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**Class culture and generational change: Immigrant families in
two Connecticut industrial cities during the 1930s**

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City University of New York, 1990

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CLASS CULTURE AND GENERATIONAL CHANGE:
IMMIGRANT FAMILIES IN TWO CONNECTICUT INDUSTRIAL CITIES
DURING THE 1930S

by
IVAN GREENBERG

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in History in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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INTRODUCTION

This is a study of workers in the modern age of the machine. The focus is on the 1930s, the period just after the widespread adoption of mass production when more than 30 percent of the American labor force was employed in the industrial sector. Factory workers were at the heart of the American mass-production economy and constituted a large portion not only of the working class, but of the national population as a whole. Part of this story is familiar; historians have studied the rise of a resurgent labor movement and the political integration of urban workers into the New Deal. Even here, there is much still to be discovered and new problems to be analyzed, especially concerning the social basis of both of these developments. In addition, as we will see, there are other aspects of the 1930s that social and labor historians have yet to explore. While a vast literature has focused on the social history of 19th century labor, many fewer studies address their 20th-century experience.

The writing of labor history has undergone tremendous change since the 1960s, with the emergence of "history from below." There is now an "Old" labor history and a "New" labor history. The Old labor history concentrates on national labor

leaders and unions and "great events;" the New history examines the experiences of average rank and file workers. Traditional labor historians, in the manner of John Commons, emphasize institutional collective bargaining and changes in the market system, but the newer history, by contrast, enlarges on this economic framework to explore the importance of the social experience of industrialization: workers' everyday relationships, on and off the job. Moreover, the Old labor history assumes that workers have traditionally shared the supposed liberal consensus of American life; that the primary goal of labor organization has been to increase wages so that workers can more fully share in American prosperity. The New labor history focuses more on the values and culture of workers and their communities, showing the complexity and diverging tendencies in the beliefs of workers. While it is clear that most American workers never joined radical movements, it is wrong to assume that they simply shared the same culture and beliefs as the middle and upper-classes. For one thing, these newer studies have revealed the degree to which workers were often job conscious and class conscious.

(1)

1. On the Old labor history, see Maurice Isserman, "'God Bless Our American Institutions': The Labor History of John R. Commons," Labor History 17 (Summer 1976): 309-328; and David Brody, "Philip Taft: Labor Scholar," Labor History 19 (Winter 1978): 9-22. Commons and Taft were leading practitioners; see also the seminal work by Selig Perlman, A Theory of the Labor Movement (New York: Macmillan, 1928).

On the New labor history, see David Montgomery, "To Study the People: The American Working Class," Labor History 21

The New history particularly highlights the inadequacy of treating "workers" as a homogeneous group, ignoring the critical differences arising from ethnicity, race, gender, and skill. It has become unacceptable to write about "the common people" or "the working class" without more specific reference to who made up this working class. As David Montgomery notes in The Fall of the House of Labor, "To write about the working class is to discuss many disparate individuals....Instead of listening for the 'voice of the working class,' therefore, we must be attuned to many different voices, sometimes in harmony, but often in conflict with one another." (2)

My study is heavily indebted to the "bottom up" approach of the New history. It examines the family, neighborhood, and workplace experiences of a wide diversity of wage-earners. At the same time, I also incorporate the union-centered approach of the Old history. It is virtually impossible to ignore the role of trade unions when studying the 1930s because close to five million new workers joined unions during the decade. For the first time unions made significant headway in organizing the mass-production industries of auto,

(Fall 1980): 485-512; and the essays in J. Carroll Moody and Alice Kessler-Harris, eds., Perspectives on American Labor History: The Problem of Synthesis (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1989). Leading practioners in this school are David Montgomery, Herbert Gutman, and David Brody.

2. David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1.

rubber, steel, and electrical products. It also can be argued that unions became a truly integral part of working-class life and culture for the first time in American history.

Few historians have studied labor and working-class movements during the 1930s within the context of local community life and culture. The traditional labor history analyzes leadership conflicts between the AFL and the CIO and the great "sit-down" strikes. (3) By contrast, while the New labor history focuses on the activities of average workers, it often is limited to an evaluation of the extent of rank and file militancy and class consciousness. (Were these "turbulent" years?) (4) Similarly, while immigration and

3. See, for example, Walter Galenson, The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935-1941 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); James Oliver Morris, Conflict Within the AFL: A Study of Craft Versus Industrial Unionism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958); Sidney Fine, Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969); and David Brody, "The Emergence of Mass Production Unionism," in John Braeman et. al, Change and Continuity in Twentieth Century America (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964).

4. On the radical potential of rank and file militancy, see: Staughton Lynd, "The Possibility of Radicalism in the Early 1930s: the Case of Steel," Radical History 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1972); James Green, "Working Class Militancy in the Depression," Ibid.; and Bruce Nelson, Workers on the Waterfront: Seaman, Longshoreman, and Unionism in the 1930s (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

On the uneven and limited quality of militancy, see: Robert Zieger, "The Limits of Militancy: Organizing Paper Workers, 1933-1935," Journal of American History 63 (Dec. 1976); Madison's Battery Workers, 1934-1952: A History of a Federal Labor Union (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); Daniel Nelson, "The CIO at Bay: Labor Militancy and Politics in Akron, Ohio, 1936-1938," Journal of American History 71 (Dec. 1981); Ronald Schatz, "Union Pioneers: The Founders of Unions at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1933-1937," Ibid.

ethnic historians analyze changes in local family and social life, they have not connected the study of the immigrant family and community to the study of social movements. (5)

This study, then, merges the concerns of immigration history and the Old and the New labor history. However, rather than analyzing in detail, as some studies do, ethnic, gender and racial differences, I dwell especially on two other sets of factors -- the skill differences and generational differences among immigrant workers and their children.

Students of labor have long noted divisions within the working class based on skill. Moreover, skill differences are usually considered to have fragmented the working class.

(6) Steven Ross, in his study of 19th century Cincinnati,

66 (Dec. 1979): 586-602; and Melvyn Dubofsky. "Not So 'Turbulent Years': Another Look at the American 1930s," in Charles Stephenson and Robert Asher, eds., Life and Labor: Dimensions of American Working-Class History (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986).

5. See, for example, John Bodnar, Immigration and Industrialization: Ethnicity in an American Mill Town (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael Weber, Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh 1900-1960 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Ewa Morawska, For Bread With Butter: The Life Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Josef Barton, Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Rumanians and Slovaks in an American City, 1890-1950 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); and Judith Smith, Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

6. See the discussion by Eric Hobsbawm, Workers: Worlds of Labor (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 214-272; and William Form, Divided We Stand: Working-Class Stratification in

provides a recent statement of this point of view. "One might argue theoretically that all people who did not own the means of production and labored for wages constituted a single working class," he writes. "Yet, how could one expect the formation of a single working-class consciousness when the nature of work and the experience of workers varied so dramatically among the city's major industries?" (7)

Before the rise of the CIO, trade unions in the United States were organized mainly along skilled craft lines. Some critics called the AFL the "American Separation of Labor" because of its exclusion of nonskilled workers. (8) It was considered a remarkable achievement when the skilled and nonskilled mobilized on behalf of common grievances.

The question of skill assumed a new, vital importance during the 1930s because the union movement organized both skilled and nonskilled workers in the same organizations. The genius of "industrial unionism" was its cross-skill, industrywide basis. It was no coincidence that many CIO unions labelled themselves "United"; the United Auto Workers, the United Rubber Workers, and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers are but prominent examples. The skilled

America (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

7. Steven Ross, Workers on the Edge: Workers, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 140.

8. David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 92.

machinist or toolmaker became a member of the same union as the semiskilled machine operator or assembler. However, it was no easy task for skill differences to be accommodated within the same organization. That such an accommodation existed, and how it was achieved, is a crucial, if incomplete, chapter in the history of the American labor movement that forms an important theme in this study. I examine how each group in the factory shared power in the new unions, revealing that no one group in this early period dominated the leadership. Such cross-skill unity stands out in sharp contrast to the situation which existed before 1935, and after 1950, when skilled workers once again dominated union leadership even in the large industrial unions. (9)

Moreover, when we turn to the leadership of the new industrial unions, we find that many of the union pioneers were second-generation immigrants, the American-born children of southern and eastern European migrants. The rise of this new working-class group during the 1930s is a critically important demographic development which historians have generally neglected. This omission is costly because this new working class constituted a formidable group by 1930, with a population of twenty-six million nationwide, almost twice as large a group as their immigrant parents, and an impressive 21 percent of the national population. The second generation

9. On the post-war years, see Stanley Aronowitz, False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), 172-178.

comprised 38 percent of New England's total population and made up more than 40 percent in such states as Connecticut and Rhode Island. (10)

Much of this study explores the way this generation constructed their own identity within, and apart from, their parents' world. We see that their lives were marked by instances of both ethnic and multiethnic contact, and that their world was a synthesis of a variety of cultural forces. However, my discussion of generational differences departs from traditional immigrant history, which explores the second-generation experience in the context of ethnic group development and the process of assimilation into American society. By contrast, I consider generational differences in a class context, how generational differences were a source of working-class fragmentation. To what extent were workers able to "transfer beliefs between generations?" (11) That process is crucial to the reproduction of a working class, the ability of different generations to share a common workers' tradition.

I have chosen to study two Connecticut industrial cities,

10. United States Census, 1930, Population, 19. See also Dorothy Krall Newman, "The Second Generation Immigrant in America with Special Reference to Problems of Adjustment" (Ph. D diss., Yale University, 1937).

11. Herbert G. Gutman uses this phrase as an outgrowth of his study of the persistence of the black family in slavery and freedom. See "Interview with Herbert G. Gutman," in Gutman, Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class, edited by Ira Berlin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 349.

Bridgeport and New Britain. There are several reasons why these particular cities are selected. First, few historians have studied workers in the Connecticut industrial region. There are numerous studies of labor in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Michigan and in other industrial states, but Connecticut has received little attention. (12) While industrial activity in the "Constitution State" may appear unfamiliar, manufacturing was, in fact, extensive in a number of cities -- notably in Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford, and New Britain. Indeed, during the 1930s the Bridgeport-New Haven region formed the third largest industrial area in New England, ranking behind only Boston and Providence, with about 1,400 factories in operation. (13) It ranked ninth in the nation among the fourteen industrial areas with at least 100,000 wage-earners. (14) (See Table A.1)

A study of two cities allows for a comparative investigation. In many ways Bridgeport and New Britain were similar: both were medium-sized, industrial settlements where the "New Immigrant" working-class constituted a majority of

12. The few studies on Connecticut labor include, Jeremy Brecher, Jerry Lombardi and Jan Stackhouse, eds., Brass Valley: The Story of Working Peoples' Lives and Struggles in an American Industrial Region (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982) and Robert Asher, Connecticut Workers and a Half Century of Technological Change, 1930-1980 (Storrs: Center for Oral History, 1983).

13. The Bridgeport Post, Dec. 12, 1935.

14. United States Census of Manufactures, reprinted in Statistical Abstract of the United States 1940, 841. This data is for the year 1937.

the population. In this, they were typical of many industrial areas that were reshaped by immigration and industrialization after 1880. In both cities, too, the "second generation" came of age during the 1930s. Understanding the similarity of working-class experiences in these two settings makes such developments more compelling, less exceptional.

TABLE A.1. Industrial Areas With At Least 100,000 Wage Earners, 1937

New York City-Newark-Jersey City area	848,345
Chicago area	538,775
Detroit area	406,882
Philadelphia-Camden area	345,553
Boston area	247,685
Pittsburgh area	227,675
Cleveland area	163,319
Providence-Fall River-New Bedford area	158,075
Bridgeport-New Haven-Waterbury area	146,077
St. Louis area	140,876
Los Angeles area	128,555
Milwaukee area	120,957
Buffalo area	105,722
Baltimore area	105,615

Source: United States Census of Manufactures, reprinted in Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1940, 841 (Table 832).

Important differences also marked working-class life in Bridgeport and in New Britain. Here, the comparative method highlights why these differences were present, and what they meant for the development of the working class. Especially instructive, for example, is the contrasting nature of electoral politics in each city. Bridgeport stands out as one of the most important cases of municipal Socialism in American history. Members of the Socialist party won almost every city elective office after 1933 and maintained control of local politics into the postwar years. It is noteworthy that grass-roots support for the Socialists did not wane after 1937, during the so-called "decline" of the New Deal elsewhere. (15) Moreover, in many cases the elected officials were themselves workers, who lived in or near the inner city. This is not, then, a case of "middle-class socialism," but neither is it a clear-cut case of a cross-skill working-class movement: the local Socialist party had its roots in the AFL unions and most of its leaders, including Mayor Jasper McLevy, were skilled craftsmen. Factory workers gained only limited institutional political power.

In New Britain, socialist movements were weak and the New Deal arrived late. Both Republicans and Democrats alternately controlled municipal politics before 1938, when

15. On this decline, see Richard Polenberg, "The Decline of the New Deal, 1937-1940," in John Braeman, Robert Bremner and David Brody, eds., The New Deal: The National Level (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1975), 246-266.

the first pro-labor New deal mayor was elected to office. In many respects, ethnic politics in New Britain undermined class politics, and the roots of this difference can be found in the structure of working-class neighborhoods. But it is also clear that the relationship between ethnicity and class is complex, and simple formulas do not normally fit historical reality. Indeed, in some cases ethnic and class loyalties were not in strict opposition.

This complex political pattern characterized New Britain politics for much of the 1930s and stands out in contrast to the tradition of popular Socialism in Bridgeport. Exploring such differences adds a new dimension to the seminal question posed by Werner Sombart at the beginning of the century: "Why is there no socialism in the United States?" (16) The success in one immigrant city and the failure in another has social causes that provide a new historical perspective on the question of American exceptionalism. It also is appropriate to reformulate Sombart's question, asking, "What did socialists do when they gained political power in the United States?" Were they able to move beyond the New Deal?

These questions, then, form some of the major themes in

16. An insightful review is Eric Foner, "Why is there no Socialism in the United States?," History Workshop 17 (Spring 1984): 57-80. See also, Erik Olssen, "The Case of the Socialist Party That Failed, or Further Reflections on an American Dream," Labor History 29 (Fall 1988): 416-449; and Leon Fink, "Looking Backward: Reflections on Workers' Culture and Certain Conceptual Dilemmas Within Labor History," in Moody and Kessler-Harris, eds., Perspectives on American Labor History, 5-13.

this study. We look at some of the "big changes" of the 1930s from the perspective of the "New Immigrant" working class; how this group experienced these changes and also helped bring them about in the first place. At the same time, it becomes clear that this group itself was changing with the rise of the second generation. The history of Bridgeport and New Britain not only sheds light on social processes during the 1930s, but also brings into sharper focus the roots of the postwar society.

CHAPTER 1

THE SETTING

"Where is the old New Britain?," a local history of the city asked in 1925. "Has it disappeared altogether, is it underneath the surface, or is it cherished only in the bosoms of a few who love the past?" At the very least it had become clear that "the old, homogeneous Society is forever gone." (1)

Such resentment against the immigrant masses, of course, had been expressed much earlier. In 1905, the Rev. Joel S. Ives of Meriden, Connecticut, informed the National Civic Federation of the disruption and strain on social services created by the settlement of thousands of newcomers.

You may go into cities in Southern New England, like New Britain, Connecticut, for example, and watch the outworking of this problem. There you may see a schoolhouse which has been built in a rapidly growing section of the city, and realizing that New Britain is already 80 percent of foreign parentage, may call to mind the fact that the people who built this schoolhouse are of the old New England stock who have made New Britain what it is and by their skill, thrift and enterprise have accumulated their property and are able, therefore, because of their taxes, to build such schoolhouses.

But, if we were dependent upon the large percentage of New Britain's population to erect such buildings it could not be done; and we are facing this

1. Lillian Hart Tryon, The Story of New Britain, Connecticut (New Britain, 1925), 125-126.

condition in Southern New England, that not an institution can be maintained therein out of the native stock alone. If you reckon the children, the parents and the grandparents in this section, not one-quarter of them are of native stock. It is not a question of the desirable or undesirable immigrants; it is the question of having within our gates this enormous mass of people, who, to be sure, have come to help in our needs, to work in our factories, to build our railroads, to make up the large increment of our large population; but are not qualified, because of their early education, their associations, their environments, to appreciate the high worth of the New England ideal which obtained so long ago and has developed itself westward to The Great Sea. (2)

In the late 1930s a middle-aged Bridgeport woman probably expressed the feelings of many old-stock Americans when she remarked, "I feel the American people are being pushed back like the Indians were. There are few real Americans now, and we are just shoved back and stepped on by a terrific lot of foreigners. We have let all this rough stuff come into this country. Of course, they have as much right as I have to live, but they should be good citizens. They aren't." (3)

The cities of Bridgeport and New Britain underwent tremendous change in the fifty years before the onset of the Great Depression. The population increased five-fold and four-fold, respectively, so that the city of 1880 was no longer visible in 1900, and the city of 1900 was again remade

2. Speech of Rev. Joel S. Ives, reprinted in the Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1905 Annual Report, 249.

3. David Rodnick, "Group Frustration in Connecticut," American Journal of Sociology 47 (Sept. 1941): 157, 162. Rodnick commented, "Even the Yankees have developed all the cultural characteristics of a minority group."

over the next twenty years. The population of Bridgeport, which stood at 28,000 in 1880, surpassed 146,000 by 1920. New Britain's population shot up from a mere 14,000 to 59,000 over the same period.

The Puritan heirs of Connecticut might have wondered at the diversity of immigrants that settled the metropolitan landscape. And the homegrown "Connecticut Yankee," much celebrated in American folklore for his ingenuity and know-how, would not have recognized the new urban community.

The visibility of the "New Immigrants," those who migrated from southern or eastern Europe, was accentuated by the fact that they settled across the urban landscape. While the urban periphery remained the domain of the middle and upper class, it was the new immigrant working classes who claimed many of the city streets as their own. In New Britain, immigrants and their children formed majorities in all six wards in 1930. The immigrant generation constituted 28 percent of the total population, the largest proportion of any Connecticut city. However, they were far outnumbered by the second generation, who alone constituted almost half of the city's people. First and second-generation immigrant dominance also characterized Bridgeport, where these groups totaled more than 70 percent of the population: the foreign-born numbered 27 percent and their native-born children numbered 45 percent. In Bridgeport, this ethnic population also spread itself across the city, forming majorities in

eleven of twelve wards. (4) Statewide, an impressive two-thirds of Connecticut residents consisted of first or second-generation immigrants, and about three-fifths of the state's church members were Roman Catholic. (5) The outstanding characteristic about immigrant life in Bridgeport is this diversity of groups. The largest group, Italians, totalled 15 percent of the city population during the 1930s, followed by Irish (9 percent); Slovaks (8 percent); Poles (6 percent); Hungarians (6 percent); Germans (5 percent); English (5 percent); and Russians (4 percent). (6)

This setting is a useful contrast to New Britain, where Poles, at a substantial 24 percent, far outnumbered the population of other immigrant groups. These other groups included: Italians (14 percent); Irish (5 percent); Germans (5 percent); Swedes (5 percent); Lithuanians (4 percent); and Russians (4 percent). (7) As we will see, the Polish community is an outstanding example of an ethnic enclave that persisted through the interwar years. When historians refer to the loosening and demise of ethnic culture after 1920, under the impact of such homogenizing forces as the new mass culture and consumer culture, they can not include New

4. United States Census, 1930, Population III, Part I, 336.

5. Rodnick, "Group Frustration in Connecticut," 157.

6. United States Census, Population, 1930, 22. These figures include the first and second generations.

7. *Ibid.* The remainder of the immigrant stock was spread among French-Canadians, Austrians, Slovaks, Hungarians, and British.

Britain's "Polonia" in their frame of reference. As the Federal Writers' Project in Connecticut observed as late as 1939, "A day or evening does not pass when one cannot hear the flow of the Polish language resounding in the streets, the verandas, or the places of business." (8)

Bridgeport and New Britain present, then, two different urban ethnic experiences. One consequence of diversity in Bridgeport is that ethnic groups often found it difficult to sustain a vital ethnic life into the 1930s. The texture of community life was noticeably different from the tight-knit Polish experience in New Britain, but not necessarily different from working-class life outside the New Britain Polish settlement.

One major similarity in both cities was the strength of the second generation. Their place in the everyday life of the 1930s was secure as the result of a variety of factors. Immigration restriction during the 1920s limited the arrival of new immigrants. The waning of the immigrant presence also was abetted by the aging process: between 1930 and 1940, for example, the number of foreign-born residents declined by 17 percent in Bridgeport and 18 percent in New Britain, as a

8. "Poles in New Britain: Weekly Activities," 10, box 129, Connecticut Ethnic Groups Survey, Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration (hereafter CEGS). These materials are housed at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford and at the University of Connecticut at Storrs. Yale Professors David Rodnick and Samuel Koenig directed the Ethnic Survey Project, which interviewed more than 2,000 residents statewide and prepared many local history reports.

substantial number of old-timers passed away. (9) It also was hard to keep down the second generation because of the sheer numbers of them reaching adulthood in these years. There are two periods in the 20th century which witnessed the maturation of a large youth population. Much has been written about the middle-class young adults of the 1960s and early 1970s. But the working-class young adults of the 1930s form an equally impressive group, who, like many of their 1960s counterparts, became politically engaged citizens who joined social movements -- in this case, industrial unions. But the "rising generation" of the 1930s was very different from the 1960s generation precisely because of their identity as wage-earners and the importance they placed on economic grievances.

Industrial Development: Bridgeport

New Britain and Bridgeport are also examples of two different industrial experiences. Bridgeport sported a diversity of industrial activity and was known as the "Industrial Capital of Connecticut." The largest industries were iron and steel and their products, electrical machinery and products, brass, apparel, and transportation equipment. While Bridgeport sometimes had the reputation of being a

9. United States Census, Population, 1930, 22; Nathan L Whetten and Henry W. Rieken, Jr., The Foreign-Born Population of Connecticut, 1940 (Storrs: Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 246, Sept. 1943), 40-41.

single industry city -- especially during the two world wars when many of its factories were geared to war production -- its industrial base was in fact quite diverse and manufacturers counted some 5,000 different articles produced. Overall, about 500 manufacturing establishments operated at mid-decade and the vast majority of these (440 or 89 percent) employed less than 100 workers. Only nineteen firms employed at least 500 workers. As the local City Directory boasted, "There is probably no city in the United States that has a more diversified line of industries." (10)

Bridgeport had two nicknames in these years. The first, the "Park City," referred to the extensive two-and-a-half mile park developed along the Long Island Sound, which showman P. T. Barnum, who served as Bridgeport mayor during the 1870s, helped the city to develop. The second nickname, "The Industrial Capital of Connecticut," was more indicative of the city's daily livelihood. During the 1930s the manufacturing sector, with approximately 34,000 workers, employed about half of the total workforce, and Bridgeport was home to the largest industrial workforce in the state. One indication of the city's industrial identity was the naming of its first radio station, which went on the air in 1926 with the initials WICC -- Industrial Center of Connecticut.

10. United States Census, Population, 1940, 62; Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, The Book of Bridgeport, 1931, 44; Elsie Nicholas Dannenberg, The Story of Bridgeport (Bridgeport, 1936), 148-149; Bridgeport City Directory 1933, 10.

A variety of industries had settled in Bridgeport since the early 19th century, but industrial expansion was especially rapid after 1880, benefitting from the city's proximity to manufacturing centers in other parts of New England as well as from its convenient location on both water and railway routes. Unskilled immigrant laborers came from New York to work in the factories and skilled workers often were attracted from nearby machine building cities in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. (11)

By 1900, when Bridgeport became an immigrant city for the first time, an estimated 80 percent of the male workforce toiled in the industrial sector. The professional class (doctors, lawyers, dentists, clergy) remained small, less than 300 people in all. Moreover, only about 1,000 middle and upper-class families could be found living in houses with lawns, barns, and flower gardens, while some 14,000 working-class families populated single and multi-family dwellings, including many tenements, on crowded unpaved streets. (12)

The wage-earning population in manufacturing more than doubled between 1899 and 1914 and the number of industrial establishments increased by 42 percent (286 to 405). The large influx of immigrants during the same period made up the vast majority of this wage-earning force. Industrial

11."Bridgeport, Connecticut: The Story of its Economic and Social Growth," 1941, 18-19, box 131, CEGS Hartford.

12.Ibid., 24.

expansion occurred in most other Connecticut manufacturing cities in this period, but was greatest in Bridgeport. We find that the number of industrial wage-earners rose by 42 percent in New Haven; 53 percent in Waterbury; 60 percent in Hartford; and 79 percent in New Britain. (13) On the eve of World War One, the size of Bridgeport's industrial workforce was roughly equal to such other medium-sized cities as Paterson, New Jersey, and Fall River, Lowell, Worcester, Lawrence and New Bedford, Massachusetts. It was slightly larger than Lynn, Massachusetts, Akron, Ohio, or Manchester, New Hampshire. (14) World War One created a boom for Bridgeport and it became known as the "Arsenal of America." As thousands of new workers arrived, the industrial workforce again more than doubled, reaching 62,000 by 1918. About 90 percent of these workers were employed directly or indirectly in war production. At its peak, the large Remington Arms company manufactured 4,000 rifles and 7,000 bayonets each day. (15) Of course, the end of the War saw a demobilization of this workforce, and by the mid-1920s the number of wage-earners stabilized at about 50,000, a level that would not be

13. United States Census of Manufacturers, 1914, 297, 328-329.

14. *Ibid.*, 370-371.

15. "Bridgeport, Connecticut: The Story of its Economic and Social Growth," 43, 53.

surpassed until World War Two. (16) In fact, few new large factories were built after 1920. While seventeen factories each employed more than 500 workers in 1920, that figure had risen to only nineteen by the mid-1930s. (17) All in all, we find that the city's industrial economy matured during the interwar years.

The focus on aggregate data tells only part of the story. While there was relative stability in the number of employees in the industrial sector after 1925, there was also change in the nature of that sector.

One set of changes occurred in the composition of the labor force. For example, the number of children employed in factories declined, due in part to the passage of tougher state child labor laws. In Bridgeport, only 6 percent of male children ages ten to fifteen, and only 3 percent of female children, worked for wages in 1930. (18)

Scholars note that many new white women joined the paid workforce during the 1930s because of family need for supplemental income due to unusually high male unemployment rates. (19) Data for Bridgeport and New Britain demonstrate

16. United States Census of Manufacturers, 1919, 286; "Bridgeport, Connecticut: The Story of its Economic and Social Growth," 66.

17. United States Census of Manufactures, 1919, 332-333.

18. United States Census, Population, 1930, 45.

19. Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 250-272.

a small, but clear rise for the decade of the 1930s. In Bridgeport, the number of women workers increased from 29 percent (10,853 of 37,348) in 1930 to 35 percent (13,343 of 37,796) in 1939. In New Britain, the percentage increased from 20 percent (3,125 of 15,966) to 25 percent (3,946 of 15,731) over the same period. (20)

It is usually believed that married women made up much of this increase. A study of Bridgeport conducted by the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department reveals that a significant 20 percent of women workers were married in 1930. (21) We do not know if that number increased during the 1930s, but data for several factories in the late 1903s suggest that married women had a significant presence. At the Remington company, about half of the female workers were married, and most of these were second-generation Italians, Slovaks, Hungarians and Poles in their twenties or early thirties. (22) At the Casco and Bryant Electric factories,

20. Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics, Report of Factory Inspection, 1930, 20; Connecticut Department of Factory Inspection, List of Connecticut Factories, 1939, 14.

We should note that women formed a stable portion of the industrial workforce before 1930. An indication of their earlier presence is evident in statistics for 1904, 1909 and 1914. In these years, women totaled 26 percent, 27 percent and 28 percent, respectively, of Bridgeport's total industrial workforce. In New Britain, women formed 20 percent of this labor force in each of these years. United States Census of Manufacturers, 1914, 328-329, 340.

21. The Bridgeport Post, Aug. 20, 1939.

22. Women totaled about one-half of the factory work force of 3,000. No blacks were employed. "Study of Munitions Workers" [1939], box 133, CEGS Hartford.

almost one-third of the women were married. (23) Sometimes married women lied in order to keep their jobs. A worker at the Underwood factory in Bridgeport recalled, "They didn't want to hire a married woman at the time....so I went in as a single girl." She was not the only one. "All the girls were married, but they didn't tell," she said. (24)

The popular criticism of married women workers is also testimony to this rising female presence. More than twenty-five states, for example, considered legislation during the 1930s barring married women from holding state jobs, and this issue was much discussed in both public and private life. (25)

As one male Bridgeport worker remarked, "The 'burner' is that most [of the women] were married and they had their husbands working, so why the hell should they want to work. I don't mind that a broad has to work in a shop, but why the Christ does a married woman have to work. Their business is to take care of the house and raise kids." (26)

The entrance of the second generation into the labor force marked a crucial change. They were often a different breed of worker than their immigrant parents. Born and raised

23. "Hungarians: General," Feb. 15, 1939, 4, 9, box 18, CEGS Storrs.

24. Julianne O'Connor interview, July 14, 1981, Connecticut Workers and Technology Project, University of Connecticut, Storrs.

25. Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 257.

26. "Hallett St. Survey," 58, box 18, CEGS Storrs. This worker was 35 years-old, of Slovak background.

in the United States, they were less deferential, less reluctant to challenge American authority figures. (27) It has been noted, for example, that second-generation Polish factory workers often were brazen and outspoken on the shop floor. (28) They were clearly at the forefront of the CIO mobilization in New Britain and Bridgeport and assumed important union leadership posts. The second generation also was more willing than their parents to join with workers of other ethnic backgrounds in asserting common grievances.

This acceptance of pluralism on the job often had its roots in experiences off the job. As an observer of the Polish community in New Britain reported, "An important item in the gatherings of the second generation is their apparent trend toward a cosmopolitan association with their friends. Those that have married outside their nationality particularly, and even those that didn't, entertain many friends who are not Polish, among them being Italian, Irish, Armenian, French, etc., something the first generation didn't

27. Ewa Morawska, For Bread With Butter: The Life Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 274.

28. Peter Friedlander, The Emergence of a UAW Local, 1936-1939: A Study in Class and Culture (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), 26-28, 78, 98-99; Frank Renkiewicz, "Polish American Workers, 1880-1980," in Stanislaus A. Blejwas and Mieczyslaw B. Biskupski, eds., Pastor of the Poles: Polish American Essays Presented to Right Reverend Monsignor John P. Wodarski (New Britain: Polish Studies Monographs, Central Connecticut State College, 1982), 192.

do at all." (29)

The childhood experiences of Joseph Salwocki, a young CIO organizer in New Britain, sheds light on this generational attitude. "Our native language, Polish, was always spoken at home," he recalled. "No doubt this was done in order to preserve the language by having it passed down from generation to generation." However, even before he entered school, Salwocki spoke English much more fluently than Polish and many of his friends in public school did not belong to the Polish group; he remembered playmates of Italians, German, Russian and English backgrounds. Moreover, his movement outside his parents' immigrant world was a source of generationl conflict. "There were times when my ideas did not agree with those of my family," he said; prominent among these was "the question of having friends who were of a different national group." (30)

A second set of changes concerns the very structure of manufacturing, a shift from the production of primary products, such as pig-iron and steel, to nondurable products,

29."Poles of New Britain: Family Life," 10, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

30."Second Generation Interview," Nov. 28, 1939, box 129, CEGS Hartford. The Writers' Project did not identify this individual by name, but noted his union affiliation and title. It is clear that he is Salwocki because much of the life history material overlaps with that contained in a separate interview of Salwocki. Compare Joseph Salwocki interview, n.d, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

such as appliances and automobiles. Indeed, the largest gains in manufacturing throughout the nation in the early 20th century occurred in these consumer-products industries. However, the "new" manufacturing did not completely or suddenly displace the "old." In addition, the production of "old" primary products often was linked to the production of "new" nondurable ones. In Bridgeport, industrial development during the first decades of the 20th century was rooted in a variety of consumer-products industries. By the mid-1930s, I calculate that an estimated 70 percent of the city's sixty largest plants were associated directly or indirectly with nondurable production. (31)

Portraits of several Bridgeport factories reveal the expansion in this sector. The General Electric company was the largest industrial establishment in the city. Its factory complex, spread out among thirteen main buildings, employed about 8,000 workers at its peak in October 1937. Of its five manufacturing departments, three concentrated solely on consumer products. These departments -- Appliance, Home Laundry Equipment, and Radio -- dominated work in the plant. The two other departments -- Wiring Devices and Conduit and Wire -- made products used in the manufacturing of these consumer goods.

31. Those associated with nonconsumer production made primary metal, machinery and machine parts. "List of Connecticut Factories," in Connecticut Department of Factory Inspection, 1933-1934 Report, 5-22.

A brief history of GE product lines tells as much about the history of the firm as it does about the rising demand for consumer goods in American society, and its effect on the workforce. Thus, for example, the Radio department was first established in 1935. GE moved its radio production to Bridgeport from its Cleveland plant as a way to concentrate and expand radio production. About 1,000 new workers were hired -- the majority women, employed as semiskilled assemblers -- to produce 2,200 sets each day. An estimated half million radios were made during the first six months of production. (32) This expansion occurred in large part because radio sales nationwide climbed significantly by mid-decade. As radio prices dropped, and the depression eased, even many low-income families purchased their own. As a Writers' Project reporter indicated, after surveying a working-class block in Bridgeport, "In every home visited, the family owns a radio. In most, the radios were going full-blast during the interview, usually tuned to a musical program." (33) At the decade's end, about twenty-eight million homes or 86 percent of American families owned their own sets. (34)

GE in Bridgeport produced a wide assortment of other

32. The Bridgeport Post, March 25, 1937.

33. "Clinton Ave. Survey," 9, box 27, CEGS Storrs.

34. Dixon Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-1941 (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 229, 331.

products. It introduced electric fans in 1925; sun lamps in 1929; and flat plate irons in 1931. The appliances introduced in the early 1930s included: food mixers, sandwich grills, percolators, coffee makers, toasters, and electric hot plates. Another innovation for the home was the wringer-type clothes washing machine, first produced in the Home Laundry division in 1935. (35) In 1939, plans were announced to consolidate the refrigerator and washing machine production, by shifting the Cleveland production to Bridgeport. (36) And on the eve of World War Two, the Bridgeport newspapers speculated about a new product -- the television. More than one hundred GE district sales managers and representatives held a three-day conference in Bridgeport in May 1939, to chart the company's advances in television technology. Were consumer advances moving too fast for product sales? how fast could the new American consumer absorb the onslaught of new products? The head of GE's television department assured the delegates:

Radio will continue to be the prime medium of entertainment in the home of millions of Americans. It would be shortsighted to lose sight of this fact in the excitement attendant upon television's debut, just as it would be shortsighted of us not to incorporate in our new receivers every possible device for bridging the gap between radio and television. (37)

When we turn to the relationship between consumer demand

35. The Bridgeport Post, June 29, 1935.

36. The Bridgeport Times-Star, Aug. 23, 1939.

37. The Bridgeport Post, May 31, 1939.

and factory employment at GE, we find that the size of the workforce fluctuated dramatically during the 1930s depending on national product sales. The year 1938 illustrates this dynamic. At the beginning of the year the workforce was a mere 3,000. Production fell as consumer spending declined during the "Roosevelt Recession." However, by August the workforce more than doubled, reaching 6,500, as a result of a new contract for 250,000 radio sets. This beefed-up workforce toiled through the early fall and stabilized at around 5,800 during November. At that time, some 155,000 radios had been made. However, once the 250,000 quota was reached, many workers would be left jobless. (38) In these new consumer industries business was still uncertain about levels of consumer demand that could be tapped or sustained, and factory workforce levels fluctuated widely.

Unions also realized that steady employment depended on consumer purchasing power. The UE closely monitored the sales of electrical appliances and found cause for celebration in upward sales trends. "It is, of course, highly gratifying that these [sales] trends of such importance to our union are for the moment pointed upwards," the union reported in September 1939, adding, "[B]ehind each upward or downward trend and curve are human lives. When we report, for example, an increase in sales in consumer goods, it not only means that more of those goods have been sold, and that more of our

38.Ibid., Aug. 28, 1938; Nov. 7, 1938.

members are working union hours and union rates to produce these goods; it also means that the public at large has had the money with which to buy these appliances." (39) Clearly the union saw it as an advance for workers to be part of this "public" that could buy appliances and boost their standard-of-living. When workers bought appliances they were also investing in the maintenance of their jobs. This assumption, with its consumer ethos, also stood behind the New Deal's Keynesian economics, especially in its early phase: redirect money to the masses at the bottom, so they could spend more and have a "trickle up" effect on the economy. (40)

Another Bridgeport firm involved in consumer production was the Columbia Record company. As radio production soared at GE, the manufacture of records increased at Columbia

39. Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union, 1939, 191. Emphasis in original.

40. Labor secretary Frances Perkins justified the passage of the 1935 Social Security Act in these terms. "We must recognize that if we are to maintain a healthy economy and thriving production, we need to maintain the standard of living of the lower income groups of our population who constitute ninety per cent of our purchasing power," she said. It had become clear to the President's closest advisors that the "promotion and stabilization of mass purchasing power" was essential; without it "the present economic system cannot endure."

A similar logic stood behind the New Deal's aid to the debt-ridden small farmer. To aid the small farmer was also to boost their mass purchasing power. As agriculture secretary Henry Wallace noted in 1934, "Their death as consumers closed thousands of factories and helped to throw millions out of work." William E. Leuchtenburg, ed., The New Deal: A Documentary History (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 85, 177-118.

Record. The Bridgeport plant manufactured more than ten million records each year during the late 1930s, making it the largest record factory in the world. During the interwar years, as records gained a new mass-based popularity, the plant became integrated into the nation's commercial entertainment industry. Ownership of the factory remained in local hands until 1934. The American Record Company then bought the plant and sold it four years later to William Paley's Columbia Broadcasting System. Owning the plant allowed CBS direct access to a variety of record labels, some of the most prestigious and popular ones of the era: Columbia, Brunswick, Vocalion, Percept, Melotone, Conqueror, Playtime, and Watch-Tower. Most of these records were for the mass consumer market, for either home use or for commercial juke boxes. (41)

A different type of product was produced at the large Remington Arms company, a factory complex centered on arms and munitions production. During World War One, the company's large plants, employing close to 14,000 workers, became a major supplier of weapons for the Allies. Iron Age identified the factory as one of the largest manufacturing establishments in the world. (42) During peacetime the firm produced arms for the sports market, benefitting from the popularity of

41. The Bridgeport Post, June 23, 1938; Dec. 18, 1938.

42. Iron Age, Feb. 3, 1916.

hunting during the early 20th century. (43) The DuPont Company, which acquired a majority interest in the firm in 1932, thus worked with the National Rifle Association to push sales. (44) For DuPont, the acquisition of Remington marked another step into the consumer market. DuPont had grown substantially during World War One and moved into consumer production following the war, introducing a variety of synthetic materials -- rayon, cellophane, and plastics -- which became essential to such new products as linoleum, lacquers, and Pyrex cooking utensils. (45) In addition to arms, since 1918 a small section of the Remington plant manufactured fine cutlery and flatware, as well as scissors and garden shears.

Although automobiles were not a significant Connecticut industry, some firms produced a variety of associated parts. The Casco company, which employed between 500 and 1,600 workers, manufactured such products as automatic cigar lighters for car dashboards. In 1938, the firm made as many 20,000 each day, supplying most domestic car manufacturers. The large automakers also turned to Casco for windshield defrosters, fans and car grille guards. (46)

43. The Bridgeport Post, May 15, 1938.

44. Ibid., May 25, 1933; March 14, 1934.

45. Martin V. Melosi, Coping with Abundance: Energy and Environment in Industrial America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 104.

46. The Bridgeport Telegraph, Nov. 11, 1936; June 14, 1940.

These firms were among the leaders in the city. I have chosen to focus on them because they were primary sites of CIO organizing. In general, many of the industrial union battles of the 1930s were fought on the grounds of such consumer-products plants, especially by the large United Auto Workers (UAW) and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE). Bridgeport and New Britain offer particularly interesting case studies since the UE was the dominant union in each city. The UE's "electrical" and "radio" emphasis was geared especially to the new manufacturing in Bridgeport. Its "machine" and "electrical" emphasis covered many workers in New Britain.

Industrial Development: The Hardware City

New Britain was a concentrated factory town, centered on hardware production. It stands alongside other single-industry cities -- "auto cities," "rubber cities," "textile cities," or "steel cities." About 70 percent of the labor force filled wage-earning jobs, with the vast majority -- some 60 percent of all gainful workers -- employed in manufacturing or mechanical establishments. Overall, almost one quarter (16,000) of the city population worked in factories. This employment was concentrated in a small number of firms: nine companies employed about 85 percent of the industrial workforce. The label of the "Hardware City" suggests a very different, less diversified, industrial landscape than

Bridgeport's designation as the "Industrial Capital of Connecticut." (47)

The "Hardware" name derives from several firms that had established a manufacturing base for the city during the first half of the 19th century. One leading firm was the American Hardware company. This century-old firm, originally known as Russell and Erwin, became one of the first in the nation to specialize in the manufacture of builders' hardware. By the Civil War it produced such items as cabinet locks, trunk and suitcase hardware, post office boxes, and keys. During the 1930s it employed some 3,500 workers, the most of any factory in the city. An even older firm, the North and Judd Manufacturing company, began the manufacturing of buckles and small hardware during the presidency of James Madison. To this list of hardware producers also belongs the Stanley Works company, started in 1843, as a one-man bolt business. Frederick T. Stanley, the company's founder, became the first mayor of New Britain when the city was formally chartered in 1850. The Stanley Works became well-known in the 20th century for its hand and electric tools, which were highly popular in the consumer market, but the firm also produced a variety of furniture, refrigerator and garage hardware. Indeed, in the 20th century the company became a multinational, with factories far beyond Connecticut's shore. The headquarters,

47. Robert Tata, "Problems of Industrial Old Age New Britain: A Case Study" (Ph. D diss., Syracuse University, 1957): 41-49.

however, remained locally based. (48)

We should think of hardware products as occupying an intermediate link between the new consumer and the old primary product industries. Most hardware goods were not bought directly by the consumer, but by firms in the building trades.

However, the building trades' demand for hardware products was tied to consumer demand for new homes. The spread of home ownership boosted such hardware production; at the same time, declining housing starts reduced production needs. New Britain's hardware industry was hard hit during the early depression as building came to a standstill throughout most of the country. (49)

Besides hardware, New Britain's metal industries also included several durable goods firms that made machine parts. The New Britain Machine company, founded in 1895, produced engines, woodworking and metalworking equipment, and especially automatic "chucking" and screw machines. The chuck is a mechanical device used to hold a tool in a machine; it can hold a tool that does drilling or hold the work that is being machined. The Skinner Chuck company, which dates to the late 1880s, also specialized in "chucks" and other machine parts. So did the Union Manufacturing company, which was established in 1866. This firm also made such hardware

48. New Britain, Connecticut: The Hardware City of the World, 1850-1950 (New Britain, 1950), 78, 84, 88-89.

49. Tata, "Problems of Industrial Old Age," 42.

products as hitching post caps, brackets, and coil door springs. (50)

Did any vestiges of the old primary metals manufacturing persist? In 1937, a mere ten workers were employed in primary metal production, after two irons works (the Malleable and Vulcan companies) recently had gone out of business. (51)

The closing of these iron works testified to New Britain's transition to the "new" manufacturing. Other indicators are found in the establishment of several firms that were linked to automobile production. The Fafnir Bearing company was established in 1911 as a producer of ball bearings, supplying a critical component which the developing auto industry had previously imported from abroad. (52) The same year the Corbin Screw company started to produce auto and bike brakes, as well as speedometers. Just a year later, in 1912, the firm built a special new plant in New Britain to cater to these products. (53)

Meanwhile, the most important consumer goods plant in the city -- the Landers, Frary and Clark company, maker of "Universal" appliances -- had its roots in hardware, but

50. New Britain, Connecticut: The Hardware City, 82, 86.

51. Tata, "Problems of Industrial Old Age," 48.

52. New Britain, Connecticut: The Hardware City, 92.

53. The Corbin Screw company was formally part of the American Hardware company, but operated as a separate facility. "New Britain History and Industry: Corbin Screw Corp.," 5, box 127, CEGS Hartford.

switched over to the "new" products during the early 20th century. George M. Landers, the founder of the company, came to New Britain in 1830 as a sixteen year old apprentice. Several years later he decided to start a business manufacturing metal furniture castings, coat and hat hooks, and other hardware products. The company flourished during the mid-19th century, and George Landers, like Frederick Stanley, became a popular local businessmen who went into politics. He was elected to the state Assembly and then to the United States Congress during the 1870s. (54)

The Landers firm made the shift to consumer products in 1898, when it took out a patent on a food chopper, the first ever made commercially in the United States. The Universal food chopper was soon followed by the Universal bread maker, cake mixer as well as a line of alcohol-heated household appliances. For the most part the move into appliances reflected the increasing electrification of American homes. By 1912, the company offered an electric flat iron, followed by vacuum cleaners in 1919, washing machines in 1920, electric ranges in the early 1920s, and refrigerators in 1933. (55) During the 1930s the Landers factory figured as the second largest employer in the city, with about 2,700 workers. Like the General Electric factory in Bridgeport, it too was an

54. New Britain, Connecticut: The Hardware City, 80.

55. The Universal Story (New Britain: Landers, Frary and Clark, 1961), 4.

early site of UE organizing and played a crucial role in the history of union formation in the city.

The auto and electrical products industries helped transform the face of manufacturing in both New Britain and Bridgeport. This structural dimension is fairly clear. The primary metal production of the 19th century had been displaced in many ways by the new "nondurable" manufacturing. This was not a fast process of swift substitution of one type of product for another. Intermediate levels of manufacturing persisted, as exemplified by hardware and machine parts. However, the workforce ties to, and dependency on, consumer markets was evident even at these intermediate points of production.

The impact of this change on working-class consciousness is less clear. Certainly workers saw the products they were making, and some must have wanted to share in the fruits of their labor by being able to buy appliances and other nondurable goods. The UE, at least, thought this was a positive goal. However, there is little evidence that ethnic workers shared raising consumer expectations and were frustrated by their inability to buy consumer products. It is likely that few first or second-generation immigrants were able to share in an American Standard of Living during the 1920s, and there is considerable doubt if the immigrant generation wanted to, even if they had the income. And during the 1930s, few ethnic workers hoped to purchase such goods

because of the economic crisis. Roland Marchand shows that advertising executives realized this, virtually excluding from one-third to one-half of the population as potential "buyers" or "consumer citizens" because of their marginal incomes. (56)

In New Britain, few residents during the depression decade actually owned many new appliances, such as electric refrigerators or ranges. By 1935, 70 percent of New Britain residents still used ice for refrigeration and an additional 14 percent reported no type of refrigeration at all. An even fewer number of people replaced coal or wood cooking stoves; an estimated 1 percent of city dwellings had installed electric ranges. "The use of electricity in New Britain for cooking purposes seems yet to be negligible," a city report noted. (57)

Hard Times

When President Franklin Roosevelt declared in his second Inaugural Address that one-third of the nation was "ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished" he was describing the material condition of life in such industrial cities as Bridgeport and New Britain. In these cities the depression

56. Roland Marchand, Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 64-65.

57. Report of City Social Survey -- New Britain, Connecticut (Hartford: Emergency Relief Administration, 1935), 23-24.

left more than one-half of the population in "hard times," facing economic dislocation, hunger, instability, and a legacy of poor housing and overcrowded neighborhoods. The depressed material life in urban Connecticut marked it as one of the most severe victims of the economic crisis.

Why focus on poverty? It becomes clear that the setting of widespread deprivation helped shape the working-class experience in these years. It provided the background for working-class mobilization into unions and political parties. But in what ways? It is too simple to assert that the success of the CIO or the success of Bridgeport Socialism was primarily the result of the economic crisis and the closing off of social mobility. In this view, if the prosperity of the 1920s had continued there would have been little radicalism or working-class mobilization during the 1930s. Rather, it is likely that poverty itself was not the reason for working-class mobilization, but certainly it was an important social factor that framed working-class perceptions of the injustice of work and social relationships in society.

(58)

58. However, protest movements do not only arise during periods of economic uncertainty. There is much to be gained from the "resource mobilization" approach which suggests that social movements often develop when people are not destitute or severely impoverished, but when they have some resources of their own that they can use to organize to improve their lives. See, for example, Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley Publishing Co., 1978); J. McCarthy and M. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements," American Journal of Sociology 82 (1976): 1212-1241; and J. Craig Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory

There is also some question about whether the Great Depression really marked an abrupt change in the lives of many working-class people. There is little doubt that unemployment rates rose sharply. But did the hard times of the 1930s represent a dramatically new experience for workers, or was it really an intensification of the economic insecurity that characterized working-class life in previous decades? Alexander Keyssar's study of unemployment in Massachusetts is highly suggestive of the extent that joblessness has been a regular feature of many worker lives, even during allegedly "prosperous" times. (59) Worrying about unemployment and finding ways to cope with substandard incomes were often the norm for this social class.

Different groups of workers also viewed the depression differently. It is evident that many skilled workers fared better than their nonskilled peers. Such craftsmen as plumbers, mechanics and electricians often were able to sustain their standard of living, although painters and carpenters suffered severe losses. Skilled factory workers

and the Study of Social Movements," Annual Review of Sociology 9 (1983): 527-553.

59. Alexander Keyssar, The First Century of Unemployment in Massachusetts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Irwin Yellowitz, Industrialization and the American Labor Movement, 1850-1900 (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977), 24-25. See also Frank Stricker, "Affluence for Whom? - Another Look at Prosperity and the Working Classes in the 1920s," Labor History 24 (Winter 1983): 5-33; and James T. Patterson, America's Struggle Against Poverty 1900-1980 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

such as machinists and tool and diemakers also were in demand, but semiskilled and unskilled wage-earners had a much more difficult time, as did older workers in general. (60)

We should also consider if there were separate generational perspectives on the experience of hard times. Older workers were more likely to believe that the depression would probably pass; that opportunities for factory labor would soon open up again. Many had been laid-off before the 1930s and had a realistic view of life as a worker; the regularity of unemployment in their lives made them less likely to view the depression in catastrophic terms, at least until the late 1930s when unemployment reached early depression levels.

It appears that younger workers became disenchanted with unemployment and hard times much sooner. This difference is related both to lifecycle issues and to the particular historical position of the rising second generation. Much of this generation had first entered the work world during the 1930s and knew nothing but high unemployment rates and shortened working hours. For them, the "depression decade" was an especially long and disillusioning one. They could not remember working during better times. The economic crisis appeared to be a permanent condition. The factory world that supported their parents was itself in jeopardy. How was the younger generation to support themselves and their young

60. See chapters 4 and 6.

families? (61)

In this context, it is useful to note the perspective of a young Bridgeport worker who was angry about the high rate of joblessness and complained about the palliative approach of the New Deal's temporary employment programs. This was no way for a young worker to start out. "The WPA ain't going to do a damned thing to help the people," this Bridgeport resident said. "It only keeps them from starving. And the C.C.C., who the hell wants to kill his life for six months. The C.C.C. only keeps you from starving for six months and then you're on the streets again. The hell with it." (62) This young worker also implicitly acknowledged a major weakness of public employment programs during the 1930s: most provided nonskilled jobs, with little provision for skilled training. (63)

There can be no mistake that both Bridgeport and New Britain were poor workers' cities. Poverty ran deep. A survey of 2,000 New Britain families during 1935-1936

61. Howard M. Bell, in a survey of more than 13,000 young adults, reported that 58 percent believed that economic insecurity was the most pressing problem facing their generation. As one respondent said, "We can't get a job like other people used to before." Youth Tell Their Story (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1938), 249-255.

62. "Hallett St. Survey," 25-26.

63. About 90 percent of WPA jobs were nonskilled; many CCC jobs, such as forestry work, fell into a similar category. Richard J. Jensen, "The Causes and Cures of Unemployment in the Great Depression," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 19 (Spring 1989): 576-577.

indicated that the overall median income was a pitiful \$1,099, well short of the estimated \$1,500 deemed necessary by the government for a "decent" living. Many families were still further down the income scale: about 43 percent had incomes less than \$1,000. (64)

Many families took in boarders to earn needed money. About 12 percent of native-born families opened up their homes in this way. If a family lacked a spouse, they were even more likely to take in boarders; about 28 percent of native-born families in this situation earned income from boarders. But such income was supplementary to other sources, too small to live on by itself. Yearly earnings from boarders usually averaged between only \$250 and \$300. (65)

Relatively few residents owned their homes, about 22 percent in New Britain and wage-earners had an especially difficult time. (66) Only 12 percent of native-born wage-earners were homeowners. The immigrant generation was more successful, with home ownership rates ranging between 20 and 30 percent, depending on their incomes. As the Labor Department reported, "Older families are more likely than

64. United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Family Income and Expenditure in Five New England Cities, 1935-1936 Vol. 1: Family Income (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 93, 102.

65. Ibid., 51, 67.

66. This rate was the lowest among the cities surveyed. Compare Providence (27 percent), Haverhill, Mass., (36 percent), and Wallingford, Conn., (43 percent). Family Income and Expenditure, 71.

newly established ones to have a settled position in the community, and to have had more time in which to accumulate some capital." Then, too, immigrant cultures often placed great weight on the purchase of one's own house, as scholars suggest. How else to explain the fact that about 36 percent of foreign-born families with less than \$500 family income owned their homes? These old-timers had bought their homes many years before. (67)

Owning a home provided a sense of security and stability for the working class. Even if workers lost their jobs, or were temporarily laid-off, they knew they had a place for themselves and their families to live. By the 1930s, however, many working-class homeowners and renters alike often occupied old, crowded, and decaying multi-family buildings. There was very little about the condition of these structures that made them desirable. Most were built around the turn of the century, or before, to accommodate the large influx of immigrant workers. In New Britain, the greatest number of housing structures (2,312 or 36 percent) were built between 1885 and 1909. (68) In Bridgeport, 25 percent of the housing structures were built before 1900, and an additional 54

67. The rate in New Britain again was the lowest of the cities studied by the Labor Department. About 14 percent of wage-earners in Providence were homeowners, 21 percent in Willimantic, Conn., 28 percent in Wallingford, and 31 in Haverhill. Ibid., 72, 74-76.

68. Report of City Social Survey, 27.

percent were constructed between 1900 and 1919. (69)

A reporter for the Writers' Project described the poor housing on a working-class block in Bridgeport. "There is hardly a house on the block that is not in need of repair," he reported. "Many of them are beyond repair." Repairs had not been made in most structures for at least ten to twenty years. The majority of houses were made of wood. The roofs often leaked. Most needed a paint job. In some cases the chimneys were "at the point of collapse, some leaning precariously on one side." Most of the buildings were crowded together, separated by five or six foot alleyways. Indoor plumbing was primitive -- "pipes can be seen jutting out of the kitchen walls, in some cases leading around the kitchen into the bath." Toilets were often in the hallway, shared by several families, without windows or proper ventilation. The hallways themselves were dark, often without electricity. The steps leading up to the apartments are "treacherous because they have been worn and are out of proportion." Residents often heated their apartments with twenty to thirty year-old cast-iron stoves. Many said they used coal stoves because they couldn't afford oil fuel. These buildings were the stuff of post-war slum clearance projects. (70)

We see the severity of the depression by looking at monthly relief rolls. Table 1.1 shows the combined local and

69. United States Census, Housing, 1940, 5.

70. "Hallett St. Survey."

federal relief given to New Britain families during the month of January, from 1928 to 1939. Several points are apparent. First, these figures alone do not tell of the full need for services by the people. Rather, they reflect the extent that such services were made available by the government. Thus, we find that only 160 people were given relief in 1930 because such relief was not available, not because more people did not need it. Similarly, city services were able to give relief to only 1,002 people in 1931, although the number in need was probably three or four times as great. As soon as New Deal programs were put into effect, relief services reached many more people, between approximately 2,800 and 3,400 families monthly, or about 20 percent of the families in the city. This is a significant percentage of families on relief, but it also probably underestimates the extent of poverty because many immigrants, who had yet to be naturalized, were sometimes either excluded from aid or were reluctant themselves to file for public assistance because they did not trust "outsiders."

(71)

It also becomes clear that the depression left a large number of families on hard times for much of the decade. The

71. City sponsored work-relief projects often hired only citizens. New Britain Municipal Record, 1932, 42.

Caroline Golab notes that Poles in Philadelphia rarely show up on relief rolls or sought public assistance, despite the fact that unemployment was high among this group during the depression. They preferred to rely on kin for support. Golab, "The Huddled Masses Reconsidered," in Richard E. Ehrlich, ed., Immigrants in Industrial America, 1850-1920 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 31.

only substantial decline in relief occurred during the nineteen month period between September 1936 and April 1938, when the number of families on monthly relief fluctuated between 800 and 1,700. (72) A similar decline occurred in Bridgeport between January 1936 and January 1937. (73) We should note that it was during this period that the CIO was formed and consolidated. The increased stability of the workforce provided a more conducive setting: workers on relief (due to unemployment) do not have the option of joining trade unions.

TABLE 1.1. Combined Local And Federal Relief To Families For The Month Of January, 1928-1939, In New Britain

1928	137
1930	160
1931	1,002
1932	2,423
1933	2,782
1934	2,895
1935	3,426
1936	3,080
1937	1,459
1938	1,535
1939	2,267

Source: New Britain Municipal Record 1932, 194; 1935, 279; 1939, 135.

72. New Britain Municipal Record, 1939, 135.

73. Relief rolls dropped by 50 percent. The Bridgeport Post, Feb. 2, 1937.

The federal government did not keep detailed unemployment statistics during the 1930s. Nevertheless, a variety of local studies illuminate the extent of joblessness. A mid-decade study sponsored by the city of New Britain and the Emergency Relief Administration found that approximately 37 percent of gainful adult workers were unemployed. Of those employed, only 72 percent worked full-time. (74) In Bridgeport, this state of joblessness was studied by the Labor Department in 1934 -- along with Springfield, Ohio and Lancaster, Pa. -- because these were judged to be "typical American industrial cities." About 25 percent of the Bridgeport labor force was reported to be out of work, and this situation was most pressing in the large manufacturing sector, where 30 percent of male workers and 18 percent of women workers were jobless. For many, unemployment approached chronic proportions. Almost half (47 percent) had been without a job for at least two years. As high as 29 percent were jobless for three years. Men were more likely than women to go long periods without work, comprising 53 percent of those who had not held a job in two years, compared to 22 percent of unemployed women. (75) The severity of Bridgeport's unemployment problem ranked it

74.Report of City Social Survey, 39.

75."Employment Conditions and Unemployment Relief: Unemployment Survey of Bridgeport, Conn., 1934," Monthly Labor Review 40 (March 1935): 626, 630, 633-634.

sixteenth in a government survey of seventy-nine cities. (76)

We should, then, keep in mind this ethnic, generational, industrial and material setting as we turn to examine the changing structure of working-class neighborhoods. We will see in more detail the community and family roots of working-class social activity.

76. Urban Workers on Relief (Washington, D.C.: Works Progress Administration, 1936), 47. According to this survey, the median duration of unemployment for Bridgeport workers on relief (in May 1934) was 32.2 months. The severity of hard-core unemployment during the 1930s is noted by Jensen, "The Causes and Cures of Unemployment," 556-557, 564-567.

CHAPTER 2

NEIGHBORHOODS AND CLASS

Neighborhood formation affects class development. Where one lives impacts one's work solidarities, social life and political ties. Social historians have devoted considerable attention to the worker's experience in his or her community, acknowledging that worker consciousness is not simply a reflex of one's relationship to the means of production, but also is shaped by a variety of other experiences. This is more true in the 20th century than before, because the shortening of the workday over time left wage-earners with more time for non-work activities. The 1930s was unique in a different respect: many workers experienced an "enforced leisure" due to unemployment and shorter factory shifts and others who retained their jobs were also the beneficiaries of paid vacations for the first time, a new provision in many CIO contracts. Studying the structure of the residential neighborhood can tell us much about worker lives and identities. We can ask, as Ira Katznelson suggests in City Trenches, if neighborhood life divorced work concerns from other life experiences; if there developed a split between

"work" identities and "community" identities. (1) This question is especially relevant when studying immigrant workers, because many developed tight-knit, family based communities in urban America.

Scholars have advanced several interpretations about the relationship between neighborhood structures and the development of worker consciousness. We can identify several different types of neighborhoods. (2)

The first is the single ethnic/cross-class neighborhood. This type of community often is referred to as the "ethnic ghetto," although it is not restricted only to low-income residents. Individuals of a particular ethnic group reside regardless of occupation or wealth level although relatively few have high incomes.) This neighborhood is believed to

1. Ira Katznelson, City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

2. These neighborhood types are suggested in recent social history. See, for example, Josef Barton, Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Rumanians and Slovaks in an American City, 1890-1950 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); John Bodnar, Immigration and Industrialization: Ethnicity in an American Mill Town (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Roy Rosenzweig, 'Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City 1880-1920 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Olivier Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982); Katznelson, City Trenches; Susan Hirsch, Roots of the American Working Class: The Industrialization of Crafts in Newark, 1800-1860 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); and Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity: Historical Issues," Journal of American History 66 (December 1979): 603-615.

encourage a particular form of worker consciousness and organization. The working-class component may organize among itself, but will also organize with other social classes of the same national origin on behalf of the ethnic group. Generally, there exist cultural barriers to multiethnic worker cooperation among the immigrant generation. Immigrant workers might join a socialist party or a trade union, but often in a separate ethnic section. (3)

The second type of neighborhood is the single ethnic/working-class neighborhood. Workers of a single ethnic group reside in the same area, as the majority of their middling and upper class ethnic peers move into other areas. This structure encourages the development of a consciousness as part of the "laboring people" or "working class of people." However, there is still hesitancy among workers to form class alliances across ethnic lines. They tend to associate only with their "own kind," even though their "own kind" has a defined class character.

A third type is the multiethnic/working-class neighborhood. In this community workers of different ethnic backgrounds live in the same area, often within the same buildings. As we will see, many neighborhoods of this kind emerged in Bridgeport, and in some working-class areas outside

3. On the numerous foreign-language sections of the Socialist and Communist parties, see Nathan Glazer, The Social Basis of American Communism (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1961), 42, 93; and Nick Salvatore, Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 285.

the Polish settlement in New Britain. This type of neighborhood appears to be a new development of the 1930s, and provided a favorable setting for the development of pluralistic social movements. This new type of multiethnic neighborhood encouraged the recognition, among a diverse group of wage-earners, that they shared a common position in society and had a common interest in forming alliances to express their grievances. As ethnicity is loosened, and people of different backgrounds mix in daily life, cultural barriers to class solidarity are lowered. Common class feelings develop in this setting.

The Bridgeport Example: Multiethnic Living

To fully appreciate the significance of the new neighborhood formations in Bridgeport during the 1930s, we need to look briefly at the structure of neighborhoods in the thirty years before. Worker neighborhoods in the early 20th century were characterized by ethnic segregation. For the most part the "New Immigrants" organized their own settlements along national lines as they transplanted their premigration culture to the New World. Significantly, these settlements were usually cross-class in composition. While most residents were low-income wage-earners, other salaried and self-employed business people also lived in the neighborhood and elaborated a common culture in churches, in fraternal societies, and in saloons. They also aided their

own group economic development by establishing loan agencies, to help members buy property and get through hard times; mutual-benefit societies, which paid benefits to members in case of illness or death; and grocery stores, where members often bought "on the books." As a fifty-nine year old Italian stated in 1939, "All the people then were not like now. All the Italians were like one. All the other nationalities used to stick with their own people. The Polocks and the Irish and the English, they all had their own section." (4)

Other scholars note such immigrant group development. Josef Barton describes the process whereby Rumanians, Italians, and Slovaks settled in separate ethnic communities in Cleveland. John Bodnar traces the establishment of segregated communities among Slovaks, Italians, Serbians, Croatians, Bulgarians, Hungarians, and Poles in Steelton, Pennsylvania. Similar but separate patterns of ethnic group life also characterized pre-World War One Worcester, Massachusetts. Roy Rosenzweig's study of class battles over leisure is set within a social context of ethnic "insularity and separatism." Olivier Zunz also finds that the settlement of neighborhoods in Detroit was determined primarily by ethnic identification in these years. Poles, Hungarians, and

4. "Italian Community in Bridgeport," 19, Sept. 1939, box 22, CEGS Storrs. Laura Anker Schwartz discusses residential change in Connecticut in "Immigrant Voices From Home, Work and Community: Women and Family in the Immigration Process, 1890-1938" (diss., State University of New York, Stony Brook, 1983), 363-5, 702-3.

Italians settled among themselves regardless of occupation, relying on kin and premigration networks for assistance and mutual support. (5)

The structure of these neighborhoods often changed during the second decade of the century, and these changes were accelerated after World War One. Middle-class ethnics often moved to more affluent, American areas. (6) This group included some skilled factory workers and independent tradesmen as well as low white collars and the few ethnics that became professionals. The spread of street car transportation and of a car culture generally made it convenient to live on the outskirts of the city and to continue to work and to shop downtown. Thus, in 1916 the City Planning Commission in Bridgeport recognized the use of new forms of transportation and advised that "in the new suburban areas, adequate width on the main routes should be reserved wherever additional space is likely to be needed by future growth." (7) The suburbs around Bridgeport grew in population by 36 percent between 1920 and 1930, while the population in

5. Barton, Peasants and Strangers; Bodnar, Immigration and Industrialization; Rosenzweig, 'Eight Hours for What We Will'; and Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality.

6. See, for example, John Bukowczyk, "The Transformation of Working-Class Ethnicity: Corporate Control, Americanization, and the Polish Immigrant Middle Class in Bayonne, New Jersey, 1915-1925," Labor History 25 (Winter 1984): 53-82.

7. John Nolen, Better City Planning for Bridgeport: Some Fundamental Proposals to the City Plan Commission (Bridgeport, 1916), 7.

the city itself increased by a mere 2 percent. (8) This suburban growth was a national pattern. James J. Fink, in The Automobile Age, notes that during the 1920s "suburbs grew twice as fast as the cities they encircled." (9) A Polish resident in Bridgeport recalled, "When the Polish people had some money, after all the years of work, they went to these places in the country or outside the city. Even now [in 1939], with lots of these people working in the factories, they live in the country [Stratford or Shelton] and they come to work here every day. Sometimes three or four drive from one town, and they pay just so much for all the gas." (10) This was also the case among Hungarians at the medium-sized Bryant Electric factory, where approximately 25 percent of the work force (ninety workers) lived in a nearby suburb and came to work by car. A significant number of commuters from the suburbs also worked at the Casco factory. (11)

One result of such residential dispersion was that previously cross-class communities were increasingly becoming working-class communities. While upwardly mobile ethnics moved out, others in low-paying occupations remained. Ethnic

8."The Book of Bridgeport, 1931," Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, 8.

9.James J. Fink, The Automobile Age (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 150.

10."Polish Community in Bridgeport," 21, box 25, CEGS Storrs.

11."Hungarians: General," 4, 9, Feb. 15, 1939, box 18, CEGS Storrs.

groups now became more segmented along class lines. The pattern that occurred in Bridgeport also took form in Detroit, as Zunz reports, finding by 1920 a "movement toward the blend of old ethnic groups into the new social order, but also a diversification and fragmentation of the society into a greater number of ethnically and racially isolated working-class groups." (12)

But such working-class groups still did not live among each other. Not until the 1930s did significant numbers of workers of different ethnicities move into the same low-rent neighborhoods. While some of this movement occurred during the 1920s, the Great Depression was the major catalyst for new formations. As the income of workers declined -- with shortened working hours and unemployment -- many moved in search of lower priced housing. This depressed condition led to a general shake-up: workers moved about as families sometimes doubled-up and shared living quarters; families also moved to take advantage of "bonuses" or "concessions" that some landlords offered to fill vacancies. In such cases, new tenants got their first several months rent free, so families had an incentive to constantly find new apartments after their leases ran out.

The diverse ethnic makeup of the city also was conducive to such mixing because no one group was large enough to dominate. Ironically, this diversity of groups made it harder

12. Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality, 359.

for specific ethnic communities to survive and facilitated cross-ethnic ties. Italians were the only ethnic group which made up at least 10 percent of the population in 1930.

A demographic dimension also contributed to the new multiethnic living. Many of those who settled the new multiethnic areas were young workers -- the American-born children of the "New Immigrants" -- who only recently formed families and were looking for cheap apartments. Their decision to leave the immigrant enclave in which they were raised was relatively easy to make because the second generation had already become detached from their parents' world in significant ways. (13)

The immigrant generation in Bridgeport also moved during the Depression. They, too, shifted neighborhoods in search of new housing opportunities. Others, however, stayed in their initial settlements, and were joined by those on the move, so in this way immigrant enclaves were transformed into multiethnic areas. As an Italian resident remarked, "Now it don't make any difference. The Italian people don't care where they live, just so long that they have a house to sleep." (14) This was true for other ethnic groups as well. We have the case of a French-Canadian family that moved into a Hungarian area because the rent was low. In this instance,

13. Second-generation culture and experiences are discussed more fully in chapter 3.

14. "Italian Community in Bridgeport," 42.

the head of the household was a skilled worker -- a painter.
(15)

Numerous other examples of neighborhood change can be cited. The transformation of Bridgeport's Italian East Side into a multiethnic community was described by a recent arrival to the area. Working-class Italians had remained on the block and were joined by workers of other backgrounds who settled as their neighbors. Doris Gumkowski, a twenty-four year old Polish-American, traced the beginning of this process of residential change to the 1920s.

This section formed the Italian concentration until a few years after the World War, when many of the Italians living in this area shifted to other parts of the city, buying their own homes or moving to healthier surroundings. Houses left vacant by this migration of people, who had fared better than the average run of industrial workers, were soon filled by members representing all ethnic groups. Landlords who feared loss of rentals because of this move were left with no alternative but to rent their flats to any who might be able to pay. (16)

Block surveys in this area in the late 1930s document the multiethnic makeup. On Willard St., where 108 families lived, forty-five were of Italian background, twenty-three Slovak, twenty-three black, thirteen Polish, two Jewish, and two Portuguese. The ethnic mix occurred within buildings as well. In one such four-family house two Italian, one Polish and one

15. "Spruce St. Survey," June 1939, box 27, CEGS Storrs.

16. "Polish Community in Bridgeport," 24.

Hungarian family resided. (17)

On nearby Hallett St., initially settled by Slovaks around 1900, the diversity of backgrounds is also clear. Of 119 families, forty were of Slovak origin, twenty-four Italian, twenty-one black, fifteen Polish, four Russian, four Hungarian, two Irish, and one family each of Lithuanian, English, Indian, Jewish, French, American and German background. (18) Here, too, the mix can be found within buildings. (19) Still further diversity appears when one considers the differences in background of the Italian population: ten were of Central Italian origin; ten of Southern Italian origin; and five of Sicilian back-

17. "Willard St. Survey," Dec. 1938, box 27, CEGS Storrs.

Typical of such an ethnic mix are the tenants in the following buildings:

154 Willard St.: Degruittola, Floriszanski,
Squashic 159 Willard St.: Gelormino, Iodice,
Wojtaszik
161 Willard St.: Klima, Andrejkovich, Vaz,
Giordanella, Marseglia.

(Listings are contained in the 1937 City Directory.)

18. "Hallett St. Survey," May 1939, box 18, CEGS Storrs.

19. For example,

15 Hallett St.: Bouchard, Smith, Chernak, Casco,
Galpin
42 Hallett St.: Abbott, Lapio, Lewandoski,
Gisonno, Denaro, Rebnicky
90 Hallett St.: Calogino, Pomikal, Niemczynowski,
Visciglia, Sharp
195 Hallett St.: Drapp, Rampino, Gomez, Edwards,
Mitchell, Premak

(1937 City Directory)

ground. (20)

Data for two West Side blocks also reveals a multi-ethnic makeup. On Clinton Ave., at least eight nationalities are represented in a survey of sixty families. The breakdown is: nine French-Canadian; six Rumanian; five Hungarian; three Italian; two Irish; two Lithuanian; two Albanian; one Slovak; one Scotch; and in twelve families the parents intermarried. We also find that the ethnic backgrounds of the landlords who lived on the street varied greatly, suggesting as well that a single ethnic group did not dominate the area. The landlords include a Slovak immigrant, a Hungarian immigrant, an Italian immigrant, a second-generation German-Irish, a second-generation Lithuanian, and a third-generation Scotch. (21)

The history of this block was marked by constant flux. Swedes were early settlers and by 1900 formed a majority of the residents. By 1910 a large number of immigrant Poles took up residence, and after World War One several Italian and Rumanian families moved in. However, the largest group in the 1930s, the French-Canadians, were the most recent arrivals: they began settlement on Clinton Ave. at the beginning of the decade. The new composition of this block is indicated by data on the length of residence. In 1939, a majority of the

20."Hallett St. Survey."

21."Clinton Ave. Survey: First Block," 3-5, 8-11, box 27, CEGS Storrs.

residents -- thirty-seven of the families -- moved in sometime after 1933. Only four families lived on the street for at least fifteen years. The other families included nine who moved in between 1927 and 1930 and six families who moved there between 1931 and 1933. (22)

A diverse working class also lived on Spruce St. However, in this case Hungarians, who had dominated the block before the 1930s, continued their dominance to a lesser extent. In 1939, approximately 54 percent of ninety-seven families were Hungarian. (The remaining population included French-Canadian, Irish, Swedish, American, Polish, and Slovak residents.) (23) And many of the institutions of the ethnic enclave still existed. A Hungarian section of the International Workers Order, a communist fraternal society, was housed at 280 Spruce St. Two Hungarian religious organizations were located nearby: the Ladislaus Hungarian and Greek Catholic Society (at 325 Spruce) and St. Stephan's Hungarian Roman Catholic Church (at 340 Spruce).

A Hungarian resident described the changes.

At one time this was an all-Hungarian neighborhood. You could not find any other nationality in the West End, and Hungarians kept close together. But now things are changing. There are many different nationalities in this neighborhood. My neighbor upstairs is Polish, the lady next door is Slavish.

22.Ibid. Data is for 56 of the 60 families.

23."Spruce St. Survey."

The Italian [neighbors] are very kind. (24)

What were the class ramifications of such mingling? Instead of insularity and separatism, the working class had new opportunities to form multiethnic alliances. Low-income wage-earners on these blocks could readily recognize that they shared a common economic position in society and had a common interest in organizing to improve their lives. Doris Gumkowski, for example, noticed the

closer interrelationship of the various national groups, which only recently have begun to merge into some sort of unity; if not culturally, at least they are unified in an economic sense. Poor Italians, poor Russians and Slovaks as well as indigent Poles live under one roof in these tenement houses. Whatever the cultural differences might be, at least there is the realization that they are all low-wage earners. (25)

The appearance of such a neighborhood class ethos during the 1930s contrasts sharply with earlier cultural barriers to a multiethnic awareness. Before World War One, segregated neighborhoods helped fragment the working class. Immigrant workers were sometimes suspicious of the motives of workers of other ethnic groups within trade unions, for example, especially when union organizers and leaders were a different ethnic background. An example of Irish and Slovak tensions

24. "Miss A. Interview," 9, box 21, CEGS Storrs. We can also point to multiethnic living on Dover St., where Slovak, Irish, Italian and Armenian families resided. Most of the employed residents worked at the General Electric factory. "Survey of Remington City," 8, box 27, CEGS Storrs.

25. "Polish Community in Bridgeport," 24.

illustrates the dynamic. When newly settled Slovaks tried to move into the East Side, they met resistance from the Irish living there. Some Slovaks moved in anyway, though not on the same blocks as the Irish, and several street fights reportedly broke out. "There was hardly a time when the immigrants could venture out at night without being attacked by gangs of Irish," the Writers' Project reported of this earlier period. "Even to get a pail of beer at the corner saloon [was dangerous] unless five or more Slovaks armed with clubs would protect the beer carrier." (26)

Such turf battles were common. Younger members of the ethnic enclave may not have owned homes, but they believed they collectively "owned" the streets in their neighborhood. Even when clashes did not occur, ethnic groups often were fearful of straying into unfamiliar areas. (27) We should consider how perceptions of interethnic hostility shape the willingness of workers to form economic or political alliances. Such negative sentiments adversely affect the organization of multiethnic trade unions. Apparently, "Many of the Slovaks looked upon the union organizers as suspicious people who might at any time report the activities of Slovak workers to the management. The Slovaks did not trust these organizers, most of whom were Irish. They felt this was a

26. "Hallett St. Survey," 3.

27. David Nasaw, Children of the City: At Work and At Play (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor Press, 1985), 30-34.

trap set by the Irish so they would be discharged from their jobs." (28)

This account should not be accepted fully at face value: under certain conditions Slovak workers, like immigrants of other nationalities, did join unions that were led by leaders of different ethnic origins. However, the broader meaning of this account is that the potential for lasting class bonds to develop across ethnic groups is extremely difficult as a result of the structure of the immigrant neighborhood.

We have established that the residents of the new multiethnic areas lived in close proximity of each other during the 1930s, usually sharing the same buildings. But did they interact within these buildings and on these blocks? What were ethnic group relations? First, one can note that these individuals did not necessarily have to interact to see that they shared similar life experiences. Observing the difficulties others face can help place one's own burdens in a larger perspective. We do have evidence that ethnic group relations were marked by tolerance and respect, but not by significant sociability. The sense of respectful difference is evident in the comment of the Hungarian resident who noted that "the Italian neighbors are very kind." This type of statement suggests that ethnic differences did not disappear; residents were conscious of the different cultural practices and beliefs of others. There was not an uniform or universal

28."Hallett St. Survey," 9-10.

group culture. It is significant that this individual had the opportunity to live next to Italian neighbors and see they were "kind." A new sense of multiethnic trust was forged. The description of neighborly feelings on Clinton Ave. reinforces the point. "The residents at the lower end of the street near Railroad Ave. all spoke of the street as 'a nice, friendly street,'" the Writers' Project reported. "Although most of the women said they had little time for visiting among their neighbors, they spoke of the friendly relations existing between all the families." (29)

The various groups also cooperated to organize common social institutions. One such multiethnic social club on Spruce St. was the Bridgeport Cadets, a male social club which housed pool and card tables and a gymnasium. The members were "chiefly Hungarians but there are also included Swedes, Slovaks, Poles and Jews of all groups." (30)

Residential Mobility and Class Feelings

At this point it is instructive to consider whether the residents of these new neighborhoods stayed there long enough to form alliances. The relationship between class awareness and geographical mobility is a much discussed topic in recent social history. Stephan Thernstrom's studies of mobility have

29. "Clinton Ave. Survey," 23, box 130, CEGS Hartford.

30. "Spruce St. Survey: Interview No. 25," April 21, 1939, box 27, CEGS Storrs.

been instrumental in framing the terms of the debate. He writes, "An adequate model of the conditions which promote working-class solidarity must presume not only relative permanence of membership in the class -- that is low levels of upward occupational mobility -- but also some continuity of class membership in one setting, so that workers come to know one another and to develop bonds of solidarity and common opposition to the class above them." (31)

Thernstrom, as well most subsequent writers on geographical mobility, measure "continuity of class membership in one setting" by focusing on movement in and out of a particular city, usually over a ten-year period. The common choice to use a decade as the time of study is convenient because such investigations normally draw upon federal census material to track residential persistence. The cumulative effort of these studies allegedly point to an "American Pattern" of decade persistence rates ranging from 40 to 60 percent throughout most of the 19th and 20th centuries. The data for the 1930s is not exceptional. Persistence in Boston was 59 percent; in Norristown, Pennsylvania, approximately fifty percent. (32)

31. Stephan Thernstrom, "Socialism and Social Mobility," in John H. M. Laslett and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., Failure of a Dream? Essays in the History of American Socialism (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor Books, 1974), 513.

32. Stephan Thernstrom, The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970 (Cambridge:

This high level of geographical mobility is generally believed to have inhibited the development of local class loyalties. As Thernstrom notes, "More or less continuously lower-class areas can be identified, but the same individuals do not live in them very long...There is a prima facie case for the view that the remarkable volatility of the American working class, past and present, has been an important influence retarding the development and expression of distinct class loyalties." (33)

How does this conclusion apply to the Bridgeport situation? I already suggested the emergence of class feelings on the new multiethnic blocks. We also know that Bridgeport politics were dominated by working-class Socialists for most of the 1930s. We should consider two sets of questions in evaluating the relationship between class awareness and residential movement that most mobility studies do not address. First, how long does it take for residents to elaborate class bonds? Does it take as long as a decade, as most mobility studies assume? Why not a shorter period, such as four or six years? In fact, there is very little discussion in the mobility literature justifying why a ten

Harvard University Press, 1973), 221-225. An exception is Indianapolis, between 1870-1900, according to Robert G. Barrows, "Hurrin' Hoosiers and the American 'Pattern'," Social Science History 5 (Spring 1981): 197-221. See also my discussion of high persistence rates in New Britain later in this chapter.

33. Thernstrom, "Socialism and Social Mobility," 517.

year period is desirable for study. When we consider the 1930s, it is well to remember that working-class friendships and communication to a great extent remained locally based. For one thing, many low-income residents did not own telephones. Radio ownership, too, was irregular before mid-decade. It was the telephone and the radio that helped open the ordinary household to events beyond its normal existence. Car ownership also was uneven for this low-wage segment of the population, so much of one's non-work life was spent in the neighborhood. In this context, several years of continuous residence is probably sufficient to establish roots and friendships in the community.

Second, is it sufficient to measure "continuity of class membership in one setting" by looking only at movement in and out of a city as a whole? How long does it take class bonds to develop if residents persist at the same address? Statistics on high rates of transience do not necessarily reflect the disruption of local life, especially if we can demonstrate that residents persisted at the same address (or in same locally defined community) for several years. A working-class community can withstand a large degree of residential change if a core group stays and serves as the roots upon which others build. (34) And change is not

34. Zunz recently has made this point. "How, then, to reconcile a vision of stable ethnic neighborhoods of homeowners," he writes, "with the image of the poor as always on the move, only temporarily clustering around places of work?" One way is to view mobility and fixity as

necessarily disruptive if we consider, for example, that movement off a residential block is usually an uneven and gradual process. Some residents remain within particular buildings longer than others, helping to sustain local ties. Rarely do the residents of a three or four family house all move out at the same time. Nor does half a block change all at once or persist at even rates.

When we study the working-class community in Bridgeport, it is possible that persistence rates were unusually high, and Bridgeport falls outside the mobility associated with the American Pattern. This might explain the class feelings and popular support for the local Socialist party without engaging the issue of geographical mobility. This does not appear to be the case. I have conducted seven block surveys in Bridgeport. I look at persistence from an address (not city-wide) perspective. These blocks, drawn from three neighborhoods, are among the poorer areas of working-class settlement. (35) The data suggest that geographical mobility

"functionally complementary when a core of settled people maintains a community which serves many transients." Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality, 179-180.

35. Few workers in these areas owned their own homes. Homeownership rates for all the residents on these blocks was a mere 12 percent in 1937. (See appendix A.) This rate is on the lower range of levels of working-class homeownership during the 1930s, according to other studies of ethnic workers. Consider that more than 30 percent of Slovaks, Poles, and Croatians owned their homes in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and between 25 and 50 percent of Poles and Italians were homeowners in Pittsburgh. Ewa Morawska, For Bread and Butter: The Life Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge

was frequent. Over the nine-year period, 1930 to 1939, persistence at the same address was a combined 27 percent. There was some variation among the individual blocks -- but all fell within a 21 to 43 percent range. (See appendix B.) It is not surprising that the overall figure is significantly lower than Thernstrom's 40 to 60 percent city mobility measure. Persistence at the same address is a different measurement.

However, we should also note that persistence rates were considerably higher over shorter periods. For example, 49 percent of the residents remained at the same address during the six years 1933 to 1939. (See appendix C). While this still constitutes considerable movement, it does not necessarily indicate that residents remained rootless, unable to forge common bonds. In fact, it is worth considering if just the opposite was possible; whether a 49 percent persistence rate at the same address demonstrates that a large core group stayed in place over these years and was able to cultivate a stable working-class community. Of course, there is no way to prove that a specific persistence level is a

University Press, 1985), 401; and John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael Weber, Lives of their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh 1900-1960 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 255, 260. Moreover, information on one block surveyed in Bridgeport shows that few residents were employed at skilled trades or jobs that can be considered part of the upper strata of the working-class. On Clinton Ave., for example, the majority of the residents were unskilled workers, although among the men this included some skilled workers who had lost their jobs and were working as laborers. "Clinton Ave. Survey."

prerequisite for the possibility of working-class solidarity in the community, but there is ample reason to question if the decade measurement, as opposed to four or six years in the same neighborhood, provides a meaningful approach to understand the construction of working-class loyalties and solidarities during the 1930s.

The Color Line

Class feelings on these multiethnic blocks did not cross the Color Line. Blacks resided on several of these blocks, but their presence was not welcome. Most lived by themselves as a group. Race often has cut through the solidarity of the working-class. This has had an institutional basis: the early AFL unions, for example, often explicitly excluded blacks. (36) And white workers sometimes built a class consensus about their lives based on anti-black feelings.

White racial attitudes among the residents on Hallett St. reveal the ways that racism divided the working-class. Several workers blamed blacks for their hard times. There was little hesitancy to report these feelings to the Writers' Project, which also suggest how open and acceptable were racist sentiments. These attitudes persisted despite the rise of the CIO, which embraced the black worker's cause, and the existence of a Socialist city government in Bridgeport with

36. William H. Harris, The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 29-50.

its inclusive rhetoric of the "working people."

Blacks first moved to Hallett St. during the early depression. The decline of ethnic enclaves, and the opening of apartments to a multiethnic population, drew blacks to the area in search of cheap living spaces. They also moved because the nearby Stanley Works factory started to hire more blacks. White landlords rented them the most run-down apartments because most working-class whites would not occupy them. (37)

White and black adults kept to themselves, although their children sometimes played together. This mixing upset white parents. "The children at the lower end of the block, both colored and white are often seen playing together," one account noted. "Slovaks and Italians alike frown on this and continually warn the children to find other playmates." (38)

A Slovak woman described the tension:

I always tell my children not play with the nigger-people's children, but they always play with them just the same. I tell them that the nigger children are dirty and that they will get sick if they play. I tell them they could find some other friends that are Slovaks just the same. This place now is all spoiled, and all the people live like pigs because the niggers they come and live here with the decent white people and they want to raise up their children with our children. If we had some place for the children to play here I'm sure that the white children they would not play with the nigger children...All people are alike -- that's what God says -- but just the same its no good to make our children play with the nigger children, because they

37."Hallett St. Survey," 28-32.

38.Ibid., 28.

are too dirty. (39)

The "dirty" stereotype was one of many that white residents used to describe blacks. It is interesting in this context because cleanliness often constituted a criterion that Americans, since the 1830s, invoked to criticize white immigrants. Personal standards of cleanliness were considered crucial for acceptance into the middle and upper class. (40) In this case, Italians and Slovaks in Bridgeport turned the tables. They criticized blacks as a way to elevate their own working-class status and deflect American judgments about themselves.

Another common stereotype involved the destructive "wild parties" that blacks allegedly held. A white resident said:

I'd rather have my house empty than to have any niggers in it. Once they get in a flat you start seeing all kinds of insects and bugs. They wreck the walls and everything else in the house and if you give them half a chance they rip the house apart with their wild parties. Well, it is a good thing that I don't live right next to them. (41)

This stereotype had political implications since some whites believed that blacks were able "to party" because they did

39. Ibid.

40. See, for example, Charles E. Rosenberg, The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 62-63, 137-142; and Richard Bushman and Claudia L. Bushman, "The Early History of Cleanliness in America," The Journal of American History 74 (March 1988): 1228-1232.

41. "Hallett St. Survey," 30-31.

not have to work, supported as they were by government welfare. One resident even claimed that blacks were better off than white workers because,

the nigger people can stay up to 3 o'clock in the morning playing and dancing and they don't have to worry about going to work -- so they must have money. We poor people can't even have a good time one time a week...The nigger people have a holiday every day in the week. (42)

Interviews such as these reveal the extent of tension over race within the New Deal coalition. As the Writers' Project pointed out, "The Slovak people as much as the people from other ethnic groups on this block, feel that the negro people are treated better, and given more relief by the city welfare, than any other group of people. They say that the negroes are given better dietaries and more milk and that ...the negroes don't have to go through as much 'red tape' as do white people." (43) It did not matter that the black population in Bridgeport was small, approximately 2.3 percent in 1930. (44) An angry white reaction to a black presence had formed, defining a boundary of working-class consciousness.

42.Ibid., 32.

43.Ibid., 31-32.

44.The black population in most northern cities was a small percentage of city populations in 1930, ranging from 2.6 percent to 4.7 percent in Chicago, New York, and Boston. Only Philadelphia, among leading eastern or midwestern cities, had a significantly higher proportion of blacks, at 11 percent.

Ethnic Institutions

What happened to immigrant institutions in these multiethnic neighborhoods? Did they disappear or how were they altered as ethnic enclaves were transformed? In turning to such questions, it is well to remember that portions of the enclave persisted on these blocks. And residents of a particular ethnic group usually had neighbors of the same group on surrounding blocks who helped maintain local religious institutions, benefit societies, and social clubs. Immigrant institutional life was on the decline, but still persisted in important ways.

The Hungarian community offers a good case study. The Bridgeport settlement was among the largest in an American city. (45) By the 1930s many of the group's institutions still survived, but with dispersion there were fewer residents in the neighborhood to maintain a vital social life. In addition, second-generation Hungarians who remained in the neighborhood often were indifferent toward ethnic institutional life. The aging of the foreign-born also contributed to the decline.

The aging of the immigrant generation is reflected in a number of events in the early thirties. In 1931 more than

45. In 1930, the Bridgeport Hungarian settlement was the sixth largest in the nation, following Hungarian settlements in New York, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia. The area around Spruce St. was the heart of the community. Leslie Konnyu, Hungarians in the U.S.A: An Immigration Study (St. Louis: The American Hungarian Review, 1967), 55.

200 Hungarian representatives from New England, New Jersey and New York met at the local Rakoczi Hall to organize an Eastern Hungarian Immigrant Association for those residing in the United States for at least twenty-five years. In 1933, 500 local Hungarians attended a celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Ladies Aid Society of the State Hungarian reformed church, also held at Rakoczi Hall. In 1936, old-timers established a Hungary Club to stimulate interest in Hungarian culture and to help provide better contact between Hungarian groups and other ethnic groups in the area. (46)

Signs of decline in the community's institutional life include a reduction in the publishing schedule of the local foreign-language newspaper. The Bridgeport Hungarian was published weekly until 1930, when the editors decided the community could support only a bimonthly appearance.

However, a portrait of the decline of the Hungarian community should not be overdrawn. Other social institutions and ethnic practices persisted. An example is the Hungarian Rakoczi Aid Association, which included about 2,500 members from the Bridgeport area in 1937. That this membership remained as high as it did is significant because the social programs initiated by the New Deal might have undermined ethnic benefit societies. Clearly this was not the case.

46. The Bridgeport Post, May 16, 1931; May 8, 1933; July 17, 1934; Oct. 14, 1934; Jan. 16, 1936. See also Hillel Bardin et. al, The Hungarians in Bridgeport: A Social Survey (Department of Sociology, University of Bridgeport, 1959).

There continued to be a pressing working-class need for such societies, despite the New Deal, because many of the older members could not depend on receiving benefits from the new social programs, and often these benefits were relatively meager. The Social Security Act covered only naturalized citizens, which excluded many of the older members of the community. Workers who were discharged from factory jobs when they reached their forties also did not qualify for old-age pensions. Other New Deal programs had a marginal impact. For example, unemployment compensation applied only to those who were already regularly employed. Many were left out of the new safety net. The importance of the Rakoczi Aid Association was clear on the occasion of its 50th anniversary in 1938. A state insurance representative commented, "It is no mean accomplishment for a fraternal benefit society to complete fifty years of continuous existence, and at the end of that time to have more members, more insurance in force, more assets and to be in sounder financial condition than at any previous time in its history." (47)

Sustaining the Association during the worst years of the depression was not an easy task, and had required accommodations. Although some members were unable to pay their dues, they were still allowed to remain in good standing, with regular benefits for two to four years, if they

47. Rakoczi Aid Association Golden Jubilee Book (Bridgeport, 1938), 12; The Bridgeport Post, Jan. 24, 1937.

promised to repay their outstanding sums in the future. There was considerable interest among older individuals in the Association, in part because those in their "graying" years (in this case anyone reaching seventy) were eligible for a yearly award of \$100., for a maximum of five years. Young parents, too, had an interest in joining the Association, because they were entitled to such benefits as a juvenile death award of \$400. But the interest of the second generation was minimal, and this concerned immigrant leaders in Bridgeport, and in other Hungarian communities in the United States. Laszlo Lakatos, who edited the Golden Jubilee Book for the group's anniversary, pointed to the problem of retaining the loyalties of the youth, a much discussed issue in contemporary Hungarian-American newspapers and organizations. Lakatos wrote:

We, the members of this big society, love and respect the name and memory of our great hero Rakoczi. We ask the reader to join us in his fight. We ask the reader, especially in the second generation, to read His life, to know more of His life, and we ask them to join our organization that we may be more and more who fight His noble fight for freedom, for liberty, and for the daily piece of bread. (48)

48. The 1930s witnessed the emergence of bilingual Hungarian publications (such as the Bridgeport Golden Jubilee Book) and English-language Hungarian publications, such as the Young Magyar American, which was published in Cleveland. A 1941 study of Hungarian marriage patterns found that 66 percent of second-generation Hungarian brides married grooms of similar background. Golden Jubilee Book, 77, 57-58; Steven Bela Vardy, The Hungarian-Americans (Boston: Twayne, 1985), 103-108; Emil Lengyel, Americans from Hungary (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1948), 227.

When we examine the local medical services that many Bridgeport Hungarians used, we also see signs of both persistence and change. By the late 1930s, Hungarians still were able to visit their own ethnic physicians, as only one Hungarian doctor (of six in Bridgeport) disassociated himself from the ethnic group in order to reach a more upscale clientele. The other physicians kept their practices close to the old enclave (even though the doctors lived in more wealthy areas). The outstanding example is M. J. Greenstein, who maintained an office since 1912 on Bostwick Ave. and served as medical examiner for five Hungarian organizations.

(49) Moreover, the fact that Greenstein -- and two of the other physicians -- were Hungarian Jews, but serviced a predominantly Catholic population, also suggests a minimum degree of religious tension within the ethnic group. (Greenstein told the Writers' Project that he did not observe anti-semitism among the Hungarians.) However, by the late 1930s most of the Hungarian physicians did not treat Hungarians exclusively, instead catering to local residents of many backgrounds. As the enclave was transformed, so was the social basis of their clientele. The ethnic doctor now worked in a multiethnic context. (50)

49. These organizations were the Hungarian Branch, International Workers Order; St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Society; the Hungarian Reformed Church; the Verhovay Society; and the Rakoczi Aid Association. "Hungarians: General," 11-13.

50. Ibid.

The New Britain Example: A Polish Enclave

New Britain's neighborhoods developed differently. To a greater extent than in Bridgeport, prewar ethnic patterns of separatism persisted during the interwar years. The most important factor that explains this difference is the city's smaller total population and the dominance of one ethnic group -- Poles. A cross-class community characterized the Polish settlement. At the same time, however, we also find that multiethnic worker neighborhoods took form in other parts of the city. Both types of ethnic neighborhoods existed in the Hardware city.

Scholars note the relatively strong kinship and communal ties that Polish immigrants developed in America. Few "New Immigrant" groups surpassed them in their devotion to the family and to the local community, much of which drew its inspiration from a fervent faith in Roman Catholicism. Their enclaves often persisted into the 1930s, and continued to include the second generation in the community. One reason for this persistence is that Polish ethnicity was strengthened after World War One, with the creation of an independent Poland. Joseph Wytrwal notes that the "swelling consciousness of Polish nationality served to strengthen all the Polish cultural institutions." (51) John Bukowczyk, in the most

51. Joseph A. Wytrwal, Poles in American History and Tradition (Detroit: Endurance Press, 1969), 353.

recent survey of the Polish experience in America, finds that during the 1920s "Polish parishes had multiplied and Polish neighborhoods had become more heavily 'Polish.'" (52) The depression decade also functioned to preserve, and often embellish, ethnic ties under the strain of the economic crisis. Poles often relied on their ethnic peers for support, buttressing family and community bonds. So did other ethnic groups, but Poles often had a stronger base to draw upon because of their cohesiveness in the previous period. In this case, the few opportunities for occupational advancement during the 1930s also kept many of the younger generation within the enclave because they did not have any other place to go. (53)

While in Bridgeport the depression served as a catalyst for ethnic groups to form multiethnic neighborhoods, in New Britain the numerical dominance of the Poles in the ethnic population, and the especially elaborate social life that accompanied this dominance, helped keep the ethnic group together. The unusually high degree of residential persistence in the city (an issue we will return to later) also contributed to the stability of the enclave. This closely-knit Polish settlement was known locally as a "little Poland" or a "second Polonia," and the Writers' Project

52. John J. Bukowczyk, And My Children Did Not Know Me: A History of the Polish-Americans (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 65-66.

53. Ibid., 76-77.

singled it out in the late 1930s as the leading example of a flourishing ethnic enclave statewide. "In this Polonia," Project director Samuel Koenig remarked, "group life in its manifold phases is still distinctively Polish." He added, "The impression one gains is definitely that of being in the midst of a foreign community." (54) The enclave setting is reflected in the quality of the foreign language newspaper published there. Koenig noted that of the twenty-five ethnic newspapers in existence in Connecticut, "In scope and appeal, the Polish paper published in New Britain undoubtedly surpasses all other foreign-group publications in the state. Its circulation is nationwide, and its claim of being 'the most influential Polish weekly in America' may be justified." (55)

The first Polish immigrants arrived in the city in the 1890s. The development of the community included the establishment of a church (1896), a parish school (1904), a newspaper (1907), and a cemetery (1912). In the early years the Polish settlers "wished to be among their own kind, speak their own language, be close to factory and church and generally, to occupy a place wherein they would feel at home and not as strangers." (56) That description was offered by

54. Samuel Koenig, Immigrant Settlements in Connecticut (Hartford: Connecticut State Department of Education, 1938), 3.

55. Ibid., 56.

56. "Growth of Poles to Present," 2, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

a local Project reporter, after interviewing many of the residents. It is also the interpretation that revisionist scholarship has advanced: immigrants were not radically "uprooted," but were able to "transplant" significant elements of their premigration culture and build stable communities in urban America. (57) The early unity among the Poles also was rooted in their old world ties because by 1910 approximately 60 percent of the settlers came from Russian-dominated Poland; migrants from German and Austrian regions were a minority. As a result, there was a relatively low level of diversity among Poles in New Britain. (58)

The Fifth Ward was the center of the community. By 1920, 65 percent of Poles lived in the Fifth Ward, and an additional 22 percent resided in the adjacent Sixth Ward. As the community expanded during the interwar years, the population in the Fifth Ward swelled: by 1940 the number of residents

57. Contrast Oscar Handlin's The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951) to John Bodnar's The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). The uprooted or "social disorganization" model was advanced early on by Thomas and Florian Znaniecki in The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, which had a impact on both sociological studies and American immigration studies. On such sociological studies, see Ronald L. Howard, A Social History of American Family Sociology, 1865-1940 (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 39-94. The transplanted model is advanced by such scholars as Herbert Gutman, Daniel Walkowitz, Josef Barton, Judith Smith, Tamara Hareven, Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, and Caroline Golab.

58. Daniel S. Buczek, Immigrant Pastor: The Life of the Right Reverend Monsignor Lucyan Bojnowski of New Britain, Connecticut (Waterbury, Ct.: Heminway Corp., 1974), 146.

there more than doubled the number in any other ward. Polish concentration is also evident in statistics on homeownership. One of the social meanings of homeownership, afterall, is that it encourages residential stability. In 1938, an estimated 513 Polish families owned their homes in the Fifth Ward, and an additional 131 Polish families owned their homes in the Sixth Ward. This group comprised the vast majority of all Polish homeowners (643 of 765, or 84 percent), according to a survey of the City Directory. Accordingly, a Writers' Project report on Poles was titled, "Description and History of a Concentrated Polish Section." (59)

Interviews with Poles conducted in 1938 and 1939 testify to this ethnic concentration. Invariably one finds some other immigrants living in the Polish settlement, but these other groups had a low profile and the level of interaction between different groups was low. Polish culture dominated the life of the community. As a thirty year old Polish-American explained,

I was born in New Britain, as a matter of fact right in the fifth ward. Once, only, has the family moved out of that ward, moving back to it eventually, where we are residing to this day. We live only a stone's throw from the two Polish churches. Our neighbors are almost entirely Polish, except for an American or Italian family strewn here or there, almost unnoticeably.

Hence, we are surrounded by 'Polish life.' Every day the neighbors address each other in Polish,

59. "Economic Life of Poles in New Britain: Description and History of a Concentrated Polish Section," 2, 14, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

gossip in Polish, buy from Polish peddlers, go to Polish churches, and do everything which would give you the impression that you are anywhere but in an American city. (60)

Another second-generation Pole told of a feeling of ethnic exclusiveness. This view is all the more significant because he had attended public high school, graduating around 1930.

I was born in New Britain, and since I was old enough to remember, I have lived in the same section of the city all my life...Since I lived in a Polish community for so long, most of the kids before and after I went to school were Polish. With them I played. Now and then there chanced to be a sprinkling of a lone Italian kid, an Irish one, but with these I didn't have too much to do. (61)

The perception of ethnic persistence was even stronger among the immigrant generation. They easily ignored any foreigners among them. A fifty year old Polish woman, who lived in the Fifth Ward for most of her life, remarked,

I have no American friends whatsoever. Only Polish. I never come in contact with Americans either. My whole life seems to take place in the Polish community here. There are Armenian and French neighbors, but all I say is 'hello' to them, or often mention something about the weather. (62)

60. Samuel Koenig and David Rodnick, Ethnic Factors in Connecticut Life: A Survey of Social, Economic and Cultural Characteristics of the Connecticut Population (unpublished manuscript, 1940, CEGS Hartford), Chapter 9, p. 35.

61. "Second Generation Interview," Oct. 26, 1939, box 129, CEGS Hartford. He also lived in the Fifth Ward.

62. "First Generation Pole Interview," Jan. 12, 1940, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

Most of her needs were taken care of in an enclosed ethnic world. She worshipped at the nearby Polish Sacred Heart parish and regularly read Polish newspapers and books. "My boys bring Polish books from the library whenever I want." She did not need to know much English to get along. "I have tried to acquire a small knowledge of English, though not on any serious attempt," she said. "Once in a while I acquired a word from my children, what this meant or that, or how do you call this type of food or that." Her ethnicity blocked any desire to reach beyond her group.

To me, nationality seems to be a sort of dividing line between peoples. I know I am faithful to the Poles, and realize that I am, I often look askance at another nationality. This, I suppose is only on the surface, for when something of a serious nature happens, like a war, I am sorry for them. (63)

The dominance of Poles in the Fifth Ward was reflected on by an outsider. A second-generation Lithuanian male, who had grown up there and faced some tensions, recalled intergroup relations during the 1920s:

My playmates before and for quite a long while after I went to school were Polish. There were some Irish in this neighborhood, but they played with themselves most of the time. We used to fight with them for calling us names like 'Hunkies' and 'Polocks.' I didn't get along very well with the Polish children either, because they were always adopting a superior attitude toward me, saying that I was a half-breed and in a lower class than they were. I remember that after a rain storm we used to build dams in the gutters, and they always broke mine and chased me away from theirs. If I sailed a stick of wood down the gutter, they always picked it

63.Ibid.

up and threw it away. I hated them, and hated the Irish kids worse and used to join the Polish kids in fighting them. (64)

The sense of ethnic persistence leading to ethnic tensions is clear enough. It also is noteworthy that ethnic tensions appear to reflect hierarchical and status distinctions. While the Lithuanian and Polish children were sometimes at odds, they still were able to join forces to fight the Irish.

Polish persistence is reflected in the flourishing of numerous ethnic institutions. Approximately seventy were functioning in the late 1930s, and as the Writers' Project noted, "More than any other nationality in the city of New Britain, the Poles have the largest assortment of clubs, societies, and organizations...these various organizations form a generous part of the weekend activity among the Poles."

(65) At the Holy Cross Parish, despite the presence of second-generation clergy and worshippers, the church continued to use the Polish language in sermons, devotions, and weekly announcements. The first mass in English was not performed until September 1942. (66) This point is significant because the sermon is probably the most important index of language

64. David Rodnick, "Group Frustration in Connecticut," American Journal of Sociology 47 (Sept. 1941): 163.

65. "Poles of New Britain: Polish Club Activities," 13, box 128, CEGS Hartford; "Growth of Poles to Present," 1.

66. Stanislaus A. Blejwas, "A Polish Community in Transition: The Origins and Evolution of the Holy Cross Parish, New Britain, Connecticut," Polish American Studies 35 (Spring-Autumn 1978): 29-31.

maintenance, sensitive to the preferences and needs of the congregation. (67) The Polish language also was used in a variety of other contexts. Perhaps the most telling is its usage by the Pulaski Democratic Club, an organization which served as a base for Polish participation in American politics. The Club conducted all their meetings in Polish throughout the decade, and their minutes were kept in Polish. This paradox is particularly significant because of the success of the Club: by 1929, Poles dominated Fifth Ward politics, electing their own candidates to citywide office, and many elected officials were affiliated with the Club. During the 1930s the Club expanded, and was important in registering new voters and teaching the values of the American political system to the immigrant and American-born generations -- all in Polish! (68)

The Polish language also was used by the Polish Literary Guild in its meetings. The Guild, established in 1923, served as a citywide structure to unite the various Polish organizations and to function as a common clearing house for their concerns. Fifteen Polish organizations were Guild

67. Joshua Fishman et. al, Language Loyalty in the United States (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1966), 133.

68. Jonathan Shea and Christine Stoj, "The Pulaski Democratic Club of New Britain, Connecticut," in Stanislaus A. Blejwas and Mieczyslaw B. Biskupski, eds., Pastor of the Poles: Polish American Essays Presented To Right Reverend Monsignor John P. Wodarski (New Britain: Polish Studies Program Monographs, Central Connecticut State College, 1982), 137-151.

members during the late 1930s, including such diverse groups as the Polish-American Businessmen's Association and a chapter of the Polish National Alliance. (69) Indeed, it appears that only a single Polish organization -- the second-generation Republican Oaks Club -- regularly used English. (70)

However, persistence did not preclude tension or division within the community. The Writers' Project referred to the Polish settlement as the "Triangle Colony" to suggest three institutional centers: the Polish Falcons, the Holy Cross church and the Sacred Heart church. The Falcons were a fraternal and physical culture organization, which attracted many of the younger generation for sports classes. Holy Cross and Sacred Heart were competing Catholic churches. The split in the religious life of the community occurred during the late 1920s when younger parishioners from Sacred Heart, who were alienated by the priest's autocratic control, left the parish to found Holy Cross.

But the "triangle" conception is insufficient for several reasons. It does not adequately describe the level of intergenerational conflict within the Polish settlement. This conflict could take institutional forms, as in competing religious institutions, or in the rise of the new industrial unions, which were often led by the second generation. Such

69. "Polish Literary Guild of New Britain," 1-2, May 10, 1939, box 130, CEGS Hartford.

70. "Oaks Club of New Britain," 1-5, Aug. 22, 1939, box 130, CEGS Hartford.

institutions could serve as centers of power for younger workers to challenge the control of their elders. But intergenerational conflict had its origin in the home, in splits between parents and children about the values they embraced and the ways they constructed their lives.

Class differences within Polonia were also a source of tension. On one side stood an immigrant middle-class, consisting of professionals, a small propertied elite, and some skilled tradesmen. This social class grew after World War One, and was partly remade by second-generation businessmen and professionals that came into their own during the middle 1930s. The middle class often saw themselves as an elite in the community and typically embraced the goals of American reformers to remake Polish culture along more acceptable American lines. Bukowczyk writes, "To defend themselves against charges of disloyalty and foreignism, middle-class Polish leaders embraced Americanism, founded civic and political clubs, and plunged into naturalization work." The immigrant elite profited from this type of leadership. It provided them a "new avenue of career mobility via government service and American party politics." They gained the most from Polish integration into mainstream American life. (71)

On the other side stood the large industrial proletariat. Their lives were difficult even in the best of economic

71. Bukowczyk, And My Children Did Not Know Me, 71.

circumstances; during the depression, they struggled to survive. For them, the new CIO was perhaps the most important institution in their lives. About 1,500 Polish workers became CIO members -- about 40 percent of the Polish factory workforce -- and the new unions in this early period were much more than simply "economic" organizations. They sponsored social activities, became involved in politics, and offered an intensity of purpose and enthusiasm that rivaled any organization in the city. In some ways the CIO also widened the distance between different Polish groups. The Rev. Lucyan Bojnowski at Sacred Heart, for example, was hostile toward the new unions, associating them with communist influences, and frequently spoke out against them. The Polish middle class, which usually associated with the Republican party, also had little sympathy with the goals of trade unions or the New Deal. Nor did the new unions receive significant tactical support from Polish fraternal organizations. Some organizations were sympathetic to their cause, such as the Polish Political Club No. I. None were integral to the CIO's early mobilization or survival. My survey of the leaders of many of these organizations does not find any who were leaders or activists in the industrial unions. Many CIO members were members of fraternal organizations, and certainly to some extent drew upon a legacy of communal ethnic values in forming the CIO, but the unions and the fraternal organizations did not formally work together. They occupied separate social

spaces and sometimes even were in competition as service organizations within the same community.

We are compelled to return again to the problem of geographical mobility. Since Polish ethnicity and social institutions persisted, what were the patterns of mobility? In fact, unusually high persistence rates were reported for New Britain, according to a mid-decade study of more than 13,000 families. The study concluded that "New Britain is constituted largely of families which have resided there for relatively long periods." (72) More than half (52 percent) of the families lived continuously in the city for at least 16 years. More than a quarter (26 percent) resided for at least 26 years. The vast majority -- about 70 percent -- were in residence for at least a decade. This 70 percent rate is far above the 40 to 60 percent mobility range associated with Thernstrom's "American Pattern." Significantly, by contrast, only about 13 percent of residents (as of Dec. 1934) moved to the city within the previous five years, i.e., after the Great Depression. It was during these years -- the worst of the depression -- that many people were particularly mobile. (73)

72.Report of City Social Survey -- New Britain, Conn. (Hartford: U.S. Emergency Relief Administration, 1935), 7.

73.Ibid., Table 7. Ronald Edsforth notes that population turnover in Flint reached about 34 percent between 1930 and 1933. Class Conflict and Cultural Consensus: The Making of Mass Consumer Society in Flint, Michigan (New Brunswick:

Citywide data cannot tell us with certainty about the level of residential change among the Polish population. But it is well to consider that this high citywide persistence is likely due in part to the strength and stability of the Polish enclave. However, within this enclave, and within the city as a whole, families often changed addresses. The study found that 54 percent of the city residents moved at least once within the previous five years; almost 24 percent had lived in their residences for one year or less at the time of the survey. (74) Once again we can conclude that a core group stayed in one place, but a large number of residents moved around. In such a setting it was possible for community ties to be sustained, especially because it is likely, at least among Poles, that many who moved stayed within the same neighborhood. This type of movement did not disrupt established habits or alter the feeling of cultural continuity. As one Polish resident indicated,

I have been an American citizen for almost twenty years. I live, and have lived, most of that time right here in the Polish community, in one place or another, not more than 15 minutes walk from the

Rutgers University Press, 1987), 260.

A second study of geographical mobility in New Britain confirms the high rate of persistence. A survey of 1,747 women, who graduated from high school between 1931 and 1934, found that a very substantial 92.6 percent still lived in the city in June 1938. "New Britain Maladjustment Survey," 51-52, June 13, 1938, box 127, CEGS Hartford.

74. However, about one-fifth of the families had not moved within the previous five to ten years and an additional one-quarter of the families occupied the same dwelling for more than a decade. Report of City Social Survey, Table 12.

Polish church. Most of my activity is confined in this section for I live here, trade here, have my friends and neighbors there. In fact, there are so many Polish people there that most of the talk is in Polish. I trade in a Polish grocery store; my tenement boss is Polish, so you can see that in a casual sort of way I live in a community which is almost segregated from the rest of the city. (75)

Italian Dispersion

The Italian population in New Britain did not have the same degree of cohesiveness, and an "Italian" enclave did not persist into the 1930s. This lack of ethnic cohesiveness is evident in a number of ways. One is the absence of a foreign-language newspaper, although Italians in eight other Connecticut cities supported at least one paper (including eight papers in New Haven and three in Waterbury) and Italians supported more foreign-language publications statewide than any other ethnic group. (76)

Their weak institutional presence is also evident in the delayed construction of an ethnic parish. The community mobilized in support of their own church in 1937, nearly a half century after their initial settlement. During these years Italians chose to worship at St. Mary's, the city's "mother church." While other immigrant groups also worshipped there, most had used it only temporarily until they were able to start their own church. Poles broke away from St. Mary's

75. Quoted in Schwartz, "Immigrant Voices From Home, Work and Community," 376. Emphasis added.

76. Koenig, Immigrant Settlements in Connecticut, 56.

in 1894; Lithuanians broke away in 1896; and Slovaks left in 1918.

At St. Mary's, Italians and Irish formed the largest groups. Even here, the Italian population was a minority, as the Irish, who initially founded the parish, retained dominance and secured clerical leadership. Matthew J. Traynor, who served as pastor for much of the interwar period (1924-1946), was known for his "old Irish way." "His rosary was the old Irish rosary replete with trimmings so common to the Irish Catholic." Despite this Irish edge, he was valued for his multiethnic leadership and had been brought to New Britain from the St. Mary's parish in Bridgeport especially because of his ability to cross ethnic boundaries. As a church history notes, "While there [in Bridgeport] he saved a sinking parish by going into the neighborhood, compelling the Catholics of all nationalities to come to St. Mary's." (77)

Why did it take so long for Italians to leave St. Mary's? It was common for Italians to express anticlerical feelings, with hostility, especially among men, toward the institutional church. As a result, they often were slow to start their own parishes. They were unlike most other Catholic immigrant

77. Centenary Observance: St. Mary's Church, 1848-1948 (New Britain, 1948), 7.

groups in this respect. (78) It also can be said that Italians lacked a certain "ethnic intensity" that characterized other eastern European immigrants who felt that the very existence of their culture and national identity was threatened by political change in the Old World. Poles, for example, certainly felt this concern, witnessing the invasion of their homeland during World War One, but the Italian state was never in serious jeopardy. (79) Establishing a parish also requires the substantial financial support of parishioners, and Italians, as workers, were apparently reluctant to commit themselves to an additional economic burden.

There does not appear to be any immediate conflicts or problems at St. Mary's which account for their departure in 1937. Indeed, John B. Malley, an assistant pastor at the parish, who worked for a number of years with the Italians there, was a leader in the effort and won the blessing of St. Mary's clergy. We find instead that the Italian immigrant leaders, who were at the forefront of the church mobilization, feared the imminent loss of Italian identity. This fear was so strong that by the late 1930s they were willing to undertake this considerable financial commitment --

78. Rudolf Vecoli, "Prelates and Peasants: Italian Immigrants and the Catholic Church," Journal of Social History 2 (Spring 1969): 217-268.

79. John W. Briggs, An Italian Passage: Immigrants to Three American Cities, 1890-1930 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 162.

construction costs of about \$70,000 -- despite the hard times of the depression. It was a defensive effort by the old-timers to bring the younger generation into their world. It was also a late effort to try to unite the immigrant generation. The process of constructing the new church brought together Italian organizations that otherwise had little contact. Fundraising events were sources of ethnic solidarity. The community responded. Some prospective members of the new parish -- especially masons and carpenters -- even donated their labor free of charge to help build the church. Approximately 2,000 people turned out to celebrate the beginning of construction in June 1937. Several street parades helped kick off the opening of the parish the next year. (80)

Organizing the parish was not an easy task because Italians populated many of the multiethnic blocks in New Britain. Residents described mixing with other immigrant groups in the neighborhood. A twenty-nine year old Italian-American grew up on Oak St. where his father, a bricklayer, had managed to buy a home. He recalled attending a nearby public school and making friends with a variety of ethnic children. "My playmates were Italian, Irish, Polish and American," he said, "and aside from making sport about my

80. The New Britain Herald, May 21, 1937; June 14, 1937; July 9, 1937; Aug. 14, 1937; Sept. 3, 1937; May 21, 1938; July 18, 1938.

name, we got along very well." (81) Another second-generation Italian explained that her neighborhood was called the "League of Nations."

We often called our neighborhood the League of Nations, for there was a [sic] German, Irish, French, and Italian families all lived within a short distance of each other. The German family lived across the way from us. From them we learned many German expressions. Then there was an Irish family close by. They had two or three children our age and we used to play with them most of the time. (82)

This type of multiethnic neighborhood also characterized several blocks on Hartford Ave. in the Sixth Ward. A government survey in the mid-1930s interviewed 312 families, covering 1,238 people. The majority (69 percent) were American-born, most of these being the children of immigrants. Residents of Italian, Polish and Lithuanian background dominated the area. (83)

Neighborhoods and Class

We also see the multiethnic quality of the Sixth Ward by

81. "Second Generation Interview," n.d., CEGS; a copy is located in the Italian File, New Britain Public Library.

82. Emma Reale interview, n.d., CEGS, Italian File.

83. Report of City Social Survey, 24, 34. There is other evidence of multiethnic living. Twenty-nine year old Albert S. Kayeski, who lived on Winthrop St. in the First Ward, said: "[M]y early days were spent in a neighborhood leavened with many nationalities. Through my life my associations have been as much or more than with my own nationality, and I think that I have grown to appreciate things about all of them." Kayeski was a second-generation Lithuanian. Albert S. Kayeski interview, box 128, CEGS Hartford.

looking at the ethnic composition of several other blocks in the district. I focus on blocks where several prominent CIO leaders lived in order to suggest a tentative correlation between neighborhood structure and class awareness. For example, Nicholas Tomassetti, a prominent leader of the United Electrical Workers (UE) union, resided in a six-family tenement on Erwin Place throughout the 1930s. (84) The neighbors in his building included three other Italian residents, one Russian and one Irish resident. The buildings adjacent to his tenement had an even greater variety of ethnic groups, and overall only about 25 percent (14 of 59) of the residents on the block had Italian backgrounds. An Ukrainian Hall was the only social institution on the block. (85)

The citywide CIO leader Joseph Caiazza also lived in the multiethnic Sixth Ward. Italians were a minority on his block, totalling about 36 percent (14 of 39) of the residents, while nearly all the remaining residents were of eastern European origin. (86)

Both Tomassetti and Caiazzi were second-generation Italians, and their residence in multiethnic areas is predictable considering the dispersion of the Italian community. But what about leading Polish-American CIO

84. Biographical information on Tomassetti and the other CIO leaders cited below is presented in chapter 5.

85. New Britain City Directory 1938, 759.

86. *Ibid.*, 800-801.

leaders? Did they live in the concentrated Polish settlement? Many did. UE president James Wilson lived alongside a majority of Poles on Myrtle St. in the Fifth Ward. (87) So did UE leader Alfred Czerepuszko, who resided on Lyman St. UAW leader Edward Smolenski also lived on a mostly Polish block on Lassalle Court. (88)

Because these Polish-American leaders lived in the ethnic enclave, one is prompted to ask: where did they acquire a multiethnic consciousness, because the new CIO was a diverse ethnic organization? The answer to this question is suggested in the next chapter, as we investigate more fully the lives of the "rising generation."

87. James Wilson had Polish origins, despite the apparent incongruity of his surname. In fact, his immigrant father was active in Polish church affairs in New Britain. James Wilson interview, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

88. New Britain City Directory 1938, 781, 786, 797-798.

CHAPTER 3

THE RISING GENERATION AND THE WORKERS' TRADITION

We do not know much about the children of immigrants, the second generation. While historians have focused on various aspects of the immigrant experience, few studies explore the lives of their children. There is compelling reason to do so. If the United States is a "nation of immigrants," it is also, then, a "nation of the descendants of immigrants." It is important to study not only the ways that immigrants adjusted to, and affected, American society. We also should focus on their children, who came to maturity in the twenty to fifty years after their parents' initial settlement. If nothing else, the very size of this generation -- often several times larger than the immigrant generation -- prompts us to investigate their experience in America. How did it differ from their parents' experience, and how did it differ from the experience of the American-born children of American-born parents?

Most immigrants in the early 20th century arrived in the United States with little income or property. They became members of the working class. However, what position did the second generation occupy and in what ways were their class identities different from the immigrant generation's? Could

workers "transfer beliefs between generations"? A recent article by Herbert Gutman and Ira Berlin places the second generation at the center of an analysis of class formation in the United States. The development of a working-class tradition in the United States has much to do with the degree of continuity (and discontinuity) between working-class generations. Did each generation of workers have to start over in constructing their cultural and organizational life? If so, a workers' tradition would be marked by repeated interruptions and new beginnings. Gutman and Berlin analyze the working class in 1880, choosing that date as a point to study the class development of the "Old Immigrants," those who arrived from northern Europe in the 1840s and 1850s. Their insights are relevant in analyzing the working class in 1930, or 1935 -- an appropriate time to study the class development of the "New Immigrants." They write,

The high proportion of young workers born of immigrant parents poses crucial questions for the historian of the working class studying class relations and class behavior. Is it appropriate to call them 'native-born' workers? What point of origin and cultural category should be assigned to these men and women? What does the concept of 'assimilation' mean in the context of rapid capitalist development and the emergence of new popular urban culture? Answers to these questions will affect our understanding of the processes by which they became adult American workers. Failure to answer these questions has resulted in the neglect and isolation of historical processes after 1880 that shaped political behavior and popular

culture, class conflict, and class integration. (1)

A second set of questions is related to these. The very presence of so many first and second generation immigrants meant that few old-stock Americans were part of the working class. This absence not only shaped the class development of the middle and upper classes, but also helped determine the forms of popular culture and of the political process. Gutman and Berlin ask,

What did it mean for the culture at large and for its politics that so relatively small a percentage of old-stock white American males had experienced wage dependence in manual occupations? And what did it mean to live in new and rapidly growing urban settings in which the vast majority of wage-earners were not products of the mainstream culture? That was the American Pattern. (2)

The second generation has always been important in studies of social mobility. The alleged fixity or fluidity of the social structure is typically measured by looking at levels of intergenerational advancement, to see whether the sons of working-class parents were able to move beyond their parents' class position. Yet, such attention to the second generation is usually only instrumental. These studies do not explore the content or context of second-generation culture, the forms of their institutional life, or the ways

1. Herbert Gutman and Ira Berlin, "Class Composition and the Development of the American Working Class, 1840-1890," in Gutman, Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class, edited by Berlin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 387.

2. Ibid., 394.

different historical generations were influenced differently by the times in which they lived. So, for example, a historian of Polish immigrants recently notes that the history of second-generation "Polonia" is unknown. (3) Much the same can be said about the second-generation experience of most other "New Immigrant" groups.

The "Marginal Man" Reconsidered

Most studies of the mentallite of the children of immigrants have been conducted by sociologists. They usually view the second generation as "marginal" individuals, caught in an unstable "dual culture" or "halfway culture." The Chicago School first popularized this interpretation in the late 1920s, following the publication of Robert Park's article, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man." (4) The problem of the second generation, as Park framed it, was that they experienced severe conflict in trying to move in two different cultures, one immigrant and one American. They never could reconcile the contradictions and uncertainties posed by this "dual" experience; they never found a comfortable cultural sphere in which to live.

3. Thaddeus Radzilowski, "The Second Generation: The Unknown Polonia," Polish American Studies 17 (Spring 1986): 5-12.

4. Robert E. Park, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," American Journal of Sociology 33 (May 1928): 881-93. See also Everett N. Stonequist, The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict (New York: Russell and Russell, 1937).

According to this interpretation, the second generation even had a more difficult time than the immigrant generation. American authorities expected the second generation to integrate themselves into their vision of society; they never really expected the immigrant generation to do so. At the same time, American leaders did not acknowledge that discrimination often kept the second generation out of the mainstream, if they tried to join. This ambiguous situation is believed to have generated considerable frustration, which was internalized into a sense of inferiority. A feeling of inferiority was central to their marginality. The Chicago School did not examine whether such frustration led to a heightened sense of "justice" (and injustice); or whether the experience of discrimination encouraged the ethnic workers' politicization and their support for social movements that would give them more control over their lives. Rather, the School assumed that the second generation was tormented by inner conflict. If they took social action, it was perceived as negative and violent, in such forms as delinquency or crime. (5)

It also was assumed that the second generation did not have their own set of social institutions to fall back on for

5. Contemporaries did not find an exceptional pattern of second-generation criminality. See Donald R. Taft, "Nationality and Crime," American Sociological Review 1 (October 1936): 724-736; Elliot H. Stofflet, "A Study of National and Cultural Differences in Criminal Tendency," Archives of Psychology 185 (May 1935): 5-56.

support or aid. They allegedly had little stimulus to organize among themselves because they could not identify with any historical background or consider themselves as belonging to a common group. They were at home nowhere. They were welcome in immigrant social institutions only if they conformed to the prevailing norms, which they were reluctant to do. Even then such institutions were on the decline after the 1920s. Sociologist William C. Smith described their dire predicament. "Members of the ethnic community cannot understand him and revile him for behavior at variance with their code, and on the other hand the Americans ridicule him and call him a 'Wop', a 'Shennie', or a 'Dago.' And there is no peace within his soul." (6) It was this second-generation group that novelist Anzia Yezierska described in Children of Loneliness and Louis Adamic was so worried about when he penned an article in Harpers in 1934 about this "tremendous mass of neutral, politically dead citizenship." (7)

Adamic was probably the foremost popular advocate of "New Immigrant" concerns during the 1930s. He spent time among industrial workers, interviewing and writing about their lives; one product was My America. In general, Adamic's views

6. William C. Smith, Americans in the Making (New York, Arno Press, 1970), 246.

7. Anzia Yezierska, Children of Loneliness (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1923); Louis Adamic, "Thirty Million New Americans," Harpers, Nov. 1934, 685-686. See also Irving Long Child, Italian or American? The Second Generation in Conflict (London: Oxford University Press, 1943).

epitomized the ideology of liberal pluralism, critical of conservative Americanizers who tried to uplift and intervene in immigrant lives. Yet, during the early depression he believed the majority of these "New Americans" were oppressed by acute feelings of inferiority, a psychology he said was evident in their "relation to their fellow citizens, to the mainstream of American life, and the problem of life as a whole." Adamic's views both reflected and popularized the widespread perception that this group was "lost" in America, because "they have no consciousness or instinctive feeling of....being part of any sort of continuity in human or historic experience." Their problem was pressing "since there are so many of them and their number is still rapidly increasing..." (8)

The view of the Chicago School persists in recent scholarship. Joseph Wyrwal, for example, presents Polish-Americans as "sometimes in an uncomfortable position due to the strange dualism into which they had been born. How to inhabit two worlds at the same time was the problem of this generation." He describes them as "rootless and mobile" with "feelings of inferiority." (9) Oscar Handlin, in The Children

8. Adamic, "Thirty Million New Americans," 685-686; My America: 1929-1938 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938); Richard Weiss, "Ethnicity and Reform: Minorities and the Ambience of the Depression Years," Journal of American History 66 (December 1979): 579-584.

9. Joseph A. Wyrwal, Poles in American History and Tradition (Detroit: Endurance Press, 1969), 383, 385.

of the Uprooted, notes that these American-born children "formed a far less coherent group than the earlier" children of the "Old Immigrants," but they were "much more aware of [their] own identity." Most shared a common experience: "The society in which they grew up made them conscious of their marginality and established their unique character as the second generation." (10) A recent study of Hungarian-Americans also stresses their feeling of inferiority. (11) And Ewa Morawska similarly notes the "considerable pain and frustration" among the second-generation, observing that "their social consciousness seems to have been emotionally rawer and therefore more uncomfortable" than their parents. They suffered from "alternating feelings of frustration, anger and resignation." Especially troublesome was attendance in public school which generated "recurrent feelings of embarrassment and inferiority." (12)

This perspective no longer appears convincing because much of it is based on a conception of immigrants as passive and atomized, helpless victims in industrializing America. Revisionist scholarship effectively challenges this view, demonstrating that the immigrant family did not "disorganize"

10. Oscar Handlin, ed., The Children of the Uprooted (New York: George Braziller, 1966), 233-234.

11. Steven Bela Vardy, The Hungarian-Americans (Boston: Twayne, 1985), 103-104.

12. Ewa Morawska, For Bread With Butter: The Life-Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 267-268, 275.

or "breakdown," but managed to create strong family and community traditions. (13) Immigrants and their children were able to make their own lives in positive and fulfilling ways. The second generation were, then, the "children of the transplanted." They grew up in stable enclaves and were able to draw upon immigrant values. They also were able to draw upon experiences outside their parents' world.

The position advanced here is that the second generation drew upon two worlds, and rather than being burdened by this, they faced their position realistically. They chose what they needed from each world to make sense of their lives. Instead of being "rootless" and "marginal," they were in the unique, even enviable, position of being able to choose differently for the different spheres of their lives and for the varying contexts in which they found themselves. Movement in two worlds provided an abundant supply of resources, which could be a source of power. Theirs was an authentic search for a "usable past."

13. See, for example, Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1920 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); Tamara Hareven, Family Time and Industrial Time (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); John Bodnar, Michael Weber, and Roger Simon, Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh 1900-1960 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Bodnar, The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Judith Smith, Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985); and Robert A. Slayton, Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

It is useful to think of second generation culture as a "dynamic synthesis" of a variety of experiences. (14) This approach avoids the determinism inherent in views of "assimilation" or "Americanization," as if there is a uniform and unchanging process of culture change toward a predetermined final product, and the second generation is only "halfway" there. It also avoids the assumption that there is a single American type or national character that all groups, regardless of class, race or gender, aspire to imitate. Moreover, the "dynamic synthesis" model avoids the notion of culture "breakdown," with its disregard of the ways that the "old becomes the new" and its neglect of the process of change itself. (15) We should also consider if the very idea of a "dual culture" is a contradiction. Can a culture be radically divided (or dual)? If it was, it would have no center or fixed meaning. A culture can be ill-adjusted to life circumstances, but it has to be a single entity or it can not be identified as a set of values. And if one is conscious of a dual culture, then it would not be "dual" at all, but a "single" culture with recognizable tensions.

Intergenerational Conflict

In reconsidering the idea of the marginal man we should not deny the significance of intergenerational conflict. A

14.Radzilowski, "The Second Generation."

15.Gutman, Power and Culture, 255-59.

wedge was driven between generations; generational differences, as we will see, helped fragment the working-class world. However, this reconsideration hinges on the impact that this conflict had on the second-generation individual: whether it made the individual passive and nondirectional; or whether the ability to move in two worlds was a source of power that offered new opportunities and resources for empowerment. Chapter Five demonstrates, for example, that this individual was instrumental in founding and leading the new CIO unions. The second generation also established a variety of their own community organizations and their political support was crucial in the making of the New Deal. They moved in both immigrant and American worlds and made use of the best qualities of each. At the same time, it became increasingly difficult for workers to "transfer beliefs between generations." While the immigrant generation sometimes encouraged their children to depart from their own way of life, especially in the search for skilled work, more often they criticized their children for their expressions of autonomy. A question asked during the 1960s has relevance for this earlier period: Could this "rising generation" rely on anyone over thirty?

Historians have shown that during the 19th century immigrants and their children often shared the same subculture and huddled together in their own urban communities. Differences between generations were limited because social

experience was intensely local. Robert Wiebe, for example, describes 19th century life as composed of discrete "island communities." (16) Culture was produced within local settings, and there were relatively few national media organizations or mass communication systems; external forces did not significantly penetrate immigrant working-class life. Ethnocultural political historians also base their analysis on this assumption. Paul Kleppner argues that local issues, such as observance of the Sabbath and proper moral schooling, had most meaning for the majority of voters. (17)

This generational unity also extended into the realm of work. While some of the sons or daughters of immigrants advanced within working-class occupations or accumulated more capital than their parents, as in Newburyport or Poughkeepsie, both generations shared a similar set of values and similar family and community priorities. (18) The practice of the "family economy" was one example: children's earnings helped meet the collective needs of the family and individual aspirations were subordinated to communal family concerns.

16. Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

17. Paul Kleppner, The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900 (New York: The Free Press, 1970).

18. Stephan Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Clyde Griffen and Sally Griffen, Natives and Newcomers: The Ordering of Opportunity in Mid-Nineteenth Century Poughkeepsie (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

Children's economic role within the family was crucial. Claudia Goldin estimates that Philadelphia's Irish, German and American children earned between 28 and 46 percent of family income in 1880, and similar estimates were made in Massachusetts in the mid-1870s. (19) As a result, working-class children, especially from immigrant families, did not spend as much time in school as their 20th century peers, and that fact is significant because of the school's role as a teacher of dominant American values.

Such a tight-knit workers' world underwent change during the first decades of the 20th century. While the retention of premigration culture among the "New Immigrants" was extensive, this culture was only partially transmitted across generational lines, especially after 1920. This American-born generation grew up in a new mass society, where a variety of outside American forces helped to socialize the young and challenge the integrity of the immigrant family. The second generation was pulled in new directions.

Language, Schooling and Class Communication

Language use is crucial in the preservation of a group's

19. Claudia Goldin, "Family Strategies and the Family Economy in the Late Nineteenth Century: The Role of Secondary Workers," in Theodore Hershberg, ed., Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family, and Group Experience in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 284; Ivan Greenberg, "The Half-Day Mill School Movement of the 1870s," in Michael F. Konig and Martin Kaufman, eds., Education in Massachusetts: Selected Essays (Westfield, Mass: The Institute for Massachusetts Studies, 1989), 73.

cultural heritage. If immigrant workers and American-born workers used different languages, it would be hard for them to find a common ground. Language use also is crucial in the way that a language of class takes form and has meaning. On the one hand, the foreign language of the immigrant often had its primary associations with a pre-industrial, rural existence. Such terms as the "working class," "factory labor," "capitalism," or "socialism" were initially alien to them. On the other hand, their American-born children, who embraced English and grew up in industrial settings, had a ready familiarity with such language and its meanings. Not only they, but the nation's intellectual and political leaders often used a language of Labor and Capital in this period to give meaning to social relationships in society. (20)

Language use during the 1930s was a source of intergenerational conflict. Many immigrants continued to speak their Old World language; their children preferred

20. Adam Walaszek, "'For in America Poles Work Like Cattle': Polish Peasant Immigrants and Work in America 1890-1891," in Marianne Debouzy, ed., In the Shadow of the Statute of Liberty: Immigrants, Workers and Citizens in the American Republic, 1880-1920 (Saint Denis, France: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1988), 98-103; David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, eds., 'Slaves of the Depression': Workers' Letters About Life on the Job (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Steve Fraser, "The 'Labor Question,'" in Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 55-84. Gerstle suggests changes in working-class discourse during and after World War Two, in his Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 263-336.

English.

Let us first turn to the immigrant generation. They knew some English. A survey of 58,833 people in New Britain in late 1934 shows that only 2.4 percent (1,328) indicated they did not speak any English. However, the vast majority said they spoke a different language in their home. (21) This evidence warns against overemphasizing the importance of adult high schools and "Americanization" classes. Many did not attend, and the lasting impact of such classes on first-generation consciousness is unclear. By 1935, a substantial 48 percent of adult-age immigrants in New Britain had declined to become naturalized citizens. (22) Take the case of a fifty year old Polish immigrant who arrived in New Britain in 1906. She "tried to acquire a small knowledge of English, though not in any serious attempt." She never attended an evening school, but "once in a while I acquired a word from my children, what this meant or that, or how do you call this type of food or that." Only in the late 1930s did she feel the need to know English. "I feel that in order to get along downtown, away from the Polish community, you have to know it to get along. I can see that it is very helpful in this

21. Report of City Social Survey -- New Britain, Conn. (Hartford: Emergency Relief Administration, 1935), 47.

22. Ibid., 6. There are comparable statistics for Bridgeport. In 1930, some 50 percent of men and 44 percent of women were recorded as aliens. United States Census, 1930, Population, 19.

country." (23)

The second-generation spoke English, and their language preference often created tension within the home. A twenty-five year old Polish-American in New Britain said his parents "wished us to speak more Polish in the home, not only [with] them but between we children ourselves." In Bridgeport, although Polish-American Joseph Snaidecki attended a parochial school, he remembered that "all my playmates...spoke English." A Hungarian mother complained, "The Hungarian children don't want to learn Hungarian any more, just English." Although she wanted her children to speak and read her native language, and spoke to them in Hungarian, there was little she could do when "the little one answers me in English." (24)

By the time the second generation started their own families, non-English languages almost vanished from usage altogether. Few second-generation parents transmitted one to their children. The 1960 Census found that of 2,300,000 second-generation Italians who spoke Italian, only 147,000 of their children spoke it. The proportion of third-generation Poles who spoke their grandparent's language was even lower: only 87,000 children, of 1,516,000 second-generation Poles. Joshua Fishman believed that the 1930s "marked the beginning of an unmistakable and seemingly irreversible downward trend

23. "Personal History of First Generation Pole," Jan. 12, 1940, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

24. Joseph Snaidecki interview, box 26, CEGS Storrs; Mrs. Satmory interview, box 21, CEGS Storrs.

for most southern and eastern European mother tongues." (25)

Preserving the mother tongue was a primary goal of parochial schools. Most Catholic immigrants were eager to set up their own schools as a way to educate and socialize their young. Parochial schooling was, for them, an ethnic experience. As high as 30 percent of school children in Chicago in 1940 attended parochial schools, and similar rates are reported for New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. (26) Supporting such schools perhaps was easier in large cities than in small ones, because support of parochial education might strain the finances of a small ethnic community. We find, for example, that attendance rates in New Britain and Bridgeport are considerably lower, despite the large population of working-class Catholics in both cities. For Bridgeport, approximately 16 percent of all students were enrolled in parochial schools in 1937 and the figure for New Britain was a mere 15 percent. (27) This does not tell the whole story, because most of this enrollment was for elementary schooling only. Few Catholic institutions in either city supported their own high schools, so many children

25. Joshua Fishman, et. al., Language Loyalty in the United States (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966), 42-44.

26. James W. Sanders, Education of an Urban Minority: Catholics in Chicago, 1933-1965 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), ix, 12.

27. The Bridgeport Post, Jan. 22, 1937; Feb. 19, 1937; "Study of Public Facilities," Works Progress Administration Report, New Britain, Jan. 1939, 128.

who started out in parochial school subsequently entered public school. Neither Poles nor Italians established their own high schools anywhere in Connecticut. (28)

The spread of public high schooling was an important development of the 1930s. The second generation attended in large numbers, and the school's influence was substantial because it is during adolescence that American "influences" can have their greatest impact. In New Britain, some 64 percent of residents between seventeen and twenty-five completed high school at mid-decade. (29) Similar findings on a national level were reported by the United States Department of Labor: 67 percent of children (ages fourteen to seventeen) were enrolled in high school nationwide in 1936. The increase over previous years was staggering, as a mere 32 percent were enrolled nationwide in 1920. (30) The magnitude of this increase is also evident in Bridgeport, where average enrollment in 1938 was about 12,000, up from 3,700 in 1927. (31)

28. Italians supported only 2 parochial schools in Connecticut, of a statewide total of 106 parochial schools. This hardly compares to 15 Polish schools and 58 Irish schools. Samuel Koenig and David Rodnick, Ethnic Factors in Connecticut Life: A Survey of Social, Economic, and Cultural Characteristics of the Connecticut Population (unpublished manuscript, 1940, CEGS Hartford), Chapter 6, 12-14.

29. Report of City Social Survey, 20.

30. U. S. Department of Labor, Monthly Labor Review 50 (Jan. 1940): 29

31. Bridgeport Municipal Register 1928, 215-216; 1939, 137.

Public schooling posed a challenge to the authority of immigrant parents and widened the gap that separated the generations. The immigrant generation had little formal education. Fishman estimates that only 6 percent of immigrant Poles or Italians had attended high school, and those who did often had gone to school in the Old World. (32) Meanwhile, their American-born sons and daughters not only had a significantly greater education, but there emerged the pressing question of where the second generation would attend school, in a public or parochial institution. The private-public school debate engaged both generations in a discourse on the relevance and importance of ethnic values in America. The inevitable result was conflict. Even in cases where children attended public school, parents sometimes disagreed among themselves about this choice. It was common for one parent to approve of public schooling, while the other favored a parochial school education. This type of intra and intergenerational tension is suggested in the comments of a 7th-grade Slovak boy who attended public school. "My father said those days are over when people used to go to the religious schools." Yet not everyone was happy about the change. "My mother don't like this and sometimes they have a fight....Once in a while my mother gives me a bad time and she says that if I went to [parochial] school in the first

32. Fishman, Language Loyalty in the United States, 49.

place then she would never have to 'bawl me out.'" (33)

Children who remained in private schools also were affected by the cultural changes going on around them. Some felt contained in a system of values with which they could not easily identify. They wondered if they could realize their aspirations outside of an American educational context. A thirteen year old boy who attended parochial school articulated this conflict. He wanted to learn what the other boys did in the public school. His parents were upset at how little he sympathized with their ethnic world. Since most of his peers on his block attended public school, he had a point of comparison and could protest as being part of a minority.

I'd like to learn other things that they learn in the other schools. I don't know exactly, but they teach you how to make airplanes in those other schools, and that's what I would like to learn. I like aviation and I would like to be a pilot someday....I asked my mother when I was in fifth grade if I could go to [public] school, but she said it wasn't my business what they do, that my job was to learn our way because its supposed to be the best way to learn. My only hope is that when I get out of here I'll be able to take it up in high school. That's what I hope anyway. (34)

What impact did the public school have on family unity? A largely negative impact. Public schools were probably the most important institution that distanced second-generation workers from their parents. For the first time many young people were grouped together for long periods of time outside

33."The Slovak Community in Bridgeport," 35-36, box 18, CEGS Storrs.

34.Ibid., 35.

of the control of the immigrant family. The schools organized them for class work, on sports teams, and in extracurricular activities. Most importantly, immigrant sons and daughters were put under the authority of American adults as their teachers. An ethno-familial culture was challenged as teachers taught American values and rewarded conformity to American norms. Public schools taught citizenship: at a minimum, the school required that ethnic children acquire a common language and the basics of national history. The daily ritual of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance was only the most explicit example of cultural conditioning.

However, in evaluating the schooling experience we should emphasize that the cultural transmission of American values was an uneven and contested process, particularly in a high school setting characterized by ethnic diversity. Students were able to draw upon multiple cultural tendencies, as schooling became an occasion for ethnic and multiethnic contact, in addition to contact with American students and teachers. For example, we see the multiethnic dimension in the friendships that a Polish-American factory worker in New Britain formed. "In school I became friends with several Italian fellows, one German fellow, and throughout the years they have been some of my best friends," he said. This experience was by no means unusual for the second generation.

(35) Then, too, the ethnic clubs established by students helped to sustain particular ethnic feelings within the public school, even if in a largely symbolic way. The Polish Club at the Central High School in Bridgeport, for example, met weekly to discuss Polish history, literature and customs; they even organized a trip to the 1939 World's Fair to visit the Polish Pavilion. An Italian Club also was established at the high school during the 1930s, and both Polish-American and Italian-American students were offered the opportunity to study their parents' native language during regular school time because immigrant leaders successfully lobbied the Board of Education to include their language in the school curriculum. Polish community leaders in New Britain undertook a similar effort. (36)

The schooling experience, rather than serving as a source of pain and frustration, often helped the second generation find a clear way of looking at themselves and at the larger society. To begin with, it appears that many were eager to attend public school. It clearly was the preference of the thirteen year old boy who wanted to learn how to make airplanes. Meanwhile, some second-generation students who

35. "Second Generation Interview," March 21, 1940, box 129, CEGS Hartford. Two other interviews also discuss multiethnic friendships forged in public school. See, "Second Generation Interview," n.d., CEGS (located in Italian File, New Britain Public Library); and "Second Generation Interview," Nov. 28, 1939, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

36. Bridgeport Central High School Criterion 1936, 46; 1939, 86; The New Britain Herald, Jan. 29, 1937.

attended both parochial and public schools favored the latter. Ladislaus Michalowski entered a public school in the seventh grade and remembered that the "method of instruction was more interesting and the discipline much less brutal" than in his Polish parochial school. And he excelled in the new environment. "Throughout my school days I was known to the teachers as a 'model student'," he recalled. "I received high grades in all my studies and graduated from high school among the highest in my class." (37)

This generation was active in the organizational life of the schools. Even a cursory glance at high school yearbooks in New Britain and Bridgeport suggests their presence in extracurricular activities. For example, many male students were active in organized school sports, which especially appears to have enhanced their self-esteem. Of Michael Stein, who was to become a leading CIO leader in New Britain, the high school yearbook noted, "He is interested in sports and is very popular with his classmates." Aleck Zaleski, a future UAW official, played on four sports teams and while "on the surface, Alex seems very quiet, when he gets with his friends and fellow athletes -- oh boy!," the yearbook

37. Michalowski considered attending college, but his father -- who worked as a brass molder for many years -- developed silicosis and Michalowski's labor was needed to help support the family. Ladislaus Michalowski interview, March 8, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford; Michalowski, interview by author, March 26, 1990.

reported. (38)

Participation in school theatrical activities also proved to be particularly rewarding in New Britain and laid the basis for a semi-professional theater company known as the Little Theatre Guild. The Theatre Guild, which was formed in 1934 and financed with F.E.R.A. and later WPA funds, was composed entirely of second-generation players, most of whom were active in the theatre in high school and went to work in factories thereafter. The formation of the Guild suggests two points relevant to this discussion. First, its very existence points to the ability of the second generation to establish their own organizations. Second, we see the constructive interaction of several cultural worlds in the group's membership and activities. The multiethnic dimension is striking. In 1938, the company included forty-five members, representing eleven nationalities. The breakdown was: sixteen Italian; seven Irish; six Polish; four Jewish; three French; two Lithuanian; two English; two German; one Scotch; one Slovak; and one Ukrainian. The Writers' Project said that the Guild was the most ethnically diverse cultural organization in the city. In addition, the company performed for an audience of diverse "New Immigrants," of both the foreign-born and native generations, and the directors of the company (Paul DeSole and Stanislaus Dabkowski) were drawn from the same diverse ethnic world. Meanwhile, an American and Anglo-

38. New Britain Beehive 1936, 3; 1929, 39.

Saxon orientation for the Gild centered on the use of the local Y.M.C.A. for rehearsals, and also is evident in some of the plays that the group performed, which were split between classical and experimental productions (including works by Shakespeare, Brecht, and Lewis Carroll). Monthly performances drew a substantial crowd of about 250. (39)

The positive role that the public school played in second-generation life is evident in some of the quotes selected by high school students for their yearbook. Consider those chosen by Michael Stein and Joseph Salwocki in New Britain. Not only do they indicate a consciousness far removed from the frame of mind we might associate with the marginal man, but their quotes also suggest a comfortable self-consciousness. Salwocki's -- "know thyself" -- could not be more illuminating of one's search for self-clarity. Stein's selection -- "Every bird is known by its feathers" -- appears to demonstrate an awareness of the importance of both personal and social distinctions. There is no indication of a second-generation inferiority complex. (40)

39."The Little Theatre Guild," 1-5, Dec. 1, 1938, box 127, CEGS Hartford; New Britain, Connecticut: The Hardware City of the World, 1850-1950 (New Britain, 1950), 33.

40.One can not claim that Salwocki and Stein necessarily are representative of other second-generation high school students. The fact that they become important city leaders, as CIO officials, suggests that they were among the more articulate members of their working-class generation. However, being outgoing and articulate in high school were not prerequisites for city leadership. Compare, for example, the yearbook quote selected by Mike Petannovitch, who also became a leading CIO organizer. His entry was, "Speech is

The involvement of the second-generation in American-style sports deserves more attention because this activity also occurred in several cultural contexts. One important context was the American public school, in which sports activity was structured by American supervisors but the teams themselves were made of athletes of diverse backgrounds. However, another context involved the ethnic community. Ethnic organizations since the 1920s often featured sports activities to interest the younger group in their world. Two examples: The Polish Holy Cross parish in New Britain established baseball and basketball teams during the late 1920s; meanwhile, the Russian branch of the International Workers Order in Bridgeport added athletic activities to its programs in 1935. (41) A third context for sports activity concerned the new CIO trade unions, which looked to sports as a major solidarity activity; it was believed that the collective team concept in sports could aid class

costly," and the yearbook described him as "very quiet and speaks very seldom." New Britain Beehive 1936, 31; 1929, 99; 1931, 27.

41. Stanislaus Blejwas, "A Polish Community in Transition: The Origins of Holy Cross Parish, New Britain, Connecticut," Polish American Studies 44 (Spring 1977): 56; "International Workers Order, Bridgeport Russian Branch No. 3089," 5, June 17, 1937, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

The Communist party sometimes used sports to appeal to younger workers. The Young Worker, for example, included substantial coverage of professional sports after 1926, even though the Party was critical of the commercialization of sports. Jon Stauff, "The Communist Sports Movement in America, 1922-1936," paper presented at the Warren Susman Memorial Graduate History Conference, Rutgers University, April 8. 1989.

organization. The CIO in Connecticut, which drew upon an active second-generation base, organized a statewide baseball league in 1939, and soft-ball was featured at the first statewide CIO field day. In New Britain, the CIO unions formed their own city softball league in 1938. In Bridgeport, workers created their own intrafactory teams in several sports to compete during their time-off. Bryant Electric workers engaged in softball, bowling, and horseshoe-pitching on a multiethnic basis. Although Hungarians formed the largest group of employees, they "fraternize in their activity with all groups." Workers at General Electric formed a union sports committee, and at the Casco factory, male workers started softball, bowling and basketball teams. (42) In short, the positive value of organized sports in second-generation (male) lives can not be overemphasized.

Religion and Consciousness

We can observe some of the splits between the generations in their diverging religious styles. The process of secularization affected many of the second-generation, who were less committed to church affairs than their elders, even though they often attended regularly. An analysis of a Polish church in New Britain and a Hungarian church in Bridgeport

42. Connecticut CIO Yearbook 1940 (Waterbury: Connecticut State Industrial Union Council, 1940); "Hungarians in Bridgeport," 5, 10, Feb. 15, 1939, box 18, CEGS Storrs; People's Press (New Britain edition), June 25, 1938.

suggest the ways working-class generations were growing apart. Yet, as we will also see, many union leaders in New Britain (where evidence is available) pointed to religious values as an integral part of their trade union consciousness. Religion was still important to the second generation, but they lived with it in different ways than their parents.

The Bridgeport example is the Hungarian Holy Cross church. The church was founded in 1913 by 300 parishioners, including Father Mihael Golob, who had emigrated just two years earlier. By the 1930s church practices had been adapted to retain the adherence of the second generation, and this effort was crucial: a loss of church members had accompanied neighborhood changes and the aging of the foreign-born, and the future of the parish depended on the younger generation. With this in mind, Golob made special appeals to the second generation and often lectured the immigrant generation to do more to retain the loyalty of their young. Church efforts included the establishment of an English-speaking Boy Scouts troop in May 1931, and the establishment of a parish baseball team the next year. Both efforts were short-lived. A second attempt by Golob to establish a Boy Scouts troop in 1935 also failed. Most telling of all, Golob started using English in his sermons in the mid-1930s and also addressed younger parishioners in English. For Golob, this last effort was a radical departure and reflected his desperation. As the historian of the parish writes, "His dreams were shattered

when he realized that youth was quite different from his ideal and from the image he held of them during the first years of the parish." Golob recorded the following entry in his announcement book in 1937:

[Next year] will be 25 years since we started our parish. What we prepared in those years, that was done to be preserved and supported in the future by our youth. What kind of youth did we raise? (43)

Vital statistics illustrate the decline in church life. During the decade of the 1930s only 117 baptisms were performed, a figure that hardly compares to the ninety baptisms performed in 1916 alone, or the 582 performed during the first eleven years of the parish. (44) Not only do these statistics demonstrate declining church membership, but it is well to remember the extent that baptisms were parish-wide affairs involving many in ceremony and celebration. There now were fewer occasions for group sociability.

The church rarely could maintain a stable cultural life. The choir performed only routinely on Sundays; they engaged in few concerts or shows. Parish theatrical performances, sporadic as they were, attracted meager audiences. On one occasion in 1938, Golob lamented to the congregation:

As can be seen, we are not going to have Slovenian shows much longer. Do come as long as we still have them. Parents are excusing themselves by saying that their youngsters do not like to attend our shows. This is indeed a sad condemnation of our

43. John A. Arnez, The Slovenian Community in Bridgeport, Conn. (New York: Studia Slovenica, 1971), 44-45.

44. Ibid., 46.

parents and youth; for whenever youngsters prefer the company of strangers, then you parents cannot expect any good to come about. Look around you at other nationalities. You probably cannot detect it in yourselves. But a nation which despises itself will not last long. (45)

The example from New Britain involves the Polish Holy Cross church. It is a useful contrast because the second generation was an integral part of this institution. Indeed, the church was established in 1928 in large part as a second-generation search for their own religious style. Several of the pastors were the children of immigrants themselves.

Stanislaus Blejwas has studied the events leading up to the formation of the parish. During 1927 a crisis in the Polish Sacred Heart parish occurred, as younger members challenged the autocratic leadership of the pastor, Lucyan Bojnowski. Sacred Heart, formed in 1896, was at the time the only Polish church in the city and Bojnowski ran it with an iron fist, dictating most aspects of religious life as well as giving advice on many matters in the community. He is an extreme example of the "immigrant pastor," who believed his role was to serve as a community leader with the authority to oversee most aspects of the immigrants' lives.

The second generation was alienated by this type of leadership. Their disenchantment at Sacred Heart took organizational form as their numbers increased. An alternative parish -- Holy Cross -- was founded by many of

45.Ibid., 69.

the younger generation who split from Sacred Heart. As Blejwas notes, "It was a conflict between generations for community leadership..." and this conflict was one of the most heated in the history of the Polish settlement in the city. It was marked by "two cases of arson, angry words and verbal insults, and the division of the community into warring factions..." (46)

The evolution of the parish also demonstrates the texture of the second-generation experience. Besides baseball and basketball teams, local troops of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts also were established by parishioners. These American-style groups were among twenty-three parish-related organizations formed during the church's first two years. While the church housed distinctively Polish and American organizations simultaneously, Polish life was dominant in one important respect: sermons were conducted in Polish throughout the decade, and the Polish language was used in weekly announcements and in the records of the church. Parish activities were heavily influenced by Polish traditions,

46. Blejwas, "The Origins of Holy Cross," 44. See also Daniel S. Buczek, Immigrant Pastor: The Life of the Right Msgr. Lucyan Bojnowski of New Britain, Conn. (Waterbury: Association of Polish Priests in Connecticut, 1974) and "Three Generations of the Polish Immigrant Church: Changing Styles of Pastoral Leadership," in Blejwas and Mieczyslaw B. Biskupski, eds., Pastor of the Poles: Polish American Essays Presented to Right Reverend Monsignor John P. Wodarski (New Britain: Polish Studies Program Monographs, Central Connecticut State College, 1982), 20-34.

including Christmas celebrations and weddings. (47) The second generation were church-goers on their own terms.

"On their own terms" is the critical distinction. Interviews with Polish-Americans in New Britain suggest the extent that their religious style differed from their parents. The second generation viewed religion as only one of several spheres in their lives; religion did not consume them, as it did some of their parents. A Polish-American resident recalled growing up during the interwar years. "My people were religious, especially my mother. She was very religious, almost to the point of fanaticism I sometimes thought." The second generation was more reluctant to embrace faith over reason and some identified religion as a source of contention. "By this I mean," he continued, "that various interpretations which could be very logically explained by a little reason, she attributed to the high heavens, thus creating a point of argument between herself and the other of my four brothers." (48)

Another Polish-American resident, age twenty-five, confirmed the intensity and frequency of such generational clashes.

Religion is often a point of conflict at home. Let

47. Blejwas, "The Origins of Holy Cross," 63-65; "The Polish Community in Transition: The Evolution of Holy Cross Parish, New Britain, Connecticut," Polish American Studies 35 (Spring-Autumn 1978): 27-29.

48. "Second Generation Interview," Aug. 1, 1939, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

us say that I don't observe its followings as strictly as they would like me to, and for that reason a subsequent clash occurs. Since my parents, like all other Poles, are very religious, the clash here is not only the loudest but most frequent. (49)

A "sound thrashing" might result if children did not share their parents' religious life. One youth recalled that he was expected to repeat his prayers every morning and evening. "I had to pray, whether I wanted to or not," he said. "One had to do a lot of praying to be able to get along smoothly at home..." As he grew older, however, he became bolder in questioning parental rules. "I have recollections of playing truant on Sundays," he told the Writers' Project. "My mother caught me a few times and long and severe arguments resulted, she in tears." After those incidents, he gave in for a short period "to make it easier on her," but soon decided to forego church in order to play with friends in the street. He was not the only second-generation kid to skip church, and often the young devised their own ways to successfully fool their elders. "There are dozens and dozens of the second-generation youth who do it [skip church] today," he reported. "Many times they approach friends after mass and find out 'who preached,' so that they will be fortified just in case their parents inquire as to who conducted the mass."

49. "Second Generation Interview," May 26, 1939, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

(50)

The second generation separated religion from other spheres of their everyday lives. Their parents often were unable to do so and expressed themselves in religious terms on such nonreligious occasions as a common "thanks" for a minor courtesy or favor. They used terms such as "Bog Zaplac" (God repay you). In Polish homes visitors often entered with the greeting, "Niech bedzie pockwel ony Jesus Christus" (The Lord be Praised) and the homebody replied with "Na wieki wiekow Amen" (Forever and ever, Amen). By contrast, the second generation rarely used such terms, preferring standard secular English greetings such as "hello," "how are you" or "won't you come in." (51)

Religion was compatible with class feelings for the younger generation. They did not associate religion with a pre-industrial (and pre-class) way of life, a life centered in the rural villages of the Old World, as did many of their parents. Religion had meaning as it informed their lives in an industrial society. We find that important second-generation CIO leaders drew inspiration for their activities from religious values; these values stirred a sense of social

50."Second Generation Interview," n.d., box 130, CEGS Hartford. David Nasaw explores the ways working-class children organized and regulated their own world, in Children of the City: At Work and at Play (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1985).

51."Economic Life of Poles in New Britain," 6, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

justice that was an integral part of their language of class. Examples from New Britain illustrate this ideological dimension. UAW official Michael Stein believed that union organization was "necessary in order to put into practice the moral and ethical code taught by the school and the church." UE organizer Joseph Caiazza, who said he attended church regularly, was conscious of the potential hostilities between the church and unions. But his hope was that "labor and religion can and will work side by side without any conflict for the betterment of both." UE official Ladislaus Michalowski stated that "the principles of Catholicism are based on justice and equality for all mankind just as the principles of true trade unionism." Alfred Czerepuszko expressed a similar view. "There is no conflict between my religious and trade union beliefs," he said. "I believe both have the same objectives." A religiously-based belief in the universal brotherhood of man also motivated Nicholas Tomassetti's membership in both union and church. But he was quick to note in 1939, "I disagree strongly with such demagogues as Father Coughlin, who in my opinion, do not represent wholly nor [sic] truly the beliefs of the Catholic church." (52)

Some leaders drew direct support from clergy for their

52. Michael Stein interview, March 8, 1939; Joseph Caiazza interview, n.d.; Ladislaus Michalowski interview, March 8, 1939; Alfred Czerepuszko interview, Feb. 13, 1939; Nicholas Tomassetti interview, n.d. These interviews are located in box 199, CEGS Hartford.

union activities. Pope Pius XI's 1931 statement in support of trade union activity was an ideological resource. The Connecticut Archdiocese also had established a tradition of pro-labor attitudes before World War One. (53) Czerepuszko had regular contact with the Catholic priest in his church who endorsed his union activities, saying, "If you can get anything out of it, go to it." The UE's Louis Huevelman also was heartened. "I feel the same as some of the more progressive clergy in my church who have realized the need for organization of labor and who have taken their places in the front ranks of labor." Dan Dragone received tacit support for his activities as a UE union president. "My priest knows of my activity in the CIO and on the several occasions I spoke to him, he never said a word against the union." (54)

In other instances, opposition from clergy forced workers to confront their feelings about religion's place in society. Dragone, sure of the importance of unions and of his priest's support, responded forcefully when a priest from another parish publicly condemned the CIO. He led a delegation of union members to Hartford to discuss the matter with the Connecticut Archdiocese. Michalowski's was a more complex

53. David J. O'Brien, American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 97; Dolores Ann Liptak, "European Immigrants and the Catholic Church in Connecticut, 1870-1920" (Ph. D diss., University of Connecticut, 1979).

54. Czerepuszko interview; Louis Huevelman interview, n.d., box 199, CEGS Hartford; Dan Dragone interview, March 24, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

case, since he faced opposition to his union activities from his pastor. "He openly opposes organization of workers, especially by the CIO, calling such movements radical and he has frequently stated that workers are never satisfied with what they get," he said. "In a personal conversation with him he has accused me of being a Communist because of my activities in the CIO." Nonetheless, Michalowski continued to attend church and his ability to settle the matter for himself stands as an eloquent rebuttal to the whole range of Chicago School assumptions about the second generation. "My opinion is that the pastor of my church is in a better position to direct my moral and spiritual life and should devote himself more exclusively to that. He is hardly in a position to understand thoroughly my economic problems as well as those of other workers and so should not be hasty in condemning a movement beneficial to the majority of his parishioners." (55)

The ways that the second generation responded to the worlds of leisure and consumption offer further evidence of their positive decision-making roles. This type of analysis of the working-class only recently is high on the research agenda of social and labor historians. Ronald Edsforth points to the omission, noting that "twentieth century American labor history continues to be written almost as if mass consumerism

55.Dragone interview; Michalowski interview.

and automobility never happened, or at least, as if these things could have developed without simultaneously transforming the traditional values that informed working-class protest and organization." David Montgomery makes a similar point. "[We] must not simply deny the importance of improved material conditions of life and 'consumerism' in shaping both the relative acquiescence of the twenties and the reformism of the thirties," he writes. "Automobiles, radios, gas stoves and running water became increasingly important in the lives of those who had jobs in the thirties as well as the 1920s." (56) Montgomery makes the distinction between those who had jobs and those who were unemployed; clearly, those workers with little work and little money could not afford to share in the new consumerism and were influenced marginally by new commercialized entertainment. We should also ask if the new consumerism and mass culture was embraced in different ways by different groups in society. What was the process of "audience reception"?

The Movies

Movies were arguably the most important new mass cultural form. It is estimated that an astonishing sixty to seventy-

56. Ronald Edsforth, Class Conflict and Cultural Consensus: The Making of Mass Consumer Society in Flint, Michigan (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 30; David Montgomery, "Thinking About American Workers in the 1920s," International Labor and Working Class History 32 (Fall 1987): 32.

five million people attended each week during the 1930s, even during the worst years of the economic crisis. (57) But did the first and second generations greet the media in the same way? Was movie-going a source of intergenerational conflict?

Second-generation workers were enthusiastic movie-goers. This is not a surprising finding because several scholars demonstrate the popularity of movies among this working-class group before 1930. (58) Statistics for New Britain provide concrete evidence of movie-going during the 1930s. A mid-decade survey asked residents how often they attended the movies. Approximately 57 percent (32,424 people) said they went to a movie at least once a month. (59) Members of the second-generation went most often. A survey of 1,747 New Britain women high school graduates (between 1931 and 1934) reported that a majority attended an average of once a week. "Many reported that the photoplay is the most important recreation of youth." (60) Political leaders responded to

57. Andrew Bergman, We're In the Money: Depression America and its Films (New York: Harper Books, 1971), xi.

58. See, for example, Roy Rosenzweig, 'Eight Hours for What We Will': Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City 1880-1920 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 191-221; and Elizabeth Ewen, "City Lights: Immigrant Women and the Rise of the Movies," in Catharine R. Stimpson, Elsa Dixler, Martha J. Nelson, and Kathryn B. Yatrakis, eds., Women and the American City (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 42-63.

59. Report of City Social Survey, 42.

60. "New Britain Maladjustment Survey," 74, July 13, 1939, box 127, CEGS Hartford.

their interest. In 1930, the City Council approved an ordinance allowing movies to be shown after 4:00 P.M. on Sundays. Movies on Sundays had previously been forbidden. However, this provision was not sufficient to please young parents and their children who wanted to take in a matinee. So in 1934 the Council approved a 2:00 P.M. show time. (61)

In Bridgeport, high school students organized an extracurricular "Motion Picture Club" in 1936 to discuss new movies. Forty-three students are present in the Club's yearbook picture, which makes it one of the largest student organizations. Moreover, the Club was an extension of movie study in the regular English classes. "A further study of motion pictures is made to supplement the Motion Picture Appreciation Book offered during Junior English course." The seriousness of the effort is reflected in the fact that members included "representatives from each English class in the school." (62)

The immigrant generation was hardly as dedicated to the "moving pictures." They did not attend as regularly and often went to foreign-language, ethnic films. Movie-going could help to rekindle their ethnic feelings. As a contemporary student of Italians reported, "When an Italian film appears

61. There are other indicators that Sunday was becoming secularized. In 1937, the Council allowed sports activities -- bowling and track and field contests -- to take place after 2:00 P.M. New Britain Municipal Record 1934, 310; 1938, 164.

62. Central High School Criterion 1936, 59.

at a local theatre, most of the older group may be found in attendance." (63) The same was true of other immigrant groups. When the downtown Rialto theater in New Britain aired two Polish films in 1938, the response was so enthusiastic that the theater decided to show foreign films on a regular basis, about every two weeks. One writer observed, "Many of the people reply that they like to see pictures which they can understand and which speak their own language." (64) On other occasions immigrants viewed foreign language films at their parish. Hungarian movies were regularly shown at St. Stephen's in Bridgeport, and the showings were well attended. "The majority of the first generation Hungarians (living in this section) do not attend the American motion picture theaters but patronize the showings at St. Stephen's hall." (65)

Few of the second generation attended such showings, despite the efforts of their elders to bring them along. In New Britain, Polish parents encouraged their children to attend the foreign-language shows at the Rialto, but such efforts usually were fruitless. "The audiences continue to be composed of [immigrant] men and women," one writer

63. Phyllis B. Williams, South Italian Folkways in Europe and America (1938; repr., New York: Russel and Russett, 1969), 119.

64. "Poles of New Britain: Weekly Activities," 7, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

65. "Hungarians in Bridgeport," 7.

reported. "It seems," he continued, "that the youth prefers pictures of American make and design." (66) However, immigrant parents had more success in attracting the second generation when movies were held at a parish. In these cases, the second generation was not confused about whether this was an ethnic or American event. Foreign-language showings at downtown theaters seemed out of place. They fit in at the local church. At St. Stephen's, "The younger generation support the Hungarian films to a greater extent than do people of other ethnic groups support their particular films, with the exception of the Polish who marshall still better support among the younger generation." (67)

According to Roy Rosenzweig, "Both movie content and the experience of taking leisure outside the home or the ethnic community challenged old patterns and assumption." (68) A Polish family in New Britain's Fifth Ward provides an example. A twenty-five year old recalled the tension. "Not only I, but also my brother and sisters used to have clashes with our parents. Being young, we liked to go to the motion picture show, but our parents wouldn't allow us to go as much as we wished, the result often ending in argument." (69)

66."Poles of New Britain: Weekly Activities," 7.

67."Hungarians in Bridgeport," 7.

68.Rosenzweig, 'Eight Hours for What We Will', 220.

69."Second Generation Interview," May 26, 1939, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

Consumer Values

Shopping patterns also reflected different first and second-generation cultures. The older generation was reluctant to shop in large chain stores, just as they were reluctant to frequent American film theaters. The same individual who went to foreign-language films shopped at the local ethnic grocery. His or her transition to a modern consumer consciousness was slow and halting. They often preferred ethnic shops because they remained centers of immigrant sociability. Indeed, one of the most pronounced differences between the ethnic grocery and the American supermarket was the frequency of the visits. At the large supermarket, it was common for the consumer to purchase several day's goods, or more, during a single visit. However, the consumer usually made many trips, often on a daily basis, to the local grocer and bought small quantities. Frequent trips were a necessity for those who used ice for refrigeration. They also served as occasions to share news about family and community affairs. A Polish-American in New Britain learned how widespread was Polish hostility toward intermarriage by listening to "grocery talk." He dated a woman of a different nationality, but had not realized the extent of immigrant opposition. "This is so with other Polish families too," he confided to the Writers' Project, "as I have seen occur with other families, by listening to the women

discuss the subject in the grocery store...." (70)

The immigrant generation also felt comfortable in these stores because they did not have to greet Americans. Language use was not an obstacle; shopping in the local grocery allowed them to converse easily with store personnel. The foreign-born believed that the ethnic grocer better understood their needs. An immigrant Pole said that his generation prefers "to deal with a firm of their own nationality so that they can better understand the value of the merchandise." (71) In this setting products appeared less standardized, retaining a more distinctive ethnic quality.

Shopping locally was convenient and these stores allowed customers to buy "on the books." The grocer and local residents knew each personally and were able to establish an informal credit system. As a Bridgeport Hungarian commented,

A lot of Hungarians still trade on the book...That's the way they started when they first came here. They didn't have so much money, so that's the way they had to buy. They got used to it, so they still buy by the book. But you'll find that most of them pay every week. Not so many Hungarians buy in the big markets. (72)

Such informal credit usually served everyone involved. It offered the immigrant consumer needed flexibility, helping those who were temporarily unemployed or poor to make it

70."Second Generation Interview," May 26, 1939. See also Slayton, Back of the Yards, 76-79.

71.Quoted in Schwartz, "Immigrant Voices," 706.

72.Ibid., 377.

through hard times. It was common for residents to buy groceries during the week "on trust" and to pay their bills on pay day. Sometimes those engaged in seasonal work were extended credit for several months at a time. One ethnic grocer in Bridgeport recalled that at one time he carried more than one hundred neighborhood shoppers. "Sometimes the people were out of work and the bill would go up to almost \$100." That might be more than a factory worker's monthly wages. "I remember one time that some family in the house next to this [shop] had a bill of \$300. After a while the man and his wife started to work again and they paid the bill." (73)

Some long-time immigrant residents continued to shop at the local market because they owed substantial sums to the grocer and felt obligated to shop in his store to pay off their bills. The customers were upset that they did not have more freedom in the purchasing. They were aware of the cheaper prices at large downtown stores and resented being overcharged. They were beginning to view shopping as an impersonal economic experience, an exchange of cash (or credit) for goods without much opportunity for group sociability. Modern consumer values had impacted them in some ways and ethnic ties were becoming harder to sustain. The attitudes of several Slovak women on Hallett St. suggest this type of consciousness. One said,

When I buy food for my family I know that Fetchiks'

73."Hallett St. Survey," 18.

[grocery store] is going to take everything. I have a book in his store for over 15 years and when I buy something in that store it makes me sick. (74)

Another women commented,

That lousy crook Fetchik. So long that I buy there I never have any money. In other stores I could get stuff for eat much cheaper and in Fetchik have to pay almost double. He thinks that people don't have to work for the money. He thinks that everybody is rich like himself. They rob plenty of money from the people in all these years. Once you have a book in that store you have to pay all your life. (75)

The anger of a third resident extended beyond this particular grocer.

No matter where you buy on the East Side they crook your money. I don't blame the people if they go uptown to buy everything. I wish that maybe Fetchik close up business someday so that the people could be free. (76)

Why did not these residents merely skip out on their bill? Who was to stop them? The city police was an unlikely enforcer because immigrant residents were reluctant to involve them in their affairs. Their practice of buying "on trust" also did not involve an easily enforceable legal contract for city authorities to settle. If nothing else, the comments of these women reflect the transitional nature of immigrant consumer consciousness. Ethnic trust still mattered and functioned as it own control. Yet, those who relied on trust now sometimes found it a burden. Their values had partially

74. "Hallett St. Survey," 20, box 18, CEGS Storrs.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

changed, and buying on the books, which once was satisfactory to them and a resource to make ends meet, was now viewed as an exploitative transaction.

One reason that ethnic families were impacted by consumer values is that many ethnic groceries had closed down. The spread of chain stores, such as A & P and Grand Union, took a heavy toll on small merchants during the late 1920s. The Connecticut Department of Labor, in survey of mercantile establishments in 1930, reported that "the 'corner grocery' has been displaced in many instances by a branch of the chain store." This change was not yet complete. "[I]n the poorer and more crowded sections of the cities, many of the former are still in existence." (77) Statistics for Bridgeport and New Britain illustrate the impact of the new stores. Of 655 food stores in Bridgeport in 1929, some 158 (or 24 percent) belonged to a chain. The percentage of chain stores was lower in New Britain (20 percent, or 43 of 210 food stores), but the net annual sales in the chain stores in both cities was substantial, more than 40 percent of total grocery sales. (78)

The spread of the new chain stores also affected the local economy. As ethnic merchants gave way to corporate businesses, the money of the local working-class was sent out of the community. Grocery sales did not benefit local ethnic

77. Connecticut Department of Labor, Report of Factory Inspection, 1930, 12.

78. United States Census, Distribution, 1930 Vol. 1, 373, 379.

businesspeople, who sometimes put some of that money back into the community, but helped fatten the pockets of national corporations. The small businesses of the American middle-class also suffered from competition with corporate firms. In Bridgeport, they had their defender in Bridgeport Life, a local weekly which ran a vigorous public campaign against chain stores in 1937. Their protest was a defense of the autonomy of local middle-class life. In the same breath that the newspaper attacked chain stores, they criticized the newly formed CIO. A typical editorial stated,

Bridgeport, like every other American city, has suffered long and patiently from chain store fever. The malady has become chronic and calls for drastic remedies. Chain outfits have run their pipe lines into Bridgeport in an effort to suck out every dollar in sight. While the CIO and the communists are bent upon wrecking our local industries, the chain stores are wrecking our mercantile institutions. (79)

The city's very "independence" was at stake.

How much longer will it be before they control all the business from the manufacturers and the farmers right on down to the ultimate consumers? After the chains have annihilated all the independents, at such a time will it not be that there will be no independence left in America and everybody will be chained to the chain stores? Will it then be a case of pay tribute to the chains or go naked and hungry? The more powerful these chains become, the more effort it is going to take to attempt to control them with laws. The thrifty purchasers may think that they are now saving a few pennies by patronizing these visiting vultures, but the day is not far off when they will be forced to give back their savings. (80)

79. Bridgeport Life, Dec. 4, 1937.

80. Ibid., Oct. 2, 1937.

So far we have described the view of immigrants and the small American middle-class businessman. How did the second generation fit in? They were among the "thrifty purchasers" who shopped regularly at the chain store and cared primarily about the price of goods. Preserving an ethnic group economy was not a priority. That attitude set them apart from many of the immigrant generation and reflected the extent that they were apart from ethnic group culture. The second generation viewed shopping as a different type of social experience than did their parents. They saw it as a welcome opportunity to leave the ethnic world, to mix with Americans and people of other nationalities. They readily used public transportation and did not view leaving the neighborhood as an inconvenience. In this respect, the shopping experience resembled going to the movies or to the amusement park. It was autonomous activity free from parental control. Was the shopping experience too confusing for them, too different from ethnic childhood experiences, that it caused pain and frustration? Did it cause severe conflict within their souls? If they were "marginal" men and women we might expect this to be the case. However, we should emphasize that if such shopping caused inner torment, then the second generation would not continue to go to chain stores. They had the choice. They could simply remain in the neighborhood and shop locally.

This generation was more receptive to advertising than

their parents, noticing different packaging styles, and used formal credit to purchase goods. They did not buy "on trust." Chain stores did not offer such transactions and the ethnic grocer was reluctant to start new informal credit accounts with the younger generation (although they might use their parents' credit book). This generation developed a sense of entitlement to the right to purchase as "consumers." That was one meaning of American citizenship. But this identity was not necessarily in opposition to a "worker" identity because, like many other wage-earners, they did not have a high enough income to share in an American Standard of Living. American consumerism was a way to boost a meager living standard and make life easier. They did not have to embrace economic and consumer individualism, and cherish consumer products as their own property, in order to enjoy the trip to a downtown chain store. The second generation had the flexibility to be consumers on their own terms, moving comfortably in both ethnic and American worlds of consumption. Their parents did not value this flexibility. That was one difference between the generations.

The second generation faced many choices. They were not burdened by their freedom. The multiple contexts of their lives offered fertile material to construct a stable cultural world. But whether they could rely on the older generation in this effort is a matter of some importance in the history

of the working class. This becomes even clearer in the next chapter, as we analyze the position of the second generation in the skilled labor force.

CHAPTER 4
THE CRAFTSMEN'S CHANGING WORLD

Recent scholarship depicts the work lives of first and second-generation immigrants as interdependent; workers relied on their parents to learn skills and to find jobs. A study of Pittsburgh notes that "second-generation Poles and Italians built upon the occupational and residential bases established by their parents. The patterns developed earlier continued to provide support from which to launch a career....[They] had slightly better jobs than their parents, although they remained clustered in the same industries." (1) A study of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, reports a similar finding. Both generations "shared a basic community of outlooks" because they "shared work and social situations." Their work values were "basically an expansion of the parents' values." (2)

Scholars also have shown that immigrant families, influenced by their Old World experiences, established their own family-based work priorities and goals. Decisions about

1. John Bodnar, Michael Weber, and Roger Simon, Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh 1900-1960 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 237, 248.

2. Ewa Morawska, For Bread With Butter: The Life-Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 271, 278.

employment were determined on the basis of collective family interests. Family members pooled their earnings. They also relied on kin to secure employment and to cover for them when they needed time-off. One result, as Judith Smith indicates, is that "most immigrants did not see their work in terms of individual choice or personal advancement, but as a struggle to make a family living." (3) John Bodnar points to the importance of the family economy for workers who formed the CIO. He suggests that the "enclave mentality of the pre-Depression years proved a persistent force" and most workers of southern or eastern European background "never lost sight of their primary (family-centered) allegiances." (4)

This perspective reminds us that the majority of the second generation worked at manual wage-earning jobs like their parents and continued to inhabit a workers' world. However, within this similarity of experiences, there were also important cultural differences. Family work culture was not static. It underwent change as the second generation came into its own.

3. Judith Smith, Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 23. An earlier study of the family economy is Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1920 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

4. John Bodnar, Workers' World: Kinship, Community, and Protest in an Industrial Society, 1900-1940 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 166.

Internal Challenges to the Family Economy

The family economy was an important point of contention. The experience of scarcity often required that this rising generation continue to contribute to the family's collective income. (5) However, many second-generation workers were reluctant to give-up a large portion of their wages. They believed they had a right to a greater share of their earnings, and to decide for themselves how much they should contribute. One impact of the new social discourse on "worker rights" during the 1930s was to encourage the young worker to rethink the dimensions -- and limits -- of their family work responsibilities. That point was clear to Phyllis H. Williams, a contemporary student of Italian-Americans. She believed that the second generation

no longer wish[es] to give their entire earnings into their mother's safekeeping... 'It is my money,' they assert, and herein lies the greatest change. Wages used to be used jointly for the common support of the family; now they tend to remain in the possession of the girls and boys who earn them. Another issue is thus created by the conflict between young and old. (6)

Italian-American Freddie Santoianni kept almost half his monthly paycheck from WPA employment in Bridgeport. "I give mom \$40., leaving me \$30.80 with which I buy clothes, shoes,

5. Lois Rita Helmbold, "Beyond the Family Economy: Black and White Working-Class Women During the Depression," Feminist Studies 13 (Fall 1987): 639-640.

6. Phyllis H. Williams, South Italian Folkways in Europe and America (1938; repr., New York: Russel and Russett, 1969), 36.

cigarettes and other items, such as movies, a soda now and then, starching my shirt, buying a tie, etc." Although Santoianni was becoming accustomed to an individual work identity, he had not abandoned collective family values. "O.K.," he said, "lots of people think I keep a 'hell of a lot' for myself. Alright, I'd give every penny in if mom was a little more modern in considering these needs." (7)

Slovak-American Paul Kubisek articulated the split between the generations. "My parents felt the family was a unit. I felt the family was a group of individuals. They felt the family to be an economic unit. I was expected to turn in what money I earned. I felt that I should be allowed to keep part of it." (8)

This attitude was most pronounced among skilled tradesmen (and other high-wage workers), a group that managed to get through the depression better than other manual workers and were not as dependent on kin for support. Many second-generation workers were now part of the aristocracy of labor and as they became more isolated from other segments of the working class, they also grew distant from their immigrant parents. Their experience challenged a cohesive family culture of work because immigrant parents had difficulty in transferring their work skills to their children. Those immigrants who were artisans had little to offer because the

7.Freddie Santoianni interview, box 23, CEGS Storrs.

8.Paul Kubisek interview, box 18, CEGS Storrs.

nature of craft work changed substantially over time. The younger generation often needed standardized training, such as provided in trade schools, in order to secure employment. They did not look to parents for guidance and had little reason to view craft work as part of a family tradition.

Second-Generation Autonomy

Many immigrants and their children realized that their work worlds were different and that the second generation would learn new trades independently from their parents. One might suspect that immigrant parents were reluctant to grant their children such autonomy since this freedom weakened the strength of the family and of immigrant culture in general. Moreover, few immigrants were accustomed to such a relationship with their children. In Europe, few children choose their own work. As one immigrant recalled, "In Poland the father and mother they have to tell the young what to do because they all live the same from one generation to the other." (9) An Italian immigrant, who was raised in a small Sicilian village, remarked, "My father and grandfather was doing this [cabinetmaking] before and they want that I should learn the same thing." (10)

However, the immigrant generation apparently offered less

9. Quoted in Laura Anker Schwartz, "Immigrant Voices From Home, Work, and Community: Women and Family in the Immigration Process" (Ph. D diss., Stony Brook, 1983), 258.

10. Mr. Merlo interview, box 23, CEGS Storrs.

resistance than we might suppose toward the second generation's craft choices. As one Polish settler remarked, "The Polish father don't say what the children are going to learn because the children know better, like the old people know what is better for them." Each generation had its own perspective. "The Polish young people they want the work that has the future and the kind that they don't have to work so hard.....That's why now you see all the Polish young people learn all the modern trades and they are more intelligent than the old people." (11)

Henry Oleski's friends picked out their own trades and "their families had nothing to say about it." Oleski, a twenty-four year old Polish-American who worked as a welder in Bridgeport, noted the considerable amount of freedom his generation enjoyed. "In my experience of being with Polish people I find that the young are choosing their own trades. At one time the parents did the choosing for them. I think the reason is that the young people know what trades are better for a good future." (12)

Another Polish-American explained that his mother deferred to his judgement in choosing a trade. In this case, the mother had selected the trade for her first son, but realized that her own judgement was inadequate when he later decided to work in a different trade. Frank Chop said,

11.Quoted in Schwartz, "Immigrant Voices," 699.

12.Henry Oleski interview, box 25, CEGS Storrs.

When we were growing older, we used to talk to my mother about what was best to learn. She said she didn't know much about what the modern kids wanted to learn, so in other words she was willing to listen to what we had to say. We gave our ideas and she agreed with us that the best line is the mechanic line. She knows now that she made a mistake with my brother Stanley when she had him learn the carpenter trade, because now he's working in the mechanic line and he likes it better. (13)

The fact that the brother switched trades to please himself reflects second-generation autonomy. Chop's decision to become a mechanic, an occupation his brother already worked at, also demonstrates that family ties were still a factor in second-generation work choices, although the ties that mattered in this case were intragenerational.

The experience of John D., a Bridgeport Slovak-American, further demonstrates the changing structure of craft work and craft culture. He grew up in the mid-1920s and got his first job in a textile factory. "The first thing I did when I got out of [grammar] school was to get a job, any old job," he said. "I work from the bottom up." Schooling was not valued in his family because of the struggle for subsistence. "The only thing on the minds of the kids was to get out of school and go to work. The reason for that was that the parents figured the main thing was for the family to earn money and they didn't waste time in having kids learn a trade." (14) Another Slovak-American told a similar story. "Our parents

13. Frank Chop interview, box 25, CEGS Storrs.

14. John D. interview, box 18, CEGS Storrs.

never considered our learning some trade for some use in the future," said George Meresko. "Instead, just as soon as we got out of school, we had to go searching for a job so as to help out the family. Most of the kids I knew grew up this way -- working in factories and doing the same thing year in and year out." (15)

John D.'s parents had a say in his work choices, which he contrasted to younger members of the second generation. "Once the Slovaks were trying to teach their children to learn on the Old Country style. That was the same with the trades and habits. But now the old people are taking a back seat and they're letting the kids judge for themselves. I don't think that the old people have much to say, and all my friends say the same thing." (16)

15. George Meresko interview, box 18, CEGS Storrs. These comments support the revisionist interpretation of public education, which suggests that professional reformers and workers often had different views of schooling. One reason workers resisted schooling was to stay in the workforce to earn income for the family. See, for example, Michael B. Katz, The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life (New York: Basic Books, 1976); David B. Tyack, One Best System: A History of American Urban Education (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); David Hogan, "Education and the Making of the Chicago Working Class, 1880-1930," History of Education Quarterly 18 (1978): 227-270; and Ivan Greenberg, "Reformers, Workers and the Half-Day Mill School Movement of the 1870s," in Michael F. Konig and Martin Kaufman, eds, Education in Massachusetts: Selected Essays (Westfield, Mass.: Institute for Massachusetts Studies, 1989), 63-77.

16. This shift was in part a response to technological change, because in many cases immigrant artisan skills were becoming

"Now that the times have changed, the type of trades have changed too," commented a Slovak barber in Bridgeport. "This is the change that they have taken -- the difference of what their fathers followed and what they are following." He had seen the changes within his own family. His son went to a trade school and "most of the young fellows are learning some trade that is worth something in the future." (17) A young Slovak-American he hired in his shop recently graduated from a hairdressing school after completing a 2,100 hour course in beauty culture. There were four such schools in Bridgeport in 1939. (18)

Parental authority was challenged as the second generation learned trades their parents did not know. While

outdated. In addition, such craft skills were particularly unprofitable for the second generation to learn during the depression, because of the difficulty that artisans had in sustaining business. The decline of independent trades, of course, preceded the 1930s. Nationally the number of workers employed in such trades dropped by more than 50 percent between 1910 and 1930. A mere 356,888 jobs still existed in 1930, and more than one-half were being done by women, who dominated the semi-skilled dressmaking and millinery trades. The most numerous independent trades in 1930 were: dressmakers and seamstresses (158,380); shoemakers (76,388); milliners and dealers (44,948); blacksmiths (41,456); jewelers and watchmakers (27,125); piano and organ tuners (6,102); coppersmiths and tinmiths (2,559); and cabinetmakers and carpenters (401). The median age of the handicraft workforce in 1930 was a high 45 years. See W. S. Woytinsky, Labor in the United States: Basic Statistics for Social Security (Washington, D.C.: Committee on Social Security, 1939), 73, 241, 256, 309.

17. Mr. Voytek interview, box 18 Storrs.

18. Educational and Cultural Opportunities in Bridgeport (Bridgeport Adult Guidance Service, 1939), 11-15.

immigrant artisans often worked as cabinetmakers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, ironmakers, barbers, tailors, stonecutters, and weavers -- crafts they usually learned in the Old World -- many of their sons learned such new trades as plumbing, drafting, auto-repair, and electrical work. Thus, John D. recalled that "years ago the Italians had their kids learning the trades that they knew on the other side. The Polish and Russians did the same thing. But now the whole thing is changed because the kids have learned to follow things along the American style." The American style meant standardization and uniformity, "one best system" shaped by managerial and educational elites. "It's no use for Italians to learn the shoemaker business and jobs like that because there's no use in those trades anymore," John D. said. "You find that Italian, Polish, Russian, Ukrainians and even the Irish take up the same trade." (19)

Standardized Training

Training in the new crafts was accomplished at American trade schools. Both Bridgeport and New Britain had their own, and these schools were perhaps the most important job-training centers for the second generation. Trade schools became especially popular during the 1930s and attendance more than tripled nationwide. Whereas 5 percent of high school age students attended trade schools in 1930, some 16 percent

19. John D. interview. Emphasis added.

attended at the end of the decade. (20) In Bridgeport, attendance soared during the early depression and there were long waiting lists to get into the school throughout the decade. In 1938, for example, the waiting list reached 475, compared to a capacity enrollment of 736 students. (21) Young workers showed a similar interest in New Britain. Its school also was full with a long waiting list. (22) Both schools also offered free evening classes for workers already in the labor force. Hundreds attended, mostly members of the younger generation who had not managed to attend the schools as adolescents. (23)

We can see the role of trade schools in working-class communities by looking at the Connecticut experience. Connecticut was a leading state in developing free trade education. In 1909, the state legislature became the first in the nation to establish state-funded vocational schools. When the New Britain school opened in 1910, it won the distinction of being the nation's first state-funded vocational institution. The Bridgeport school, which was opened later in that year, became the state's largest. During

20. Alfred Kahler, Education for an Industrial Age (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1948), 66.

21. The Bridgeport Post, Oct. 2, 1938.

22. In 1937, 265 students were waiting to enroll; full-time enrollment was 492. The New Britain Herald, July 17, 1937.

23. About 700 students attended these classes in Bridgeport and about 600 in New Britain. The Bridgeport Post, March, 2, 1937; The New Britain Herald, Nov. 20, 1936.

the 1930s, eleven schools were operating in Connecticut, and the Bridgeport school remained the largest, offering instruction in sixteen trades: autorepair; autoscrew; carpentry; architectural drafting; dressmaking; electrical work; foundry work; machine trades; masonry; painting; paperhanging; wood patternmaking; plumbing; composition and presswork printing; and welding. (24)

Daniel T. Rodgers and David B. Tyack recently note that very little is known about the local history of vocational education. "Who enrolled in the new vocational education courses? From what backgrounds did they come? What kinds of vocational courses did they seek out in greatest number? How much of that demand was voluntary, and how much of it coerced?" (25) To begin with, we should note that school hours and lessons were structured to resemble the regular work experience. At the Bridgeport school, about 90 percent of school time was devoted to hands-on, practiced trade instruction, with the remaining portion devoted to general educational subjects. Daytime instruction was for fifty weeks each year, eight hours on the weekdays and four hours on

24. Connecticut State Board of Education, Vocational Education in Connecticut, 1932-1937 Report, 28.

25. Daniel T. Rodgers and David B. Tyack, "Work, Youth, and Schooling: Mapping Critical Research Areas," in Harvey Kantor and Tyack, eds., Work, Youth, and Schooling: Historical Perspectives on Vocationalism in American Education (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), 284.

Saturday. (26) We can contrast this school schedule with the one provided in the regular public schools to see the extent that trade school training helped mold a disciplined work force. The regular public school usually was in session from 9 AM to 3 PM on weekdays, approximately a twenty-five hour week, compared to the trade school's forty-four hours. Nor did the regular public school hold class on Saturday; furthermore, their vacation allotment was significantly greater -- eight weeks stretching the summer months, compared to just two weeks at the trade school. However, the trade school schedule was generous by comparison to the worker's experience in industry. The two-week vacation provision was more time-off than most industrial workers enjoyed; one usually needed five to ten years of continuous service with a manufacturing firm to receive that stretch. The forty-four hour work week was also atypical during the depression because most factories shortened the working day. In New Britain, almost half of employed workers clocked less than a thirty-six hour week at mid-decade. (27)

Data for Bridgeport shows that the student body was drawn heavily from the ranks of the second generation, and included a wide spectrum of ethnic groups. Approximately 75 percent of the students were the children of eastern or southern

26. Vocational Education in Connecticut, 1932-1937 Report, 39.

27. Report of City Social Survey -- New Britain, Conn. (Hartford: U.S. Emergency Relief Administration, 1935), 45. This data is based on a survey of 10,022 workers.

European immigrants, and the breakdown was much like that of Bridgeport's multiethnic neighborhoods, with 16 percent Italian, 13 percent Pole, 11 percent Slovak, 8 percent Russian/Ukrainian, 7 percent Hungarian, 2 percent Lithuanian, and 3 percent Jewish. This dominance of "New Immigrants" generally marked a departure from the origins of trade schools in the Progressive era, when they often were founded to train old-stock American boys for skilled and supervisory factory jobs. (28)

The schools remained a male preserve. In Bridgeport, women were allowed to study only traditional women's trades, such as dressmaking and millinery, and their classes were held in a different building. This pattern of sex segregation and restriction was common in vocational education in this period. (29) Often women were excluded completely, which was the case at the New Britain school. However, by the mid-1930s some community leaders in New Britain advocated their inclusion,

28. Only 3 percent of the students were foreign-born. Statistics are for 1938. See Samuel Koenig and David Rodnick, Ethnic Factors in Connecticut Life: A Survey of Social, Economic and Cultural Characteristics of the Connecticut Population (unpublished manuscript, CEGS Hartford, 1938), Chapter 6, p. 3-6; David Nasaw, Schooled to Order: A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 124-125.

29. The Bridgeport Post, Sept. 26, 1930, Oct. 27, 1930; Trade Education in Connecticut (New Britain: Connecticut Board of Education, 1915); Marvin Lazerson and W. Norton Grubb, eds., American Education and Vocationalism: A Documentary History (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974), 40-41, 114-115; Geraldine Joncich Clifford, "'Marry, Stitch, Die, or Do Worse': Educating Women for Work," in Kantor and Tyack, eds., Work, Youth, and Schooling, 240-242.

but even this training was not intended to advance the position of women in the local economy or to promote their own job aspirations. Their labor outside the home was needed because many husbands were unable to earn a family wage. "The girl who has a trade may help to support the family," remarked the state director of vocational education in Connecticut. It was estimated that "high school boys who are graduated these days are not able to support a wife for 10 years after graduation." (30)

Why did second-generation men flock to the trade schools? We have noted that many could not rely on their parents for skilled training. As a result, they had few other places to learn a craft. Many also appear to have accepted the schools' claims that employment prospects were bright after graduation, even during the worst years of the Depression. The Hartford Trade School, for example, reported that approximately 86 percent of its graduates (between 1930 and 1935) found jobs in trades within three months of finishing school, and about 96 percent secured skilled work within six months of graduation. (31) This success apparently continued throughout the decade. It was reported that 87 percent of all

30. The New Britain Herald, Nov. 14, 1936.

31. Youth in Search of Jobs! (Hartford: Connecticut State Employment Service, 1935), 11-12. Data for 1933-1934 also show that relatively few trade school graduates found it necessary to register with the State Employment Service for job assistance. The state reported that less than 5 percent of about 43,000 registrants under age 25 reported a trade school background.

(600) trade school graduates in Connecticut in 1938 found jobs in their area of training soon after graduation. In Bridgeport, the percentage was 93 percent, and, according to school officials, the placement of Bridgeport graduates never fell below 85 percent during the 1930s. (32) In New Britain, school officials estimated that 95 percent of graduates at mid-decade found employment in skilled work. (33)

However, job prospects varied by trade, and this variation indicates the difference between the "old" and "new" trades. Painters and carpenters were the largest groups among the old-time tradesmen and they suffered high rates of unemployment during the depression. In 1934, for example, they formed the two largest urban unemployed groups in the nation, suffering massive job losses in the construction

32. Bridgeport Telegram, March 15, 1939; The Bridgeport Post, Oct. 2, 1938.

33. New Britain Herald, Nov. 11, 1936. The relatively high placement rates for trade school graduates does appear surprising. Indeed, it often is suggested that vocational high school education has little bearing on one's ability to secure employment in a given skilled occupation, and that many trade school graduates are forced to find work outside the field of their training. See, for example, Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 138-141; and Grubb and Lazerson, Broken Promises: How Americans Fail Their Children (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 166. We can question the accuracy of the placement figures supplied by Connecticut trade schools; they had an obvious self-interest in reporting high placement rates and may have misled the public. However, there is an important historical dimension involved: many of these graduates were trained in skilled factory work (a point discussed later in this chapter) and those workers easily found appropriate jobs between 1935 and 1940 because of a shortage of skilled workers in manufacturing.

industry as housing starts declined. (34) Indeed, building construction lapsed in Bridgeport during the early depression and workers in the building trades made up 19 percent of those on relief in 1934, even though they were only 6.5 percent of the city's gainful workers. (35) This high rate of unemployment is the most likely reason that few trade school students studied these trades. The most popular nonfactory trades at the Bridgeport school were plumbing, autorepair and electrical work. (36)

The "New" Trades

The growth of each of these "new" trades was tied to the interwar expansion of the consumer and home markets. The widespread use of cars after 1920 among the upper and middle classes generated a demand for auto mechanics. Similarly, the use of electricity and electrical devices necessitated more skilled workers trained as electricians. By 1929, about 85 percent of nonfarm American homes were wired for electricity, up from only 8 percent in 1907. Industry also was wired. More than 90 percent of manufacturing

34.Urban Workers on Relief (Washington, D.C.: Works Progress Administration, 1936), 36.

35.Ibid., 93, 124.

36.An analysis of graduates between 1932 and 1935 shows that 58 students majored in autorepair, 52 in electrical work, 36 in plumbing, 30 in carpentry, 7 in painting, and 13 in masonry. This data is collected from lists of graduating students printed annually in The Bridgeport Post.

establishments used electrical equipment in 1929, and a decade later electric motors produced about 90 percent of total industrial horsepower, compared to only 55 percent in 1919. (37)

The new demand for the skilled plumber reflected the increase in private bathrooms in American homes. The case of the plumber shows some of the job characteristics that shaped the new trade school elite. First, his wages were relatively high. The average plumber in Bridgeport earned between \$1.30 and \$1.40 per hour in 1938, more than three times the wage of the semiskilled factory operative and twice the wage of the skilled factory worker. Plumbers also enjoyed steady work. "There is more regular employment than in many other trades," reported the Bridgeport Adult Guidance Service. (38)

His training lasted from three to five years, and the training requirements of the job increased as housing and sanitary codes became stricter. Rather than being proletarianized, which would render him closer to the lower strata of the working class, the plumber's elite status was accentuated. By the late 1930s,

Only a very well-qualified person will be able to do the work. The codes and state standards are

37. Richard B. DuBoff, "The Introduction of Electric Power in American Manufacturing," Economic History Review (Dec. 1967): 515; John G. Clark, Energy and the Federal Government: Fossil Fuel Policies, 1900-1946 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 86.

38. The Plumber (Bridgeport Adult Guidance Service Occupational Bulletin No. 6, 1939), 2.

constantly increasing in difficulty. New materials are being used of which the old-time plumber had little knowledge. More exact measurements are demanded. Sanitation and sewerage have grown to complex proportions and demand a technical knowledge which is very extensive. (39)

The plumber was required to pass a state examination and become formally licensed before he could practice his trade. Such a requirement, which is usually reserved for professionals, had little applicability for most working-class jobs. This requirement set him above his class peers. Many cities also had their own licensing procedures. New Britain's "Plumbing Code" required plumbers to petition the building commissioner for a license, initially at a cost of \$50 and annually thereafter for \$10.40.

The plumber also enjoyed a high status because public health depended on his services. Fire could result if he did not install hot water or steam systems properly; asphyxiation might occur if gas equipment was inadequately installed. In addition, he was sometimes called in an emergency to clean out a plugged-up drain or to repair broken piping. He worked under his own supervision.

In the late 1930s a variety of factors made plumbing an attractive job for the future. In Connecticut, many old homes had to install new plumbing because of stricter sanitary requirements and stricter public health enforcement. Moreover,

39. Ibid., 4.

40. Electricians also had to petition the city for a license. New Britain Municipal Record 1934, 309; Ibid., 1935, 158-9.

new slum clearance and low-income housing, sponsored by the United States Housing Authority, increased the demand for plumbers. The introduction of air-conditioners by business also promised employment opportunities. (41)

Origins and Opportunity

Was entrance into this craft elite open to all? Did the children of both skilled and nonskilled workers have access?

Scholars suggest that parents' occupational status impacts the opportunity system. Josef Barton finds, for example, that 90 percent of the children of Italian artisan and petty merchants found work in skilled or white-collar jobs.⁴² Why was this so? Partly because the income of skilled parents was higher than their nonskilled peers and they were less likely to require their children to forego school for work in order to contribute to the family's income. Parents with skills also were more likely than others to encourage their young to take up skilled jobs because they wanted to preserve the family's standard of living. They realized the benefits of skilled training.

I analyze the family backgrounds of Bridgeport trade school graduates (between 1932 and 1935) to determine the extent of skilled and nonskilled access. Four trades are

41. The Plumber, 3.

42. Josef Barton, Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Rumanians and Slovaks in an American City, 1890-1950 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 93-94.

studied. In two of them -- auto-repair and tool and diemaking -- the percentage of skilled or low-white collar fathers is more than 85 percent. In the other two cases -- plumbers and machinists -- the distribution of fathers' occupations among skilled and nonskilled is roughly equal. Overall in the four trades about 73 percent of the fathers were skilled workers or low white-collar workers. (43)

Let us first consider the non-factory trades. Thirty-six plumbing students graduated in this field. Data on the occupations of ten fathers are available, five of whom held skilled or low white-collar jobs. The other five worked as semiskilled factory wage-earners or as laborers. (44) By contrast, the fathers of autorepair graduates were mostly

43. Lists of graduates are published in The Bridgeport Post, June 27, 1932, June 30, 1933, Jan. 23, 1934, and June 25, 1935. Fathers' occupations are determined from listings in the 1937 Bridgeport City Directory.

A note is in order about these statistics. About 20 percent of the students (45 of 172) do not appear in the 1937 Directory. The names of an additional 13 percent (28 of 172) are unclear, usually because the Directory lists two individuals with the same name. So 99 students can be identified in the 1937 Directory. Of these, the occupations of their fathers is available in 48 percent (48 of 99) of the cases. All in all, then, we have data on about 20 percent (48 of 172) of the students. It becomes clear that the use of city directories to study mobility provides incomplete data and only suggestive -- not definitive -- conclusions.

44. The occupations include: 2 firemen, 1 stone mason, 1 barber, 1 factory wire tester, 1 porter, 1 laborer, 1 clerk, 1 buffer, and 1 press operator. I use the 1940 Census classification of skilled and nonskilled occupations, which places buffers and polishers in the nonskilled category. See Margo Anderson Conk, The United States Census and Labor Force Change: A History of Occupational Statistics (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980), 39-40.

skilled. The occupations of eighteen fathers show that fifteen toiled as skilled or white-collar workers. (45)

There also was variation within the factory trades. Forty-one students learned the machinist trade and information is available on only eight of the fathers. Of these, half were skilled workers. (46) However, tool and diemakers, like auto mechanics, had almost all skilled fathers. The occupations of twelve fathers reveal that only one worked at a nonskilled job. (47)

Thus, the family occupational background of trade school students is mixed. Non skilled, manual wage-earners' children had access to some jobs. However, there is a tendency for students to come from skilled or low white-collar families. Little difference is found in the background of factory versus nonfactory trade students.

Did the students perceive some trades as part of a craft elite? Did they learn particular trades in order to stay out of the factory? This does not appear to be the case. Student preferences to a great extent were based on the opportunities available in the local economy. They chose trades that

45. We find 3 business owners, 2 clerks, 1 factory foreman, 2 toolmakers, 2 machinists, 1 factory watchman, 1 molder, 1 machine operator, 1 factory yardman, 1 baker, 1 weaver, 1 baler, and 1 fireman.

46. Fathers' occupations were 1 buffer, 2 press operators, 1 plater, 1 machinist, 1 polisher, 1 molder, and 1 weaver.

47. The occupations were 3 toolmakers, 2 machinists, 1 toolsetter, 1 factory engineer, 1 factory floorman, 1 factory stock clerk, 1 buffer, 1 police officer, and 1 business owner.

appeared to offer the best employment prospects. During the first half of the decade about the same number of students enrolled in the "new" trades as in skilled factory trades. In the second half of the decade, students favored factory work as factories stabilized their workforces.

An acute shortage of machinists developed by 1936 and more students began training in this trade. "With factories everywhere expressing a demand for skilled workman," one account noted, "the machine shop at the [Bridgeport] school now boasts more students than any other department, and there still are 181 applicants on the waiting list." (48) New Britain's school felt a similar demand.

Considerable sentiment has been found in manufacturing circles for more trade school space. As fast as machinists are graduated they are employed, and the need has often reached the point where factories take the boys before they are graduated and place them under instruction in the factories. (49)

About 40 percent of the student body trained in machinist work in 1937. The school reported the following distribution: (50)

machine	100
electrical	36
auto repair	30
carpentry	27
printing	24
mechanical drafting	23
masonry	3
architectural drafting	1

48. The Bridgeport Post, Oct. 2, 1938.

49. The New Britain Herald, Dec. 14, 1936.

50. Ibid., Oct. 21, 1937.

Part-time night students also heavily favored factory trades. About 68 percent (399 of 587) pursued machinist training.⁵¹

Business Values

It is important to point to the ideological impact that the schools had on students, especially the ways that the schools taught business values by encouraging the second generation to view craft work as an individual "career" and to pursue goals of individual "success." John D. noticed that "kids are trained in the schools to pick out ahead of time what trades are best to follow and they read how this guy made a success or how that guy made a success." In this, the schools used professional counselors who replaced parents as a source of vocational guidance. "Now they give you tests to find out what kind of work is best to take up." "Nowadays kids have their own ideas and they don't mind what the parents say because they know that any advice that they need they could get from somebody in school." (52)

Vocational guidance counselors are an example of the intervention of American "experts" into working-class life. Counselors wielded enormous power. They used standardized aptitude tests as well as subjective character analyses to judge an individual's liabilities and assets, and to determine what they believed were the proper work choices for the

51.Ibid. Oct. 14, 1937.

52.John D. interview.

students. In Bridgeport,

If there is any question in [the student's] mind as to the career he plans to pursue, it is usually dissipated after he has been tested and interviewed by three vocational counselors, who ascertain his interests and ambitions, discuss his future with him and test his aptitude for the trade he has chosen....By the time he is ready for class work, he usually has his future career quite definitely in mind. (53)

The Bridgeport school had close ties to employer firms and associations and directed students to meet the needs of local businesses. "State trade school graduates are acceptable to business and industry for many reasons," reported the Bridgeport Post, "none the least of which is that the trade school courses have the approval of local businessmen and industrialists, and which, in many cases, have been specifically requested by them." (54) Manufacturers also were instrumental in the founding of the New Britain school and donated generously in the purchase of school equipment. During the 1930s some trade school evening classes were held in the privately-owned factories. Instructors for these and other courses also were drawn from the ranks of management personnel. (55)

One function of job counseling was to control the occupational choices of the working class. This impact also was felt in the regular public schools, where job placement

53. The Bridgeport Post, Oct. 2, 1938.

54. Ibid.

55. The New Britain Herald, April 21, 1937, Oct. 4, 1937.

offices began to be established as working-class attendance soared. A survey of high schools in 905 cities found that a majority (61.5 percent) employed at least part-time employment personnel by 1937. (56) State employment services also initiated vocational guidance programs. Connecticut offices "tested" approximately 5,255 students in 1939, and they made numerous trips to public high schools that year.

Probably to a greater extent than any previous year, 1939 saw the Employment Service going into the high schools of the State and conducting tests. It was only done in cases where there was a specific request for that service. In all, about twenty high schools requested this service. This, of course, was in addition to the regular registrations and visits to the schools for the purpose of giving occupational information. (57)

Who benefitted from vocational counseling? We should consider the extent that manufacturers and businesses had the most to gain. Job placement services helped to reduce the level of labor turnover. When workers voluntarily "quit" or are discharged employers lose whatever costs are incurred in the process of hiring and training the worker. From management's perspective, the occupationally adjusted worker is also a more stable, tractable, and productive worker. Counseling also helped steer workers into trades that business desired, and helped business secure a disciplined wage-labor

56. Howard M. Bell, Matching Youth With Jobs: A Study of Occupational Adjustment (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1940), 72.

57. Connecticut Department of Labor and Factory Inspection, 1938-1940 Report, 122.

force. A Bridgeport industrialist advocated trade school expansion, explaining,

I have employed many high school graduates. On the whole they are not suited for industrial work and they find it hard to orientate themselves. It is lack of proper schooling along industrial lines that lies behind the situation. (58)

The trade school ideology, with the stress on individual success and careers, echoed capitalist doctrine in an era in which social movements had widespread popularity and effectively challenged the capitalist ideal. Second-generation immigrants were subjected to this ideological training and their futures were intimately tied to the future of urban North America. However, while business used the schools to train workers with specific skills and to wage an ideological battle, it is also necessary to note that workers were not passive recipients of business prerogatives. It is clear that many young workers were interested in vocational education, as the long waiting lists in Bridgeport and New Britain testify, but workers attended because they had few other options, especially during the depression. The fact that the schools were free made them an affordable alternative to the regular public schools and some youth may have noticed that a regular high school diploma did not go very far in securing work in an industrial city during the 1930s. To attend these schools did not mean that workers shared the same

58. Alfred V. Bodine, quoted in The Bridgeport Telegraph, March 15, 1939.

values or goals as manufacturers.

Moreover, it is difficult to know the extent that school counselors influenced the values of the rising generation. Although we are in uncertain terrain, several points are suggestive. It appears that many young workers wanted jobs that were "interesting" to them. Mere survival, as a contributor to the family economy, was not satisfactory by itself. Yet, such values did not necessarily mean that second-generation workers assumed middle-class ideas about social mobility and achievement. Few thought they would become wealthy or work at a professional occupation. One rarely finds such goals among working-class children in this period. Nor did many associate a "good job" with reaching middle-class status. Instead, being a "success" meant, for example, becoming a skilled auto mechanic with a thorough knowledge of the car business. A "good job" was one that offered a steady income and did not jeopardize one's health, job attributes that production work rarely provided.

The second-generation tradesmen inhabited a new workers' world. They faced changing industrial demands, which required that they forsake family advice, and spurn the artisan world of their parents, for that provided by job counselors and trade school instructors.

CHAPTER 5
SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CIO

Second-generation workers built the new CIO. The industrial unions were the most important institutional center in the lives of many young workers. They turned to unions to demand economic rights and to cultivate working-class friendships and culture. In New Britain, as we will see, the CIO was in many respects a second-generation experience. A diverse group of young workers founded and led the new unions. The second-generation presence also was felt in Bridgeport, where several children of immigrants became important CIO leaders. The key role that this generation played was apparent to some contemporary observers, such as movement activist Len DeCaux, founder of the CIO News. In 1936, he described the generational dimension in dramatic terms when James B. Carey was elected the president of the United Electrical Workers (UE). It was hard not to notice, because Carey, at age twenty-five, was known as the "boy wonder" of the new union movement.

Carey may be but 25 or so, but his union is no more than six months old. The industry in which he operates is also young. So too are the tens if not hundreds of thousands of workers it employs. (1)

1. Steel Labor, Sept. 25, 1936. The roster of young CIO leaders includes the UE's national treasurer, Julius Emspak,

Union Lives

This generation of workers was attracted to unions for a variety of reasons, and in many of these, they shared a common frame of reference. First, it is well to remember that most only recently had entered the world of work. Nationally, the median age among the children of immigrants in 1930 was twenty-five years old, while the median age among foreign-born groups was forty-four. In New Britain and Bridgeport as well the vast majority of the second generation was under thirty. (2) This demographic dimension meant that the movement for industrial unions in the second half of the decade coincided with their coming of age in the American world of work. We might ask: without the rise of this generation, would the CIO have happened at all, or at least during the 1930s? Some scholars emphasize the contribution of "great men," such as John L. Lewis, in establishing the CIO. (3) Certainly Lewis' split from the AFL was bold and

a thirty-three year old Hungarian-American and James Matles, who was UE national union director at age twenty-seven. Meanwhile, Reid Robinson, age twenty-seven, was president of the International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers union. Ronald L. Filippelli, "UE: The Formative Years, 1933-1937," Labor History 17 (Summer 1976): 366-367; Harvey A. Levenstein, Communism, Anticommunism, and the CIO (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 61, 65.

2. United States Census 1930, Population, 12. Some 60 percent of New Britain's population was under 20 in 1930.

3. See, for example, Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, "John L. Lewis and the Triumph of Mass-Production Unionism," in Dubofsky and Van Tine, eds., Labor Leaders in America (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 185-206.

innovative. However, the formation of the CIO was possible only because of the rise of this new working-class group which fought passionately for industrial unions.

During the 1930s the second generation began to see the "nature of things," the structure of factory life, who had power and who did not have power, and what life was like as a worker. Their participation in the CIO was part of a process of defining their relationship to society and discovering their own place in the social structure. The union campaigns abetted many young workers' self-discovery and politicization. For many it was their first participation in a social movement and their first opportunity to serve in a leadership role. Some had seen the function of unions in their fathers' membership, and a small minority previously had been members of the AFL, but it appears that many more viewed industrial unionism as a new experience. (4)

Take the case of Dan Dragone, the influential president of UE 207 in New Britain. At first it took the lobbying of fellow workers to interest him in the union movement. Several months after a drive was started in the factory, the workers in his department, as he said, "finally shamed me into attending a meeting of the union. At this meeting, I found that I had a lot in common with the other workers there. That

4. See appendix D, which shows that only four of twelve leaders in New Britain who were interviewed by the Writers' Project had a prior union experience. Only two of these leaders were former AFL members. This low number is partly a function of their recent entry into the workforce.

same night the men from my department elected me as a committeeman to represent them before the foreman of their department and to keep them in touch with the activities of the union." Within the month, Dragone was elected shop chairman in his work division. Three months later his peers elected him president of the local. (5)

A similar quick climb to responsibility characterized the experience of Ladislaus Michalowski, the recording-secretary of UE 232 in New Britain. Following his father's footsteps he went to work in a local factory six months after graduating from high school. Michalowski accepted a manufacturing job because, he recalled, "I was promised a better job in the near future by the general manager and I didn't mind my work very much on that account." Within two years on the job, he became disillusioned. As he said, "There were capable men working with me who had been on the job for many years. Many were getting wages far below the standard of living as taught in school... I saw promotions and better jobs handed out on the basis of favoritism and influence." Though Michalowski began to view work in the factory as a dead-end, he saw few options for work elsewhere. "I came to realize that I was destined to be a worker all my life as millions of others, always struggling to maintain and extend what little security I had." We should note that his views

5.Dan Dragone interview, March 24, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

developed gradually, neither as part of some dramatic conversion experience nor as a result of trading one set of values for another. "At the time I joined the union I wasn't politically conscious enough to even register myself as a voter," he recalled. "Later, as I became more conscious of the objectives of the union, I realized the necessity for independent political action on the part of the workers as exemplified by such organizations as Labor's Non-Partisan League. I believe that eventually the workers will set up some form of a nationwide 'labor party' to carry forward their fight." (6)

Dragone, too, became politicized by his trade union activities. At the time he joined the union he reportedly told his fellow workers, "I'm coming in on the condition that the organization will have nothing to do with politics." His attitude soon evolved. "The more active I became," he said, "the more I realized the necessity of political action by the workers. In my local I became one of the strongest supporters of independent political action by workers and their organizations." (7)

Young workers like Dragone and Michalowski entered the workforce with few economic resources. In this, they shared a common generational experience because finding jobs during

6.Ladislaus Michalowski interview, March 8, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

7.Dragone interview.

the Depression was difficult and their choice was severely limited. Any measure of economic security was difficult to obtain. Like others, the second generation faced the prospect of unemployment and shortened working hours. However, unlike their parents, they did not know first-hand that factory life was any better than these hard times. The deprivation of the 1930s could appear to be a chronic state of affairs. They could see that their position might very well be worse than their fathers, and that factory life could not support them or their families.

To some extent their situation was more desperate than the immigrant generation's. Few worked long enough to put much money in savings accounts to help get them through the economic crisis. Nor did many have other tangible assets, such as owning a home, to draw upon. A survey of forty-two union leaders in New Britain shows that only two were homeowners in 1937. (See appendix E.) Generally, the prospect for young families to purchase a home during the Depression was bleak. Indeed, among wage-earners in this period, homeownership was most common in middle or old-age, after one had time to settle down and accumulate some capital. Thus, in New Britain more foreign-born residents (24 percent) owned their homes than native-born residents (18 percent), a remarkable statistic considering that the latter group included the city's old-stock middle and upper-class families. This pattern also characterized a number of other New England

cities in the mid-1930s, according to studies conducted by the United States Department of Labor. (8)

Many also faced pressing family considerations. Young workers often were recently married and either had young children or were considering the possibility. Statistics from New Britain suggest that this family structure was often the norm. Approximately 36 percent of native-born, wage-earning families at mid-decade had one or two children under age sixteen. An additional 28 percent consisted of only a husband and a wife. (9) Early adulthood is a stage in the lifecycle when economic problems are likely to be most severe. Families with children usually kept one spouse -- the wife -- at home to care for young children, foregoing steady paid work; the cost of supporting small children added an additional burden to the working-class budget.

The fact that workers were having children is evident in the numerous birth announcements in the union press. The "Doings in the District" section of the UE News contain frequent "congratulations." During June 1939, we see several such notices. Indeed, UE 203 at the General Electric plant in Bridgeport looked to the next generation of union members.

8. The Department tabulated homeownership rates in five New England cities (New Britain, Providence, Haverhill, Ma., Wallingford, Ct., and Willimantic, Ct.). Family Income and Expenditure in Five New England Cities, 1935-1936 Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1939), 71-79. Information on New Britain leaders is drawn from the 1937 New Britain City Directory.

9. Family Income and Expenditure, 165-166. These statistics are based on a study of 957 white families.

Cards of congratulations were sent the following members, all of whom were presented with babies by their wives: Leonard Revet of Home Laundry, Nell Rodia of Code-Wire, and Louis Schuckman. All three have already signified their intention of training them for a business agent's job. (10)

Additional comments were offered the next week.

More cards of congratulations to Henry Selling, William Grabowski, Peter Scapellatto, and William Vitka, all proud parents of new babies. If this keeps up, we're going to have a tremendous potential membership about the year 1956. (11)

But one did not have to be married or have children to be an union activist. Important union pioneers were single, as we will see in New Britain. Viewing the economic hardship experienced by relatives and neighbors heightened the value they placed on worker rights. They, too, saw that factory life was unstable.

Other issues prompted young workers to form unions. Life inside the factory generated discontent, as workers responded to the abuse of foremen; the lack of accountability in the hiring, promotion, and firing of workers; low and unequally distributed wages; the lack of paid vacations; the speed-up; and poor health and safety standards. (These issues are discussed in chapter 6.)

The second generation also was receptive to unions in a way the immigrant generation often resisted. We can see that a variety of generational experiences shaped different

10.UE News, June 10, 1939.

11.Ibid., June 17, 1939.

attitudes toward unions. One was religion. We have already seen that religion informed the values of some second-generation leaders. (12) This religious consciousness was flexible and generalized; it provided a "notion of right" (to use E.P. Thompson's phrase) that had meaning apart from the institutional church and could withstand a challenge from institutional religious leaders. By contrast, the immigrant working class often was more reluctant to view such a "notion of right" apart from institutional religion and often deferred to the judgement of the immigrant pastor. Moreover, immigrant parishioners were more likely than their children to view religion as a mystical experience, and this type of consciousness was antithetical to trade union consciousness.

Second-generation lives were marked by a variety of multiethnic contexts, and this movement outside immigrant subcultures was in continuity with the multiethnic CIO. Public schooling was an important point of multiethnic contact, as was movie attendance and shopping at chain stores. Of course, those workers who lived in multiethnic neighborhoods experienced this type of contact on a day-to-day basis. However, even immigrant and second-generation workers who continued to inhabit ethnic enclaves experienced this neighborhood separatism in different ways. This separatism often served to block the immigrant generation's class development; they could not readily reach beyond their

12. See pp. 138-141.

ethnic group. But, the impact of neighborhood separatism on the second generation was different. The type of insular consciousness it encouraged was often offset by the second generation's other multiethnic experiences. The second generation had the ability to look beyond the ethnic group.

The legacy of immigrant fraternal and communal values was an additional positive force. It served as an ideological resource for the younger generation to use to build collective organizations. They inherited a "joining" impulse from their parents; however, this impulse was not restricted to non-economic matters, as it often has been for old-stock Americans.

New Britain

The rise of the CIO in New Britain was fast, successful and characterized by few strikes. In the six-months from January to June 1937, some 5,700 workers organized into nine CIO locals, covering a majority of the city's large industrial establishments. The UE led the way with five locals, followed by the United Automobile Workers with two locals, and a single chapter each of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union. Victories came relatively easily as employers capitulated to the union fever that swept over the region. On only two occasions did workers need to stage walkouts in order to gain recognition. Approximately 600 autoworkers of UAW 197 waged a five-week

strike beginning in late March. In the other case, 105 shirtwaist workers struck for a month in February. That action witnessed the only arrests of workers during the initial CIO campaigns, when police brought into custody twenty-seven women who tried to block several workers from crossing their picket line. (13)

However, union success soon peaked. After this six-month heyday, the unions made few new inroads until World War Two. (14) The union movement, which burst on to the scene with enthusiasm and high hope, soon found that sustaining

13. "The CIO in New Britain," 8, box 199, CEGS Hartford; Connecticut CIO Yearbook (Waterbury: Connecticut State Industrial Union Council, 1940). On union developments, see the weekly New Britain edition of the UE's People's Press (housed at UE headquarters in Pittsburgh), as well as The New Britain Herald, February 27, 1937, March 15, 1937, March 16, 1937, March 20, 1937, March 29, 1937, and April 23, 1937; and Oliver Michael Carsten, "Work and Lodge: Working-Class Sociability in Meriden and New Britain, 1850-1940" (Ph. D diss., University of Michigan, 1982), 194-201.

The success of the UE in New Britain was part of a broader grass-roots activism by metal workers in New England. Matt Campbell, head of the UE's New England district, reported this activity to the national UE convention in September 1937: "The growth of the UE in New England has been so abnormal in the last year that it is impossible to give a report on each individual local. We have chartered forty different groups in twelve months. The membership in our district has increased from twelve thousand to thirty thousand. A few small strikes have been settled satisfactorily to the workers." James J. Matles and James Higgins, Them and Us: Struggles of a Rank-And-File Union (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1974), 73.

14. One exception is the establishment of the Industrial Insurance Agents Union 55, United Office and Professional Workers, in early 1938. Brief reference to three small UE locals (UE 233, 237, and 247) appear in the People's Press in 1938, but these locals do not appear to have survived the year. People's Press (New Britain edition), April 12, 1938; July 2, 1938; Oct. 1, 1938.

interest beyond its initial base was not an easy task, especially among foreign-born workers. Union membership dropped to about 3,000 during the "Roosevelt Recession" of 1937-1938, and the city's troubles in organizing drew the following comment from James Matles, UE national director, in 1940. "I feel greatly disturbed at the state of our organization in the [city's] two large plants. It is almost unexplainable. I don't know of a single case in our International Union," he said, "where we are in a worse position organizationally than at Landers and American Hardware." (15)

Local leaders acknowledged their difficulties. "As you undoubtedly know the earlier successes of the UE in New Britain were of substantial help in stimulating the growth of the UE in other sections of Connecticut," said Nicholas Tomassetti, a prominent local leader. "However, we regret to say that since these earlier successes of the UE in New Britain our organization has suffered certain setbacks of which to date we have been unable to overcome." (16)

The sources of union success and failure were rooted in generational patterns of union involvement. A significant number of second-generation workers eagerly embraced the new

15. James J. Matles to Joseph Caiazza, Dec. 18, 1940, Joseph Caiazza File, UE Archives, University of Pittsburgh. Thanks to David Rosenberg for help in locating these materials.

16. Nicholas Tomassetti to James J. Matles, July 3, 1941, UE 207 File, UE Archives.

unions. Many of their parents, especially among Poles, were much more reluctant.

Let us first turn to the second generation. Scholars are beginning to suggest their central role in the formation of the CIO. Peter Friedlander, in his study of a Detroit UAW local, finds that second-generation workers (mostly of Polish background) formed the largest and most enthusiastic group among the early leaders and the rank and file. The union's roots and success depended on their activism. (17) Darryl Holter finds that "many of the CIO leaders were very young men" in Milwaukee. The head of the city's CIO Council was twenty-five; the head of the state CIO Council was twenty-eight. (18) Studies by John Cumbler and Eli Ginzberg also provide additional cases of second-generation leadership. Cumbler's study of eighty-seven CIO activists in Trenton, New Jersey, shows that most of these workers were young and recent hires -- about 70 percent entered the workforce between 1930 and 1935. Ginzberg's analysis of the formation of a Pottery and Porcelain Workers' CIO union in Parkinstown, Pennsylvania, highlights the pioneer leadership of young Polish-Americans and Italian-Americans. (19) This pattern of second-generation

17. Peter Friedlander, The Emergence of a UAW Local, 1936-1939: A Study in Class and Culture (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976), 26-28.

18. Darryl Holter, "Sources of CIO Success: The New Deal Years in Milwaukee," Labor History 29 (Spring 1988): 210-211.

19. John T. Cumbler, A Social History of Economic Decline: Business, Politics and Work in Trenton (New Brunswick: Rutgers

involvement also characterized the union leaders in the Hardware City, as workers of a variety of "New Immigrant" backgrounds came together to lead the early campaigns and to assume formal leadership roles.

In New Britain, workers of Polish background were the largest constituency in the union movement. While about 70 percent of CIO members were of southern or eastern European descent, Poles formed the majority at 40 percent. (20) Their activism in New Britain rivaled Polish interest in unionism in other settlements. John Bukowczyk writes, "It is no exaggeration to claim that Poles in Detroit, Chicago, eastern Pennsylvania, and elsewhere played a central role in sparking the wave of union-organizing activity that virtually remade industrial America between the early 1930s and the early 1940s." Overall, of those workers who joined the new CIO by 1937, an estimated 25 percent had Polish or other Slavish

University Press, 1989), 117-123, 203-204; Eli Ginzberg, The Labor Leader: An Exploratory Study (New York: Macmillian 1948), 83-162. See also Gary Gerstle, "The Politics of Patriotism: Americanization and the Formation of the CIO," Dissent 33 (Winter 1986): 84-92; Thomas Gobel, "Becoming American: Ethnic Workers and the Rise of the CIO," Labor History 29 (Spring 1988): 173-198; Mike Davis, "The Barren Marriage of Labor and the Democratic Party," in his Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the US Working Class (London: Verso, 1986), 55; and William Foote Whyte, Men at Work (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1961), 281-286.

20. CIO membership lists of more than 4,000 workers show that Poles, at 40 percent, were followed by Italians at 16 percent, Germans at 8 percent, Lithuanians at 7 percent, and Ukrainian, Swede, French, Irish, and American workers at about 4 percent each. "The CIO in New Britain," 29.

backgrounds. (21)

It appears that a majority of New Britain's Polish CIO members belonged to the second generation. Union leaders often lamented the difficulties they had organizing the immigrant generation, and from such comments we can see different generational attitudes. "What are we going to do about organizing the thousands of Polish speaking workers that domanate [sic] New Britain industrial plants?" wrote a leading UE official to Julius Emspak, national secretary-treasurer. "[This] problem has deeply concerned our present membership from the start." Because the second-generation leadership could not successfully reach out to this older generation, they asked the national office to help by providing foreign-language literature and a Polish organizer. "Our own effort to teach these workers of their rights to organize is discouraging," he reported. "The problem is purely educational...We are purchasing a loud- speaker for shop gate talks for the coming warm months; give us a Polish Organizer and New Britain will go to town." (22)

It is worth reflecting on this langauge barrier. Why were second-generation Poles unable to "talk union" to their elders? Why did they need a Polish organizer? It appears

21. John J. Bukowczyk, And My Children Did Not Know Me: A History of the Polish-Americans (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 79-80.

22. Arthur F. Hayes to Julius Emspak, March 8, 1941, UE 232 File, UE Archives.

that a main problem concerned the poor foreign-language written skills of second-generation leaders, who "could not write the Polish language well enough for union leaflets" and other organizing material, Michalowski recalled. While some members of the second generation learned to write Polish in parochial school, this schooling did not last beyond grammar school (because the Poles did not support their own high school) and knowledge of the Polish language subsequently was taught in the family. However, while immigrant parents often spoke Polish in the home, Michalowski noted that they rarely taught their children how to write the language. (23) A Polisher organizer not only could help to bridge this written language gap, but also compensate for the uneven foreign-language verbal skills of the younger leaders. Afterall, shop-gate talks were most effective if the messenger could freely converse in the desired language and generate trust between with the workers and the union. It is notable that the young leaders apparently were unable to recruit a Polish organizer locally to achieve this task.

Second-Generation Pioneers

Many of the leading CIO officials in New Britain were in their twenties. Edward Smolenski, the head of the citywide CIO Council, was a twenty-five year old Polish-American. He first become involved in union work in early 1937 as a leader

23.Ladislaus Michalowski, interview by author, March 26, 1990.

in the formation of an UAW local at the Standard Steel and Bearings Company and was elected its first union president. Smolenski had gained a citywide reputation after leading the five-week UAW strike. New Britain's workers also remembered him in another role, as a spokesman for unemployed demonstrators during the winter of 1930-31. Although only nineteen at the time, he had articulated their grievances to city officials. (24)

Meanwhile, Nicholas Tomassetti, a twenty-two year old Italian-American, not only chaired the newly established Labor's Non-Partisan League (LNPL) and was vice-president of the state branch, but also was elected to the state legislature in 1938. His union efforts began in a SWOC drive in early 1937 and included short periods as business agent of two UE locals. He came to unionism after a high school education and knew first-hand the meaning of subsistence living as one of six children in a single-parent household. His father died when Tomassetti was only four years old and the children were sent early to work to supplement their mother's wages from a domestic service job. (25)

Other prominent second-generation leaders included the leading UE organizer, Mike Petannovitch, a twenty-two year old Ukrainian-American. Initially, the national UE sent in

24. Edward Smolenski interview, Feb. 13, 1939, box 199 CEGS Hartford.

25. Nicholas Tomassetti interview, n.d., box 199, CEGS Hartford.

their own organizer in early 1937 to aid the organizing drives; the national union soon replaced him with Petannovitch, a New Britain native, who helped coordinate local UE efforts and helped establish a citywide Industrial Union Council in May. He chaired the early meetings until members elected Smolenski. (26) Furthermore, James Wilson, thirty-one, born of Polish immigrants, served as president of UE 232, one of the largest and most important locals with a membership of about 2,000. Ladislaus Michalowski, twenty-three, the financial-secretary of that Local, also was a second-generation Pole, as was Alfred Czerepuszko, thirty-one, a financial-secretary of UE 207, which was the other large union local in the city. Among others were Joseph Caiazza, born of Italian immigrants, who was active in several UE drives and served as state representative of the CIO Workers' Alliance; Frank Satalino, twenty-five, a UE 207 vice-president who assumed the leadership of the CIO Council in 1938; and Michael Stein, nineteen, son of an Hungarian father and a German mother, who was the recording-secretary of LNPL and an UAW official. (27)

26. Mike Petannovitch interview, Feb. 16, 1939, box 199 CEGS Hartford. Petannovitch also wrote a weekly column, "The Organizer Speaks," in the local edition of the People's Press.

27. James Wilson interview, n.d.; Ladislaus Michalowski interview; Alfred Czerepuszko interview, Feb. 13, 1939; Joseph Caiazza interview, n.d.; and Michael Stein interview, March 8, 1939. These interviews are also located in box 199, CEGS Hartford. The New Britain Herald, March 24, 1937 and May 19, 1937; People's Press (new Britain edition), July 9, 1938. The ages of these and other workers are as of 1937.

While several foreign-born workers were prominent leaders, they closely resembled their American-born counterparts because they too were raised in the United States. Dan Dragone, the influential president of UE 207, emigrated from Italy as a young child. (28) Joseph Salwocki, the business agent of UE 232, left Poland with his parents when he was only four years old. (29) Both had emigrated early enough to attend American schools. That point is significant because while technically the terms "first" and "second" generation refer to place of birth, the critical distinction is the place where one grows up and spends his or her childhood and adolescence. (30) We can see this especially in the case of Salwocki, who was very popular with his high school classmates. The senior yearbook describes him in the following terms:

Behold the enlightening mien of this young philosopher. He will soon shatter the theories of Freud! Those who will read his works will feel the influence of the personalty of this young genius. He has a remarkable personalty. It is impelling that a certain charm lingers around everything or everybody with whom the young sage comes in contact. If success in literary matters (for he aspires to a literary career) depends on personalty, this young wit will reach the zenith of success. (31)

28.Dragone interview.

29.Joseph Salwocki interview, n.d., box 199, CEGS Hartford.

30.Michael J. Piore, Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 65-66.

31.The Beehive 1929, New Britain Senior High School, 99. Several of these leaders were prized for their union

Perhaps most telling of all, few old-stock American workers played a central role in the local leadership. The most prominent was Robert Barrows, twenty-four, an official of UE 232 who also served as vice-president of the CIO Council. (He claimed family ties to Andrew Jackson.) (32) Finally, few union pioneers came from "Old Immigrant" backgrounds. The sole citywide leader was Louis Huevelman, born in the United States of Belgian parents, who served as recording-secretary of the CIO Council and, at age forty-one, was an elder statesman of the new union movement. (33) While several other workers of northern European background played important roles early on, particularly in the founding of UE 207, their formal leadership did not last long, as Polish-American, Italian-American and other "New Immigrant" workers dominated the unions. (34)

militancy. The People's Press described Salwocki as a "determined young man" and a "spark plug." James Wilson "established a reputation as a rootin', tootin' fighter for the rights of workers." Dragone also was described in the union press as a fiery leader; his remarks at union-management meetings were "punctuated by prodigious table pounding, especially if it concerns grievances." People's Press (New Britain edition), Jan. 15, 1938; Jan. 29, 1938; Feb. 12, 1938;

32. Robert Barrows interview, Feb. 13, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

33. Louis Huevelman interview, n.d, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

34. Samuel Koenig wrote in 1941, on the basis of interviews of 44 labor leaders (25 AFL and 19 CIO) in New Haven and New Britain, "Those of old-American stock...have a very low representation." He noted further that "close to two-thirds of the leaders are American born, and all, except two, come from the working class." "Social Backgrounds and Attitudes of Labor Leaders, with Special Reference to New Haven and New

UE 207: The Exception

UE 207 was the first CIO local established in the city, and its history is instructive because in many ways it was the exception to the pattern of union formation and leadership elsewhere. Unlike the other Locals, its first leaders were predominantly of northern European background, with high skill levels, and some were political radicals. The early UE 207 pioneer fits the profile that Ronald Schatz describes in his study of electrical workers. Schatz studies thirty-five union leaders, chosen from the Westinghouse factory in East Pittsburgh and from the General Electric plants in Lynn, Massachusetts, and Schenectady and Erie, New York. Few in his sample have "New Immigrant" origin, despite the large number of these workers employed in the factories. Schatz thus finds a significant ethnic, age, and skill difference between the leadership and the rank and file. He describes the typical union pioneer as an "atypical" worker who "belonged to a privileged stratum of the labor force." (35)

When we turn to the history of UE 207, we should note that it differed from Schatz's model in an important respect: the leadership changed significantly over a short period of

Britain," Sociology and Social Research 25 (1941): 264.

35. Ronald Schatz, "Union Pioneers: The Founders of Local Unions at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1933-1937," Journal of American History 66 (Dec. 1979): 601. See also his The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse 1923-1960 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

time. There was considerable ethnic succession, which had three stages: "Old Immigrant" dominance; the sharing of power between Old and New Immigrants; and finally "New Immigrant" dominance.

UE 207 had its origins in an "Independent Industrial Union" formed in April 1934 by a group of workers at the Landers, Frary, and Clark factory who were frustrated by the AFL's refusal to organize in the industrial sector. In the first month of its existence about ninety workers joined the union. Many of these were the younger workers in the plant, although the top leaders were primarily older immigrants, from Sweden and Germany, who had been active in the labor movements in their native countries. A number of them appear to have been political radicals. Zachary Anderson, a machinist, was the driving force behind this initial effort. Fond of quoting Marx, he and his fellow pioneers held the union's first meetings at a Communist Workers' Center hall on Church St. Anderson drafted the union's statement of principles, which stressed rank and file autonomy and class solidarity. It read:

Recognizing that our interest can be best attained by combining our collective strength in a Union organized in the principle of one industry, one union, our union calls for the united strength of all the workers in the factory, regardless of race, creed, nationality, religion, sex, age or political affiliation.

It bases itself on the principle of rank and file control, unrestricted trade union democracy.

We repudiate and condemn the policies of dividing

the workers in the shop or industry as it is done by the International Association of Machinists and the other craft unions and groups in industry. Such policies can only result in the defeat of the workers' aims.

We recognize ourselves as a part of the working class movement as a whole, and we must not, and shall not, at anytime dissociate ourselves from the general and broader struggles of our class. (36)

This effort was partially a family affair. Anderson's son, John, was chosen as the first Local president, while Zachary became shop committee chair. The Swedish influence included the new recording-secretary, Berger Frisk; while the German influence extended to the other three elected posts (vice-president, financial-secretary, and treasurer).

In these early days much of the organizing centered around the efforts of the shop chairs. Fourteen workers were designated shop chairs, and their ethnic composition was broader than the elected officials, but still was dominated by workers of northern European background. Five stewards were of German background, three of French, two of Slovak, and one each of Irish, English, Italian, and Austrian origin. The growing membership included more Poles and Italians, but few became leaders. The union signed up 200 of 215 workers in the plant; those who did not join "were mostly the older members of the Polish, Italian and Russian groups." (37)

By 1936, some shakeup in the leadership occurred. Only

36. "The CIO in New Britain," 2.

37. Ibid., 3.

two of the initial five officers remained. Two of the Germans retained their positions, but the three Swedes were gone, apparently because their Left leadership did not win them the favor of the workers. One account notes, "Zack had been relegated to ordinary membership and relative obscurity by the younger leaders in control, because they suspected him of communistic tendencies." (38) However, the new leaders continued the ethnic dominance of the northern Europeans. The new president, Harold Whitney, had an Irish background; the new financial-secretary, Rupert Crossman, had English roots; and the new recording-secretary, Herbert Berry, claimed a Scottish background.

Skilled workers dominated the Independent Union. In both 1934 and 1936 the president was a machinist and the vice-president was a finisher. Information is available on five of the six other officials and shows a similar pattern of skilled dominance. Two were machinists and one was a painter, but the leaders also included a semiskilled assembler and a machine operator, both of whom served only in 1934. So by 1936, all formal leadership posts were occupied by skilled workers. (39)

38. "The CIO in New Britain and Zachary Anderson," 5, March 17, 1939, box 127, CEGS Hartford.

39. John Anderson (machinist) was replaced as president by Harold Whitney (machinist) in 1935. The 1934 vice-president was Fred Rittner (finisher). The skills of the 1936 officials include Crossman (painter) and Berry (machinist) in addition to Rittner and Whitney. The 1934 semiskilled leaders were Clarence Rund (assembler), financial-secretary, and Berger

The success of this union was limited beyond its initial base. Operating as it did as the lone industrial union in the city, it could have only a limited impact. On one occasion the union bargained a payhike for its workers and organized a walkout after a union member was fired. The significance of this independent effort was that it helped spur organization among the city's workers as soon as the national CIO campaigns were started. In November 1936, after a downturn in the economy helped drop membership to fifty, the union decided to seek affiliation with the UE-CIO. When the workers voted to form UE 207 in December 1936, the founding of the city's first CIO local served as a catalyst for organizing throughout the manufacturing sector. (40)

Several of the leaders of the Independent union remained after the Local affiliated with the UE. The transition from Old to New Immigrant leadership did not occur overnight. Of UE 207's first officers, four of six claimed northern European background. Crossman was elected the first president. Lester Thompson, a fellow English worker, was elected vice-president. Rund, who had served as financial-secretary in 1934, won the post of treasurer and Loren Clary, of Irish descent, became the new recording-secretary. However, marking a break with the past, two "New Immigrant" workers assumed leadership posts. The Polish-American Alfred

Frisk (machine operator), recording-secretary.

40.Ibid., 4-7; The New Britain Herald, May 27, 1936.

Czerepuszko was elected financial-secretary and the Italian-American Frank Satalino became general shop chair. Old and New Immigrant groups now shared leadership roles for the first time. (41)

The tradition of skilled leadership persisted; four of the six were employed at skilled jobs. (42)

The next year "New Immigrant" workers were chosen to serve in the majority of leadership posts. Workers of Italian background held many of these, but did not dominate the leadership. In 1937, the union Executive Board consisted of four workers of Italian background, two of Polish background and one each of German, Austrian and Ukrainian background. By 1939, the leadership remained diverse, as the Executive Board was composed of three workers of Italian background, three of Polish background, and one each of American, Austrian, and Cuban background. (43)

For the first time the union also witnessed a sharing of power between the skilled and semiskilled. Dragone, the president, was a skilled scalemaker, while Satalino, the new vice-president, worked as a semiskilled machine operator. John Niemiec, the new treasurer, was employed as a skilled

41."The CIO in New Britain," 7; The New Britain Herald, April 21, 1936; April 24, 1936.

42.Crossman (painter), Thompson (foreman), Clary (stationary engineer), Czerepuszko (timekeeper), Rund (assembler), and Satalino (machine operator). 1937 New Britain City Directory.

43."The CIO in New Britain," 31.

plater, but Arthur Hayes, the new recording-secretary, toiled as a semiskilled assembler. Tomessetti, a machine operator, was chosen as business agent, while the new general shop chair, Joseph Kowalewski, worked as a skilled molder. (44)

UE 232: The Pattern

The history of UE 232, at the American Hardware Company, is more representative of the social characteristics of the city's union leadership. Southern and eastern European workers were union pioneers from the beginning. Second-generation Poles were at the forefront, although they shared power with workers of a variety of other backgrounds. In fact, Anthony C. Uccello, the first president, had Italian roots. However, James Wilson, the union's second president (elected in 1938), was a homegrown product of the Fifth Ward Polish settlement. Other early officials include Carl Carrubba as vice-president, Salwocki as recording-secretary and Michalowski as financial-secretary. The majority of the union's four shop chairs (one for each plant) also were drawn from the "New Immigrant" working class, such as John Rurak, Walter Surko, and Chester Skurzewski, who served in this important role as the "grievors" mediating between the workers

44. Information on the titles of union leaders is drawn from articles in People's Press, The New Britain Herald and UE News, as well as Writers' Project interviews and union correspondence with the national UE office. Skill levels are determined from job listings in the 1937 New Britain City Directory.

and management on everyday concerns. (45)

By 1939, this leadership remained intact at the upper levels. Wilson was reelected president; Michalowski served another term as financial-secretary; and Salwocki became the business agent. Two notable additions were rising leaders: Robert Barrows, the new recording-secretary, became president in 1940; Henry Kosinski, the new vice-president, was elected president in 1941. (46)

The shop-level leadership also retained its ethnic diversity. In 1939, the four new shop chairs were Gustav Lux, Carl Anderson, Carl Carrubba, and Joseph Maczko. The Italian and Polish presence persisted, but also was joined by some "Old Immigrant" influence. (47)

The leadership of UAW 288 resembled UE 232 because it was almost uniformly "New Immigrant." The first officers were chosen in March 1937: Peter Danis served as president and George Mastascik served as vice-president. Both were reelected the following the year. Different workers staffed the other three elective offices over this two year period. Despite the turnover of personnel, all six had southern or eastern European roots. (48)

45. The New Britain Herald, Sept. 4, 1937; Sept. 15, 1937.

46. Ibid., Jan. 23, 1939.

47. Ibid.

48. Michael Krinski, Peter Bardoorian, Aleck Zaleski, Michael Stein, Vincent Matus, and Patrick Brayman. The New Britain Herald, March 15, 1937, March 28, 1938.

While full leadership rosters of other New Britain CIO locals are not available, we do know that the union presidents of three in 1939 affirm the pattern of "New Immigrant" leadership. Smolenski headed UAW 197; Andrew Hanisian headed UE 245; and Anthony Adomaitis served as president of UE 235. Once again we find few top leaders of "Old Immigrant" or old-stock American background. Contrary to Schatz, there was little age or ethnic difference between the leadership and the majority of the rank and file. (49)

49. One reason for the difference between these findings and Schatz's concerns the social composition of the factories under study. The "New Immigrant" working class did not dominate the workforce in some of Schatz's factory settings and this may explain the different data to some degree. At the Westinghouse plant in East Pittsburgh, for example, the presence of many German-speaking immigrants, with left-wing politics, appears to have been critical. However, at the General Electric plant in Erie, first and second-generation Poles and Italians formed roughly 40 percent of the factory workforce, but practically none served as union officials until World War Two.

Perhaps a more significant difference concerns methodology. Schatz's leadership data is drawn from four cities, while my data is based on a single city. In Schatz's case, the use of four cities may indicate that he focuses on the most prominent leaders from each; he does not attempt to provide a "total" picture of union leadership in one setting. This may bias his data toward older, more experienced, reputational leaders. By contrast, I have included all union leaders (where information is available), at both secondary and primary posts, within individual New Britain unions. John Cumbler uses a similar approach for early CIO leaders in Trenton, and his data also points to similar youth and ethnic backgrounds among the union pioneers. See especially the case of UE 409, where Cumbler shows that the leading early activist was twenty-three year old Bob Immordino, who became the union president. A Social History of Economic Decline, 117-123, 203-204, 255-256.

Cross-Skill Unity

Scholarly attention recently has focused on the role of skilled workers as activists and founders of the new industrial unions. This emphasis follows scholarship on the 19th century working class, which suggests that artisans and other skilled workers were often at the forefront of labor struggles. (50) Both Friedlander and Schatz bring into focus the key contributions that this segment of the workforce played in the resurgent 1930s labor movement. (51) One of the most recent articles on 1930s labor treats the leadership of skilled workers as constituting a general pattern. "If semiskilled operators comprised the CIO's mass constituency," writes Steve Frazer, "it was a certain kind of skilled worker, experienced politically as well as in trade union matters, who supplied the movement's elan and organizational genius." (52)

The union leadership in New Britain does not fit this pattern, as we will see. But, it is also necessary to explore not only if skilled (or nonskilled) workers became leaders, but also the relationship between skilled and nonskilled

50. David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology and Labor Struggles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

51. Peter Friedlander, The Emergence of a UAW Local; Ronald Schatz, "Union Pioneers" and The Electrical Workers. See also Steve Babson, "Class, Craft, and Culture: Tool and Die Makers and the Organization of the UAW," The Michigan Historical Review 14 (1988): 33-56.

52. Steve Frazer, "The 'Labor Question'," in Frazer and Gary Gerstle, eds., The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 65.

leaders. Did workers of different skill levels share power within union locals, or did each group have different bases of support and compete for power? This type of questioning helps illuminate the quality of union leadership and the degree of solidarity within the union and within the factory. It can also help suggest the extent that the early CIO constituted a social movement.

We have already seen that skilled workers played important roles in the history of UE 207 and UE 232, but did not dominate the leadership. The nonskilled held important posts. A collective profile of forty-six CIO leaders shows a significant degree of cross-skill unity. Skilled workers did not appear to define their interests as different from those of other manual workers. They did not retard or fragment working-class mobilization; they were content to share power with those of less skill. Overall, twenty-five of the leaders were skilled workers and twenty-one were nonskilled workers. The skilled workers included both production and nonproduction workers. Some were trade school graduates. The nonskilled were mostly machine operators, although some also were assemblers.

Skilled workers held more top posts within the unions, but nonskilled workers filled vital citywide leadership roles. We find the following pattern. Important local UE presidents were skilled workers, such as Dragone (a scalemaker), Wilson (an inspector), Uccello (a timekeeper) and Anthony Adomaitis

(a foreman). Many of the other UE offices also were staffed by skilled factory workers. However, this was by no means an exclusive pattern because the vice-presidents of both UE 207 and UE 232 were machine operators, and in each case the nonskilled worker went on to higher posts. Satalino, of UE 207, assumed the citywide leadership of the CIO Council after Smolenski stepped down in late 1938. We have already noted that Kosinski, a vice-president of UE 232, became president of the local in 1941. Carl Carruba, who preceded Kosinski as vice president, also worked as an assembler. Moreover, the majority of the shop chairs of UE 232 (between 1937 and 1939) were nonskilled. Of six (upon which information is available), three were assemblers, one was a polisher, and one worked as a filer. The only skilled worker was a lockmaker.

Other nonskilled leaders include both presidents of the UAW locals. Many of the UAW's other officeholders also worked at semiskilled occupations. In both 1937 and 1938, the president and vice president of UAW 288 were machine operators. We have information on four other officials of this union: two were nonskilled. In addition, the city's two early leading unionists -- Tomassetti and Smolenski -- were machine operators. (53)

It also becomes clear that the unions had a relatively high level of office turnover. This reflected not only the

53. Appendix F provides a list of CIO leaders, and their skills, between 1937 and 1939.

newness of the CIO as an organization, but also its democratic quality. The opportunities for leadership were not limited to a select group; nor did the leadership become entrenched. David Brody, for example, observes that career ambitions of leaders were not very important in this initial period, as compared to the postwar years. (54) In New Britain, this turnover was frequent among both top and secondary-level officers. Union elections were contested, often with up to three candidates running for a single office. However, by no means were most positions always changing. By 1939, several leaders in different locals had been reelected once or twice and emerged as leading unionists. Even then, however, they often were elected to different posts from one year to the next.

The individual and group experiences of a number of these leaders also reveal new perspectives on working-class development in this period. We can note, first of all, that all of those interviewed by the Writers' Project had working-class roots. Most of their fathers were factory workers and, with the exception of Tomessetti, were the principal wage-earners in their families. This is hardly a surprising finding because recent research suggests a pattern

54. David Brody, "Career Leadership and American Trade Unionism," in Frederic Cople Jaher, ed., The Age of Industrialism in America: Essays in Social Structure and Cultural Values (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 299.

of the working-class origins of post-bellum labor leaders.

(55) Clearly this included some skilled workers, such as Smolenski's father, who had been a farmer in Poland, but became a machinist soon after arriving in New Britain; Michalowski's father, who worked as a brass molder; and Petannovitch's father, a lockmaker.

Reflecting the youth of the leadership, we also find that an important minority was single and still lived at home in 1937. It is striking that the heads of LNPL (Tomessetti) and the city CIO Council (Smolenski) were single, as was the recording-secretary of LNPL (Stein), the state representative of the CIO Workers' Alliance (Caiazza), and a vice-president of UE 232 (Kosinski). It is important to point this out because it has been suggested recently that single and married second-generation workers exhibited vastly different patterns of union activity. Peter Friedlander suggests that the single workers (among Poles), while some of the most militant activists on the picket-line and at union meetings, did not aspire to become union officeholders. Rather their "street

55. The Writers' Project interviewed 12 CIO leaders covered here. All their fathers came from the working class. See also, David Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans 1862-1872 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967): 206; Warren Van Tine, The Making of the Labor Bureaucrat: Union Leadership in the United States, 1870-1920 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973): 21; Ginzberg, The Labor Leader, 49-54; Hal Seth Barron and Walter Licht, "Labor's Men: A Collective Biography of Union Officialdom During the New Deal Years," Labor History 19 (Fall 1978): 535; and Cumbler, A Social History of Economic Decline, 204.

gang" mentality was a source of factionalism within the union.

[They] possessed little if any political consciousness. Instead, pragmatic and adventurous, they idealized both combat and solidarity. On the other hand, they seemed nihilistic, narrow in their perspective, and if self-sacrificing as individuals, they sometimes appeared in union conflicts to be self-centered as a group. Yet their primary identification was the union, which to them, however, seemed to be something of a bigger and better gang. (56)

It is fruitful to consider if married and single second-generation workers had different perspectives on their participation in the labor movement. For example, married workers were more likely to view labor issues as family issues. Male married workers often assumed the responsibility to earn a "family wage" and considered job security an especially pressing issue. Moreover, many married workers viewed union dues as part of their family expenditures, while single workers more often worked, and paid dues, "for themselves," even when they contributed part of their wage to their parents. (57) While married workers vastly outnumbered others in office-holding in New Britain, a sharp distinction between the leadership aspirations of single versus married second-generation workers does not seem warranted because single workers made such a critical contribution as citywide strategists and tacticians.

We also find that many of those who became leaders spent

56. Friedlander, The Emergence of a UAW Local, 101.

57. Monthly Labor Review 50 (May 1940): 1076.

many years in the city prior to their union involvement. A survey of twenty-four leaders finds that about two-thirds lived in New Britain since at least 1930. (58) So while working-class families often were geographically mobile, the pioneers were part of a relatively settled population and found support for their labor activism in local life. Important leaders were born in the city, such as Petannovitch, Wilson, Caiazza, Michalowski, Zaleski, Barrows and Stein, while several others lived there since childhood, including Tomassetti, who was born in Pueblo, Colorado, but moved to New Britain when he was eleven; Smolenski, who moved from nearby New Haven when he was two; and Salwocki, who settled in town with his parents when he was four. UE president Dragone and Council leader Satalino also were in residence before the onset of the Depression. In the late 1930s, many of the leaders lived in the city's low-rent, densely populated Fifth and Sixth wards, often within walking distance of one another.

What attracted these workers to unions? Data on a select group of leaders shows that a minority (four of twelve) had previous familiarity with unions before their involvement with the CIO, either as former AFL members or as the sons of union fathers. (59) The career of Petannovitch demonstrates the former case. Even here, his AFL experience was limited because of his youth. After graduating from a New Britain

58. See appendix G.

59. See appendix D.

high school, Petannovitch joined the AFL's Cafeteria Workers Union while briefly employed as cook and dishwasher in a New York City restaurant. Having observed the union win a wage increase, he would recall that "this experience made me realize that workers had to organize if they wanted to help themselves." In 1935 he returned to New Britain and found work in a laundromat. He soon became involved in organizing meetings for various CIO drives and the national UE asked him to join its organizing staff and take charge of New Britain. (60)

Stein's experience is an example of the latter case. Stein's father often spoke, his son recalled, about his involvement in the Machinists Union. In his early teens Stein began reading the Machinists' newspaper his father subscribed to and often asked about the union. This early education left its imprint. Although Stein was not part of an initial group of workers that fought to establish a CIO union, he joined at the first word that a union was being formed. He said, "I sneaked out of my department and climbed three flights of stairs to find a fellow who had some applications blanks for membership in the union." Stein was elected recording-secretary at the third meeting of the Local. Thereafter, he also spent many hours helping to build the local LNPL. (61)

The fact that many young leaders became interested in

60. Petannovitch interview.

61. Stein interview.

the CIO without prior family or personal experience with unions also suggests the relatively large potential for workers to become leaders during the 1930s. The CIO was in many ways a logical outgrowth of this generation's experience in the workforce. For many, their class awareness and labor consciousness was rooted in the injustice they observed at work, and unions provided a way for them to combat the alienation and exploitation of factory labor. A similar pattern of class awareness, without necessarily being associated with Left parties, is also evident in the letters of workers across the country who wrote to the federal government during the Depression, as David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz document. (62)

There were other routes to union consciousness and the political Left served as a stimulus for several leaders. While only Salwocki was identified by the Writers' Project as a socialist, Michalowski recalls that several local leaders were influenced by the Left, although none of them publicly identified with Socialist or Communist groups. Of the twelve leaders interviewed by the Writers' Project, Michalowski suggests that perhaps one-quarter were Socialists or Communists. (63) There is good reason to accept this estimate

62. David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, eds., "Slaves of the Depression: Workers' Letters About Life on the Job" (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

63. Michalowski, interview by author. This is consistent with data on the religious attendance of these leaders; nine of the twelve leaders said they regularly attended church. My

because other scholars note that socialist ideas circulated widely in the working-class world of the 1930s and moved some young workers to become involved in labor struggles. (64)

An additional finding is that while many leaders continued to attend immigrant churches, few had gone to its parish school. Of the group of twelve leaders cited earlier, only one (Michalowski) appears to have attended a religious school, and even then only through grade school. It was common for second-generation leaders to attend public school, often into high school; in this sample, the majority (eight of ten) had gone to public high school. (65) We have already noted that the spread of high school education among the working class was a new phenomenon. Before World War One, a minority of working-class children remained in school beyond age fourteen. This included labor leaders as well as the rank and file. (66) During the interwar years many more children

assumption is that active church attendance and Left membership is unlikely.

64. For example, many of Friedlander's pioneers were associated with the Socialist party. Schatz also reports that many Socialists and Communists were among the union leaders. A similar finding is suggested for the organizers that Alice Lynd and Staughton Lynd include in Rank and File, many of whom were Communists. Friedlander, The Emergence of a UAW Local, 31; Schatz, "'Union Pioneers'," 587, 594; Alice Lynd and Staughton Lynd, Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working Class Organizers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

65. These leaders were: Tomessetti; Caiazza; Michalowski; Czerepuszko; Stein; Petannovitch; Salwocki and Wilson.

66. Van Tine, The Making of a Labor Bureaucrat, 13, 21; Ginzberg, The Labor Leader, 51.

stayed in school for longer periods, and this partially was a response to changing factory employment standards. In the 1930s, almost all the large factories in New England required new hires to secure a high school or trade school diploma. (67) Not only were many of the CIO pioneers drawn from these educated ranks, but they were among the most educated of their working-class peers because a number of them pursued additional training, either at trade school or general education evening courses. (68)

Why did union leadership attract public school graduates? In part this reflected the extent that second-generation workers moved outside their parents' immigrant world and embraced American civic and political culture. (69) Public schooling also encouraged the study of social problems. The more one knew of American history, economics, and politics, the more likely one might be in organizing for social change. Yet, we should not necessarily conclude that most second-generation workers during the 1930s considered themselves to be "Americanized." They neither eagerly tried to assimilate nor did they seem overly concerned with being accepted in American society. They drew on both American and ethnic

67. Qualifications for Beginning Workers in New England Industry (Boston, 1936), 82; Cultural and Educational Opportunities in Bridgeport (Bridgeport Adult Guidance Service, 1939), 35-45.

68. None attended higher education institutions.

69. Gerstle, "The Politics of Patriotism."

experiences to make sense of their work lives. We can see that these leaders did not radically sever their ties to the immigrant community. Their attendance in ethnic churches is one indication. Some unions also used the facilities of ethnic institutions to hold their early meetings. For example, UAW 288 met at the Italian War Veterans Hall. Several locals, including UE 235 and the SWOC chapter, met at a Lithuanian hall. Ties to the ethnic community are evident in other ways. UE 232 located its headquarters on Broad St., which was in the center of the Fifth Ward Polish community. When the UE unions organized a picnic in July 1939, they advertised both Polish and American dancing, to a live orchestra, as entertainment. (70) But ethnicity was not a defining issue in the union drives. Even the union use of ethnic facilities often occurred along multiethnic lines, as workers of many ethnicities attended the union gatherings. The relatively pluralistic, educated and stable second generation provided a solid base for industrial unionism.

Union formation in Bridgeport resembled New Britain in several important ways. The UE was also the leading industrial union and workers made significant headway in organizing during early 1937. The "New Immigrants" also played leading roles and the second generation often was at

70. The New Britain Herald, March 15, 1937, May 27, 1937, and Sept. 2, 1937; UE News, July 15, 1939.

the forefront. Overall, fifteen CIO locals were established by the end of 1937, covering close to 14,000 workers. UE 203 at the large GE plant was formally recognized in early March, followed by UE 209 at Bryant Electric and UE 210 at the Casco company, site of a "sit-down" strike. The task of organizing many of the city's largest plants was accomplished by late August, when Local 320 of the International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers union was formed at Bridgeport Brass, covering close to 3,000 workers. The CIO presence also included a variety of smaller locals in diverse settings, including a single local of the UAW; the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union; the Aluminum Workers Union; the United Mine Workers; the United Office and Professional Workers; the American Newspaper Guild; and the United Plaything and Novelty Workers. (71) In Connecticut cities, "Bridgeport has made the best start towards organizing its industrial workers," the state CIO Council reported in 1940. (72)

Workers of eastern and southern European background held prominent posts in a number of key UE locals. Examples include Joe Petriello, the president of UE 210, several officials of UE 229 (vice-president Mike Jilliano, recording-

71. The UE had six locals and the IMMSW had three. Bridgeport Common Council Meeting, Official Proceedings, Dec. 6, 1937, 11-12. The Bridgeport Post, March 4, 1937, March 5, 1937, Aug 20, 1937, Feb. 21, 1938.

72. Connecticut CIO Yearbook 1940, 7. Bridgeport hosted the first state CIO Union Council meeting in November 1938. The CIO News, Oct. 8, 1938.

secretary Joe Minito, financial-secretary Joe Kristoff), and many officials of UE 203. But this leadership did not constitute an exclusive pattern. Several of the UE locals elected officials of "Old Immigrant" and American background. (73) This mix is reflected in the leadership of the two city-wide CIO organizations, with UE 203's Joseph Julianelle heading LNPL and UE 258's Henry Johnson heading the CIO Council. For present purposes, however, it worth highlighting the "New Immigrant" leadership. A case study of UE 203 demonstrates their critical contribution to the labor movement.

UE 203

The General Electric factory, employing between 5,000 and 8,000 workers, was the largest in the city. The union at GE was formally recognized after Gerald Swope, the General Electric president, agreed to negotiate with the CIO at his various plants nationwide. Some union efforts were undertaken in the 1933-1936 period, including an effort by the Mechanics Educational Society of America (1934), the Communist-led Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union (1935), and the company-sponsored G.E. Works Council (1933). An independent Electrical and Radio Workers Union also was established

73. Note UE 237's president, Herbert Greenspoon; UE 209's president, initially Kenneth Redfern and then Harley DeLong; and UE 258's president, Henry Johnson. People's Press (Bridgeport edition), April 10, 1937; Aug. 21, 1937; Oct. 9, 1937; Bridgeport Post, Oct. 14, 1940.

(1936), which later affiliated with the UE. A founding member of this union recalled,

In the summer of 1936, I got 16 men together from my department, one Saturday afternoon, and took them down to the union headquarters on 15 Fairfield Ave. That was really our first meeting, and we elected a chairman for the union. Two weeks later, we had a meeting with Code Wire and Cable and elected all the officers.

Right after that, we went to see [W. Stewart] Clark [works manager]. Clark told us that he would deal with the union on individual cases, but not for the whole plant as we didn't have the majority yet. We had difficulties in the Radio department. Our first officers came from Radio, and the company transferred three of the officers out of town. We kept on, just the same, and got the tool room and the machinists organized. In November, 1936, we had a drive to get all the men paid up in their dues. All who paid up were listed as charter members.

That was how the union got started. It wasn't built overnight. You couldn't organize G.E. with craft unions. You had to have an industrial union. If everybody would know what the AFL is, nobody would join....It took a lot of hard work to build the union in G.E. (74)

There is evidence of generational patterns of union involvement. The UE did not cover all the workers in the plant; in early 1937, they organized about 3,000 out of a workforce of 5,500. (75) Other workers joined a company union, and many of these were the older male workers in the plant, as well as some of the female employees. Andrew Vassie, the president of the company union, was a middle-age

74. Mr. R. interview, box 133, CEGS Hartford. He was employed at G.E. since 1929.

75. The Bridgeport Post, March 4, 1937.

immigrant from Scotland. In the late 1930s he claimed that his union included 1,300 workers, half of them women, and others who were "older members, former members of the Company Council [in 1933-34] who were antagonized by the CIO." The UE recognized that special attention was needed to attract these older workers, and one way they approached the matter was to assure those over forty that the union "will not allow the double injustice of being fired for both age and union activity." (76)

Inside the UE local, which drew upon a diverse work force, there apparently were few interethnic conflicts. UE secretary Frank Fazekas informed the Writers' Project "that representatives of all national groups were employed in the G.E. plant, and that there were no group conflicts. He said the men jokingly called each other 'Hunky' or 'Wop', but only in fun and without sense of discrimination." (77) Fazekas, a thirty-one year old Hungarian-American, was an important early activist. He was employed at G.E. since 1930. His job at the factory was one of his first since joining the labor force and, like many other members of the second generation, he was the father of young children (ages six and seven) who

76. Andrew Vassie interview, March 1, 1939, box 133, CEGS Hartford. An UE official also described the composition of the company union as including "a lot of the old-timers" and "many women." Frank Fazekas interview, March 1, 1939, box 133, CEGS Hartford. See also "Older G.E. Workers Need Strong Union to Protect Jobs," People's Press (Bridgeport edition), Oct. 30, 1937.

77. Fazekas interview.

was trying to construct a stable life during the depression. His activism initially was rooted in Catholic social justice ideology. In 1935, he participated in a local social service club affiliated with the "radio priest," Father Charles E. Coughlin. From there, he became interested in organizing at his workplace and helped initiate the UE. (78)

Other young workers also were at the forefront of the union campaigns. Oliver Arsenault, the first president, was in his twenties when he helped form the union and he, too, was a new father during the early 1930s who initially was a follower of Father Coughlin. Arsenault was a dynamic and popular figure, whose leadership earned him the lasting support of the rank and file. By 1939, he ran unopposed for president and eventually served eight successive terms. He also helped organizing efforts at other plants during the early stages of the CIO organizing. For example, he was involved in the organization of the UE at Casco and served as a member of the committee that met with management to resolve the sit-down strike. (79)

78. Ibid.; Peter Gilmore, interview by author, May 10, 1990. Gilmore, the managing editor of the UE News, is a former Bridgeport alderman. See also Alan Brinkley, Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression (New York: Vintage Books, 1983); and Steve Jeffreys, "'Matters of Mutual Interest': The Unionization Process at Dodge Main, 1933-1939," in Nelson Lichtenstein and Stephen Meyer, eds., On the Line: Essays in the History of Auto Work (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 110-111.

79. The Bridgeport Post, March 4, 1937; Oct. 26, 1951; Gilmore, interview by author.

However, Arsenault is unrepresentative of other leaders in an important respect. His French-Canadian background departs from the "New Immigrant" leadership of the majority of early UE 203 leaders. (80)

A good example of this leadership is Julianelle, the union business agent, who was an American-born son of Italian immigrants. Like Arsenault, he was a popular leader and by 1939 ran unopposed for union office. He gained citywide prominence over a short period of time. Julianelle's union credits, in addition to president of LNPL, include secretary-treasurer of the CIO Council (in 1940); one of two UE officials to serve on the local draft board (in 1940), at the recommendation of the State CIO Council; and author of the weekly column, "GE Guide," in the People's Press. His belief in unionism as social justice was firm. One article he wrote for the union press was titled "I Am A Happy Man," detailing his efforts resolving worker grievances and the personal satisfaction he felt. (81)

A majority of the other elected officials also fit the "New Immigrant" leadership model. In 1937, these include John

80.Arsenault family interview, box 19, CEGS Storrs. See appendix H for a list of union officials.

81.Julianelle graduated from high school in New Haven, worked in several factories, first in a nonskilled position and eventually moving up to foreman, and then left New Haven for Bridgeport joining the GE workforce in 1935 as a serviceman. People's Press (Bridgeport edition), Sept. 25, 1937; Oct. 30, 1937; Jan. 29, 1938; Bridgeport Times-Star, Jan. 26, 1940; Joseph Julianelle interview, box 23, CEGS Storrs; Connecticut CIO Yearbook 1940, 8.

DeFrancisco, as vice-president; Peter J. DeMarco, as financial-secretary; and Frank Kogut, as treasurer. (82) The case of organizer Ernest DeMaio also is instructive. This young Italian-American was active in the earliest stages of organization, meeting with UE regional officials in April 1936 to coordinate the union drive at GE. DeMaio subsequently decided to join the UE organizing staff in New England instead of running for a local union office. (83)

One of the most important social characteristics of this leadership is the sharing of union power across skill lines. Indeed, nonskilled workers filled the top two posts. Arsenault and DeFrancisco were machine operators. However, other leaders toiled at skilled jobs, such as Julianelle, a serviceman; DeMarco and Fazekas, tubers; and Doelling, a toolmaker.

The extent of cross-skill unity is evident in the union's organizational life. The Local organized a variety of committees: Entertainment; Sick; Housing; Medical and Hospitalization; Slum Clearance; Legislative; Education; Constitution and Bylaws; and Sports. A diverse group of workers staffed these committees and skill does not appear to

82. Other workers who served in elected posts (in 1938 and 1939) are John Doelling, Andre Maye, Leonard Revet, and Fazekas. While clearly not all of these workers had eastern or southern European origins, the majority did and workers of Italian descent were often at the forefront.

83. Matthew Campbell to James B. Carey, April 24, 1936 and Jan 22, 1937, UE District 2 File, UE Archives; People's Press (national edition), April 18, 1936; Aug. 29, 1936.

have been a consideration in determining worker involvement. (See appendix I.) The machine operator Steve DeMatteo, for example, served on three committees, more than any other worker in the union. Other activists include the skilled braider Louis Stephano, who served on two committees; and the machine operator Dan Ryan, who also served on two committees and ran unsuccessfully against Fazekas for treasurer in 1939.

Were particular committees staffed by skilled versus nonskilled workers? Did the different groups stake out their own turf? This type of separatism did not occur. Moreover, the occupations of workers in nineteen committee posts show that 42 percent were filled by nonskilled workers. We can conclude that both skilled and nonskilled workers were the lifeblood of the union, and both groups worked together for the movement.

Gender and Labor Action

So far we have not mentioned any women leaders. They did have a presence. Several held secondary union posts and others were active on union committees. The early CIO saw a new discourse on the role of women in the unions. Single and married women raised demands for representation in an environment of liberal goals and ideological ferment. They led strikes, got arrested, and acted in "disorderly" and

militant ways. (84)

It often is suggested that women's activism declined after suffrage and did not resurface until the 1960s. (85) Scholars have begun to challenge this interpretation, noting cases of women's public organization during the interwar years. The focus is usually on middle and upper-class women. (86) One exception is Ruth Milkman's study of women in the auto and electrical industries. She finds significant grass-roots labor activity during the 1940s. (87) This activism is a continuation of the activism by women between 1937 and 1939.

Much of Bridgeport's union fever can be attributed to the women of UE 210. In April 1937, women workers at Casco waged a sit-down strike, the first in Bridgeport, which not only helped achieve recognition for the union but also helped energize the city's working-class. Scholars recently document that sit-downs by women occurred in many cities. For

84. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South," Journal of American History 73 (Sept. 1986): 354-382.

85. William O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969).

86. Attention is focused on professional women's groups, the Woman's party, efforts on behalf of the Shepard-Towner Act, peace activism, and the presence of women in the national New Deal and the Democratic party. Working-class efforts include the establishment of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor in 1920 and the beginning of special summer schools for women workers.

87. Ruth Milkman, Gender At Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 84-98.

example, sit-downs by factory women were waged in Baltimore, Trenton and Milwaukee; sit-downs among saleswomen, waitresses and clerks occurred in Flint, Philadelphia, Detroit, Brooklyn and Manhattan. (88) The details of the Casco strike show, first of all, that women organized the job action despite the public opposition of Connecticut Gov. Wilbur Cross, who denounced sit-down strikes as illegal. The governor's opposition did not matter. More than fifty workers participated in the strike, the vast majority of them women, and many more had planned to participate. A strike leader described the events,

[T]he assembly department and the automatic lighter department sat down first. The company got wind of it, and immediately spread the rumor that the union

88. My reading of The New York Times for early 1937 turns up more than a dozen other sit-down strikes waged by women. The fullest treatment of a sit-down strike remains Sidney Fine's Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969). But this UAW strike is misleading in indicating the extent of women's participation because women engaged in only secondary support roles in this sit-down action (as part of the Emergency Brigade and Women's Auxiliary). However, strikes by women workers were a minority overall in industrial America. Statistics for 1939 show that women made up 10 percent of workers involved in 2,639 strikes nationwide; strikes waged exclusively by women totaled only 3 percent of all strikes. Women and men joined together in 42 percent of all strikes. These statistics may be biased toward men because of the large number of coal and auto industry strikes that year. "Strikes in 1939," Monthly Labor Review (May 1939): 1098-99; Jo Ann E. Argersinger, Toward A New Deal in Baltimore: People and Government in the Great Depression (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 170; Edsforth, Class Conflict and Cultural Consensus: The Making of A Mass Consumer Society in Flint, Michigan (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 131-132; Cumbler, The Social History of Economic Decline, 256, 258; Holter, "Sources of CIO Success," 214; People's Press (national edition), March 20, 1937; Aug. 7, 1937.

organizer had ordered the workers to walk out. The workers got confused and started walking out. When the organizer got there, he found the majority of the workers on the outside. When we tried to get back in, we found the company had locked us out. All of Bridgeport came to see the sit-down strikers. Food was brought to them, and bedding was prepared. Some of the workers managed to get in by scaling the window at night. (89)

The sit-down gained the enthusiastic backing of the workers. A mass meeting of more than 500 was held the night of the action and fellow workers unanimously voted to stay away from their jobs. Several hundred workers then "crowded the streets outside the factory and shouted encouragement" to the sit-down strikers. A newspaper account reported,

The strikers in the plant seemed to be enjoying their position. They were continually calling to their friends outside asking for things to be sent up. Notes were sent down to be delivered to homes and inform relatives where they were. Several of the women sit-down strikers were married and had children, but friends in the street assured them that the youngsters would be given care. (90)

Anti-management sentiment had become widespread before the action. At first, a company union was formed. Strike leader Agnes "Scottie" Robinson, a committeewoman in the press department, recalled, "When the company saw how fast the workers were signing Union cards, they started to organize a company union." The president of the company became personally involved. "[He] used to come around and give us

89. Miss Y interview, n.d., box 133, CEGS Hartford.

90. The Bridgeport Telegraph, March 7, 1937.

pep talks. He'd tell us if we stick by him, we'd get a ten percent bonus and everything else." But workers then turned against the company union because the boss "wouldn't even sign a company union agreement. He would not put his name to paper." These tactics revealed management's true interest - to avoid the formation of a union, and many workers caught on. "Instead of gaining with the workers, he lost out. The Chairlady of the Company Union joined the CIO. We soon had the majority of workers." (91)

The occupation lasted twelve hours. The strikers left the plant at midnight after management agreed to begin negotiations with union representatives. Negotiations lasted close to a month and workers remained on strike until an agreement was reached. (92) Midway through, they rejected two management offers because they contained provisions for a delayed wage increase and only a gradual return to work. (93)

The strike became a community affair and an important test of the CIO's strength. It drew national UE leader Julius

91. Miss Y interview. Steve Jeffreys also finds that workers who joined company unions at Chrysler later became key leaders of the early CIO. They, too, became disenchanted with management promises. "'Matters of Mutual Interest'," 105-112.

92. The contract included a 10 percent wage increase; seniority rights; vacation with pay; time and a half for overtime; and plant sanitation improvements. Miss Y interview; The Bridgeport Telegram, May 2, 1937.

93. The Bridgeport Post, March 21, 1937.

Emspak to town to speak at a large May Day rally for the strikers. (94) Mayor Jasper McLevy got involved early on and helped negotiate an end to the sit-down and later conferred with officials on both sides to help secure a settlement. (95) Local shopkeepers and merchants donated food to help stock the strike kitchen. "We were helped a lot by the Bridgeport stores -- the bakeries gave bread -- and meat was donated," commented Robinson. "We set up a kitchen at the [Rakoczi] hall, where we served meals to the strikers." (96) The use of the Rakoczi Hall as strike headquarters was an indication that work and community ties reinforced each other. Many of the women workers were first and second-generation Hungarians. (97)

A worker like Robinson thought of herself in "public" ways. She noted with pride that she was a "good worker." She also protested when foremen or other management personnel did not take her seriously. Her life history shows that she moved through many different "women's jobs" before she worked at Casco's. None of them held much status for her; all were

94. "Bridgeport Labor Rallies to Support Casco Strikers," People's Press (Bridgeport edition), May 1, 1939.

95. The Bridgeport Telegram, March 7, 1937; The Bridgeport Post, March 12, 1937.

96. Miss Y interview.

97. Robinson said: "We had strike meetings every day at Rakoczi Hall on Bostwick Ave. That was our headquarters. A lot of the workers were Hungarian." In early 1939, a survey of 315 Hungarian workers at the plant found that 78 percent (245) were women. Miss Y interview; "Hungarians: General," 9, Feb. 15, 1939, box 18, CEGS Storrs.

simply dreaded labor to make a living.

In this strike, and in other cases of women's militancy, working-class women of a variety of ethnic backgrounds did not adhere to middle-class standards of domesticity and respectability. They engaged in confrontation, and sometimes violence, for the union cause. This was usually directed against other women who crossed union picket lines. In March 1937, 800 pocketbook workers, from four factories, went on strike in Bridgeport. Police arrested seven strikers, five of whom were women. One arrest occurred when Katherine Marano, a twenty-two year old Italian-American, assaulted a fellow woman worker who ignored the job action. Marano knocked out her two front teeth. (98) Arrests followed in a separate incident when three women strikers also assaulted a woman worker who remained on the job. Both single and married women united in this effort, as in the sit-down strike. (99)

An earlier case of women's militancy occurred in 1933. Approximately 1,200 dressmakers, from nineteen factories, waged a general strike in the dress industry, shutting all but one dress plant in Bridgeport. Four women were arrested during this action, including strike leader Minnie Cederholm, who police brought into custody after marching with strikers

98. The Bridgeport Post, March 3, 1937.

99. The women were Mary Gadacy, 20; Margaret Ferry, 30; and Mrs. Mary Kulchar, 59. The single workers Ferry and Catherine Marano also served on the union strike committee. Ibid., March 4, 1937, March 6, 1937.

in front of several factories.

Watchful of the picketing law which makes groups of three or more illegal, Mrs. Cederholm was starting to line up the women in double file when she was ordered to move by police.

She refused and, while her small army marched singing up and down in front of the factory, Mrs. Cederholm was held until the arrival of the patrol wagon. (100)

The other arrests involved a confrontation between union and nonunion women. The local newspaper derogatorily described the incident as "hair pulling matches." That type of description is one way that contemporaries tried to marginalize women's work and public identities. The incident in question occurred when the three union women confronted two nonunion workers in front of the Mitchell Brothers factory and asked them if they intended to cross the picket line. When they said yes, a fight broke out. All five were arrested and each was released on \$100 bond, a relatively large sum. (101)

Women in New Britain also marched on the street for unions and got arrested. The strike by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers union in 1937 was one of the few strikes in the city that year, and the only one in which police made arrests. About 105 shirtwaist workers, from the New Britain

100. The Bridgeport Times-Star, Aug. 16, 1933.

101. Ibid. In this case the union women were older and most were married. They include Anna Konowakski, 38; Minnie Alenceowicz, 34; and Stella Mazarko, 40. Konowakski and Alenceowicz were married, as was Minnie Cederholm, a prominent Socialist party activist.

Shirtwaist company, left their jobs in late January. However, twenty-five women workers stayed on the job and this minority became a source of tension. Violence between strikers and nonstrikers erupted in late February and police arrested twenty-seven strikers for attempting to stop the others from going into work. Assaults occurred on at least three different occasions.

The union women acted defiantly when they were brought into court in early March. The judge rebuked them for improper court behavior, upset that they demonstrated little deference to public authority. He lectured them for "smiling and giggling" during court proceedings and for "treating the matter as a joke." Their attitude also upset their own attorney, who told the judge, "I assure you they will not be in again on similar charges. If they are I won't defend them." The charges were eventually dropped. (102)

Those arrested ranged in age from seventeen to fifty, although the median age of the strikers was twenty-five. Second-generation "New Immigrant" women of a variety of backgrounds comprised the majority. (103) In other cases, second-generation women were at the forefront of the union campaigns in the women-dominated industries. The ACWU in Bridgeport was composed primarily of workers of Italian,

102.The New Britain Herald, Jan. 28, 1937, Feb. 25, 1937, March 2, 1937 and March 3, 1937. William F. Managan, a former judge, served as their counsel.

103.Ibid., March 3, 1937.

Slavish and Polish background between ages eighteen and thirty-five. (104)

It becomes clear from these examples that a significant number of women were part of the factory workforce and many women remained at work after they married. In several cases single women also were union activists, departing from the interpretation that this group of workers were apolitical, concerned primarily about nonwork subjects such as marriage and popular culture. (105) Nor did single and married women separate from one another at the workplace. Women's strike activity and militancy in Bridgeport and New Britain show both groups working together to advance the union cause.

Women Leaders

Women were elected to leadership posts in UE 210 and their representation increased over time. We might expect the opposite to occur: as the union became consolidated, male workers would come to dominate the leadership. By 1939, women, who were a majority of the workforce at Casco, elected their peers into half of the leadership positions. This gender dimension had "skill" ramifications because women were excluded from skilled production jobs and their presence

104. These women totaled 95 percent of the membership, according to the union business agent. Miss Santora interview, box 133, CEGS Hartford.

105. Leslie Woodcock Tentler, Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

helped block the dominance of a skilled elite.

In UE 210, women served as recording-secretary (Jean Smith), financial-secretary (Anna Quinton) and business agent ("Scottie" Robinson). (106) It is significant that women had responsibility for union financial and business matters, because these economic responsibilities depart from traditional stereotypes of women's primary nurturing and moral stewardship functions. These union "sisters" were not marginalized. It was the union financial-secretary, for example, who usually maintained a regular correspondence with the national union office. This official helped trace the progress of union organizing for national leaders. Meanwhile, the business agent was in regular contact with management about employment practices and helped the rank and file take advantage of union benefits. This influential post was often the only full-time paid union job. Thus, it is not surprising to find that Robinson emerged as a citywide leader, serving as an Executive Board member of the city CIO Council and an activist in the local LNPL. (107)

However, the women at Casco were the exception, rather than the rule. Few other unions matched UE 210 in the level of women's involvement. The history of UE 203 pales by

106.UE president Joseph Petriello worked as a toolmaker and treasurer Steve Bersik was employed as a semiskilled buffer.

107.The Bridgeport Post, April 12, 1937; April 22, 1937; Feb. 21, 1938; UE News, Aug. 5, 1939; Miss Y interview.

comparison. No women were elected to leadership posts, and this is not because women were uninterested in union jobs. We know that Elizabeth Caldwell ran for vice-president and Joan Zerska for recording-secretary in 1938, and that Elaine Akalis ran unsuccessfully for recording-secretary in 1939. It was relatively easy to be nominated for office: a candidate needed a petition with a mere ten signatures. It was quite another thing for a majority male workforce to elect a woman leader. However, women were elected as union trustees, filling four of seven posts in 1939. (108)

Bridgeport women served in several other leadership posts: as financial-secretary and treasurer of UE 237 and as financial secretary of UE 209. (109) Of approximately fifty-two CIO leaders studied in Bridgeport during this period, eleven (twenty-two percent) were women. This number clearly demonstrates the beginning of a women's presence in the CIO leadership. However, in New Britain, women achieved little formal CIO representation. We know of only two women

108. Two of these trustees, Mary Pribula and Vera Kosteka, also served on the Sick Committee. Other trustee were Katherine Fentowsky and Lena Strouse. We know that Akalis was single, Strouse was married and Pribula was widowed. Information on Local 203 is from: People's Press (Bridgeport edition), June 11, 1938; UE News, April 8, 1939; June 3, 1939; July 8, 1939; Bridgeport City Directory, 1938; and The Bridgeport Post, March, 4 1937; ; March 5, 1937; Feb. 21, 1938.

109. Peggy Beres, _____ Gaunley, and Amanda Byxlee. Betty Koppleman served as UE 210 secretary in 1940. Peggy Beres to Julius Emspak, Oct. 10, 1940 and March 26, 1941; Betty Koppleman to Julius Emspak, Dec. 30, 1940. UE 237 File and UE 210 File, UE Archives.

officials, Mary Kaminski (treasurer) of UE 232 and Anna Mack (recording-secretary) of UE 245. Male UE leaders expressed some sensitivity to women's concerns. In August 1939, a "Woman's Page" was added to the monthly shop bulletin issued by UE 207 and earlier the Local celebrated the work of a woman shop steward in the union press, noting that she helped to settle more than one hundred grievances in her department over a four-month period. (110) Thus, while the male leadership of UE 207 made several gestures to recognize the contributions of women workers, women continued to be excluded from institutional power in the Local, and in the CIO in general in New Britain. (111)

The rank and file leaders of the new CIO represented the coming of age of a new white working class in Bridgeport and New Britain. Many of their lives were "union lives." The union movement was a social movement. Skill and ethnic

110. People's Press (Bridgeport edition), Nov. 6, 1937; UE News, July 15, 1939.

111. The CIO contract often institutionalized separate minimum wage rates for men and women. Many CIO contracts did not explicitly cover women at all. Of 202 UE contracts in force in 1939, only 50 contained minimum wage provisions for women, and 15 of these set the hourly wage at 35 cents. Meanwhile, provisions for men appeared in 177 contracts, of which 113 set the hourly rate at 45 cents or above. For example, UE 232's contract set a minimum wage of 50 cents for men and 40 cents for women. It is estimated that the average yearly income of male wage-laborers in 1937 was about \$1,027, while female laborers received only about half that amount, at \$525. Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention, 1939, 3-6, 141, 176; "Comparative Earnings and Hours of Men and Women, 1937-38," Monthly Labor Review 48 (May 1939): 103-105; UE News June 24, 1939; Aug. 19, 1939.

divisions did not pose an obstacle to working-class unity. However, the place of women within this movement was less certain. Women and men often occupied separate worlds in the factory, and women had a more difficult time securing leadership roles. But such gender division did not undermine the union fever that swept through industrial Connecticut. Women and men marched for union recognition, sometimes separately and sometimes together. They both shared the common goal to make their hometowns "100% Union."

CHAPTER 6

SOURCES OF FACTORY SOLIDARITY

What factors explain the unity of skilled and unskilled factory workers? What were sources of workplace solidarity?

During the 1930s the conditions for factory unity were far more numerous, far more important than forces for fragmentation and provided the basis for the successful organization of the CIO. These conditions especially centered on poor working conditions and the arbitrary control of managers. Both skilled and nonskilled organized to gain more control over shopfloor conditions.

Since the late 1960s numerous studies have refocused attention on the critical importance of shopfloor struggles. The "Pittsburgh School" of labor history (a name suggested by Alan Dawley) shows the multiple ways that workers restricted output, resisted scientific management, fought over the length of the workday, quit work, and struggled for a sense of dignity on the job. The Pittsburgh School, which has concentrated on the 19th and early 20th centuries, explores the ways "workers experienced class abrad[ing] class in the day-to-day encounter with wage labor." (1) Workers were active

1. Alan Dawley, "David Montgomery's The Fall of the House of Labor: A Roundtable Discussion," Radical History Review 40 (Winter 1988): 102. Studies prior to the New Labor History

and powerful. David Montgomery, echoing Big Bill Hayward, reminds us that in many cases, "The manager's brains have been under the workman's cap." (2)

I find that shopfloor relationships, especially during the 1930s, brought workers together in several ways. To begin with, an important feature of factory life in this decade was the fluidity of skill levels. Several studies

also emphasized aspects of control efforts. See especially Stanley B. Mathewson, Restriction of Output Among Unorganized Workers (New York, 1931) Several studies focused on control efforts through unions, especially works by Jacob H. Hollander, George E. Barnett, William Haber, Sumner Slichter, and Lloyd Ulman. An interpretative difference emerges, however, between the New Labor History and these previous studies. The latter generally view control efforts as an institutional trade union weapon to influence the job market, particularly to limit overproduction and to slow technological change in order to curb unemployment. The New Labor History generally focuses on control efforts as a manifestation of worker resistance to management, and as an expression of class consciousness. Control efforts often are studied independent of trade unions, viewed as rank and file efforts to contest the degradation of the labor process. The different approaches sometimes are evident in the language that scholars use. One approach emphasizes "job control." The other emphasizes "workers' control." Hollander and Barnett, eds., Studies in American Trade Unionism (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1907); Barnett, Chapters on Machinery and Labor (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926); Haber, Industrial Relations in the Building Industry (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930); Slichter, Union Policies and Industrial Management (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1941); Ulman, The Rise of the National Trade Union (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955). See also Irwin Yellowitz, Industrialization and the American Labor Movement, 1850-1900 (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977), 57-60, 75-94.

2. David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology and Labor Struggles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 9, 27. He also uses this phrase for the title of chapter 1 in The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

suggest that movement both up and down the ladder was common. One result of such movement is that skilled workers did not necessarily consider those below them to be in opposition to their interests, if only because they might assume such jobs in the future. We should also consider the ways that skilled workers had sympathy for those in less skilled jobs because many of them had done these jobs themselves in former days.

In Philadelphia, a study of more than 650 machinists found that almost 40 percent started working in semiskilled manufacturing jobs. (3) In San Jose, many skilled workers also had toiled in other jobs before they reached a skilled occupation. Approximately 52 percent reported that their skilled job was their second occupation and 46 percent said it was their third job. (4) It also becomes clear that as one became older, one was more likely to secure skilled employment. According to the 1930 Census, older workers were more likely to be employed at skilled jobs than younger workers. While only 13 percent of 18-19 year-olds and 18 percent of 20-24 year olds were employed at skilled jobs, some 23 percent of 25-34 year-olds and 25 percent of 35-44 year-

3. The others included 17 percent that started in low-level clerical work; 8 percent in nonmanufacturing unskilled jobs; and 35 percent in the machinist trade. Ten Years of Work Experience of Philadelphia Machinists (Philadelphia: Works Progress Administration and the Industrial Research Department, University of Pennsylvania, 1935), 15, 27.

4. Percy E. Davidson and H. Dewey Anderson, Occupational Mobility in An American Community (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1937), 95-101.

olds filled skilled jobs. (5)

Downward movement was common and may have helped undermine a narrow skill consciousness. Skilled workers sometimes were given semiskilled jobs on a temporary basis. We have an example of this type of movement at General Electric in Bridgeport. Eleven welders were employed in the Home-Laundry division in 1939; when work was slow in January, four were transferred to the assembly line. This did not please the skilled workers, who suffered a reduction in their wages and skills, and they sought the help of their union. (6) In general, the skilled worker had a slightly better chance of losing ground during the 1930s, sinking into semi or unskilled labor, than moving up into white-collar occupations.

(7) Age sometimes was a critical factor. Management often considered workers to be "used up" by the time they turned forty-five. However, even before they were discharged, they sometimes were "bumped" down the ladder as the best jobs were given to younger workers.

It often is overlooked that this feature of factory life helped to promote solidarity across skill levels. It was one

5.W. S. Woytinsky, Labor in the United States: Basic Statistics for Social Security (Washington: Committee on Social Security, 1939), 58, 62, especially Table 12.

6. See UE 203 minutes, "Negotiating Committee Meeting with the Management," March 1, 1939, GE Conference Board Series, Local 203, UE Archives, University of Pittsburgh.

7. Stephan Thernstrom, The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis 1880-1970 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 57.

reason why the wages of nonskilled workers interested workers at higher skill levels. As an UAW official commented,

Knowing that, in this age of speed and mass production, the average production employee's work-life is sharply reduced and that, becoming slower as he grows older, he must of necessity drop to a lower or slower job, the UAWA is trying to build the lowest job up to a living wage in order to be prepared for the toolmakers, diemakers, lathe hands, and production workers who can no longer keep their production up to shop requirements. (8)

The Bridgeport experience highlights how workers were brought together. UAW 505, for example, rallied a diverse rank and file -- first and second-generation Italian, Hungarian, Polish, German and Scotch workers -- around the age discrimination issue. "The company wanted to discharge 15 or 20 of the older men -- men who had worked in the plant for a good many years," a union activist recalled. "It was really around the issue of saving the jobs of the older men that we were able to tighten up our union organization in the shop. We told the fellows, 'This is the opportunity for the young fellows to protect the older men.' They could see that if they didn't protect the older men now, that someday when they got older they might be in the same boat." (9)

There was good reason to be concerned. Once older workers were discharged from their jobs, they had little opportunity to be hired in the manufacturing sector. A government study of Hartford workers concluded that

8. United Automobile Worker, June 12, 1937.

9. Mr. S interview, July 5, 1939, box 133, CEGS Hartford.

"opportunities for unskilled and semiskilled individuals over 45 are limited." At the Remington Arms company, men over forty "weren't even given an application to fill. They were just told, 'Sorry -- No help wanted.'" (10)

A Slovak worker was the victim of age discrimination at the Bridgeport Brass factory. He worked at the plant for more than five years, but one day the employment manager told him he was too old to be kept. He protested, telling the manager, "I have plenty strong muscles, like a young man, and even better." The manager did not care. The worker remembered being told, "Well, I'm sorry John, I can't take you even if we have any kind of job, because the factory wants only young men." (11)

Factory management categorized workers as "old" before the rest of society. A forty-five year old woman, fired from her job because of her age, remarked, "I am an old lady now, but one time I used to work like everybody else." She noted

10. Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1936 Report, 109; The Bridgeport Post, Sept. 29, 1939. See also a study of New Haven by Margaret H. Hogg, The Incidence of Work Shortage (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1932), 26-30; and Richard J. Jensen, "The Causes and Cures of Unemployment in the Great Depression," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 19 (Spring 1989): 570. The Left also protested age discrimination. When Socialist Jasper McLevy ran for Governor in 1932, he raised the issue in the campaign, noting that "modern industry has little room for those approaching the twilight of life. Many establishments and factories will not employ new workers after they have reached the age of forty-five and some still have a lower limit." McLevy, "Republican and Democratic Parties are 'Bankrupt in Principles'," Bridgeport Public Library.

11. "Hallett St. Survey," 54, Dec. 1938, box 18, CEGS Storrs.

that before World War One the factories used to favor older workers because they were more reliable and experienced. "Now," she said, "they just want young kids." (12) It is no surprise to find that workers above age forty-five comprised many of those on relief in Bridgeport. (13)

Age discrimination and skill fluidity, then, helped to close the skill gap in the factory. The skilled worker did not readily view the nonskilled as lazy or inferior; or embrace a narrow "stiff-backed" individualism as some other segments of the population did. There were other outside cultural currents that also encouraged cross-skill unity, particularly the language and values of trade unions, New Dealers, and the Left. The CIO offered an inclusive rhetoric -- "to organize the unorganized" -- and its stress on "industrial democracy" had widespread currency. President Roosevelt's sympathy for the "forgotten man," promotion of the welfare state and embrace of trade union rights also were resources to build factory solidarity. With the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in June 1933, union organizers were quick to note that "The President Wants You to Organize." And it is likely that the language of the Left "reached unorganized workers in ways that are now little

12. Ibid., 55.

13. The Bridgeport Post, April 4, 1936.

understood." (14) We should keep in mind the observation of the Writers' Project in 1939, "The trend in New Britain today is toward an integrated society rather than one based on the principles of rugged individualism." (15)

Common Grievances

The arbitrary power of management created common grievances shared by both skilled and nonskilled workers. The skilled worker, despite his "advantages," was not isolated in the factory or shielded from the everyday power of management. He, too, faced discrimination and resented unjust intervention, especially as represented by the foreman. Efforts to curb the power of foremen were an important motive for the CIO organizing drives. The skilled UE leader Ladislaus Michalowski recalled his sense of injustice in seeing "promotions and better jobs handed out on the basis of favoritism and influence." As he noted, before the union, "Grievances were prevalent but the workers were helpless to do anything about them because of the foreman's power to discharge any worker he considered troublesome and undesirable." (16)

14. David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, eds., "Slaves of the Depression": Workers' Letters About Life on the Job (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 15.

15. "The CIO in New Britain," 27, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

16. Ladislaus Michalowski interview, March 8, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

A Bridgeport toolmaker similarly complained of the foreman's arbitrary power. "There is a lot of discrimination on the job," he told the Writers' Project. "We have a fellow, a carpenter, that was brought in to make a tool crib. Anybody can make it, you know, it was just one of those things where you put up a couple of studs and put chicken wire around it. I ain't no carpenter but I could have done the work better than he did. Then do you know what they did? When he got through with the tool crib they put him on benchwork and now he is a foreman. You know the way he got the job was through the foreman going around with his sister." Incidents like these were common. They provoked his sense of justice. "There is all kinds of stuff like that. Punks who never had no training, if they knew the boss or the foreman -- it's mostly the foreman's fault -- come in and get better jobs than the guys there for long times." Such favoritism made work life alienating. "I think right is right and a guy that's put in a lot of time should get the breaks...I've found the same thing in the other shops. The ones who know the bosses get the breaks. Christ, they spoil more stuff. It's wicked." (17)

17. "Magyar Interview No. 18," box 27, CEGS Storrs. Sentiment against foremen was widespread. A Pennsylvania mill worker remembered the "abuses by the boss." A steelworker in Gary, Indiana, recalled the arbitrary "whim and will" of the foreman. A Waterbury brass roller said the formation of the CIO helped the workers to challenge the foreman's power and "stand up and be men." John Bodnar, Workers' World: Kinship, Community and Protest in an Industrializing Society, 1900-1940 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 159; Helen Lynd and Staughton Lynd, Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working Class Organizers (Boston: Beacon Press,

The new unions spent considerable time monitoring foremen, and the local union press served as a prominent forum to threaten and expose those who were particularly difficult. UE 207 reprimanded a foreman in the UE News for "doing workers out of jobs by painting benches and doing odd jobs in his division." This was a serious matter because worker jobs were at stake. "This work rightly belongs to the workers," the union reported. "We wonder if this foreman realizes that he is taking the bread from the mouths of the workers in his department." (18)

On another occasion the Local warned several supervisors that they were reserving special space for them in the "Chamber of Horrors" exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair. The union said it planned to make life-size statutes of the anti-union bosses and foremen so "these slave-drivers can gain a national reputation." (19)

The union also objected when foremen conducted productivity checks. They demanded that foremen respect the workers' turf. "A certain foreman previously mentioned for going around with a dollar stop watch and timing employees

1973), 106; Jeremy Brecher, Jerry Lombardi, and Jan Stackhouse, eds., Brass Valley: The Story of Working Peoples' Lives and Struggles in an American Industrial Region (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 164; David Gartman, Auto Slavery: The Labor Process in the American Automobile Industry, 1897-1950 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 263-268.

18. UE News, Jan. 28, 1939.

19. People's Press (Bridgeport edition), July 24, 1937.

behind their backs, has finally stopped," the union reported, "but we are giving notice to another foreman that his name will be mentioned if he continues this practice." (20) Such a threat was common as the union tried to preserve their new rights.

Although management formally had recognized the CIO, there was still doubt in these early years that management would faithfully adhere to the new collective bargaining agreements. There was special concern that they adhere to the guidelines of the union grievance procedure to resolve workplace complaints. On another occasion, UE 207 found it necessary to issue this warning: "Notice to all foreman in Landers (including superintendents and officers). Unfair labor practices such as coercion and intimidation will not be tolerated by Local 207 any longer. In short Local 207 will not stand for any foreman or superintendent or officer trying to discourage any worker from presenting grievances to them." (21) Despite such resistance, the Local helped settle a very large number of complaints -- about 500 -- during their first two years. The union helped to alter the balance of power on the shopfloor. (22)

The physical dangers of the workplace also crossed skill lines. Much feared industrial "accidents" were a constant

20. UE News, Jan. 28, 1939.

21. Ibid., April 8, 1939.

22. "The CIO in New Britain," 23.

threat. Injuries were frequent, often involving the laceration or fracture of part of the hand, a thumb or forefinger that "got in the way" of a machine, or was cut by sharp tools. Burns on hands or feet also were common; so was flying debris, such as metal chips, which sometimes became lodged in the worker's eyes. Hands or feet sometimes were crushed under, or between, heavy metal machinery. (23)

Both skilled and nonskilled feared mutilation by machinery. At Casco, a press operator told a reporter in 1939 that she was worried that "they're going to speed up the machines" and "there will be a lot more accidents." The power presses were dangerous, she said, because "there's always the danger of the press repeating...You press your foot once [on the foot lever] and the press may repeat two or three times. Of course, when it does that your hands get caught in the machine." (24) A press operator at Bridgeport Brass described these problems during the mid-1930s. He saw many fingers chopped up by machines, noting, "Almost all of the old-timers figured that they had a job for life because most of them had

23. Job Descriptions for Machine Shops (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1938), 79-80. The Bridgeport Post often listed compensation awards for many of these types of injuries. See also David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, eds., Dying for Work: Safety and Health in the United States (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

24. Mrs. Z interview, box 21, CEGS Storrs. Several studies suggest that rapid mechanization after World War One increased the number and severity of industrial accidents. See Harry Jerome, Mechanization in Industry (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1934), 404-406.

at least a couple of fingers taken off." (25)

There also was the mental stress caused by the fast pace of work. The number of worker illnesses classified as "nervous depression" had vastly increased during the late 1920s. (26) And adjusting to new machinery was no less difficult during the 1930s. A twenty year old woman worker, employed at the Frisbie Pie company in Bridgeport, recalled, "Boy, talk about slave-drivers in that place...I tried to keep up with the speed of the machine [but] it would almost wear me out...Why, sometimes I used to go to sleep at night and all I'd dream about was the conveyor whizzing by me. So finally it got on my nerves and I had to quit the job." (27)

Management's disregard for worker health was a significant source of labor discontent. Before the formation of the CIO, firms sometimes gave workers compensation for accidents, but perhaps more often workers were afraid to file claims because they believed they would be fired. State worker compensation laws had a marginal benefit when workers were reluctant to invoke their provisions. Moreover, company doctors often provided poor health care in the absence of union accountability. As one worker explained,

When anybody gets hurt in the Brass Shop, the

25."Hallett St. Survey," 56-57.

26.Georges Friedmann, Industrial Society: The Emergence of the Human Problems of Automation (New York: The Free Press, 1955), 277.

27."Hallett St. Survey," 50.

factory always fixes it up. Here is the idea. You get a finger off and the company doctor takes care of it. Then they give you compensation for as long as you got the bandage on your finger. They try to make you come to work, even if you can't work, just as long as you 'fool' around and make out that you're working. The reason they do this is that the company wants to keep a good record and say that they had very few accidents. I think that each company tries to see who can have a better record. The other thing is that the company likes to see that none of the people get a settlement. They only get compensation. And even if they could get the compensation the guys working in the plant would rather not take it, because here's the way it is. If you collect your compensation, you're just as good as fired. And everybody knows this, so that's why nobody ever tries to get a full settlement. (28)

A skilled worker like UE leader Frank Fazekas, who was employed as a tuber, faced similar healthplace dangers. He too worried that "sometimes the men got their fingers caught in the machines." He worked on machinery which crushed and softened rubber and it had the potential, as he said, to become a "huge meat grinding machine." His job also required that he regulate the flow of water to the machine so that "the steam stays up to a certain pressure." That task was dangerous because of the "tremendous pressure on the steam joints, and the danger of them being blown off." (29)

Fazekas faced other health-related production problems. The wires that ran his machine went through soapstone powder and "you get powder flying around and your clothes get white."

28.Ibid., 56-57.

29.Frazekas (as well as Tomessetti) was elected to the UE New England District Council in 1939. Frank Fazekas interview, March 1, 1939, box 133, CEGS Hartford; UE News, Oct. 28, 1939.

The tuber used an air hose to blow the powder off his machine when it got thick, but that hardly did the task. For one thing, to use the air hose required that he stop working on the machine, and foremen did not want him to do this very often. "You notice the powder in breathing," Fazekas said, adding that "you have to take a shower every night and change your clothes." (30)

Frazekas was fortunate to have a blower. Iron foundry workers at the Landers factory started a petition drive in 1939 to get one installed, and the union leadership made the issue a top priority in its early negotiations. The union realized that health was a class issue; that workers needed better health protection; and that the union could use the issue of health in organizing. "In the last foundry department meeting," UE 207 reported, "the members were so glad to hear the report that the blower was coming very soon that they promised to make the foundry a 100% union department, and that nobody will be allowed to drop behind in their dues."³¹

30.Frazekas interview.

31.UE News, April 29, 1939; June 10, 1939. At General Electric the health rights of workers also became an early union issue. The union monitored the use of chemicals plantwide. "Is your occupation a hazardous one?" the union asked in early 1937. "Do you work near, or with benzol, ead, holowax, acids, dust, etc. If so, get in touch with the union office." The union medical committee also raised the grievances of paint sprayers during labor-management negotiations. The union demanded special wash periods for the sprayers to avoid the accumulation of paint on hands and arms. UE 203 minutes, "Negotiating Committee Meeting with

"Fast Machines"

When we turn to the question of technology, we find another source for common grievances. Technology in western capitalist nations rarely has been static. But the 1920s were especially critical for the widespread adoption of systems of mass production. The dynamic quality of mass production -- with the frequent introduction of new machinery -- disrupted the worklife of both nonskilled and skilled production workers and made both groups think they were vulnerable to displacement.

Harry Jerome's 1934 study, Mechanization in Industry, chartered much of this rapid technological change. It is estimated that thirty-two workers of each one hundred in manufacturing that were required in 1920 were made unnecessary by 1929 because of the introduction of new machinery. Perhaps as many as two million workers were displaced by machinery during this period. While many of these workers eventually were reabsorbed into the workforce, these workers often endured significant interim periods of joblessness. A survey of more than one hundred manufacturing establishments reported that displacement by machinery affected both skilled and nonskilled: twenty-five percent of the firms reported the greatest reduction of workers in the skilled grade. Thus, the experience of the 1920s left many workers, across skill lines

the Management"; People's Press (Bridgeport edition), Jan. 23, 1937.

in manufacturing, with a strong perception that their job security was weak. (32)

David Hounshell recently documents the relatively late transition to mass production at the Ford Motor company. For example, the introduction of new machine tools and continuous drum-milling machines took place between 1925 and 1932 and the result was a faster and more productive assembly line, underpinning Ford's switch from the Model T to Model A car.

(33) Similarly, Robert Asher finds that textile mills in Connecticut began installing electric motors, in place of steam, to drive textile machinery during the 1920s. And in the metal industries, electric motor drives were increasingly substituted for transmission belts in the transfer of power from steam engines to individual machine tools. The brass industry witnessed the introduction of new acid baths and rolls and new electric motor controls on furnaces. (34)

These new production methods accelerated the pace and output of work. The large Bridgeport Brass company boasted,

32.Jerome, Mechanization in Industry, 382-384, 401. See also Wladimir Woytinsky, Three Sources of Unemployment: The Combined Action of Population Change, Technical Progress and Economic Development (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1935), 34-35, 50-51.

33.David Hounshell, From the American System to Mass Production, 1800-1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985).

34.Robert Asher, Connecticut Workers and a Half Century of Technological Change, 1930-1980 (Storrs: Center for Oral History, University of Connecticut, 1983), 15, 20; Jerome, Mechanization in Industry, 60-66, 80, 250-254.

Many important changes have taken place in our own mills in the past few years. Here we have the most modern sheet rolling mill in the country, while modernization and additional new equipment have greatly improved our tube and rod mills. A visit to some other mill will quickly show the difference. In place of small one hundred or two hundred pound bars, each of which have to be lifted and pushed many, many times with back-breaking labor, our huge cakes, many of them weighing over 75 pounds are lifted by powerful overhead cranes and moved about on roller top conveyors. Electric controls operate the rolls and furnaces, which are much larger and more powerful than the old timers. (35)

By 1939 the national UE was calling attention to the consequences of "widespread technological change" which it said "affect[ed] not only the machines which make the goods, but new materials and new production methods. What it means is that increases in production no longer inevitably mean increases in employment." Echoing the 19th century discourse on the "Machinery Question," the union admitted that there was little doubt that new machinery helped produce more total industrial output. However, workers did not gain from the increased productivity. This situation, the UE concluded, was the "basic injustice of present-day American life: that the vast majority of the people do more than their share of work and get less than their share of it." (36)

In New Britain, the five UE locals held a conference in late 1939 to assess the progress of unionism in the city. It

35. Bridgeport Brass News, May 1942.

36. Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention of the United Electrical, Mine, and Radio Workers of America, 198.

was agreed that one of the major problems facing labor was the "uncontrolled installation of new machinery and increased production with fewer and fewer hands." However, the solution the union proposed -- "labor's job is clear, to organize the unorganized for the protection of all" -- did not challenge management's prerogative. (37) One option was to strike over the introduction of new machinery. There is evidence of at least one such strike in Bridgeport. About 350 women shirtwaist workers, who were members of ACWU, waged an unauthorized strike in late August 1937, to protest the installation of machinery that they believed would reduce their piece-work output. (38) But their union did not support such a strategy; nor did most other unions.

The UE had good reason to complain about new machinery. Connecticut firms often responded to the uncertainty of the depression by introducing new machinery in order to cut labor costs and boost productivity. This was true at the beginning of the decade, when the Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics noted that displacement by machinery "cuts out thousands." (39) It was equally true near the decade's end, and was sometimes accelerated by the anticipation of large war production orders. "From all information one can gather," James Matles reported in February 1939, "it appears that

37.UE News, Dec. 9, 1939.

38.The Bridgeport Post, Aug. 23, 1937.

39.Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1930 Report, 15.

during the past year of depression industry has made especially rapid strokes in introducing new machinery and equipment and new methods of production." (40)

By and large, unions had little power to halt displacement by machinery. During the rapid mechanization of the late 19th century, unions (of skilled workers) criticized the introduction of new machinery, but rarely found effective means to stop displacement. In some cases unions initially waged strikes, but in most cases found themselves trying to slow technological change by establishing restrictive work rules and by trying to unionize all skilled workers in a trade. (41) Protest against the introduction of new technology was an important reason for the formation of unions in this period and it formed an important social factor for worker unity during the 1930s. The possibility of being displaced by "fast machines" was a shared working-class fear. A 1939 Gallup Poll reported that the most common reason given for unemployment, among those on relief, was the introduction of new machinery in industry. (42) E. Wight Bakke, in a

40. James J. Matles, "New Machinery and Unemployment," UE News, Feb. 6, 1939.

41. Yellowitz, Industrialization and the American Labor Movement, chps. 5, 6; Jerome, Mechanization in Industry, 355-363. After World War Two, unions often fought for severance pay for displaced workers as one way to slow the introduction of new machinery and to compensate employees. Fred Joiner, "Developments in Union Contracts," in Colston E. Warne, ed., Labor in Postwar America (Brooklyn: Remsen Press, 1949), 41.

42. George H. Gallup, The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971 Vol. I (New York: Random House, 1972), 161.

survey of 200 unemployed workers in New Haven, reported: "If American workers had an impersonal devil, that devil is the machine." (43)

Both skilled and nonskilled workers interviewed in Bridgeport also blamed hard times on advances in mechanization. As one machinist remarked,

Since I got out of there plenty of others lost their jobs too. And what's to blame? The machine. It's like Frankenstein. After they made him they didn't know how to stop him. What right have the factories got to put people out of work when the people do their work right? (44)

He worked at the Remington company and "after [being laid off] I still kept going to the shop to see if there was a chance of getting in again, but it was no use because the other fellow was doing some of the work I used to do besides taking care of his own machines. That goes to show that things are getting worse instead of better."

If things were getting worse, what could be done? He did not blame himself for his predicament, but looked to the social reasons and social agency behind his predicament. (45)

The machines are the trouble alright. But what the hell can we do about it? I tried to think of some way the whole

43.E. Wight Bakke, The Unemployed Worker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), 68.

44."Hallett St. Survey," 45-47.

45.The issue of self-blame is discussed by William R. Phillips and Bernard Sternsher, "Victims of the Great Depression: The Question of Blame and First-Person History," in Sternsher, ed., Hitting Home: The Great Depression in Town and Country (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1989).

mess could be straightened out, but I can't see how they're going to do it. The people are pretty bad off nowadays and the rest is yet to come. The only way that I could see out of it is that if the factories wanted to do it, they would let the people work only part-time on these machines and give the other guys a chance. Now if they had this fellow that's doing his job and mine at the same time -- if they had him working part-time and gave me part-time, things wouldn't be so bad. But no, instead they just go ahead and maybe let one man work his eight hours and sometimes over-time just so that he could hold down the work of two people. That's the kind of stuff that's going to hold things down. Well, maybe someday we'll have a revolution so that all the people will get a break. Things can't keep up like they're going now. Where are all these people going to be put that have lost jobs on account of fast machines? (46)

A survey of forty families on Hallett St. in Bridgeport found that a majority believed the main cause of unemployment was "machines." A twenty-eight year old press operator, who was laid-off from the Bryant Electric factory, remarked, "[A]ll the factories all over have been doing the same thing. No matter where you go you'll find people that are out of work, and if you ask them why they'll tell you that they were laid-off because they have machines doing the work." He saw new automatic foot presses introduced in 1930. The new presses "would do the work of five people....it put plenty of people out of work." It also accelerated the pace of work. Management started using new timers to speed-up production. At first, this worker resisted as best as he could. "Sometimes when they did this I made out that I had to go to the toilet, so they wouldn't be able to time me." Eventually,

46."Hallett St. Survey," 45-47.

management was able to more than double his work output through the combination of new machinery and timed speed-ups. "I was putting out 50 switches an hour and after they got after me they made me put out over a hundred an hour. Instead of giving me double of what I was making, they gave me \$2.50 extra than what I was getting before the speed-up. There was nothing I could do about it. In fact when I tried to get a better price they told me that if I didn't like it that I could stay out of work and they would get somebody else to do the job." (47)

Comments such as these suggest the oppositional relationship between workers and management. Management forced him to work faster; he tried to resist. He did not believe he was being rewarded adequately for his increased labor. When he protested, the company told him that if he "didn't like it" the company would "get somebody else."

Workplace changes occurring over a short period of time added to the instability of work life. Those not suffering displacement by machinery usually knew of several others who did suffer. A foundry worker at Bridgeport Brass described the problem. "When I first came here all the pressing was done by drop press, and all the plates have to be pressed by hand. Now all the plates they all go on the machines so that when they come out of the heat they come to us and we have to work faster to get the right gauge. This automatic business

47.Ibid., 44-45.

maybe take the job of seven people." (48) A married woman worker at Casco blamed unemployment on the "machine age." "They're always improving machines which do the work of many people. In Casco's they put in machines that did the work of more than ten girls. Now they have machines in the plating room. Before the men used to do that work by hand." (49)

Outrage was common, again suggesting that labor and capital did not reach a consensus about industrial life. "What right have the factories got to put people out of work when the people do their work right," one worker said. Another stated bluntly, "The factories don't give a damn what becomes of the people." A third remarked, "I'm sure of one thing; that somebody has to take care of these people that can't find work, because they're not to blame for being out of work -- the machines are -- and the factories own the machines." (50)

"One Week for What We Will"

Perhaps one of the most important common grievances that needs to be examined is the widespread demand for paid vacations. Historians have yet to suggest the extent that this issue was an important aspect of the labor struggles of the late 1930s and became a powerful catalyst for factory

48.Ibid., 48.

49.Mrs. Z interview.

50."Hallett St. Survey," 45, 46, 50.

solidarity. At first, it may appear ironic that skilled and nonskilled workers organized for paid vacations during a period of shortened working hours and displacement by machinery, when many already experienced "enforced leisure." However, vacations were essentially a control and social justice issue, a challenge to management's power to determine the length of employment. At the time, this demand also was relatively bold, and many industrial workers did not believe that management would agree to paid time-off. Ladislaus Michalowski recalled the advice that his father gave him as he helped organize the new industrial unions: "'This vacation with pay, do not bother with it. You can't get it. We never got it. This has not been for workers, but for everybody else.'" (51)

The vacation demand engaged a variety of worker perspectives. Paid vacations were a health issue: workers wanted a break to help offset the cumulative fatigue from months of grinding toil. It also was a matter of dignity: if office workers and most foremen in the factory received paid vacations (and many did by the 1920s), why were production

51. Ladislaus Michalowski, interview by author, March 26, 1990. AFL-CIO chief George Meany told an interviewer on Labor Day in 1969: "When I look back, it is hard to really realize the progress that is being made...but if you take a leap back a few years and try to think of what was going on then -- for instance, this business of welfare funds and pensions and holidays with pay -- this was a dream at one time...People say, well, we have so many paid holidays, vacations with pay....But I remember a time when this was unthought about." Quoted in Melvyn Dubofsky, ed., American Labor Since the New Deal (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 284-285.

workers excluded? The vacation provision also helped undermine the traditional wage system, where the wage-earner is paid only for the number of hours worked or the pieces produced. The new paid vacations recognized that rest and relaxation (with the option to "moonlight") were part of the employment relationship. And paid vacations became a widely accepted international labor standard during the interwar years. Twenty-three countries enacted legislation guaranteeing vacation or holiday benefits for industrial wage-earners, beginning in Austria in 1910, and followed by Switzerland (1912); the U.S.S.R. (1922); Italy (1927); Chile (1931); Mexico (1931); Spain (1931); Portugal (1933); Belgium (1936); Bulgaria (1936); France (1936); Venezuela (1936); Hungary (1937); Denmark (1938) and Finland (1939). Brazil, Cuba, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Norway, Peru, Poland, Rumania, and Sweden also passed legislation. (52)

In the United States, relatively few production workers (including the skilled) were entitled to paid time-off until the CIO won such provisions in their first collective bargaining agreements. Some companies included vacations in their welfare plans during the 1920s, but such provisions never became widespread. For example, when Robert Lynd and Helen Lynd noted the spread of a "vacation habit" in

52. The United States and Great Britain stand out as major exceptions. Facilities for the Use of Workers' Leisure During Holidays (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1939), 8-11; U.S. Department of Labor, A Brief History of the American Labor Movement (Bulletin 1000, 1975), 73-75.

Middletown, this was limited to the business class. Their survey of more than one hundred working-class families in 1924 found only twelve who said they took a vacation. The typical worker response was, "Never had a vacation in my life" or "I don't know what a vacation is -- I haven't had one for so long." (53) In New York state, a government survey of 1,500 factories found that only 18 percent of production workers had some form of paid vacation in 1928. (54) Relatively few AFL unions pressed for this provision, and rarely in heavy industry. (55) When autoworker Wyndham Mortimer confronted management about working-class vacations at a company union meeting in 1923, his effort bore little result. He told the factory owner:

There is a matter that has been on my mind for some time, and I know the same question is on the mind of every hourly paid man in the shop. It is this: why does the company give the office force a vacation

53. Robert Lynd and Helen Lynd, Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1929), 262.

54. Roy Rosenzweig, 'Eight Hours For What We Will': Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 251 fn. 11.

55. A 1927 study reported that "organized labor had made no concerted attempt to obtain such [vacation] provisions." Vacation provisions were found in 175 collective bargaining agreements, but two unions provided the majority of cases. The Firefighters union had paid vacation provisions in 71 contracts and the Typographical union had 41 agreements providing vacations. There were also 16 agreements containing vacation provisions by locals of the street and electric railway workers; 12 agreements among locals of the teamsters and chauffeurs; and 10 agreements among steam and operating engineers. Charles M. Mills, Vacations for Industrial Workers (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1927), 70-71.

with pay every year, while we who are also employees must work through the year without a vacation of any kind? If we take a vacation it must be on our own time, and at our own expense. (56)

The summer of 1937 was, then, a watershed as many industrial workers received a paid week of vacation for the first time. Most of New Britain's large hardware factories shut down for one week in July. "A week's vacation with pay will be general in New Britain this summer," the New Britain Herald reported in late June, after American Hardware announced it would "conform to the prevailing practice" in the city. (57) Paid vacations were included in the first contracts signed by the city's UE unions. Similar provisions were contained in many of the contracts signed by the CIO in Bridgeport. Moreover, in some cases management granted workers vacations to help discourage rank and file interest in unions. At the Stanley Works factory in New Britain the management initiative was part of a corporate campaign to undermine the appeal of Steel Workers union. In fact, the majority of steel companies nationwide adopted paid vacations for its production workers even before SWOC's efforts began. (58) By June 1937 close to 40 percent of all wage-earners in manufacturing industries were covered under paid vacation

56. Wyndham Mortimer, Organize! My Life as a Union Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 44.

57. The New Britain Herald, June 22, 1937; "The CIO in New Britain," 9, 10, 15, 17.

58. Steel Labor, Aug. 1, 1936; "The CIO in New Britain," 15.

provisions.

Union organizing provided the spark. Almost 40 percent of the plants which granted vacations to wage earners reported that 1937 was the first year in which vacation provisions became effective.(59) About 2 million union members received this provision by 1940. (60)

Interviews with workers suggest the consensus on "One Week for What We Will." A Connecticut brass roller told the

59."Extent of Vacations with Pay in Industry, 1937," Monthly Labor Review 47 (Aug. 1938): 269-271; "Characteristics of Paid-Vacation Plans," Ibid. 48 (Dec. 1938): 1225-1230.

In 1937, the AFL noted, "Many unions are including vacations in their agreements this year for the first time." They disclosed that of 746,893 AFL members with vacations, about half were in private industry and the rest in government employment. "Summary of AFL Executive Council Report," The New York Times, Oct. 4, 1937.

The national UE also heralded the new vacation rights. "There are tens of thousands who are vacationing now because of the tremendous sweep of unionism," the union noted in August 1937. "Give a great cheer for 1937 vacation time -- and a great BIG hand to those industrial workers who are this year enjoying their first PAID vacations!" UE 232 offered similar sentiment. "The one-week vacation with pay was a 1000% dividend on dues paid in, and this is only a beginning of what the union expects to do," they told the membership. In Dayton, Ohio, UE 801 at the Frigidaire company suggested that "Vacations with pay would change the outlook of every employee...What a world of meaning these three little words hold for the average industrial employee." People's Press (national edition), Aug. 14, 1937; (Bridgeport edition), Aug. 7, 1937; (District 8 edition), May 15, 1937.

60. There was variation by industry. More than 70 percent of wage earners had vacations in machinery, chemicals, food and rubber. Yet some industries with a strong union presence did not have vacation plans because of the prevalence of small plants, seasonal activity, isolated location, or in cases where industrial workers were employed by several different employers during the year. These industries include coal and metal mining, textiles, paper, tobacco and building construction. "Vacations With Pay in Union Agreements," Monthly Labor Review 51 (November 1940): 1070.

Brass Valley Oral History Project that paid vacations were a crucial organizing demand. In 1938, "The company gave us a week's vacation with pay. That was the first time it ever happened," Russell Sobin said. "The following year we didn't organize. So they didn't give us a vacation. So then we started to think, 'How about organizing'?" (61) Another brass worker remembered that the union "did a lot for the workers....We had no vacation. We got a vacation. We got a pay raise. And they said it was impossible to do. Even the workers didn't believe it." (62) A Pennsylvania mill worker recalled, "Before we organized, you didn't have any vacations...You were reporting to work seven days a week and you may get one day, if you're fortunate." (63) The wife of a young worker at the Columbia Record plant in Bridgeport remarked in 1939, "Sure I think the union is good. When the union got in he was raised to \$18 a week and he's going to get a vacation with pay this year." (64) The time-off also was a welcome respite. A UE worker noted, "If there is anything that puts a new outlook in life, it is looking forward each year to a week off with pay, a week in which one can do as one pleases and forget all about the worries of

61. Brecher, Brass Valley, 164.

62. Ibid., 159.

63. Bodnar, Workers' World, 142.

64. "Clinton Ave. Survey," 20, box 133, CEGS Hartford.

production." (65)

CIO leaders placed vacation provisions at the top of their negotiating agenda. The United Auto Workers included paid vacations in its original 1936 Ten Point Program for unionization. (66) The UE fought for vacations in its first contracts and placed great weight on extending those benefits in subsequent agreements. Its 1939 negotiations with Westinghouse show the priority attached to vacation demands. The UE News reported during contract negotiations, "The UE's first and main interest is in GETTING IMPROVEMENTS IN VACATIONS AT WESTINGHOUSE for the employees." (67) Several front-page stories featured the progress of vacation provisions, including a five-column headline on Nov. 25, 1939 ("Westinghouse Replies to UE Bids for Better Vacations, Announced Policy Meets Essential Points Asked") and the lead story the following week ("Three Locals Approve Westinghouse Reply on UE Vacation Bid"). (68)

65. "Vacation Time for Whom!," Letter to the Editor, UE News, June 17, 1939.

66. United Automobile Worker, July 7, 1936.

67. UE News, Nov. 18, 1939.

68. Although UE 207 in New Britain secured vacation provisions in its 1937 contract, it, too, fought to expand vacation terms in the union's 1939 contract. The fact that vacations were a leading contract concern is evident in the appeal made to the membership: "The summer is right around the corner, so the woods and beaches come to everybody's mind. Do you like to spend a week or two at the shore, brother member? If you do, come to our next mass meeting, May 19, as the one-week vacation with pay will be the principal topic of that meeting. We need your cooperation to be successful in getting it.

The union pressed for a "one for one, two for five" vacation formula. Workers received one week off after one year's employment and two weeks off after five years. Previously, Westinghouse granted the vacation benefit only to workers with at least five years service. The union also demanded that the length of the vacation week to be based on the standard work week, rather than the average hours worked (which were fewer than normal during the depression). In addition, it was a matter of workers' control to ensure that if management discharged workers soon before their vacations were ready to begin, the workers still were entitled to their vacation if they had accumulated at least six months service in the given year. The two-week vacation demand also reflected skill considerations, since skilled workers were more likely than others to have remained employed with the same company for a considerable time. (69)

To appreciate the class context of the 1930s vacation movement, it is instructive to consider why vacations did not

Let's get everybody interested in the vacation with pay. Let's talk about vacation with pay all the time. Ask your boss about it so the management will become aware that we need it." UE News, May 13, 1939.

69. The UE won these demands. However, long-service workers had to remain employed a full 12 months with the company prior to the start of their vacation in order to qualify for two weeks off. UE News, Nov. 18, 1939; Nov. 25, 1939. During World War Two, the National War Labor Board accepted the "one for one, two for five" formula for union contracts. Joiner, "Developments in Union Contracts," 36-37; Howell John Harris, The Right to Manage: Industrial Relations Policies of American Business in the 1940s (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 47-89.

become an important part of the company-sponsored welfare capitalism of the 1920s. Why pensions, stock-purchase plans, savings accounts, health insurance, and housing -- which companies often provided for their workers -- but not paid vacations? (70)

Management opposed paid vacations because they believed workers used their time-off in "unproductive" ways. It was observed that many workers moonlighted on other jobs and thus did not use their vacation to rest. From management's point of view, moonlighting undermined a main reason for their providing vacations for workers, that is, vacations would help reduce worker fatigue, allowing the workers to return to the job reinvigorated. During the Progressive era, management became aware of the negative effects of residual fatigue on worker productivity. This was one reason that Frederick Taylor, in Shop Management (1903), pointed to the positive effect of reducing the length of the workday and of providing short rest periods for workers during the day. But paid vacations were not considered a worthy management expenditure if workers spent their time-off employed on outside jobs. (71)

70. Stuart D. Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); David Brody, "The Rise and Decline of Welfare Capitalism," in Brody, Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 48-81. Neither Brandes nor Brody discuss paid vacations.

71. Mills, Vacations for Industrial Workers, 64-67; Extended Vacations: An Innovation in Collective Bargaining (Washington: Bureau of National Affairs, 1964), 31-32; Sebastian de Grazia, Of Time, Work and Leisure (New York: The Twentieth Century

Management also believed that workers who did not moonlight often just "hung around" and wasted their vacation time. The "dangerous classes" had more time on their hands to be dangerous. The manager of a New York firm said: "We do not believe that a vacation benefits a factory worker unless he actually goes away somewhere to the country. If they just use their vacation to hang around the corners, they had much better be at work. We presume that not over 25 percent of our men actually go away." (72)

During the 1930s, management argued that workers were already being compensated during layoff periods with the introduction of unemployment compensation. This was especially the view in industries with seasonal employment. (73) It also was argued that shortened hours during the depression, and frequent bouts of unemployment, provided a necessary relief for worker fatigue. As a result, some firms that had provided vacation plans during the 1920s suspended them during the early depression. As one manager remarked: "The object of vacations for factory workers was to enable them to have a rest period during the year. Inasmuch as they now work only forty hours a week and the majority do not work on Saturdays, it is felt that a vacation for health proposes

Fund, 1972), 70-72, 75.

72. Quoted in Mills, Vacations for Industrial Workers, 67.

73. Willian Heston McPherson, Labor Relations on the Auto Industry (Washington: The Brookings Institute, 1940), 108-110.

is no longer necessary." (74)

The fact that some workers used their time-off to moonlight on other jobs to earn needed income is an indication that vacations were part of a culture of scarcity, not a culture of plenty or abundance. Moreover, few could afford to travel or get away during their vacations. Vacation-related expenditures among workers were very minimal during the 1930s and into the early postwar years. The working class was more likely than other classes to spend vacation time at home or visiting nearby relatives. (75)

The new vacation experience also highlighted class differences in American society. As one worker said in 1939, "When I look through the travel circulars and see pictures of such heavenly places as the South Seas, Florida, the beautiful Maine woods, Canada, etc., I wonder for whom were these places intended." The answer was clear. "I guess the South Seas and the cool Maine woods just aren't meant for the

74. Quoted in Eleanor Davis, Recent Trends in Vacation Policies for Wage Earners (Princeton, N.J.: Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University, 1935), 11. This study reported that about 20 percent of 100 companies that provided vacation plans for wage-earners discontinued these provisions during the early depression.

75. Few workers surveyed on Hallett St. spent money on vacations in 1939. "Hallett St. Survey." See also Gerald Handel and Lee Rainwater, "Persistence and Change in Working-Class Life Style," in Arthur B. Shostak and William Gomberg, eds., Blue Collar World: Studies of the American Worker (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 41; and De Grazia, Of Time, Work and Leisure, 112, 130.

likes of you and me." (76)

The class context of the new vacation experience is evident in other ways as well. Union activists often used their new time-off to contact unorganized workers. In New Britain, a "staunch crew" of UE members conducted such organizing during the summer of 1939. Because several of the city's factories closed their plants at the same time, in order to allow for worker vacations, thousands of workers were away from their jobs at the same time; they were potentially a force to be organized for the discussion of group grievances. (77) In this era, as in earlier ones, it was often believed, as one prominent social scientist said in 1937, that "the new leisure time of the working class has been largely used in promoting and attending meetings designed to increase discontent with existing economic conditions." More leisure time, according to this popular view, "leads to a strengthening of labor organizations and more insistent demands for changes favorable to the interests of labor groups." (78) The 19th century movement for shorter working hours also had considered the increased leisure of workers as aiding their class identity and organization, and the

76. "Don't Forget Vacations in that New Contract," Letter to the Editor, UE News, June 10, 1939.

77. Ibid., July 15, 1939.

78. Jesse F. Steiner, Research Memorandum on Recreation in the Depression (New York: Social Science Research Council Bulletin No. 32, 1937), 85.

persistence of this general view is one reason for the embrace of paid vacations by CIO leaders. (79)

In this sense, paid vacations were quite different from the "enforced leisure" associated with unemployment. Unemployment could be personally demoralizing and often cut into union membership rolls. However, paid time-off as a result of a hard-earned and "just" vacation could be empowering.

Several CIO unions even sponsored their own summer camps to combine the new leisure with union education and training. An outstanding example is Unity House, located in the Poconos, which was run by the International Ladies Garment Workers. Union members paid \$19 for a week's stay, and workers from many different unions were welcome at the resort. (80) The UAW also started their own summer resort, as did the Steel Workers union. SWOC's camp, located near Pittsburgh, also brought in five other CIO unions -- the UE, the ACWU, the United Rubber Workers, the United Mine Workers, and the Aluminum Workers. Each union used the camp for a specified period during the summer. The typical camp day included morning sessions for union training, with the afternoons free for recreation. The evenings were devoted to social

79. See, for example, David Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872 (New York: Knopf, 1967), 236-239.

80. Unity House was featured as the Life magazine cover story (Aug. 1, 1938), "Garment Workers At Play."

activities, especially movies, dancing, and camp fires. (81)

Wages, Jobs

The accommodation reached between skilled and nonskilled workers had to overcome a wage differential that set each group apart. This especially required the patience and understanding of skilled workers since they earned considerably higher wages than the nonskilled and the new industrial unions devoted much of their early efforts on improving the wages of those at the bottom.

Skilled workers earned between 60 cents and \$1.00 per hour, compared to 35 to 45 cents for the nonskilled. In many auto plants the highest wage was 75 percent more than the lowest wage. (82) It is noteworthy that the skilled took a leading union role even though their activism jeopardized their relatively high-wage jobs, for it was well known that management commonly fired union activists.

Wage differentials became a union issue during the early CIO campaigns. The union focus on improving the wages of the lowest paid and most exploited workers derived from both ideological and strategic considerations. For the unions to

81. "Several CIO Unions Plan Sessions at 'Model Camp'," The CIO News, July 10, 1939. See also UE News, April 29, 1939 and the United Automobile Worker, July 12, 1937.

82. The Machinist (Bridgeport Adult Guidance Service Occupational Bulletin No. 1, 1939), 3; McPherson, Labor Relations in the Automobile Industry, 79-80.

succeed they needed to generate enthusiasm among the nonskilled, who formed the majority of the industrial work force. In terms of ideology, the liberal rhetoric of "organizing the unorganized" placed the greatest emphasis on gains for the mass of underprivileged wage-earners. As a UAW worker explained in 1937, "The first increase does grant the common laborer a large percentage of it, because, he, generally, is so far under a decent living wage that he must be raised greatly at once, in order that he may be more on a level with the other workers in his plant." (83)

On the one hand, industrial unionism was based on the assumption that "wages must be greatly equalized before a decent living wage is reached for all workers."⁸⁴ At the same time, the new unions believed that strategy would eventually benefit the skilled; that any wage increase at the bottom would lead to increases for those workers at higher wage levels. As a headline in the United Automobile Worker indicated, "Low Man Must Be Raised Before Skilled Worker Can Receive Most Benefit." (85)

In fact, it did not always work out this way. The skilled workers' relative wage advantage often declined as firms raised all wage-earners by the same number of cents per

83. Harold Kelly, "Low Man Must Be Raised Before Skilled Worker Can Receive Most Benefit," United Automobile Worker, June 12, 1937.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

hour, rather than by a uniform percentage. (86) Thus, union efforts to close the wage gap threatened to alienate skilled workers. "I have noticed a growing impatience among workers of the higher wage scale," an autoworker reported, because they "feel that they are left out and the small wage earner is the only party to gain." (87)

Any successful union appeal had to suggest the common experience of all factory sectors. The SWOC noted in 1936,

You, Mr. Semi-Skilled Steelworker, are working for the same \$4.80, \$5.20, \$5.60, etc., you earned in 1935. Your wages are in danger. Year by year your wages, your skill has been eaten away.

And you, Mr. Unskilled Steelworker, and your 199,000 co-workers, are getting the same \$3.24, \$3.76, and \$3.88 you earned last year. (88)

But union leaders went out of their way to reassure skilled workers of the benefits of organization. SWOC emphasized that management was responsible for declining wages since the early depression. "You, Mr. Skilled Steelworker, are working for semi-skilled wages, where once you were paid according to your

86. McPherson, Labor Relations in the Automobile Industry, 81.

87. Ibid., United Automobile Worker. Wage differentials remained a source of tension in the postwar UAW especially. During the 1960s, for example, skilled autoworkers formed separate councils within the union and pressed for higher wages. Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Labor Movement and American Values," in John H.M. Laslett and Lipset, eds., Failure of a Dream? Essays in the History of American Socialism (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1974), 559; Bill Goode, "The Skilled Trades: Reflections," in B.J. Widick, ed., Auto Work and Its Discontents (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 33-34.

88. Steel Labor, Aug. 20, 1936.

skill," the union said. "You, Mr. Heater in the Tin Mill," they explained, "are getting \$5 to \$6 a day, where once you earned \$9 to \$12." (89) In Bridgeport, the new UE unions also highlighted their special efforts increasing the wages of the skilled; the union at General Electric also pointed out the injustice that Bridgeport's skilled workers received less than their GE counterparts in other cities. (90)

The skilled worker also had a tremendous advantage because his labor was in great demand, especially after mid-decade. The shortage of skilled workers was widely publicized in Bridgeport and New Britain and persisted throughout the period of the rise of the CIO. Almost all available workers found jobs. (91)

Moreover, the skilled often received preferential treatment in layoff procedures. During slow periods, management often wanted to keep as many skilled workers employed as possible. The skilled worker was valued because of his ability to handle a number of different tasks. Machinists, for example, could usually assemble, install, operate, repair, and maintain several types of machinery, often with the aid of drawings. Their job required that they know how to use a variety of measurement tools (gauges, rules,

89.Ibid.

90."Local 203 Gets Raises for Electricians and Maintenance Workers," People's Press (Bridgeport edition), July 31, 1937.

91.See pp. 178-179.

calibers, micrometers), machine tools (lathes, drill presses, die-sinking machines, and automatic screw machines) and hand tools (hammers, thread-cutters, and chisels). Such versatility made them needed players at the point of production. "When conditions are slack, the machinist can more easily adjust himself to one of the many related fields of work," the Bridgeport Adult Guidance Service noted. (92) In Philadelphia, they were "kept on by employers even during slack times so that when prosperity returned there would be the nucleus of an organization of skilled workmen." (93) It also was during such periods that management often decided to retool machinery, and the skilled workers' services were in disproportionate demand.

The CIO faced the thorny issue of resolving preferential treatment for skilled workers. Union philosophy opposed it and the winning of straight seniority systems in the first collective bargaining agreements was considered a real advance in curbing the arbitrary power of management. While unions often favored "work sharing" programs to help as many workers as possible to keep their jobs, many CIO contracts nonetheless included preferential treatment stipulations. Management proved more willing to sign collective bargaining agreements if they retained the authority to keep large numbers of skilled workers employed during periods of retrenchment. In

92. The Machinist, 3, 5.

93. Philadelphia Machinists, 46-47.

the auto industry, William McPherson shows that it was common for management to draw up a special list of workers it wanted to retain, regardless of seniority. These lists often included 5 to 10 percent of the workforce. In these agreements, the unions were allowed the right to contest the inclusion of certain individuals it deemed unqualified or believed were chosen to reward anti-union activity. (94)

It is relevant to inquire why skilled workers needed unions if they experienced such a secure job market, as well as relatively high wages. We would not expect the new CIO to attract them, at least according to the "job conscious" view of workers and trade unions. (95)

Other demands and grievances must have been on their minds. We have already suggested some of them. It is well to return to the question of wages, because despite a pay differential, both skilled and nonskilled workers benefitted from standardized pay systems which the CIO instituted.

Before the CIO, uneven pay for the same work was part of management's discretionary hiring and promotion procedures. Workers complained that this system not only was unjust, but also encouraged kickbacks to the bosses. One worker remembered that "nobody got the same rate" in these pre-union years.

94. McPherson, Labor Relations in the Auto Industry, 121-122.

95. See, for example, Selig Perlman, A Theory of the Labor Movement (New York: Macmillan, 1928).

They [the company] had what they called the 'fair haired boys.' They paid them a certain rate. And the rest for a lesser rate. One would be getting a higher rate and one could be getting a lower rate. Well, that's because it was a company policy. They figured it all depends whether you were sympathetic toward the company. (96)

This irregular system divided the workers. Because everybody got paid different, "nobody was supposed to know [the amount] but you." Another worker said, "At our boiler shop for years men were afraid to show their envelops." One reason was the "favors" some workers did for supervisors. "Some got more pay because they bought the 'boss' a drink or meal." Others mowed their lawns or tended their gardens. (97) In Bridgeport, several of the UE locals explicitly raised this grievance. UE 209 demanded "equal pay for equal work" for the workers, and the theme "underpaid and unequally paid" was used in organizing UE 203. (98)

It becomes clear that wage demands involved control issues. Workers cared not only about monetary increases, but also about equal treatment in the distribution of their pay.

Failure of the White-Collar Promise

The unity of the factory workforce also was based on the limited appeal of white-collar work during the 1930s. Many

96. Bodnar, Workers' World, 124.

97. Ibid., 137.

98. People's Press (Bridgeport edition), July 10, 1937; July 16, 1937; Aug. 14, 1937.

observers noted that factory jobs provided better wages and working conditions than low white-collar occupations. "Why so many 'white collars'?" asked the Bridgeport Adult Guidance Service in 1939. In the first place, those trained for manual labor were more in demand during the depression. Then, too, "the earnings of many 'white collar' workers are less than those wearing overalls and a work-shirt." Moreover, the job satisfaction of white-collar work often was low. "Many who have worked at both claim that of the two divisions of labor, manual labor is often the more interesting and the less monotonous." Most noteworthy is their finding of a gradual alteration of the perception that white collar work "merits a greater prestige in the community." (99)

This revised view of white-collar work is evident in other contexts. The Bridgeport Post, commenting on the long waiting list to get into the local trade school, observed: "Apparently, the prestige of the white collar is wilted and worn." (100) When the Writers' Project asked an Italian-American munitions worker if she or her friends in a Bridgeport factory preferred to do clerical work, she responded: "Outside of a very few who thought of an office job, the majority of us would just as soon work in the factory. We don't think the office workers are any better

99. What Shall I Be? (Bridgeport Adult Guidance Service Occupational Bulletin No. 2, 1939), 6.

100. The Bridgeport Post, Oct. 2, 1938.

than we are." (101)

The experience of UE president Oliver Arsenault dramatically symbolizes the cultural blurring of occupational distinctions. Arsenault sold scrub brushes on a commission basis during his time-off in order to supplement his factory wages. Other factory workers similarly worked part-time at such jobs in order to earn needed income. Such low white-collar work obviously was not perceived as an escape from the factory; nor is it likely that it was viewed as a partial achievement of the American Dream. In one sense, Arsenault engaged in consumer salesmanship, in a "culture of selling" that might appear antithetical to his leadership of a class-conscious trade union. Apparently he did not perceive it that way and neither did his union peers. "If your doorbell rings these days and a Fuller brush salesman starts his usual line, look close for you may get a surprise," the union reported in the UE News. "Our one and only Pres. Oliver Arsenault is peddling the Fuller wares these days and doing a good job." The union headquarters even served the selling campaign. "Leave your orders with the union office folks," they continued, noting, "And Ollie did not bribe us for this free ad either, so there." (102)

Some low white collars were drawn to the union movement. In Bridgeport, they established two CIO unions, the United

101.P.M. interview, n.d., box 133, CEGS Hartford.

102.UE News, Sept. 9, 1939.

Office and Professional Workers (Local 21), which was formed during 1937, and the State, County, and Municipal Workers of America, which was chartered in early 1938. The Municipal union provides a good example of white collar "working-class" issues.

The national union was formed in July 1937 and registered about 200 locals, in 24 states, covering 50,000 workers, at its first national union convention two years later. (103) Although nationally not all of the members were white-collar workers, the union's constituency in Bridgeport was almost exclusively clerks, secretaries, and case workers. A majority came from the city Welfare Department, with others from the Comptroller's Office and the Purchasing Department. A major grievance was low pay. Junior case workers in the Welfare Department started at annual salaries of \$1,140, and their maximum reached a mere \$1,380, less than the income of some skilled factory workers. (104) City workers also suffered temporary pay cuts during the depression; in 1932, Bridgeport cut the salaries of all city employees by 20 percent. Case workers also complained about heavy case loads, which the depression exacerbated. In this, they looked to unions to stop their version of a "speed-up." They also had grievances

103. The CIO News, Sept. 25, 1939.

104. The Bridgeport Post, Feb. 2, 1938; The Bridgeport Telegram, March 12, 1938; "Interview with Charter Member of the [Municipal union] Local," July 10, 1939, box 133, CEGS Hartford; Michael Gratt interview, July 19, 1939, box 133, CEGS Hartford.

about arbitrary employment decisions. The Civil Service, introduced into city government in the mid-1930s, affected only new hires and was viewed by some as ineffectual. As one union member said, "The Civil Service was supposed to protect the workers, but it failed to do so." The reason: many old political appointees remained and there continued to be disputes about job appointments and eligibility for tenure. (105)

The leaders of the mass production unions welcomed white collars into their world. Interviews with several New Britain leaders suggest that they realized that blue and white collars workers faced similar economic problems. Michael Stein told the Writers' Project, "I believe that all workers need each other's strength to be able to progress more rapidly. The position of the white collar and skilled worker is rapidly becoming insecure similar to that of the 'common' laborer. Thus, self-preservation demands that the three groups act together for a common solution to their problems." (106)

CIO leaders supported white-collar organizing because they viewed these jobs as part of the working class. Alfred Czerepuszko believed that trade unions "should embrace all workers, including office and clerical workers." His view echoed Stein's. "[A]ll have to work for a living under very

105."Interview with Charter Member of the Local."

106.Michael Stein interview, March 8, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

similar conditions and, therefore, none should be excluded from organization." Dragone and Barrows believed that only foremen and executives should be excluded. Dragone noted, "If all types of workers are organized, there will be greater mass pressure against enemies of the workers and it will give the unions much more power in negotiations." (107)

We have come full circle when we evaluate how the loss of status and availability of white-collar jobs affected perceptions of blue-collar jobs. Many believed they were "destined to be workers." Not only the nonskilled, but also the skilled saw this as their reality and placed little importance on a white-collar promise. An analysis of the social basis of the white-collar world in 1937 also suggests why workers of southern or eastern European background had little reason to expect movement into this strata.

Samuel Koenig and David Rodnick estimated that only 12 to 20 percent of Poles, Italians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians were employed in white-collar jobs in 1937. Jews were a major exception among "New Immigrant" groups, with close to 43 percent in white collars. (108) Koenig and Rodnick studied

107. Alfred Czerepuszko interview, Feb. 13, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford; Dan Dragone interview, March 24, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford; Robert Barrows interview, Feb. 13, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

108. These findings generally follow other studies of ethnic differences in social mobility. Stephan Thernstrom notes that Jews and British-Americans often had the highest mobility rates, with Irish, Italian and Slavish groups lagging behind in this period. Blacks consistently were the worst off. Thernstrom, The Other Bostonians. For Jews and Italians, see

a 3 percent sample of each ethnic group, taken from the 1937 city directories of Bridgeport, New Britain, New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford, and Stamford. (See table 6.1) Moreover, the vast majority of these white-collar workers were employed at low-level and unprestigious jobs, particularly sales and clerical occupations. (See table 6.2) Sales and clerical jobs formed 84 percent of white-collar work among the Poles, 54 percent among Italians, 72 percent among Jews, 83 percent among Lithuanians, and 92 percent among Ukrainians.

A study of Connecticut school teachers also indicates the very low representation of these ethnic groups. In Hartford, Poles comprised less than 1 percent (9 of 1,111) of the teaching staff of the public schools. Italians fared only slightly better, at 4 percent. (109) Moreover, relatively few first or second-generation "New Immigrants" were studying

also Thomas Kessner, The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). Variation in occupational achievement is affected by a variety of factors. The availability of jobs in the economy is clearly important, as is discrimination in the labor market. Many studies also stress the particular cultural values of different ethnic and racial groups, and the degree of premigration skill acquisition. Education is also important. Ethnic differences in educational achievement often correlate to occupational differences along ethnic lines. A recent study that addresses the complexity of these issues is Joel Perlmann, Ethnic Differences: Schooling and Social Structure Among the Irish, Italians, Jews and Blacks in an American City (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

109. David Rodnick and Samuel Koenig, Ethnic Factors in Connecticut Life: A Survey of Social, Economic and Cultural Characteristics of the Connecticut Population (unpublished manuscript, CEGS Hartford, 1940), Chapter 6, p.10.

TABLE 6.1. INDIVIDUALS IN WHITE-COLLAR WORK, 1937 (Based on a 3 percent sample of each ethnic group, taken from the City Directories of Bridgeport, New Britain, Waterbury, Hartford, New Haven and Stamford.)

ethnic group	total sample	white collar n.	white collar % of total
Polish	1446	199	13.8
Italian	4818	965	20.
Jewish	2237	960	42.9
Lithuanian	646	93	14.4
Ukrainian	220	26	11.8

Source: David Rodnick and Samuel Koenig, Ethnic Factors in Connecticut: A Survey of Social, Economic and Cultural Characteristics of the Connecticut Population (unpublished manuscript, CEGS Hartford, 1940), Chapter 4, Tables 8 and 18.

TABLE 6.2. INDIVIDUALS IN LOW WHITE-COLLAR WORK (SALES AND CLERICAL), 1937 (Based on a 3 percent sample of each ethnic group, take from the City Directories of Bridgeport, New Britain, Waterbury, Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford.)

ethnic group	total white collar n.	sales n.	clerical n.	sales and clerical % of total white collar
Polish	199	49	118	83.9
Italian	965	210	315	54.4
Jewish	960	353	340	72.2
Lithuanian	93	13	64	82.8
Ukrainian	26	4	20	92.3

Source: David Rodnick and Samuel Koenig, Ethnic Factors in Connecticut Life: A Survey of Social, Economic and Cultural Characteristics of the Connecticut Population (unpublished manuscript, CEGS Hartford, 1940), Chapter 4, Tables 8 and 18.

to become teachers during the late 1930s. Students of Polish or Italian background at the New Britain Teachers' College each totalled about 5 percent of the student body, and Lithuanians, Russians, and Ukrainians together represented only 4 percent of the students. (110)

There is good reason to reflect on this low representation among workers of southern and eastern European background. Many second-generation immigrants attended high school and certainly were qualified to enroll in the Teachers' College. Did many stay away because they had the perception that teaching was a "profession" and that the professional world was closed to them?

The Polish example in New Britain is illustrative. Few immigrants made it into the professions, but the second generation had a slightly better chance. "Unlike their parents, who came here poor and uneducated, they are fitting into these cycles which were denied their forefathers," the Writers' Project reported. However, their overall representation was very meager on the eve of World War Two, with about thirty to forty professionals (including five doctors, four dentists, and three lawyers). This amounts to

110. The largest groups were British-Americans (41 percent), Irish (16 percent), Jews (9 percent), and Germans (8 percent). Ibid., Chapter 6, p. 6. The relatively high rate for Jews is notable, especially in light of their low overall population in Connecticut, and confirms other studies of ethnicity and schooling. Perlmann, Ethnic Differences.

less than 3 percent of the population. (111)

Awareness of ethnic discrimination also undermined belief in the white-collar promise. A twenty-five year old Polish-American expressed anger in describing ethnic discrimination in the professions.

There are discriminations in the teaching profession, I think, or in fields where a Pole or Italian, etc., comes into contact with children of American people. I know several persons who have had this experience. They have difficulties in securing a teaching job. Rebuffs like this shouldn't be, and in some way, should be altered or overcome entirely, if not in part. Things like that burn me up. If a Pole is as good a teacher as anybody else, why should he be denied a job because his name isn't thick with the accent of the Yankee? (112)

The union leader Joseph Salwocki also aspired to become a teacher, but was cut down because of his ethnic background. He bitterly recalled that his high school English instructor had advised him to "leave writing and teaching to the Americans." That incident left him soul-searching. "As a

111. "Economic Life of Poles in New Britain," 5, box 129, CEGS Hartford. The Writers' Project placed the number of Polish professionals at between forty and fifty, but they included nurses -- of which there were ten -- in this group. I have excluded nurses. For a debate over the question of whether nurses are professionals, see Barbara Melosh, 'The Physician's Hand': Work Culture and Conflict in American Nursing (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982). Other New Britain professionals included three undertakers and one druggist. Koenig and Rodnick's data on Poles (in Bridgeport, New Britain, Stamford, New Haven, Hartford, and Waterbury) found that a mere 1.8 percent (9 of 1,446) were business executives in 1937. Ethnic Factors, Chapter 4, p. 19.

112. "Second Generation Interview," Aug. 1, 1939, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

result of this stupid remark," he said, "I became determined to get down to the bottom of the whole problem in order to give myself some answers as whether I'd have a place in the world later on in life." (113) His life experience taught him that "when you mention that you are of Polish descent...you are given the menial jobs." "Yes, I feel discriminated against economically," he told the Writers' Project. This realization made clear to him the need for worker unity. His soul-searching led him into the union movement.

He was not the only one. As we have seen, the common grievances of a wide range of factory workers provided the basis for cross-skill solidarity and for the sharing of union power within the CIO.

113."Second Generation Interview," Nov. 28, 1939, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

CHAPTER 7

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CITY POLITICS

"Our membership is so cosmopolitan," a New Britain UE official wrote in 1940, "that it hampers solid opinion [in politics]." The issue which provoked this comment was John L. Lewis' attack on Roosevelt during the presidential campaign. Would Lewis' action at the top fragment labor's ranks at the bottom? The local branch of Labor's Non-Partisan League had lobbied against several Republican candidates in the past. Were their efforts now undermined by Lewis' endorsement of Wendell Willkie? "Not only was I astounded, but I felt a personal hurt," this union leader said. "[Lewis'] last minute 'bomb-shell' has given leaders of labor one big head-ache....and may blast apart present plans." (1)

1. Arthur Hayes to Julius Emspak, Oct. 26, 1940, UE 232 File, UE Archives, University of Pittsburgh. It has been noted that working-class solidarity in institutional politics is harder to achieve than within the factory. Industrial unions are based on a factory-wide mobilization of workers, but institutional politics require a broader city-wide (or ward-based) mobilization. As Richard Oestreicher notes, "Class sentiments are different from political consciousness...Political mobilization around class sentiments demand[s] far greater resources and involve[s] greater risks" than "workplace mobilization around work-related issues." "Urban Working-Class Political Behavior and Theories of American Electoral Politics," Journal of American History 74 (March 1988): 1269. See also William Form, "Organized Labor's Place in the Community Power Structure," Industrial and Labor Relations Review 12 (July 1959): 526-539.

Such concerns proved unfounded. The bottom did defy Lewis in 1940, giving Roosevelt a solid 66 percent of the vote in New Britain, as elsewhere in industrial America. (2) New Britain's New Deal mayor also was reelected, as was the UE's Nicholas Tomessetti, who won a seat in the state assembly in 1938. The local working class appeared to be united in new ways near the decade's end. Separate group identities still existed -- the Poles being the prominent example in New Britain -- but there was also a new sense of political unity. The UE's Ladislaus Michalowski offered the view in 1939 that "eventually the workers will set up some sort of nationwide 'labor party' to carry forward their fight." (3)

Scholars usually view the late 1930s as a period of decline of reform enthusiasm. Congressional conservatism was on the rise and President Roosevelt did not advance any new social legislation after the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act (1938). "Every opinion poll in 1938 and 1939 indicated much the same thing," notes Richard Polenber,

2. Roosevelt's support in industrial areas remained strong. Consider his vote in the following cities: Bridgeport (65 percent); Hartford (65 percent); New Haven (61 percent); Waterbury (61 percent); Camden (77 percent); Fall River (71 percent); New Bedford (71 percent); and Youngstown (70 percent). It is estimated that 79 percent of CIO members and 71 percent of AFL members voted for Roosevelt in 1940. John W. Jeffries, Testing the Roosevelt Coalition: Connecticut Society and Politics in the Era of World War Two (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 268; Richard Jensen, "The Cities Reelect Roosevelt: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in 1940," Ethnicity 8 (June 1981): 189-195.

3. Ladislaus Michalowski interview, March 8, 1939, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

"between two-thirds and three-fourths of the American people preferred that the Roosevelt administration follow a more conservative course." (4) But what about the other one-third? Their political experience in New Britain and Bridgeport suggest the persistence of a durable, progressive constituency. If in New Britain they had only recently come together, in Bridgeport they formed an especially cohesive voting block early on -- with the election of local Socialists to city government in 1933. And grass-roots support for the Socialists remained strong into the postwar years.

However, this new working-class unity in politics was not all-inclusive, without internal sources of division. Even near the end of the 1930s an Ethnic Question persisted (as suggested in New Britain), which could be subsumed in a class coalition, but which also had the potential to divide the workers. There was also the difficulty of uniting working-class movements in different sectors of the economy. In Bridgeport, craft union leaders and industrial union leaders formed only a tenuous coalition in politics, and this relationship blocked both working-class and Socialist party development.

4. Richard Polenberg, "The Decline of the New Deal, 1937-1940," in John Braeman, Robert Bremner, and David Brody, The New Deal: The National Level (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1975), 254.

Craft Workers in City Government (Bridgeport)

We should first consider the new working-class political power. It is commonly accepted that workers became a crucial component of the national New Deal coalition with the 1936 election. "Franklin Roosevelt had forged a new political coalition firmly based on the masses in the great northern cities," writes William Leuchtenburg. "While old-stock Americans in the small towns clung to the G.O.P., the newer ethnic groups in the cities swung to Roosevelt." (5) However, few accounts of this period have studied the extent that workers achieved formal political power of their own in local community settings. There are indications that this is a neglected topic. For example, we know that CIO candidates won mayoral races in several industrial areas in Pennsylvania. In the mill towns of Clairton and Duquesne, for example, the head of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee captured the mayor's office; approximately fifty-five labor candidates were elected to local office in Pennsylvania in 1937. (6) In New Haven, Connecticut, the vice-president of the Connecticut Federation of Labor was elected mayor in 1934 and seventeen

5. William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 184.

6. "CIO Unions Elect 13 Burgesses and Mayors; 42 Others Also Win," Steel Labor, Nov. 19, 1937. An important example of a CIO defeat in politics occurred in Akron, Ohio. See Daniel Nelson, "The CIO at Bay: Labor Militancy and Politics in Akron, Ohio, 1936-1938," Journal of American History 71 (Dec. 1983): 565-586.

union members were named to the General Assembly. (7) The spread of Farmer-Labor parties in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana also reflects support for independent grass-roots political activity and we need to further investigate the extent that worker groups fielded their own candidates in other cities. (8)

Bridgeport provides an outstanding example. Members of the Socialist party were swept into office in 1933. They had working-class origins and enjoyed strong working-class support. It was not a middle-class movement. (9) The leading figure was Jasper McLevy, a roofer, who became mayor. McLevy carried a plurality in nine of twelve wards, winning

7. Herbert Janick, Jr., A Diverse People: Connecticut 1914 to the Present (Chester, CT: The Pequot Press, 1975), 50.

8. Hugh T. Lovin, "Persistence of Third Party Dreams of the American Labor Movement, 1930-1938," Mid-America 58 (October 1976): 141-157; "The Automobile Unions and the Fight for Labor Parties in the 1930s," Indiana Magazine of History 77 (1981): 123-149; Staughton Lynd and Eric Lief Davin, "Picket Line and Ballot Box: The Forgotten Legacy of the Local Labor Party Movement, 1932-1936," Radical History 22 (1979-1980): 42-63.

9. Recent studies of municipal Socialist movements before World War One demonstrate that workers were the most consistent source of support. The impression that the Socialist party was a middle-class movement is suggested by David Shannon, but this analysis is largely limited to a discussion of national leaders. The history of Socialism in local settings often tells a different story. See Richard W. Judd, Socialist Cities: Municipal Politics and the Grass Roots of American Socialism (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 28-29, 33; James R. Green, "The 'Salesmen-Soldiers' of the 'Appeal Army': A Profile of Rank-and-File Socialist Agitators," in Bruce Stave, ed., Socialism and the Cities (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 23, 31; and David A. Shannon, The Socialist Party of America: A History (New York: Macmillan, 1955).

49 percent of the popular vote in a three-way race in which the incumbent Democrats garnered 35 percent and the Republicans 15 percent. Socialists also gained a majority on the Common Council and won all other elective city offices. "There must be enormous satisfaction for you in the knowledge that as you assume your duties, you are fortified by the substantial good will of the community," the outgoing mayor told McLevy during his Inaugural ceremony. "It is a rare occasion when a man enters public life supported by such a sizeable portion of the electorate." (10)

This was not a fleeting success. The Socialists in Bridgeport increased their power in subsequent elections: between 1935 and 1939 they won every city elective office. McLevy's share of the popular vote reached 68 percent in 1937 and his support in worker areas ran as high as 79 percent. (11) The Party had become a formidable force. "They tell me that Jasper McLevy could have gone into the ring with one arm tied and beaten both of those political opponents in one round," a local columnist wrote after McLevy's 1937 landslide. "It is no longer sane for either of our old-line parties to send a boy to get Jasper McLevy." (12) Of course, both of the major parties did try to unseat the Socialist mayor in these years, but with little success, carrying a plurality in more

10. The New Leader, Nov. 18, 1933.

11. Bridgeport Municipal Register, 1934-1940.

12. Bridgeport Life, Nov. 6, 1937.

than one ward only in 1933.

The Socialists also became a political force at the state level. In 1934, three Socialists from Bridgeport were elected to the state assembly, and the three-man Socialist team played a key role, holding the balance of power in a legislature that was also composed of seventeen Democrats and fifteen Republicans. They used this position to their advantage, siding with each major party to help secure favorable social legislation. Their legislative efforts centered on workers' compensation, unemployment relief, better labor standards, stricter regulation of utility companies, and civil service reform. Because of their pivotal role, the Socialists secured considerable access to Connecticut Gov. Wilbur Cross. "[T]he three Socialists were often seen filing into my office on a morning," he recalled. "They came sometimes to explain a bill of theirs which was coming up for action or to ask questions about a measure which I was advocating." (13) Their presence in state politics helped move both major parties toward liberalism and "by the end of the 1930s most Connecticut politicians, regardless of party label, occupied the ground slightly to the left of the vital center." (14)

Bruce Stave suggests that the Bridgeport Socialists "brought no great substantive transformation" and "actually

13. Wilbur Cross, Connecticut Yankee: An Autobiography (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 317, 410.

14. Janick, A Diverse People, 52-53.

marked the continuance of business as usual." In his view Bridgeport is a case of "urban political continuity." (15) This description is accurate in that the Socialists were unable to effect sweeping legislative changes during their tenure in office. However, Stave treats McLevy's long mayoral service, from 1933 to 1957, and does not focus exclusively on the 1930s. It is my belief that the 1930s marked the crucial period in shaping McLevy's approach to government, as the Socialists realized what changes they could -- and could not -- achieve in local politics. Moreover, Stave's interpretation overlooks the fundamental change that occurred in the social base of city government. A social analysis of office-holders reveals that members of the working class dominated city government after 1933. The face of local government was transformed as workers became leaders. (16)

But what type of workers? By raising this question we see the complexity of working-class development in the United States, with the wide variety of worker experiences based on skill and according to one's place in different sectors of the economy. It becomes clear that the sharing of power among

15. Bruce Stave, "The Great Depression and Urban Political Continuity: Bridgeport Chooses Socialism," in Stave, ed., Socialism in the Cities, 157, 160.

16. This was not the first time that such a change occurred in Bridgeport. In 1901, coal stoker Denis Mulvihill, a Democrat, captured the mayor's office. He served two terms. Alfred F. Howe, "Connecticut's Labor Mayors," The Independent 91 (1904): 1259-1264. Hartford, Derby and Ansonia also elected labor union mayors in this period. See also, David Palmquist, "The Challenge of Being Mayor," Bridgeport Times, Oct. 1985.

the skilled and nonskilled that was achieved during the rise of the CIO, was not as easily achieved in political life. In fact, the leading Bridgeport Socialists were skilled workers from a single sector -- that is, skilled craftsmen from the building trades.

McLevy is the outstanding example. Born in Bridgeport in 1878, he attended school locally until age fourteen, and then worked in several factories before following his father's path by going into the roofing trade. In 1900, at age twenty-two, he joined both the AFL and the Socialist party. McLevy became a prominent AFL official in Connecticut, serving as president of the International Slate and Tile Roofer's Union, head of the Bridgeport Central Labor Union (AFL), and vice-president of the Connecticut Federation of Labor (AFL). He is an exemplary figure in the minority tradition of Socialist AFL leaders. (17)

17. In 1917, McLevy's Roofers union in Bridgeport was among the few local AFL unions to hold their meetings at the Socialist hall. It appears that the Rubber workers is the only other local that met at the Socialist hall, of 49 AFL locals then in existence in Bridgeport. "Bridgeport Central Labor Union and List of Affiliated Organizations," in Official Labor Day Book and Labor Union Directory (Connecticut Federation of Labor, Sept. 1917).

McLevy's socialist activism was public and forthright. "I first turned to Socialism when I read [Edward Bellamy's] Looking Backward," McLevy said in an interview in 1933. "That started me off as a Socialist and I've been a Socialist ever since." At age 25, he had launched what would be one of many Socialist campaigns for public office. He received very little public support in his initial efforts (tallying a mere 172 votes in 1903), but in 1911, during a high point of Socialist popularity nationwide, McLevy gained a respectable 24 percent in the mayoral race. Over the years McLevy's electoral activity paralleled his trade union leadership. He

Skilled workers formed the core of McLevy's "inner circle" when he became mayor. These elected leaders include city clerk Fred Schwarzkopf (cabinet maker), town clerks Richard Schulze (machinist) and Everett Perry (carpenter) and treasurer John Shenton (carpenter). The elected members of the board of education were also skilled workers: a draftsman (1933), toolmaker (1937), and plumber (1939). So were the city sheriffs, a painter, carpenter, and paper hanger (1933); and the elected city selectmen, a carpenter (1933), steamfitter (1935), electrician (1935), and mechanic (1937). (18)

McLevy's mayoral appointments reinforced the link between the craft unions and municipal governance. "In the municipal structure of Bridgeport," city clerk Fred Schwarzkopf commented in 1938, "there is no board or commission which does not have among its membership one or more labor men. This is a recognized condition known to anyone in Connecticut

served on the executive committee of the Connecticut Socialist party and the national Socialist party, having campaigned with both Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas. Alan H. Olmstead, "The Great Jasper" (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), 49, Bridgeport Public Library; Stave, "The Great Depression and Urban Political Continuity," 164-165. The quote is from, "Mayor McLevy, Socialism's Triumph," The New York Daily News, Nov. 14, 1933.

18. Bridgeport Municipal Register and City Directory 1932-1939. Occupations are determined from listings in the Directory.

associated with organized labor." (19) However, McLevy's conception of "labor" remained bound in important ways by his AFL experience. His choice of Peter Brewster to serve as Director of Public Works is a good example of the mayor's preference for workers from the AFL building trade unions. Brewster served for many years as business agent of the Painter's union and was vice-president of the Bridgeport Building Trades Council. (20) McLevy also selected a Painter's union official to serve on the Board of Public Purchases; a member of the Pressman's union to serve on the Board of Health; and a member of the Carpenter's union to serve on the Board of Building Commissioners. It often is suggested that building trade unions, whose workers are engaged in competitive local markets, have a direct interest in forging ties with local government in order to secure favorable building codes, the appointment of sympathetic building and plumbing inspectors, and to have a say about the scope and allocation of city construction contracts. (21) McLevy provided the AFL this type of access.

19. Fred Schwarzkopf to Frank L. Trainor [SWOC Field Representative], Oct. 13, 1938, Suiridorf Papers, box 4, file 27, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University.

20. The Bridgeport Post, Jan. 28, 1934; The New Leader, Dec. 30, 1933.

21. See, for example, Derek C. Bok and John T. Dunlop, Labor and the American Community (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 427-429; Edward Banfield and James Q. Wilson, City Politics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 277-279.

But these appointments were not to the exclusion of other Socialist party activists. For example, a butcher was named to the Fire Department board; a machinist to the Police board; and a machine operator to the Garbage Control Commission. (22) Moreover, some veteran middle-class Socialist party activists also received prominent appointments. Architect Audubon Secor, a party member of more than twenty years, was named as a Building Commissioner. Longtime Socialist Philip Magill, who was employed as a bank treasurer, assumed the post of Welfare Commissioner and Harry Schwartz, a veteran labor lawyer, became the city attorney. McLevy's worker and Socialist appointments prompted praise from the national Party early on. "[He] is beginning his administration with a full sense of responsibility to the party that elected him," The New Leader reported in 1934, "and by his appointments is making it clear that he is in no way a mere 'good man', but a Socialist and representative of his Party... Mayor McLevy is giving a lesson in practical and applied Socialist politics that is particularly salutary at this time." (23)

A Socialist mayor's appointment policy was an important indication of how the administration would deal with the local power structure. Would it choose to disrupt local business networks or partially accommodate their needs? To what extent

22.The New Leader, Dec. 30, 1933; Jan. 6, 1935. Several of these appointees had run unsuccessfully for public office as Socialists in 1931.

23.Ibid., Jan. 6, 1934.

would a Socialist mayor try to build a strong Socialist institutional power base or succumb to appeals of the liberal-reform community to make merit, non-partisan appointments? McLevy's early record approximated the former approach, and it stands out in contrast, for example, to the experience of Socialist mayor Dan Hoan of Milwaukee, who appointed many non-Socialist technicians to office and apparently displayed little concern with "solidarity" appointments. (24) But it also is useful to compare McLevy's record to Socialist mayor George Lunn of Schenectady, because McLevy's appointment policy, like Lunn's, changed over time. Lunn, a minister, won office before World War One on a largely working-class ticket; twenty-three Socialist party members who were workers -- half of them machinists -- were elected to city government with Lunn. Lunn appointed fellow Socialists to office in his first term. However, in his second term Lunn choose many Democrats and Republicans, and the New York State Socialist Party revoked the charter of his Schenectady Socialist organization because of these appointments. (25)

24.Sally Miller, "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor," in Stave, ed., Socialism and the Cities, 62.

25.Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., "Tribune of the People: George R. Lunn ad the Rise and Fall of Christian Socialism in Schenectady," in Stave, ed., Socialism and the Cities, 82-83, 93-94; James R. Green, "The 'Salesmen-Soldiers' of the 'Appeal Army'," 36. Judd also the discusses the experience of Socialist mayors in Lima and Lorain, Ohio, whose appointment policies alienated both Socialists and liberals and contributed to their downfall. Judd, Socialist Cities, 130-140.

McLevy also appointed fewer workers and Socialists to office over time. The praise that McLevy received in 1934 from the national Party would not be lavished by 1938. In that year eleven of sixteen McLevy appointments went to white-collar workers, including the vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce to serve on the Board of Apportionment and Taxation and the president of the local Home and Building Loan Association (who was also the owner of an industrial firm) to serve on the city Financial Advisory Committee. Indeed, by the end of the 1930s the business class achieved a greater degree of representation through McLevy's appointments than they did through the electoral process. A city administration of the workers was no longer a certainty. (26)

So far we have looked at the social composition of Bridgeport city officials and mayoral appointments. In the publicly elected Common Council, a greater degree of working-class occupational diversity is evident. Skilled workers continued to form the leading group, but the Council also included members of the industrial working class, and this representation increased over time. In 1933, five Socialist craftsmen were elected to the Council, compared to four

26. McLevy's 1938 appointments consisted of 3 business executives, 2 business owners, 1 doctor, 2 clerks, 1 draftsman, 1 painter, 1 carpenter, 1 jeweler, 1 pump operator, 1 salesman, 1 student, and 1 factory manager. Bridgeport Municipal Register 1938, 7; Bridgeport City Directory 1937.

Socialist skilled factory workers. (27) In the 1937 elections -- which occurred after the rise of the CIO -- only one craftsman was elected, compared to seven skilled factory workers. (28) It appears that the new CIO mobilized skilled industrial workers to take a more active political role, and the Socialist party partially accommodated these aspirations. Thus, the Common Council, as opposed to other elected city officers, came closer to representing the industrial rank and file. But a skill gap still existed.

In general, the Socialist party in Bridgeport was unable to integrate different strata of the working class, and in particular the industrial working class, into its leadership. The Party leadership was somewhat entrenched -- Party faithful, led by McLevy, had been in control since the first decades of the century. Younger workers, especially the nonskilled, had difficulty in gaining a voice among the established leadership of the Party and among the building trades unions from which the Party drew many of its activists. While the popular base of Socialist government and the CIO overlapped, the leadership of each movement remained separate

27. The Socialist majority consisted of: 1 auto repairman, 1 steamfitter, 2 carpenters, 1 toolmaker, 1 roller, 1 machinist, 1 gas and oil repairman, 1 foreman in a city department, 1 factory foreman, 1 night manager, 1 "manager" -- unknown. Stave, "The Great Depression and Urban Political Continuity," 182 fn. 34.

28. The 1937 Council included: 3 toolmakers, 2 machinists, 1 factory foreman, 1 factory wood patternmaker, 1 carpenter, 1 dyer, 1 clerk, 1 trainman, 1 druggist, 1 unemployed, and 1 unknown. Bridgeport City Directory 1937.

and only hesitantly embraced each other's movement.

McLevy and the CIO

McLevy was cautious in embracing the CIO in the industrial sector, and opposed its organization of workers in the public sector. On one occasion McLevy fired municipal garbage workers who established a Municipal Workers Industrial union and sought affiliation with the CIO, against the Mayor's advice. McLevy and other Socialist leaders had urged the workers to seek affiliation with the AFL. When the workers rejected this suggestion, the mayor became determined to undermine the union. When sixty garbage workers went out on strike in May 1937, he promptly fired them. (29)

Nor did McLevy support the establishment of the State, County and Municipal Workers (CIO) union in early 1938. Again, a main reason for his opposition was the involvement of the CIO. Socialist alderman Michael Gratt, who was a leader in the union's formation, recalled that "McLevy said he didn't care whether the workers organized, but he did nothing to further organization." (30) While all of the Socialist

29. The Bridgeport Telegram, March, 3, 1937; The Bridgeport Post, May, 2, 1937; May 17, 1937; and May 21, 1937. It appears that only one-fourth of the workers eventually were rehired. Strike-breaking was common during the 1930s, even by New Dealers. For example, in 1935 militia were used in 73 strikes, in 20 states, a majority under Democratic New Deal administrations. See Art Preis, Labor's Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 96.

30. "Interview with Alderman Michael Gratt," July 10, 1939, box 133, CEGS Hartford; The Bridgeport Telegram, March 3, 1938;

alderman publicly supported the effort, it was clear to one union member that "many of the workers were afraid to join" because they feared reprisals from the mayor. (31)

McLevy found it hard to embrace the CIO because he associated the new labor federation with Communist influence, and believed that Communists in general wanted to undermine his administration. In Bridgeport we see the unusual phenomenon of a city government associated with the Socialist party and industrial unions whose national leaders often were associated with the Communist party. Many of the CIO unions that organized in Bridgeport -- the UE, the State, County and Municipal workers, the United Office and Professional Workers, the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers -- had significant participation of Communists in the national leadership. (32)

The Bridgeport Post, Feb. 23, 1938; Feb, 26, 1938.

31. "Interview with Charter Member of the Local," July 10, 1939, box 133, CEGS Hartford.

32. Two of the UE's three top leaders had CP associations (Julius Emspak and James Matles). So did Abram Flexner, the national president of the State, County and Municipal Workers and Henry Wenning, the union's national organizer. Lewis Merrill, the president of the United Office and Professional Workers, also belonged to the Party, and Communists held important posts at the national level of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers union. By 1938, approximately 40 percent of CIO national and international unions either were led by Communists and their allies or influenced by them in significant ways. Many of these unions were small in size; the largest were the UE and the UAW. Of course, just because the national leaders of a union were Communists or fellow travelers does not mean that local leaders (or the rank and file) held similar views, or even were aware of the political affiliation of the national leaders. Additionally, recent studies of local Communist activists highlight that they often acted as independent radicals. Nelson Lichtenstein, "The

While the Communist issue was not very important to rank and file workers during the 1930s -- and was not raised publicly among CIO members in Bridgeport -- it did provide a critical source of tension on the Left and between the rival AFL and CIO. McLevy's longtime involvement in Socialist and AFL circles made him well versed in left factional struggles. From his AFL leadership he drew upon a legacy of distrust for Communists, who during the 1920s and early 1930s fought bitter battles with the AFL by organizing rival "dual unions." Prominent battles were fought in the clothing trades, but even in trades where the Communists did not organize, the AFL often became embroiled in factional conflicts. The AFL made it a policy, for example, to prohibit Communists from holding membership in the Federation, and during the 1930s some national union leaders, especially John Frey, head of the AFL Metal Trades Department, publicly attacked Communist involvement in the CIO and put the condemnation of Communists at the forefront of labor concerns. Frey's 1938 testimony before the Dies Committee of the United States House of Representatives pointed to about 350 CIO officials or activists with alleged ties to the Communist party and it was during these hearings that the UE's Julius Emspak was first

Communist Experience in American Trade Unions," with replies by Robert H. Zieger and Roger Keeran, Industrial Relations 19 (Spring 1980): 119-140; Harvey Klehr, The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 235-240, 455; Harvey A. Levenstein, Communism, Anticommunism, and the CIO (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 65-69.

named. Frey repeatedly raised the Communist issue at AFL conventions. (33)

McLevy never was sympathetic toward Communists, and as a member of the Socialist party he became a leader of the Old Guard faction that refused to work with CPers. When the AFL decided to bar Communists from membership, some in the Old Guard hailed this action, particularly Louis Waldman and David Dubinsky in New York. The sentiment against Communists was so strong in the Socialist party in New York that former Communists were even forbidden membership. Dubinsky was a leading force in the Old Guard and his labor anticommunism was one reason that the International Ladies Garment Workers Union left the CIO, and rejoined the AFL, in 1938. It was this union and political culture which engaged McLevy. While many Socialists actively supported the CIO (such as Norman Thomas) and others became leading industrial union leaders (such as CIO national staffers John Brophy and Powers Hapgood and the ACWU's Leo Krzycki), McLevy was among those Socialists who were wary of the CIO. (34) The Communist issue profoundly shaped his views. For example, he and Peter Brewster had denounced the independent garbage workers union in Bridgeport

33. Klehr, The Heyday of American Communism, 248-249, 455; Ronald L. Filippelli, "UE: The Formative Years, 1933-1937," Labor History 17 (Summer 1976): 366-367.

34. Bernard K. Johnpoll, Pacifist's Progress: Norman Thomas and the Decline of American Socialism (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 111-116, 155-160; Levenstein, Communism, Anticommunism, and the CIO, 106-108; Klehr, The Heyday of American Communism, 195.

as a Communist organization. Earlier in the decade McLevy had, in fact, arrested local Communists on several occasions for distributing party literature. (35) McLevy made public his hostility toward the Communist party at a meeting of the Socialist party in 1934.

McLevy accused Communist Party leaders in Bridgeport of aiming 'to destroy the Socialist Party not only in Bridgeport, but throughout the world.' When Socialist Selectman Liskofsky asked the City Central Committee to go on record as opposing the action of the police in arresting the six youths for distributing literature, McLevy dismissed the vital problem -- freedom of speech --by denouncing the leaflets as not literature, but propaganda against the Socialist Party. (36)

There was some basis for suspicion. Communist attitudes toward the Socialist party often were highly critical. During the early depression the Socialists were accused of being "betrayers of the working class" and the disruption of Socialist organizations was a Communist party goal. After 1935, during the period of the Popular Front, Communists sought to work with Socialists and liberals and rejected dual

35. In each instance the cases were dropped in city court as a violation of free speech.

36. CP candidates usually polled less than 300 votes in citywide elections during the 1930s. The CP mayoral candidate received 178 votes in 1931; 204 votes in 1933; 284 votes in 1935; and 479 votes in 1939. (A candidate did not run in 1937). When alderman candidate Thomas Tennant ran on the Communist party ticket (from Ward Three) in 1933, he received only 46 votes. But when he ran on the Socialist party line in 1935, he got 2,377 votes and won the alderman race. Socialist party attacks on the CP are noted in The Bridgeport Times-Star, March 9, 1934; The Bridgeport Post, March 30, 1937; and "Labor in Bridgeport, 1934," 6-7, box 133, CEGS Hartford.

unionism. However, McLevy and other Old Guard Socialists did not view this shift of policy as very significant and were unprepared to forget past differences. The earlier attacks, and the experience of the 1920s, helped to forge a legacy of distrust. Thus, McLevy's negative attitude toward Communists was shaped before the rise of the CIO. While he did not associate the entire Bridgeport CIO movement with Communist leadership, he sought only cordial, but distant relations with local CIO leaders. He could feel only anxiety, for example, when the Bridgeport CIO City Council voted in September 1938 to endorse the International Workers Order as the fraternal society best suited to the needs of the local CIO membership. While most members of the IWO nationwide were never Communists, the organization was led by open Party members and Party organizers often used the IWO to organize workers. (37) The IWO certainly was not McLevy's choice for the rank and file.

Most Socialist party officials in Bridgeport also distanced themselves from the industrial union movement that swept over urban America. Indeed, Alderman Michael Gratt was the only Socialist city official to actively support the CIO campaigns. Gratt was a true ally. He helped UE organizers get permits for leaflet distribution by personally lobbying

37. "Bridgeport CIO Council Endorses IWO," People's Press (New Britain edition), Sept. 10, 1938; Klehr, The Heyday of American Communism, 384-385; Roger Keeran, "The International Workers Order and the Rise of the CIO," Labor History 30 (Summer 1989): 385-408.

the Police Department; and he helped rewrite a city anti-noise ordinance to allow the use of electric sound systems at shopgate meetings. (38) Gratt also shared platforms with UE leaders to promote organizing and urged CIO members to run their own candidates in city and state politics. He believed that it was not enough for industrial workers to support McLevy. His involvement was a public acknowledgement that the McLevy administration refused to embrace industrial unionism as a social justice issue. "If you don't [run your own candidates]" he told a gathering of 500 CIO members in 1938, "City and State administrations will take away your power to strike and picket as they already are trying to do in other states." (39) However, it appears that other Socialists in government were reluctant to take an advocacy role because to do so might very well have precipitated a break with McLevy. (40)

38. "Alderman Aids at Bridgeport," People's Press (national edition), July 11, 1936; "Gratt Asks Reelection," Ibid. (Bridgeport edition), Oct. 30 1937.

39. "CIO is Urged to Widen Scope, Political Organization Essential Alderman Gratt Tells Mass Meeting," The Bridgeport Post, Feb. 21, 1938.

40. One account said that Gratt "was the only alderman in the city who took an active interest in the growing CIO movement in 1937-1938. Not only did he speak at CIO mass meetings, but spoke at shop gate meetings, encouraging the workers in their struggle for union organization." Gratt had split with McLevy several years earlier over policy differences. Newspaper articles describing the CIO campaigns mention Gratt's participation, but none refer to the public support of other elected officials. "Interview with Alderman Michael Gratt"; The Bridgeport Post, Feb. 12, 1937; Feb. 21, 1938.

But McLevy could not ignore the newly formed CIO unions in the mass-production industries. The Mayor choose instead to serve as a mediator of industrial conflicts. On numerous occasions he met with representatives of labor and management to help resolve disputes. Sometimes he was praised by labor for his input. (41) In other instances his efforts were not viewed as very supportive. During the Casco strike, one union leader recalled that "McLevy wanted us to compromise for 'peace sake,' but the union held out for a month." (42) On few occasions did the mayor march with workers on picket lines or address their rallies, and in these instances it appears that AFL unions led the job actions, such as an ILGWU-led effort in 1936. (43)

Industrial Workers and Foremen in City Government (New Britain)

It might appear surprising that in an ethnically segmented city, such as New Britain, workers also gained a significant "presence" as elected officials. They were not united in an independent party, as in Bridgeport; nor were

41. Patricia Eams and M.S. Foucher, "Labor Movement in Connecticut: An Introductory History," unpublished manuscript, 1962, 156, Bridgeport Public Library; The Bridgeport Post, March 1, 1937; March 5, 1937; and March 15, 1937.

42. Miss Y interview, box 133, CEGS Hartford; The Bridgeport Telegram, March 7, 1937; The Bridgeport Post, April 4, 1937.

43. The New Leader, May 1, 1936; May 9, 1936. None of the sources on CIO campaigns mention public support from McLevy.

the workers necessarily union members. Nonetheless, this presence is significant for several reasons. It meant that their particular grievances, concerns, and life perspective would become part of the local political discourse. It also reflected the extent that workers gained representation -- and control -- in local life during the 1930s. It was more than mere "recognition." That such political power did not achieve radical ends does not diminish the fact that workers had an enhanced, direct role in local society. And by the late 1930s, this political power was beginning to find expression in a social movement that was built on the efforts of the local CIO.

The high-point of worker efforts occurred in the 1938 election, when two prominent labor leaders won seats in the state assembly as Democrats: John L. Sullivan, president of the (AFL) Musician's union; and Tomesetti, who then was head of the Labor's Non-Partisan League. (44) Indeed, the composition of the Common Council during the late 1930s, although not dominated by Socialists, included more nonskilled factory workers than in Bridgeport.

I study the occupational backgrounds of office-holders in 1938. While the main city officers -- mayor, clerk and treasurer -- remained in the hands of business people or professionals, we do find that the local Board of Relief was

44. Earlier in the decade, James Clerkin, the head of the Connecticut Federation of Labor, was elected to the New Britain Common Council.

headed by a bus operator, with a machinist as clerk. Most importantly, a significant working-class presence developed in the Common Council. More than half of the Council members -- fifteen of twenty-eight officials -- came from the working class. The overwhelming majority of worker representatives were employed in factories (thirteen of fifteen), of which more than one-quarter (four of fifteen) were nonskilled. (45)

Whereas craft workers had a large political influence in Bridgeport, industrial workers achieved that influence (to a more limited degree) in New Britain. Why did this difference occur? One factor is clearly related to each city's different economic base. Industrial workers were much more likely to run for political office in New Britain because they

45. Occupational information is available on 28 of 30 officials. The councilmen were: 3 machine operators; 1 factory packer; 1 factory patternmaker; 1 toolmaker; 1 factory draftsman; 5 factory foremen; 1 factory printer; 1 plumber; 1 mason; 2 lawyers; 3 clerks; 1 business executive; 3 business owners; 1 auditor; 1 accountant; 1 insurance agent; and 1 salesman. New Britain Municipal Record 1938, 13-14; New Britain City Directory 1937.

It is not surprising to find that while the ethnic composition of the Common Council varied greatly, with significant "New Immigrant" penetration, the city officers overwhelmingly came from English, Irish or American backgrounds. Thus, it appears that approximately 17 of 28 councilmen had eastern or southern European roots, while only 12 of 63 city officers did. For the background of city officers, see "Organizations in [New Britain] Life," Oct. 20, 1938, 1-5, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

This finding on the working-class component of city politics adds a new dimension to the distinction that Samuel Hays draws between local and national politics; see his "Political Parties and the Community-Society Continuum," in William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham, eds., The American Party System: Stages of Political Development (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 152-181.

formed a much more concentrated workforce than craftsmen. The AFL did take root in New Britain: about nineteen locals were in existence in 1938, up from fifteen in 1932, including organizations of painters, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and bricklayers. (46) AFL leaders also engaged in politics, as the election of Sullivan indicates. However, in general, skilled craftsmen played a smaller role in local life than factory workers. And they did not benefit from having a well-organized Socialist party available, as in Bridgeport, to focus their electoral efforts. Industrial workers had the CIO.

An interesting dimension of local politics is the prominence of factory foremen on the Common Council. Five served in 1938, and their representation included the president of the Council. (47) How did this "man in the middle" achieve such political prominence? Scholars note that foremen occupy an ambiguous place in the factory. On the one hand, many workers associated foremen with an abusive management and bitterly resented their power on the shopfloor. Resentment against foremen was an important motive for CIO organizing. Unions often excluded them from membership, and

46. "Directory of Labor Organizations," Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1932 Report, 39; Ibid, 1936-1938 Report, x-xi.

47. Several Socialist alderman in Bridgeport also were foremen, including Andrew K. Auth, the chair of the Bridgeport Socialist party in 1932, who won election to the Common Council in 1933 and was named Council president by his Socialist peers.

foremen often started their own executive organizations. (48) On the other hand, foremen were close to the workers because they usually rose from within their ranks. It was common for foremen to retain solidarity with the workers, having worked alongside them and often living in the same neighborhoods and sharing the same community life. In addition, their values were often quite different from the college-educated management staff of engineers and accountants. As Nelson Lichtenstein notes, foremen normally wore work clothes like production workers and were expected to be able to set up and run the machines of those they supervised. "Foremen spent the bulk of their workday not with higher level management or other foremen but with a production crew upon whose efforts the foreman's own success depended. A measure of friendly cooperation was therefore essential to efficient production, and a degree of psychological accommodation was vital if foremen were to avoid the isolation and ostracism of which even a nonunion crew was capable." (49)

If an abusive foreman could arouse class anger, a

48. In Bridgeport, an Industrial Foremen's Association was started in 1930 and within the first year included 89 foremen, representing 22 firms. The Bridgeport Post, Feb. 22, 1931.

49. Nelson Lichtenstein, "'The Man in the Middle': A Social History of Automobile Industry Foremen," in Lichtenstein and Stephen Meyer, eds., On the Line: Essays in the History of Auto Work (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 160-162. William Form also considers the foreman to be close to the working class. Divided We Stand: Working-Class Stratification in America (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 53-65. The U.S. Census often grouped foremen in the category of skilled workers.

sympathetic foreman could generate positive support from the rank and file. The rub of the problem is that foremen had arbitrary power and they could use it for, or against, the worker. They sometimes gained the confidence of workers, for example, when they helped them find jobs for kin or arranged for kin to work in the same area of the work room.

In New Britain, the successful foreman-politician was often an old-timer who had been around for many years and had a high degree of visibility. A prominent example is Common Council President William Greene. Greene had been employed as a foreman in the same factory since at least 1913. Another prominent old-timer was alderman William Gibney, who began local factory work at the turn of the century. But not all foremen-politicians were as experienced as Greene and Gibney. Alderman William Venberg first began work at the Landers factory in 1928, while councilman John Storey, who was employed as a foreman at Stanley Works, was a relative youngster: in 1938 he was single and lived at home with his parents. (50)

The election of a foreman to public office served the workers' interest. It provided factory workers with an unprecedented degree of political access. They were able to talk to the foreman-politician while on the job and tell him of their grievances and the issues that they wanted local

50. New Britain City Directory 1900-1937; People's Press (New Britain edition), April 9, 1938.

government to address. When else could the industrial rank and file have such access to an elected official on a regular basis?

Election to public office also transformed the foreman's relationship with the workers in his factory. This "man in the middle" became a "public servant." The foreman's political livelihood depended on his continued support from the workers. As a result, inside the factory he had more to fear by alienating workers than by alienating management. The worst thing that could happen to a foreman-politician was to acquire a poor workplace reputation among the workers; such a "bad rep" quickly spread beyond the factory into the larger working-class community. When workers elected a foreman to public office they cut into his authority on the shopfloor and made him dependent on the workers in new ways.

Multiethnic Class Politics (Bridgeport)

Scholars usually associate ethnic diversity with working-class fragmentation: the more diverse the population, the harder it is for workers of different backgrounds to build a common coalition. This fragmentation is often rooted in the isolated communities in which different groups of ethnic workers live, as residents become distrustful of "outsiders." (51) However, an important distinction should be made between ethnic fragmentation within the working class and the

51. See chapter 2.

existence of working-class identities. Historically, ethnicity has often functioned to separate workers, but it has not necessarily functioned to undermine class identities. In fact, ethnicity often has been integral to the class identity of immigrant workers, and class organizations often have been organized along ethnic lines. Immigrant enclaves did not preclude workers from acting in class ways. Indeed, such activity (when it occurred) often was undertaken within the context of a distinctive ethnic consciousness. This is most clearly evident in the establishment of separate foreign-language sections in both the Socialist and Communist parties. In the Socialist party, such ethnic groups comprised 53 percent of the Party membership by 1919, and it was common for these radical immigrants to direct their sections with virtual autonomy from the national party. (52) In the Communist party, there were nineteen different language sections by the early 1920s; less than 10 percent of the membership belonged to English-speaking sections. (53) Some of the most important Socialist electoral strongholds were also ethnically, and sometimes even linguistically, segmented. We know of the dominance of Germans in Milwaukee; Scandinavians in Minneapolis; Jews in Manhattan; the Pennsylvania Dutch in Reading; and Finnish immigrants in the mining communities in

52. Nick Salvatore, Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 285.

53. Nathan Glazer, The Social Basis of American Communism (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1961), 42, 93.

Minnesota and Michigan. (54)

There is also abundant historical evidence that immigrant workers used ethnic ties in organizing trade unions. We have seen that this occurred during many of the CIO campaigns in New Britain and several examples from Bridgeport also can be cited. I have already mentioned the 1937 Casco sit-down strike, where workers used the Hungarian Rakoczi Hall to hold meetings. (55) Hungarians members of the IWW also used the Rakoczi Hall as headquarters during a 1907 strike. (56) Moreover, when 150 workers went on strike at the Stylecraft Leather goods company in early 1937, seeking affiliation with the International Pocketbook Workers' Union, they set up

54. Relevant literature includes, Mike Davis, "Why the U.S. Working Class is Different," New Left Review 123 (Sept.-Oct. 1980): 3-44; Al Gedicks, "The Social Origins of Radicalism Among Finnish Immigrants in Midwest Mining Communities," Review of Radical Political Economics VII (1976): 1-31; Paul Buhle, "Debsian Socialism and the 'New Immigrant' Worker," in William O'Neill, ed., Insights and Parallels: Problems and Issues of American Social History (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing, 1973), 249-277; Melvyn Dubofsky, "Success and Failure of Socialism in New York City, 1900-1918: A Case Study," Labor History 9 (Fall 1968): 361-375; Irwin Yellowitz, "Morris Hillquit: American Socialism and Jewish Concerns," American Jewish History 68 (Dec. 1978): 163-188; Buhle, "German Radicals and the Roots of American Working-Class Radicalism," in Hartmut Keil and John B. Jentz, eds., German Workers in Industrial Chicago, 1850-1910: A Comparative Approach (De Kalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1983), 224-235; and Richard Schneirov, "Free Thought and Socialism in the Czech Community in Chicago, 1875-1887," in Dirk Hoerder, ed., "Struggle a Hard Battle": Essays on Working-Class Immigrants (De Kalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1986), 71-94.

55. See chapter 5.

56. Robert J. Embardo, "'Summer Lightning', 1907: The Wobblies in Bridgeport," Labor History 30 (Fall 1989): 529-530.

strike headquarters at a Lithuanian Hall. (57) This pattern occurred elsewhere. David Montgomery notes that during the strike wave between 1917 and 1921, "neighborhood benevolent societies of Italians, Poles, Jews, Croats, and Lithuanians frequently provided the bases from which efforts to unionize the factories were launched." (58) Ronald Schatz finds that Hungarian, German, Croatian and Serbian fraternal societies in the East Pittsburgh area became centers of labor agitation during the 1920s. (59) Victor Greene reports that Slavic coal miners joined the United Mine Workers of America. (60)

However, we need to recognize the existence of different interactions between class and ethnic identities. In Bridgeport, a class identity and coalition in politics was

57. The Bridgeport Post, Feb. 19, 1937.

58. David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 341.

59. Ronald Schatz, The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1923-1960 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 189-190.

60. Victor Greene, The Slavic Community on Strike: Immigrant Labor in Pennsylvania Anthracite (South Bend: University of Notre Dame, 1968). Sean Wilentz also finds that Irish and German immigrants embraced unions in mid-19th century New York. Sean Wilentz, Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 351-356. However, some scholars note that immigrants were not as easily organized as other workers because, as birds of passage, they were reluctant to join unions. See David Brody, Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era (New York: Harper and Row, 1960); Edward Fenton, Immigrants and Unions, A Case Study: Italians and American Labor, 1870-1920 (New York: Arno Press, 1975); and Gerald Rosenblum, Immigrant Workers: Their Impact on American Labor Radicalism (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

constructed in a multiethnic context. The Socialist movement in Bridgeport was characterized by a multiethnic leadership and a multiethnic rank and file. It was able to unite a diverse grass-roots. An Ethnic Question did not fragment the working class within the Socialist movement.

There is little doubt about the diverse backgrounds of Bridgeport Socialist leaders. Top elected city officers included individuals of Scotch (McLevy), Hungarian (Schwarzkopf), Irish (Shenton), German (Schulze), and eastern European Jewish (Schwartz) descent. The posts of lesser city officers favored those of eastern and southern European origin. (61) Meanwhile, the backgrounds of the Socialist alderman favored workers of Anglo-Saxon and northern European origin. (62)

61. For example, in 1933 the sheriffs were Isadore Kravetz, Salomon Snow, and George Puyda, while the selectmen were Meyer Zucker, David Widdop, and Kieve Listofsky.

The case of Meyer Zucker is an outstanding example of a radical immigrant. He migrated from Russia in 1905, after serving several years in exile for organizing chimney sweepers in Vilna. While in exile, he helped lead a battle against Czarist police in protest against poor living conditions and received an extended jail sentence. But Zucker subsequently was released during a general amnesty. "From Siberian Dungeon to Bridgeport City Hall," The New Leader, Dec. 30. 1933.

62. The composition of the Party's executive board at mid-decade also indicates that the Party was composed of many ethnic groups. A partial list reveals the following members: George Ribak, Angelo Canevari, Michael Patane, Winifred Carboneau, Jack Bergin, Celia Sacks, Samuel Silverstone, Samuel Bryer and Walter Rasmussen. Party activists during the early 1930s (who were not elected to public office) include Al Ribak, Fred Stelzer, Frank Hayden, William Kastin, Irma Kassay, Emily Auth, and J. Carrigan. The Bridgeport Post, Jan. 3, 1937; Minutes of the Bridgeport Socialist Party, November 1932, Jasper McLevy Papers, Bridgeport Public

At the same time, ethnically-based socialist groups played a minor role within the Bridgeport Socialist movement during the 1930s. It is possible to locate the existence of only seven such clubs. In addition to a Hungarian Socialist Club and a Socialist Labor Hungarian Federation, we find five ethnic branches of the International Workers Order (Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, Hungarian, and Carpathon). However, it appears that the IWO branches did not play an active role in the Socialist movement because of local tensions between Socialists and Communists. We have the example of the Russian chapter. It was established in 1935 by members of the Bridgeport Russian National Aid Association. During the 1930s this IWO section, which registered about 125 members, emphasized ethnic socialist culture. It sponsored Russian language teaching for the young as well as public lectures on economic and social problems, in addition to providing sick and death benefits to members. Even though club meetings were conducted in Russian, the group also functioned in multiethnic contexts, especially with the other IWO branches. For example, a joint Russian-Polish-Lithuanian-Carpathon choir was established in 1937. However, if the Russian branch is representative, the IWO chapters did not back the McLevy administration. According to the Writers' Project, "While of socialistic tendencies, they do not follow the Socialist

Library.

party during political campaigns." (63)

The Socialist party organized political clubs open to members of all ethnic groups. Each ward had its own multiethnic club. Ethnic identities also had little place in Party rhetoric. Party platforms and public statements contain no references to ethnic workers, referring usually to "the voters," the "thinking men and women of Bridgeport" or "the people." (64) While Socialist candidates sometimes spoke at ethnic institutions during political campaigns (the Rakoczi Hall was a frequent stop), they consistently avoided any public discussion of ethnic issues. Moreover, McLevy was well known for his "internationalism," attending a wide variety of ethnic, American and multiethnic functions as mayor. The Socialists were aware that their political success depended on uniting a diverse population; they chose a strategy of ignoring ethnic differences to achieve this goal.

A major reason that the Party was not ethnically

63. The headquarters of both Hungarian clubs are listed as 647 Pine St., according to the 1939 City Directory. See also "International Workers Order: Bridgeport Russian Branch No 3089," June 17, 1937, 1-7, box 129, CEGS Hartford. This source indicates that the Russian branch was the first one to be established in the city.

64. See the 1937 Municipal Platform of the Socialist Party; the 1935 Party leaflet, "Continue Bridgeport's Progress"; the 1935 Socialist statement of principles, "Let's Look at the Record" (printed in The Bridgeport Post, Oct. 20, 1935); the Platform of the state Socialist Party (which McLevy headed) in 1928, 1932, 1936 and 1938; Jasper McLevy, "Professional Politicians," Greenwich Time, Aug. 25, 1938; as well as numerous articles in The Bridgeport Post about the Socialist administration. None of these sources indicate Party comments on the ethnic diversity of the working-class.

segmented is that historical developments made ethnicity less important for the working class of the 1930s, than for their counterparts during the previous sixty years. Ethnic identities did not disappear, but demographic and neighborhood changes diminished the institutional base of ethnicity. Clearly the most important demographic change was the rise of the second generation. Just as this new working class group formed a crucial base of the new CIO, so too they became a critical source of support for the Socialist movement in Bridgeport. During the 1930s they voted in large numbers for the first time. In national politics, Roosevelt and the New Deal benefitted from their participation. (65) In Bridgeport, their support went overwhelmingly to the Socialists. Indeed, McLevy's strongest support came from new and young voters, those in the twenty-one to thirty-four age group. This age group was also more likely than older residents to vote Socialist. (66)

The rise of multiethnic worker neighborhoods also provided an important community setting for Socialist appeals. We have already suggested that multiethnic living helped to

65. Samuel Lubell, The Future of American Politics (New York: Harper and Row, 1965): 44-55; Kristi Andersen, The Creation of a Democratic Majority, 1928-1936 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979): 100-110; Oestreicher, "Urban Working-Class Political Behavior," 1263-1264.

66. Stave, "The Great Depression and Urban Political Continuity," 174-175 (especially Tables 8-4, 8-5).

promote trust among different workers.(67) Groups variously held on to separate identities but also found that living in the same neighborhood with other groups enhanced their understanding of the common problems in their lives as workers. In this case, diversity aided multiethnic consciousness: because no single ethnic group was dominant, or was able sustain a "complete" enclave, the different groups mixed in daily life. Then, too, class bonds forged at the workplace were not easily forgotten off the job, because the workplace and the residential community were populated by many of the same diverse group of people. With a "League of Nations" at work and a "League of Nations" in the neighborhood, workplace and community identities were not radically separated. (68)

There is evidence of different ethnic groups working together for social reforms. One prominent area of cooperation was on behalf of government funding of low-income housing, at the time one of the most radical reforms that the New Deal advanced. Historically affordable housing for workers has been a top priority of labor and social-democratic parties. (69) McLevy took the lead on this issue

67. See chapter 2.

68. On the political consequences of such a separation, see Ira Katznelson, City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

69. The CIO, too, eagerly endorsed low-cost housing. Bridgeport's LNPL championed this issue, as did many national

as early as 1936, as one of the first mayors in the country to help establish a local Housing Authority. But by 1938 he was insisting on a special federal tax status for the municipality before breaking ground on housing construction.(70) Numerous ethnic groups mobilized a united front to press the city to move faster on housing construction. In 1938, Italian, Hungarian and Slovak groups jointly lobbied the Common Council. The groups involved were: Society Trincaria; St. Stephen's Society; St. Mary's Church; Penn's Slovak Greater Roman Catholic Church; and the Slovak Catholic Men's Assembly. A cooperative lobbying effort was undertaken by several other Hungarian and Slovak organizations. These groups included: St. Joseph's Society of the First Catholic Slovak Union; Golden Gate Lodge No. 37, Order of Shepherds of Bethlehem; the First Catholic Union Branch 53; and the Hungarian Sick Benefit Society. (71)

unions. See, for example, "SWOC Demands Gigantic Program Be Started for Million New Dwellings," Steel Labor, Nov. 19, 1937 (front page); "'Dead Ends' on Down Grade as U.S. Housing Drive Gains," The CIO News, Aug. 6, 1938; Bridgeport Municipal Register 1938, 15.

70. The New Leader, Dec. 19, 1936; The Bridgeport Post, Jan. 23, 1937; Feb. 2, 1937; "The Mayor's Annual Message" (to the Common Council), June 6, 1938, reprinted in the Bridgeport Municipal Register 1938, 16-17; Nathan Straus [U.S. Housing Authority Administrator] to Father Stephan J. Panik (Bridgeport Housing Authority Chairman), reprinted in Municipal Register 1938, 36.

71. Official Proceedings of the Common Council, 1938, 399, 418. The Slovak church leader Father Panik, as chairman of the Bridgeport Housing Authority, helped mobilize the ethnic community.

How did the Socialist party sustain the support of such a diverse grass-roots? On two critical issues the Party's ideology did not conflict with the aspirations of the "New Immigrant" working class. First, the Socialists did not attack personal private property. While the Party favored government ownership of some industries, they did not consider personal property -- especially home ownership -- to be antithetical to socialist doctrine. They believed that everyone should be able to own a home, especially wage-earners whose lives were often plagued by economic instability. Working-class home ownership was not a "sellout" to capitalism, but reflected concerns for security and stood beside such other social issues as workers' compensation and old-age pensions. As McLevy stated during the 1932 gubernatorial campaign,

Almost every thrifty person desires to own a home to properly house his family and have economic security in his declining years. It is the solemn duty of a just government not only to aid him in the accomplishment of this lofty purpose, but to protect and guard him. (72)

Scholars recently have explored the importance that Italian,

72. Jasper McLevy, "Republican and Democratic Parties are 'Bankrupt in Principles'," 1932, Fred Schwarzkopf Papers, University of Bridgeport. Douglas E. Booth also notes that Socialists in Milwaukee supported home ownership and found a strong support base among homeowners. "Municipal Socialism and City Government Reform: The Milwaukee Experience, 1910-1940," Journal of Urban History 12 (Nov. 1985): 53-54.

Polish and other groups attached to owning a home. (73) This was the case in New Britain, as well as in Bridgeport, and in other New England cities, where in fact immigrants often owned their homes in greater proportions than native-born residents. (74)

Second, Bridgeport's Socialists refrained from attacking religion as a form of false consciousness. This position was especially important in a Catholic working-class city, where religious institutions had a prominent place in local life. Moreover, McLevy, as a Presbyterian, was potentially vulnerable in such a setting: the Catholic working class might have been suspicious of a non-Catholic. (75) And this

73. See, for example, Daniel Lurian, "Wealth, Capital and Power: The Social Meaning of Home Ownership," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 7 (Autumn 1976): 261-282; John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael Weber, Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 153-183; Olivier Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 152-176; Ewa Morawska, For Bread With Butter: The Life-Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 401.

74. United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Family Income and Expenditure in Five New England Cities, 1935-1936 Vol. I: Family Income (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939): 71-76.

75. There is debate about Catholic worker hostility to Socialism. Marc Karson argues that the presence of many Catholics as AFL leaders during the Progressive era is an important reason why the AFL never embraced a socialist party. Yet during the 1930s and 1940s many left-led national CIO unions had Catholic leaders and rank and file, such as the UE, the Transport Workers Union, the International Longshoremen's Union and the National Maritime Union. Douglas Seaton notes that Ben Gold, the head of the Fur workers union, was "the

religious tolerance by the Socialists did not provoke the popular association of socialism with atheism, an association that has often plagued the Left in America.

Bridgeport Socialism appealed to workers because it embodied many of the same principles as the New Deal in an "independent" form. Both the Socialists and the New Dealers embraced "positive" government, the expansion of government power to address the needs of the disadvantaged. They both supported social welfare provisions and stricter labor standards, as well as the use of government to intervene in the economy to wrestle control away from "economic royalists" and other capitalist elites. Both also tried to expand the idea of liberty to include the right to work and the right to organize into trade unions. On these issues the Socialist party and the New Deal shared a common ground. However, the Socialists also advanced an agenda beyond the New Deal, placing New Deal reform within the framework of working toward the public ownership of basic industries. But the latter was a long-term goal, and in McLevy's formulation, public ownership was viewed basically as an extension of the New Deal, not a radical departure from it. Reference to the

only important left-wing union leader who was not Catholic in background." Karson, American Labor Unions and Politics, 1900-1918 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958); Seaton, Catholics and Radicals: The Association of Catholic Trade Unions and the American Labor Movement, from Depression to Cold War (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981), 68. See also Ken Fones-Wolf, "Religion and Trade Union Politics in the United States, 1880-1920," International Labor and Working-Class History 34 (Fall 1988): 39-57.

"economic contradictions inherent to the capitalist system" stood alongside liberal demands for expanding old-age pensions, instituting rigorous merit and civil service systems, and establishing open competitive bidding on all state contracts and purchases. Indeed, McLevy's 1938 platform announced that a chief goal of the Socialist movement was the elimination of "insecurity" and the guarantee of "remunerative work." But the Party also claimed that "until the means of production and distribution are dedicated to the welfare of the producers of wealth instead of to the profit of a small and greedy group of owners, poverty, insecurity and wars will continue." (76) The Socialist platform, thus, contained a variety of meanings. One consisted of New Deal reform with an emphasis on worker needs. Another consisted of Socialist goals of public ownership. These meanings were presented as complementary. However, a fundamental difference between the Socialist party and New Deal Democrats concerned the means toward these ends. The Socialists tried to bring positive government to the people through an independent party of their own. They said that both the Republican and Democratic parties were run by corrupt politicians and controlled by greedy capitalists. Positive government could be achieved only by voting the "third [Socialist] lever."

It would be a mistake to discount the Socialist movement in Bridgeport as merely another example of nonideological

76. Platform of the Socialist Party of Connecticut 1938.

machine politics, or to attribute its electoral success to the absence of strong Republican and Democratic parties. Socialist candidates won so many elective posts that a new consensus for city government must have taken form. Many workers were alienated from the mainstream parties and found that the Socialists spoke to their needs. It is significant that the Socialist success was achieved in the context of an unusually high degree of electoral enthusiasm. A very large percentage of the eligible electorate cast ballots in both presidential and non-presidential elections years. Approximately 90 percent of registered voters went to the polls in presidential election years. (77) Off-year local elections registered relatively high turnouts too -- 76 percent in 1934 and 79 percent in 1938. (78) We can conclude that residents voted in such large numbers because they saw real alternatives and felt something important was at stake.

The Socialists also won the allegiance of many Connecticut industrial workers outside of Bridgeport. McLevy received more than one-quarter of the statewide vote in the 1938 gubernatorial campaign, and the rest of the Socialist state ticket garnered a respectable one-sixth. It was his best showing in a state campaign, and this support occurred

77. Ninety-one percent of the electorate voted in the presidential election of 1932; 90 percent in 1936; and 90 percent in 1940. Bridgeport Municipal Register, 1933, 1937, 1940.

78. Ibid., 1935, 1939.

despite the opposition of LNPL, which anticipated that a strong showing by McLevy would help elect a Republican. (79) Incumbent Gov. Cross, a New Deal Democrat who lost the election, recalled:

I sensed no imminent danger of defeat until a fortnight before election day when the president of a large manufacturing company informed me that nearly all his employees from top to bottom appeared the day before wearing McLevy buttons. Similar news came from all industrial areas west of the Connecticut River...Not until later did I learn that W.P.A. workers engaged on state building projects were also displaying McLevy buttons. (80)

Yet, alongside many worker's rejection of the major parties stood a towering figure: Franklin Roosevelt. Working-class America had tremendous confidence in FDR. Wage-earners in Bridgeport voted overwhelmingly for Roosevelt at the same time that they chose Socialists to serve in municipal government. Roosevelt received 70 percent of the city vote in 1936 and 65 percent in 1940. (81)

A sampling of opinion indicates the breath of this popular support. Second-generation factory worker John Dugas said, "I think President Roosevelt is trying all he can to

79. See, "Deny League Backs McLevy," People's Press (New Britain edition), Feb. 12, 1938; "Labor Should Not Divide Its Vote," Ibid., Sept. 24, 1938; and "McLevy Can't Win -- The G.O.P. Mustn't," Ibid., Oct. 29, 1938.

80. Cross, Connecticut Yankee, 413. See also Jeffries, Testing the Roosevelt Coalition, 44.

81. Norman Thomas received less than 2,000 Bridgeport votes in each election. Bridgeport Municipal Register 1937 and 1939; Jeffries, Testing the Roosevelt Coalition, 268.

bring better wages and conditions to the common people." (82)

Milton McDonald, who had been a member of the Plumber's union and became the head of the Building Trades Council, commented in 1939, "What we need is more New Deal measures for Bridgeport. You know what I think, President Roosevelt is the greatest president this country has ever had -- even greater than Washington or Lincoln. I don't know what will happen if he doesn't run for a third term." (83)

Thirty-seven of forty families surveyed on Hallett St. supported FDR in 1939. A factory worker told the Writers' Project, "Roosevelt is for the working people. He has proven that." Another stated, "Roosevelt has been doing a lot of things for the people in this country. He helps out the farmers and he tries to put the people back to work." The President's job was all the more difficult because, "Some of the crooked people that are in Washington don't want to see him do this because they think that Roosevelt shouldn't fight with the business people. They try to do everything to stop him. As long as I can vote I'm sure that I vote for

82. John Dugas interview, July 5, 1939, box 18, CEGS Storrs. He was born in 1889 in Bridgeport and worked for many years in local factories. His parents were among the first New Immigrant settlers in Bridgeport. Dugas was religious and strongly anti-Communist. "I think that every person should go to church because that's the only place that anyone can find comfort in these bad times...I am against all groups that are against our religion and I think that they will feel sorry for it some day...You don't see any of the Slovaks joining the Communist party, ain't that something to be proud of?"

83. Milton McDonald interview, box 133, CEGS Hartford; The Bridgeport Post, Jan. 8, 1934; Jan. 28, 1934.

Roosevelt." (84) If many people believed that national politics was far removed from their lives, Roosevelt was one figure --and perhaps the only national politician -- who they believed was responsive to their needs. A Writers' Project reporter recorded this note about the Hallett St. residents: "In the majority of cases the informants claimed that they did not know enough of 'what is going on in the [national] government' but that whatever it was they were sure that 'Roosevelt is doing all he can to help the people.'" (85)

The Late Arrival of the New Deal (New Britain)

While workers of many different ethnic backgrounds united behind the Socialists in Bridgeport by 1933, they remained fragmented politically in New Britain until 1938. Only at that late date did they form a common coalition and help to elect the city's first New Deal and pro-labor mayor. Polish separatism in local politics was the major reason why a local New Deal did not take hold earlier. Even though Roosevelt handily carried New Britain in 1936, with 70 percent of the vote, Democratic unity on behalf of a local mayoral candidate proved much more difficult to achieve. Many Poles continued to vote Republican in local races, and New Britain was among

84."Hallett St. Survey," 38-39, box 18, CEGS Storrs.

85.Ibid., 39. See also David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, eds., 'Slaves of the Depression': Workers' Letters About Life on the Job (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

the few cities that elected a Republican mayor in 1936. (86)

The 1938 election was a breakthrough, but even at that time ethnic political loyalties existed simultaneously with class loyalties. Polish voters supported Democratic labor candidates (and some cast ballots for McLevy in the governor's race) and also elected a Polish Republican to the United States Congress. (87) In the latter case, the victory of Republican Boleslaus Monkiewicz -- a second-generation Polish-American -- was heralded as an ethnic achievement within the Polish settlement. A decade earlier Polish residents had come to dominate ward politics. Monkiewicz's election was the first time that Polonia sent one of their own to Washington and they would soon elect one of their own as mayor -- second-generation leader Henry Gwiazda in 1946. The Monkiewicz and Gwiazda campaigns marked the high point of Polish ethnic politics in New Britain. (88)

86. In 1935, Republican mayors ruled in only 18.4 percent of 92 cities with populations of more than 100,000. Stave, "The Great Depression and Urban Political Continuity," 158-159. On the urban political realignment, see also Jerome Clubb and Howard W. Allen, eds, Electoral Change and Stability in American Political History (New York: Free Press, 1971); and Walter Dean Burnham, Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics (New York: Norton, 1970).

87. McLevy received about one-third of the New Britain vote.

88. Gwiazda, a judge, ran as a Democrat with the support of both the Polish Pulaski Democratic Club and the UE unions. He had lost a bid in 1944. Gwiazda was a charter member of the Polish "44 Club," started by college educated, second-generation Poles during the late 1930s. The New Britain Herald, Feb. 28, 1944; Feb. 16, 1946; "The 44 Club," Dec. 1, 1939, box 130, CEGS Hartford; and Jonathan Shea and Christine Stoj, "The Pulaski Democratic Club of New Britain,

Separate Polish Politics

The elaborate ethnic group life that Poles sustained during the interwar years reached into the political sphere. Polish residents organized their own ethnic sections of both the Republican and Democratic parties. The oldest group was the Polish Republicans, formed by immigrant men before World War One. Meanwhile, members of the second generation formed their own Republican group, known as the Oaks Club, during the early 1930s. From eleven charter members in 1934, the Oaks grew to seventy-five members in 1936 and to 140 members by 1939. (89)

The Oaks Club served as a political base for Monkiewicz. He played a prominent role in Club affairs; many of the first Club meetings were held in his office and after he was elected to Congress he continued to advise the Oaks on political affairs. Born in 1898, Monkiewicz was the son of an immigrant factory worker, and attended local schools before enrolling in Fordham University and Fordham Law School in New York city. His rise within the local political establishment also had ethnic roots. During the early 1930s he was appointed clerk of the city court by a fellow Oaks Club

Connecticut," in Stanislaus A. Blejwas and Mieczyslaw B. Biskupski, eds., Pastor of the Poles: Polish American Essays Presented to Right Reverend Monsignor John P. Wodarski (New Britain: Polish Studies Program, Central Connecticut State College, 1982), 147.

89. Meetings were conducted in English, in contrast to most other Polish organizations in New Britain. "Oaks Club of New Britain," 1-5, Aug. 22, 1939, box 130, CEGS Hartford.

member, Judge Stanley J. Traceski. (90)

Polish women, too, started their own Republican club during the 1930s. Their organization, the Polish Crest Club, was a innovation for ethnic women in politics and reflected their growing political awareness within an ethnic context.

There is no organization of its exact type in their mother country, and the organization of it was more or less original in which no definite model was set up as an example from which to form its foundations. The circumstances which brought this organization into existence were somewhat of a political nature. Since the men of the various political parties had organizations of their own, in which the women played only a small part, these few women thought it would not only be a good idea, but proper and progressive, to have such an organization of their own, wherein the women could and would have some show of interest and influence in the politics of the colony. (91)

The women formed the Crest Club so that they would have "influence in the politics of the colony." This effort paralleled the establishment of several other Polish women's social clubs during the late 1920s and 1930s, including a separate women's section of the Polish Falcons Nest; the

90. Monkiewicz's generational identity drew on both ethnic and American experiences. In addition to the Oaks, he also was a member of the immigrant Polish Political Club No. 1, the largely second-generation Polish Falcons Nest No. 88, as well as the Kiwanis Club and the Lawyer's Club.

Traceski also was a second-generation Fifth Ward leader. In 1929, at age 33, he was named a city judge, becoming the first one of Polish descent in New England. He, too, was the son of a factory worker, who attended local schools before enrolling in nearby Yale University and Yale Law School. On Monkiewicz and Traceski, see "Poles of New Britain: Biographical Data," 1, 5-6, Sept. 29, 1937, box 127, CEGS Hartford.

91. "Polish Crest Club," 2, box 130, CEGS Hartford.

Polish National Alliance; the General Haller Post No. 111; and the Polish Junior League. (92)

The Polish Pulaski Club dominated Fifth Ward Democratic politics. The Club was started in the mid-1920s to counter

92. In the late 1930s these women's groups included between 60 and 150 members each. All four groups appear to have been formed at the initiative of the women. Each held separate meetings, with their own dues, although the women's Falcons, PNA and Haller Post sponsored joint social activities with the men's groups. All the groups included single and married women. The women's Hall Post also wore their own uniforms, a variation of that worn by Polish army nurses.

The Junior League was not an auxiliary to a men's group. It provided a vehicle for sociability among younger women, as well as providing social services for the local community. Its Constitution states, "To provide, through this club, a practical means to form enduring friendships, to render altruistic services, and to build a better community life." Its charity work in 1934 included the distribution of 2,000 quarts of milk to underprivileged children, as well as eyeglasses, and support of a summer camp for children. In 1940, the group, attuned to the needs of the second generation, established a scholarship fund for college-bound Polish students. By all indications the League was very popular among young women. The group initially set a membership limit of 50, but expanded it to 65 members during the late 1930s because of the widespread interest. Many more women than this joined because women above age 25 years old had to leave the organization. In 1939, Polish women also formed League chapters in New Haven and Waterbury.

In some cases Polish women participated in multiethnic social groups. The leading example is the CIO Women's Auxiliary, started in early 1938. It was headed by Elizabeth Michalowski. The sources on women's groups include, "History of Polish Falcons Nest 88," 7, April 9, 1939; "P.N.A. Group 2612," June 20, 1939; and "General Haller Post No 111," 1-11, April 21, 1939. These materials are located in box 130, CEGS Hartford. See also Minutes of the Polish Junior League, May 9, 1935, Feb. 10, 1938; and Polish Junior League of Connecticut, Inc., Hartford-New Britain Chapter 50th Anniversary, 1926-1976 (Hartford, 1976), 1-4. These sources are housed at the Polish Heritage Archives, Central Connecticut State University. My thanks to Prof. Stanislaus Blejwas for locating these materials. On the CIO Auxiliary, see UE News, May 6, 1939; and "The CIO in New Britain," 22, 28, box 199, CEGS Hartford.

Republican influence in the Polish settlement and helped register many victories for Polish Democratic candidates in alderman races. Like the Oaks, the Pulaski Club grew during the 1930s, benefitting from the politicization of the second generation. Club membership rose from fifty-one in 1931, to 164 in 1937, and to 241 in 1939. During the late 1930s the newer members posed a challenge to the old-timers, demanding an equal share in the Club leadership. This was largely because, as one observer noted, "The younger members thought that the older ones were unprogressive." But even when these members of the second generation asserted their political rights, they remained within a separate ethnic organizational context. The same can be said of both the male and female public, because Polish Democratic women, who were largely excluded from the Pulaski Club, formed a separate auxiliary to the organization. (93)

Both Polish Republicans and Democrats ran their own candidates in ward elections and voters often split their tickets to endorse Polish candidates. "Ethnic was very powerful then," recalled Ladislaus Michalowski. "Poles voted for a Pole unless there was a strong reason for them not to vote for a Pole." (94) For example, in 1932 Fifth Ward voters

93. The generational rift is described in The New Britain Herald, March 2, 1938. See also, "Pulaski Democratic Club," 1-11, Aug. 8, 1939, box 130, CEGS Hartford; and Shea and Stoj, "The Pulaski Democratic Club," 140-141, 149.

94. Michalowski attributed some Polish Republican support to management intimidation. He said that his father, who was a

elected both Republican and Democratic alderman of Polish descent. Democrat Lucien Maciora, a charter member of the Pulaski Club, won against an Irish Republican opponent, James P. Murphy. In a separate race, Republican Richard Sokolowski also received the backing of the Polish community against a non-Polish Democratic rival, Bernard Conley. (95)

Party loyalties among the Poles remained loose before 1938, as about equals numbers of Fifth Ward voters cast Democratic and Republican ballots. The mayoral contests illustrate this phenomenon. In 1932, the Republican candidate carried the Fifth Ward (with 1,937 votes to 1,702 for the Democrats), while in 1934 the Democratic candidate received an overwhelming majority (2,479 votes to 911 votes). In 1936 -- a time when Democratic allegiances might have been consolidated -- the Fifth Ward only narrowly voted for the Democratic candidate (1,746 votes to 1,576 votes). (96) If local Democrats could not win big in a Polish worker's ward, how could they be successful citywide? Republicans won the

factory worker, voted Republican before the organization of the CIO. "My father told me that anytime during elections his factory supervisor told him, 'You better vote Republican.' My father and many other Poles voted Republican as a result...Foremen went around with veiled threats about your job. You did what was safe." Ladislaus Michalowski, interview by author, March 26, 1990.

95.Voting statistics are listed in Louis A. Gentile, "Voting Behavior, City of New Britain 1928-1940," 2 (seminar paper, Central Connecticut State University, 1979), New Britain Public Library. See also, "The Early Poles: Political History," Oct. 28, 1938, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

96.Gentile, "Voting Behavior," 18, 23-24.

mayoral campaigns in both 1932 and 1936. (97)

The only ward that the Democrats handily won before 1938 was the Sixth, which was home to multiethnic worker neighborhoods. Once again we can point to the experience of multiethnic living as encouraging the development of class sentiments. In the Sixth Ward, as in many worker neighborhoods in Bridgeport, a variety of ethnic groups

97. A short note is in order about the 1936 mayoral election. A Democratic realignment did not occur in part because the local Democratic party was sharply divided. David Dunn, the incumbent Democratic mayor, was challenged in the Democratic primary by Angelo Paonessa, a former mayor, who served three terms during the 1920s. Dunn and Paonessa long had been allies, but the two parted company during Dunn's mayoral term. The 1936 primary campaign was bitter and, in the end, Paonessa defeated Dunn, but the campaign left scars. As the Herald reported, "A campaign such as the Democratic contestants put on was dangerous for the welfare of the party, and it is now perhaps too late to make amends. For this reason the Republicans under Quigley look forward with more hopefulness than one would have thought possible a year ago." Paonessa, an Italian immigrant, was associated with the New Deal, having been appointed as a state factory inspector during the early 1930s by Gov. Cross. But he lost the general election in 1936 to George Quigley, a long-time Republican leader who had preceded Dunn as mayor. Not only were Democratic chances hurt by a divided Party leadership, but Paonessa could not depend on Roosevelt's coattails because for many years city elections in New Britain were held in April, preceding the Presidential balloting by several months. Ellis Paonessa, interview by author, May 10, 1990; Bert Botell (son-in-law of Angelo Paonessa), interview by author, May 10, 1990; The New Britain Herald editorial, (untitled and undated) 1936, in Mayor Paonessa scrapbook (in Ellis Paonessa's possession); "Republican and Democrats Name Quigley and Paonessa for Mayor in Hard Fought Primary Battles," (undated) 1936, Ibid.; The New Britain Herald, April 14, 1926, July 16, 1948, May 6, 1949, Oct. 21, 1953; Patrick Thibodeau, New Britain: The City of Invention (Chatsworth, CA: Winsdor Publications, 1989), 67-68.

resided on the same blocks. (98) Moreover, the presence of many Italian-Americans in this district aided the Democratic vote, because unlike the Poles, there was very little to attract them to the Republican party. (The only two political clubs that the ethnic group organized were associated with the Democrats -- the Italian-American Democratic Club and the Italian Social Democratic Club.) (99) The Sixth Ward majorities for the Democrats were relatively consistent over time: in 1932 (2,472 Democratic votes to 1,725 Republican votes); in 1934 (2,463 to 1,359); and in 1936 (2,419 to 1,506). (100) The Sixth was ahead of the other wards in supporting the New Deal.

The Class Dimension

In 1938, the Fifth Ward joined the Sixth in voting overwhelmingly for a New Deal. Democratic mayoral candidate George Coyle carried the Fifth Ward by almost a three-to-one margin (3,153 to 1,335), and won the election. (101) What had brought about this change? It was neither Al Smith nor

98. See chapter 2 for a discussion of multiethnic living in the Sixth Ward.

99. In 1935, Paonessa was elected president of the Italian Social Democratic Club, and he also had close ties to the Italian-American Democratic Club, which urged him to run for mayor in 1934. The New Britain Herald, July 16, 1948.

100. Gentile, "Voting Behavior," 23-24.

101. Ibid.; The New Britain Herald, April 13, 1938. The Sixth Ward continued to show its New Deal stripes, with 3,554 Democratic votes, compared to a mere 1,408 Republican votes.

FDR, but the CIO. A citywide political coalition of workers awaited the formation of the CIO, which helped mobilize the working class both at the workplace and at the polling booth. Is it a coincidence that the formation of the CIO coincides with an expansion of the electorate? The voting public increased by 7 percent between 1936 and 1938, which is particularly noteworthy because 1938 was a non-presidential election year when we might expect voter turnout to drop. (102) The activity of LNPL heightened interest in local politics by injecting a class dimension and union members helped to get out the vote.

There were good reasons for the CIO to get involved in local politics in 1938. Republican Mayor George Quigley had made clear his anti-CIO sentiments during the UE organizing drives. The event that crystallized labor's antagonism was the Mayor's refusal to grant UE 207 an outdoor parade permit in the days before the union's National Labor Relations Board election. Quigley's snub angered the new CIO leaders and after the Local scored an overwhelming NLRB election victory (gaining an unprecedented 95 percent of the vote), LNPL decided to target the Mayor in the coming election. UE leaders actively lobbied their membership to reject Quigley; Dan Dragone publicly condemned Quigley, noting "The defeat

102. An eighteen percent expansion of the voting public occurred between 1928 and 1930. This earlier increase is due to the emergence of the second generation. Gentile, "Voting Behavior," 22-24.

of Quigley and a victory for Coyle will be a step forward for labor. I intend to urge all my membership to remember that when they go to the polls." (104) The local edition of the People's Press ran vigorous attacks against the Republican incumbent, pointing to his unwillingness to appoint any CIO members to city government, especially to the City Welfare Board, and his reluctance to call a conference in the city about unemployment. "Whose Mayor is Quigley, anyway?" the paper asked. (105) And after Quigley's defeat, the national UE pointed to labor's victory as an exemplary example of CIO efforts in politics. "What the workers in New Britain did, you can do, no matter how big or how small the town you live in." (106)

The CIO also helped bring about a local New Deal by lobbying for liberal reform in the community. The new unions held citywide meetings, distributed literature and spoke at shopgates in support of slum clearance; a municipal power plant; old-age pensions; anti-injunction laws; government

104. "Union Leaders Unanimous In Stand Against Quigley," People's Press (New Britain edition), April 9, 1938; see also People's Press, Nov. 27, 1937; Feb. 19, 1938; March 26, 1938; and April 2, 1938.

105. Ibid., Feb. 12, 1938.

106. "They Did It In New Britain," People's Press (national edition), April 23, 1938. The new mayor subsequently appointed two UE officials to city government. Frank Satalino was named to the Welfare Board and Robert Barrows joined the Board of Public Works. It was pointed out that Satalino, age 26, and Barrows, age 25, were probably the youngest members ever to serve on city boards in New Britain's history. Ibid. (New Britain edition), May 28, 1938; July 9, 1938.

support for education and jobs; and a state wages and hours law. According to Tomesetti, Caiazza, and Salwocki, the CIO "carried on an independent campaign for the 'New Deal'." (107)

The CIO paved the way for a welfare society on the local level. A CIO Unemployed Committee lobbied city authorities to aid needy families and provided their own social support services. (108) For example, during the summer of 1938, the Unemployed Committee helped: 200 people get relief; 100 people get WPA and NYA jobs; 380 people secure unemployment checks; forty get citizenship papers; twenty-two people to receive general legal advice; and eight families from being evicted from their homes for nonpayment of rent. (109)

Moreover, the new unions helped to build multiethnic networks within the community. When LNPL was formed, CIO officials conducted an extensive campaign to gain the support of local ethnic organizations. They were partially successful, gaining the backing of the Russian-American Political Club, the Lithuanian Political Club, a branch of

107. "The CIO in New Britain," 23-27 (quote is on p. 26).

108. Ibid. Tomesetti and Joseph Caiazza were Committee chairs and Committee members included Michalowski and Michael Stein.

109. The Connecticut CIO Yearbook 1940 (Waterbury: Connecticut CIO Industrial Union Council, 1940). People's Press (New Britain edition), Jan. 8, 1938; Feb. 26, 1938. Walter Galenson suggests the social welfare role that American trade unions played after 1945, but we should consider that this also applies for the 1930s. Galenson, "The Historical Role of American Trade Unionism," in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed., Unions in Transition: Entering the Second Century (San Francisco: ICS Press, 1986), 58-59.

the International Workers Order, several black groups, and the Sixth Ward Progressive Club. (110)

The union experience itself was a lesson in multiethnic cooperation that helped pave the way for a New Deal coalition. Some scholars emphasize that unions function to assimilate ethnic workers into American society. (111) More important, from a social movement perspective, is their role in bringing together workers of many different cultural backgrounds, providing a social space for a diverse working class to forge common bonds. It was this union experience that proved so critical in New Britain politics.

By the late 1930s workers appeared to share a common view of the government's positive responsibility for their social welfare. While some Americans had become tired of reform and feared the new power of the federal government, such persons do not seem to have been very numerous among the working-class population in New Britain or Bridgeport. In fact, many workers wanted the New Deal to accelerate, especially to help meet their basic employment needs. As one factory worker on Hallett St. said: "I think it should be settled once and for all, that some system should be made to give all the people

110. "The CIO in New Britain," 21.

111. Thomas Gobel, "Becoming American: Ethnic Workers and the Rise of the CIO," Labor History 29 (Spring 1988): 173-198; William C. Smith, Americans in the Making (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 204-206.

a job that deserve work and that are willing to work." (112) Similar sentiment was expressed in New Britain. A twenty-nine year old Polish-American, who lived for many years in Fifth Ward, pointed to the special needs of his own generation. He expressed little doubt about the need for positive government; there could be no turning back.

The problems of the second generation are basically economic in my opinion. They, the second generation, need security in employment and opportunities to follow their natural inclinations. I think the New Deal under President Roosevelt has striven to do something, however little, for the second generation. These measures must be continued, WPA, NYA, etc., etc., and eventually an economic system developed that will guarantee security to all. (113)

It was upon such views that the new political organization of the working class had its strength. There was a sense of possibility, of the need for a better and more just economic system. This class dimension in politics was in the process of development, not decline, on the eve of World War Two.

112."Hallett St. Survey," 45.

113."Personal Life History of Second Generation Pole," Dec. 8, 1939, box 129, CEGS Hartford.

CHAPTER 8

BEYOND THE NEW DEAL? A CASE STUDY OF BRIDGEPORT SOCIALISM

Scholars continue to debate Werner Sombart's question of nearly ninety years ago, "Why there is no socialism in the United States?" Sombart and most historians writing on this question almost always have national politics as their reference. However, if one studies local politics, Sombart's question must be reformulated because municipal Socialism is an important part of 20th century American history. From the first Socialist administration elected in Haverhill, Massachusetts, in 1898, through the current Socialist administration in Burlington, Vermont, more than eighty cities and town have elected Socialist mayors. The sustained Socialist experience in Milwaukee has received attention by historians. (1) Several of the shorter experiences of

1. Douglas E. Booth, "Municipal Socialism and City Government Reform, The Milwaukee Experience, 1910-1940," Journal of Urban History 12 (Nov. 1985): 51-74; Thomas Gavett, The Development of the Labor Movement in Milwaukee (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965); Daniel Hoan, City Government: The Record of the Milwaukee Experience (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936); Sally Miller, Victor Berger and the Promise of Constructive Socialism, 1910-1920 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973); "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor," in Bruce Stave, ed., Socialism and the Cities (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 41-71.

municipal Socialism in the South and Midwest have recently come under study. (2)

The Bridgeport experience constitutes one of the longest and most important cases. Socialists stayed in power for more than twenty years, winning successive mayoral terms between 1933 and 1957. During the 1930s Bridgeport was among a handful of Socialist cities in the nation, carrying on the Progressive era tradition of honest government and advanced social reform. Sally Miller writes that the Socialists in Milwaukee, "despite themselves...epitomized progressive municipal reformers more boldly than those who bore the name." (3) Much the same can be said about Bridgeport's Socialists.

This chapter provides a case study of their municipal policy. What difference did Socialism make in the city? Necessarily, this includes an investigation of the limits of power in urban government. How did opponents at the local and state level set the parameters of municipal reform?

2. See, for example, James R. Green, Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1978); Errol Wayne Stevens, "Labor and Socialism in an Indiana Mill Town, 1905-1921," Labor History 26 (Summer 1985): 353-384; John T. Walker, "Socialism in Dayton, Ohio, 1912 to 1925: Its Membership, Organization, and Demise," Ibid., 384-405; and Garin Burbank, When Farmers Voted Red: The Gospel of Socialism in the Oklahoma Countryside, 1900-1924 (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1976). A fine comparative study, with an emphasis on Ohio, is Richard W. Judd, Socialist Cities: Municipal Politics and the Grass Roots of American Socialism (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

3. Miller, "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor," 65.

Furthermore, the municipal Socialists fought battles not only with hostile state legislators and the local political parties; within the Socialist party itself, the "municipal question" generated controversy. Many leaders of the national party were unprepared, in theory and in practice, to deal with success on the local level.

A "Real" Socialist?

Some discussions of Socialist mayor Jasper McLevy are preoccupied with the authenticity of his Socialist label. Local histories of Bridgeport often are embarrassed by the fact that a "Socialist" was the chief city leader for so long. They go out of their way to emphasize that at one time the local Chamber of Commerce hailed his achievements. They also emphasize his personal frugality. For example, one account explains that McLevy spent only \$10. on office supplies in 1940, and only \$89.44 on telephone, postage and telegraph service. By his own doing, his initial mayoral salary of \$7,500 reached only \$10,500 after more than twenty years in office. This view is expressed in a recent local history published on the occasion of the city's 150th birthday. "McLevy clearly was elected as a reform mayor and not a Socialist. He repeatedly lectured people on honesty and morality, but did not often dip into Socialist principles such as the abolition of private wealth...The Socialist affiliation

was generally meaningless to those who supported him." (4) First, the problem with such an analysis is its weak understanding of the history of Socialism. Few American Socialists in the 1930s (or before) have called for the abolition of personal wealth or property. Marx himself made the distinction between personal property and productive property. It was the latter that concerned socialists; control over the "means of production." Moreover, we do not really know the complexity of the consciousness of Bridgeport citizens who supported McLevy. It is likely that Socialism meant a mixture of ideas about independent politics, worker politics, radical politics, and reform politics.

In a similar vein, one of the most repeated stories about McLevy involves a series of snowstorms that hit the city during the winter of 1938-1939. His administration was slow in activating the snow removal service and the local newspapers ran a series of articles on the issue. McLevy's reaction to the problem, in a much repeated sentence, was reportedly, "God put the snow there, let Him take it away." In fact, McLevy never said these words. His director of public works, interviewed in a tavern, said in jest, "Let the guy who put the snow there take it away." Yet the truth

4. Lennie Grimaldi, Only in Bridgeport: An Illustrated History of the Park City (Chatsworth, CA: Windsor Publications, 1986), 152, 163.

does not really matter in this case. (5) The point of the story is that it marginalizes McLevy's politics, suggesting his unwillingness to provide social services for the city. We are told that this snow story "has been told countless times in front of fireplaces, in snow-stranded vehicles and, yes, in bars." (6) Of course, we do not really know who told this story and who listened. Did disgruntled Democrats or Republicans or middle and upper-class residents perpetuate such "popular" culture? Did workers remember McLevy in this way? When they thought of the late 1930s did they think of snow removal or the struggle for the CIO?

The First Time

The Socialists did not have practical experience as a ruling party when they assumed municipal administration. They had elected only one Party member to office during the previous three decades. Moreover, the only city government in Bridgeport they could establish continuity with was that of Denis Mulvihill, the "labor" mayor, who served from 1901 to 1905. Mulvihill, a Democrat, worked for twenty-five years as a factory coal-stoker before reaching the mayor's office on the support of the predominantly Irish working class. His rallying cry was, "Who made the world? Denny Mulvihill with

5. The city initially allocated \$300 to cover snow removal and ice clearance, but wound up spending about \$13,000. Ibid., 152.

6. Ibid.

his pick and shovel." But Mulvihill was not an advocate of government intervention in the economy or of expanded municipal services. He campaigned for economy in government and became known as the "Watchdog of the City Treasury." (7)

The Socialist Party of America also was not a significant source of guidance on municipal affairs. From its establishment in 1901 the Party was national in orientation, running candidates for the highest national offices. The Party paid only minimal attention to local politics. When they did, it was often with the goal of gathering support for the national ticket. Debate about municipal campaigns erupted at the Party's first convention, when Morris Hillquit argued for a municipal strategy based on "constructive" moderate reforms, but many others in the Party did not view municipal politics as worthy other than as a form of socialist consciousness-raising and education. The Party's municipal program thus opened with the qualification:

Socialism cannot be carried into full effect while the Socialist Party is a minority party. Nor can it be inaugurated in any single city. Furthermore, so long as national and state legislatures and particularly the courts are in the control of the capitalist class, a municipal administration, even though absolutely controlled by socialists, will be hampered, crippled, and restricted in every possible way. (8)

7. Alfred F. Howe, "Connecticut's Labor Mayors," The Independent 91 (1904): 1259-1264; N.G. Osborn, History of Connecticut (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1925), 411-416.

8. "Report of the Committee on Municipal and State Problems," Proceedings of the National Convention of the Socialist Party

In one respect this national emphasis was logical. The Party worked for a socialist reconstruction of American society. Running candidates for national office seemed to be a prerequisite for such large-scale change. Yet this approach was shortsighted because the success of Socialists in United States politics was evident only at the local level, most often in small and medium-sized towns. (9)

During the highpoints of Socialist popularity, the national party neglected the cities. During the Progressive era, Socialists gained control of almost eighty municipal administrations and elected officials in more than 340 communities. And during the 1930s, Socialist control was limited to a handful of cities, Bridgeport, Milwaukee, Reading, Minneapolis, Toledo and several other municipalities. In both periods, national Party leaders were unable to agree on a "municipal" strategy to capitalize on its local victories. For many, theorizing at the level of large absolute systems did not readily facilitate attention to the nitty-gritty of local city struggles. The politics and policies of municipal administrations mattered only in a secondary fashion, as a barometer to gauge the progress of the larger class struggle. During the depression, for

of America, 1912, Appendix K, 214-217; Judd, Socialist Cities, 21.

9. Judd, Socialist Cities, 24-25; Robert Hoxie, "The Rising Tide of Socialism: A Study," The Journal of Political Economy 19 (1911): 609-617; James Weinstein, The Decline of American Socialism, 1912-1925 (New York: Vintage Books, 1969).

example, the Socialist newspaper The New Leader covered developments in the Socialist cities in order to demonstrate the vitality of the national movement.

The Party's leaders also were willing to ignore apparent Socialist indiscretions in the city if they thought criticism would hurt the national campaign. For example, when a left-wing Socialist in Bridgeport contacted Norman Thomas about McLevy's conservative tendencies, Thomas was not interested. "(He) looked at it and he said that it was impossible to believe anything like that. They didn't want to believe that anything like that was really going on in Bridgeport. They were counting on the McLevy name to bring them quite a few votes from this section of the country and they didn't want anything to spoil it." (10)

Typical of the non-interest in the city was the discussion of "municipal problems" at the party's National Executive Board meeting in Reading in 1933. The Party's top leaders were in agreement that the first priority of a municipal campaign was to convert the people to Socialism. The second priority was winning local elective office. The municipal campaign should "make Socialists explain the class struggle to workers, fought in part against the background of a city election but fought with equal vigor between elections,

10. Interview with Al Ribak, University of Bridgeport Oral History Project, Bridgeport Public Library. Ribak was recording-secretary of the Bridgeport Socialist party between 1929 and 1933.

on the street corner, in the headquarters and in the classroom, in the party press, and on the billboards." The emphasis was on national party development, not on building a grass-roots municipal movement. "(W)ithout a clear mandate from the people for vigorous class action," the Board concluded, a local Socialist administration is a "pathetic figure and may be a dangerous obstacle to [national] party growth and health." (11)

The previous year Hillquit narrowly defeated mayor Dan Hoan of Milwaukee as national Party chair, and this Party contest was in part a referendum on municipal socialism. Over the years Hillquit's views on municipal socialism changed. In his acceptance speech before the Party convention, Hillquit criticized his opponents, saying, "I do not belong to the Daniel Hoan group to whom socialism consists of merely providing clean sewers for Milwaukee." (12) The ideological

11. Quoted in Bruce Stave, "The Great Depression and Urban Political Continuity: Bridgeport Chooses Socialism," in Stave, ed., Socialism in the Cities, 166.

12. Hoan remained an important national Party leader, serving as campaign director for Norman Thomas in the 1932 presidential election. Ironically, Hillquit ran for mayor of New York city in 1932, polling 251,656 votes. The apparent difference was not one's willingness to run for office, but how Socialists viewed their participation in the local electoral process. Thomas, for example, ran for New York state governor in 1924 primarily as means to promote progressive ideas and the national LaFollete ticket. But Party leaders were not always consistent on this score. For example, Thomas ran for borough president of Manhattan in 1931, and stressed moderate reform themes, in order to oust the local Tammany machine. Bernard K. Johnpoll, Pacifist's Progress: Norman Thomas and the Decline of American Socialism (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 44-47, 60-68, 93, 98.

tension in the Party between moderate and Left-wing groups often was based on views of the municipal question. Socialists who stressed the constructive role of city politics were associated with the Old Guard wing. Louis Waldman, former New York State chair, represented this point of view. Reviewing Hoan's book about Milwaukee, City Government, Waldman wrote in The New Leader:

This book deals with realities, not with theories. The 'militants' and 'left-wing' elements will probably not like it. It has nothing in it about 'revolution,' 'bogus democracy,' 'seizure of power,' or any other favorite phrases and symbols so dear to 'left-wing' hearts...Too little has been written about the importance of local government in our social life...Even more than the states, and frequently more than the federal government, the government of our cities touch intimately the lives and welfare of the men, women, and children of the nation. (13)

From the start McLevy's efforts were controversial in the national party. Fellow Socialists were ambivalent about his election. The Socialist periodical The World Tomorrow, for example, de facto associated the success of the municipal campaign with conservatism.

That he (McLevy) is a conservative socialist goes without saying. It is true that the emphasis in the campaign was often laid on minor matters of clean government, and that a crusade to make Bridgeport a Socialist City so far as possible would require further education of the workers...The whole problem of municipal socialism is a vexing one. (14)

13. The New Leader, April 4, 1936.

14. The World Tomorrow, Nov. 23, 1933, 627-628. Fred Schwarzkopf Collection, University of Bridgeport.

Municipal Policies

McLevy's platform during the 1933 election emphasized "honest, efficient and serviceable" government. The only radical proposal involved municipal ownership of public utilities. The main planks were:

- a) A Reorganization of the Municipal Government to eliminate waste, inefficiency, and corruption
- b) Municipal ownership of public utilities
- c) Introduction of the Merit System and Civil Service
- d) Itemized accounts of all city expenditures
- e) Strict Adherence to the City Charter
- f) Return of Home Rule for Bridgeport
- g) Opportunity for Expression of public opinion at Common Council meetings
- h) Discontinuance of Secret Board meetings
- i) Planned government in order to build for the future as well as to meet the needs of the present. (15)

The McLevy record was split in instituting this program. The administration was highly successful in securing clean and more efficient government. However, its efforts at municipal ownership were only marginally successful. The Socialists faced two kinds of obstacles in this regard. On the one hand, charter and debt restrictions and a hostile state legislature limited the possibility of reform. On the other hand, the Socialist administration was reluctant to support new programs by raising taxes on the backs of its working-class constituents, especially during the depression.

A few examples illustrate the clean government

15. Stave, "The Great Depression and Urban Political Continuity," 167-168.

achievements. Reacting against more than twenty years of Democratic machine politics, the Socialists launched a frontal assault on the spoils system. "Don't Let the Raiders Ride Again" was a prominent campaign slogan. (16) The Socialists acted in the good government tradition -- but with a difference. Most "goo-goos" were middle and upper class "best men," often fiscal conservatives, whose attack on machine politics was also an attack on the urban ethnic working class. McLevy not only had different roots, but his clean government reform was formulated to include a class component, to root out business influence in politics in order to reclaim government for the working-class of people. "Everyone likes to talk about good government, but few do anything about it -- except professional politicians," McLevy said in 1938. The professional politician "paints [government] as complex, supremely difficult to manage -- a process so intricate that the average citizen can't hope even to understand it, let alone share in it...When the average interested citizen can't understand the processes of his government, it's time to pry deep and hard into the core of things." (17) By contrast, the Socialists claimed their administration represented "clean, scientific government for the benefit of the masses for whom all governments are created and not for the few who either

16. See a leaflet by this title in the Schwarzkopf Collection.

17. McLevy, "Professional Politicians," Greenwich Time Aug. 25, 1938. This article was used as a handbill.

make a business of holding public office or of controlling those who do." (18)

The Socialists fulfilled a campaign promise by requiring that all meetings of city boards and commissions remain open to the public. This policy helped break up the secret caucuses of the Board of Alderman where city business was often conducted in the past. McLevy also established open public bidding on all city purchases. In addition, the administration successfully advanced legislation forbidding local officials from doing business with the city. (19)

Other measures facilitated efficiency. The Socialists installed centralized accounting in all city departments. This was accompanied by a citywide centralized purchasing system. A single department coordinated the buying for all branches of the government. Procedures were regularized. Greater control over purchases was accomplished. Government became more accountable.

McLevy also successfully lobbied for civil service reform. Most new city employees were covered under the new merit system. Discretionary hiring was limited. A patronage system was furthered undermined. The goal of scientific government was advanced. These reforms won the praise of the Fairfield County Planning Association, which honored McLevy

18. 1937 Municipal Platform of the Socialist Party, 4.

19. The Bridgeport Post, Oct. 20, 1935; The New Leader, July 14, 1934.

in 1935. "Your philosophy looks forward to a better social and economic order," the Association said. "You have a program. You would by intelligent, purposeful forethought steer rather than drift with the current of a changing world. In other words, you believe in planning...Bridgeport under your guidance bids fair to become the City Beautiful." (20)

It is important to note that the establishment of centralized purchasing and of civil service reform required the approval of the state legislature. The Socialists were able to obtain these measures primarily through their newly gained influence at the state level. In the 1934 elections the people of Bridgeport elected three Socialist senators and two Socialist representatives to the state legislature. In the state senate the Socialists were a small contingent, but played a pivotal role because they held the balance of power between the two major parties. As a result, shortly after the 1934 elections Gov. Wilbur Cross called McLevy to the state capital for a conference to negotiate for the Socialists' support. The Governor objected to McLevy's demands for municipal ownership of utilities. But the Governor agreed to support a series of special "Bridgeport Bills" in the legislature. (21)

The passage of the "Bridgeport Bills" was central to McLevy's early success. In addition to civil service reform

20.Quoted in The New Leader, Aug. 3, 1935.

21.Ibid., Dec. 15, 1935.

and centralized purchasing, four other measures extended the power of the municipality. One bill provided for the repeal of the "ripper" powers of the Board of Apportionment and Taxation in Bridgeport. Since the mid-1920s the Board had exclusive control of the city's financial authority. This was an impediment to the autonomy of a city administration. It was especially an obstacle for the Socialists. Normally McLevy, as mayor, would have been able to gain influence on the Board through his own appointments. But after the Socialist's strong showing in the 1931 election -- when McLevy received 36 percent of the mayoral vote -- the state legislature extended the terms of the Board members to 1937 to limit the influence of a possible short-term Socialist victory. This strategy backfired. When the Governor signed the repeal of the "ripper" powers, all seven members of the tax board resigned. McLevy made new appointments and regained some control over city finances. (22)

Another "Bridgeport Bill" revised the pension system for the city's police and firemen to help eliminate abuses in the methods of securing pension pay. This was not only a labor issue. It also was smart politics for the new Socialist mayor -- who was labelled the "red peril" by his opponents in the campaign -- to court the support of the police and fire departments. McLevy's victory had to some extent polarized the city. The presence of a working-class, Socialist

22.Ibid., March 3, 1934; June 8, 1935.

administration during the depression raised the worst fears among the forces of reaction in the city. One imagines McLevy reading the socialist press -- which contained stories about the bloody street battles in socialist Vienna, for example -- and realizing the need to sustain friendly relations with the city's fire and police power.

A fifth bill amended the city charter to establish a central Maintenance Bureau under the Director of Public Works. The Bureau facilitated more efficient maintenance of city buildings and property. A sixth bill transferred to the state responsibility for the maintenance of a truckline interstate highway that ran through the city. The highway was a political issue in the 1933 campaign because of a Democratic scandal in the financing of highway improvements. The Socialists also said that maintenance of the highway was a burden on city resources. (23)

The Socialist demand for municipal control of public utilities was frustrated at every level. Bridgeport's utilities -- electricity, gas, water, and telephone and cable -- were privately owned and operated under franchises granted by the state. Rates were reviewed and adjusted periodically by the state's public utility commission. The Socialist strategy was to secure a reduction in utility rates, and then to seek municipal ownership. Both actions, however, required

23. Ibid., Nov. 10, 1934; Nov. 17, 1934; Dec. 15, 1934; June 15, 1935.

modification of state law. The Socialists introduced a series of bills toward this end in the 1935, 1937 and 1939 sessions of the state legislature. Both the Democrats and Republicans opposed the measures. Municipal control was also one area that Governor Cross refused to consider during his negotiations with McLevy. The Socialists then urged the utility companies voluntarily to cut rates. Common Council requests for rate reductions were rejected by all four Bridgeport utility companies. (24) Nor could the Socialists easily challenge the priorities of the utility companies, i.e., the provision of gas and electric services to the newer, more affluent sections of the outer city in contrast to the poorer working-class areas which remained dependent on coal, wood, and ice.

The city extended its control into private enterprise operations in more marginal areas. One example is garbage collection, which was previously under private contract. "If there was profit in garbage collection that profit should find its way back into the City Treasury and not into private pockets," the Socialists said. (25) By one account, McLevy "got into his jalopy, drove around the state studying refuse collection by talking with the drivers and their helpers rather than with their bosses." The city bought fourteen

24. The Bridgeport Post, Jan. 26, 1937; Feb. 2, 1937; Feb. 7, 1937; March 7, 1937; The New Leader, Dec. 15, 1934.

25. 1937 Municipal Platform, 2.

trucks and built a new garbage incinerator plant to facilitate disposal. (26)

The city also took over direction of recreational facilities. This included the operation of the major beach area on the Long Island Sound. The city ran the concession stands, parking, etc. The city also built new playgrounds and parks. Bridgeport was already known as the "Park City." Notably, the Socialists improved the recreational facilities near the working-class residential areas. The one park that was built on the outskirts of the city was the largest facility: the 400 acre Fairchild Wheeler Park, which was developed as several municipal golf courses. Construction provided work for the unemployed. (27)

McLevy had few resources to reconstruct city services. Even where municipalities had the authority to support new initiatives, they required new funding sources. Cities could not readily raise taxes during the depression. If constituents did not object, the state might. New York's Fiorello LaGuardia pressed for a local income tax in 1934. The State promptly rescinded it.

McLevy never considered new taxation a serious possibility and he declined to finance new projects or expand social welfare services by floating new public bonds. In

26. "The 'Boss' Who DIDN'T Get Licked," Colliers, Feb. 4, 1950.

27. Municipal Register, 1938, 137.; The New Leader, April 13, 1933; Aug. 3, 1935; The Book of Bridgeport (Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, 1931).

fact, the Socialists were proud that they did not raise any new bonds during their first two administrations and listed it as an accomplishment during their 1935 and 1937 campaigns.

(28) McLevy seemed to interpret sound fiscal policy as a populist response.

The tax issue was a real dilemma for the mayor of a working-class city. Since many taxpayers were wage-earners, with marginal incomes, high taxes were not normally popular. The important point is that if municipal Socialists could not reform the tax codes to force businesses and high income individuals to pay a larger share, large-scale initiatives in the city were limited. Socialist mayors did not want to raise the tax burden on their working-class constituents. Without being able to redistribute wealth in the city -- which required state approval -- they stressed efficiency and worked within established limits.

As we have seen, the municipal ownership component of McLevy's program was blocked by a hostile state legislature. The McLevy administration and its Socialist allies on the City Council could not significantly advance a program beyond the urban liberalism that was becoming popular at the time.

We can also evaluate McLevy's relation to poor peoples' movements in the city. Did a working-class, Socialist mayor encourage, or respond favorably, to collective action waged

28. Leaflet "Continue Bridgeport's Progress" (1935); 1937 Municipal Platform. Schwarzkopf Collection.

by the lower classes? One way that the Left could overcome the limits in regular politics was to mobilize the people from below to press the system to widen the possibilities for government action. Did McLevy try to capitalize on the crisis atmosphere of the depression to push through his program?

Social Movements

McLevy's relation to the two main "bottom-up" insurgencies -- the movement of the unemployed and industrial unionism -- is uneven. He was sympathetic toward the grievances of both movements while directing city authorities to contain them.

The Socialist party never became a labor party. McLevy's ambivalent attitude toward the CIO was the main obstacle. Like other AFL leaders, McLevy strongly objected to Communist participation in the CIO and exaggerated their role in the new labor federation. This fear was accentuated by the fact that the UE -- one of the most radical of the new CIO unions -- was the leading CIO organization in Bridgeport. And it appears that there was Communist activity within the large UE Local 203 at General Electric, although the precise scope of this involvement remains unclear. (29) In addition, McLevy

29. See Joseph Julianelle, "Purge in Bridgeport," Plain Talk, Sept. 1947, 25-27. In 1947, there were an estimated 60 Communist members of the Local (out of a membership of 6,000). The Local received national attention during internal union battles in which twenty-six alleged Communists were expelled from the union.

may have attacked the CP in order to retain control of the "Left position" in electoral politics, to prevent serious competition from a rival Left party.

The mayor's relationship to the political structure of the CIO also was tenuous. While the Bridgeport branch of Labor's Non-Partisan League (LNPL) endorsed him for reelection in 1937, a formal alliance did not last beyond this campaign. When McLevy ran for governor the next year, LNPL backed his Democratic opponent. Part of the opposition to McLevy stemmed from the fear that the Socialists would divide the labor vote and help the Republicans gain a gubernatorial victory. "McLevy Can't Win -- The G.O.P. Mustn't," the People's Press reported. "The main issue is the protection and extension of the New Deal," and the McLevy campaign promised to be a spoiler. (30) However, the CIO-McLevy split also assumed an ideological basis, as LNPL asserted that the union movement could not look to him as a leader of the working class. "It may surprise some of our readers to hear Jasper McLevy classed with the reactionaries. But the facts bear this out," it was reported. "He says he is for the workers. So do the Republicans. But Bridgeport's labor record under McLevy does not show this." (31) Indeed, there were signs that such a split was in the making by early 1938. On one occasion officials from UE 203 asked McLevy to help investigate if

30. People's Press (New Britain edition), Oct. 29, 1938.

31. Ibid., Sept. 24, 1938.

General Electric was deliberately curtailing production in order to temporarily lay-off much of its workforce, and to break the new union. McLevy declined to help and even refused to raise the issue in public. From the union perspective, the burden of unemployment during the Roosevelt Recession was high; between November 1937 and May 1938 some 4,500 GE workers lost jobs. Who was to blame? The union assured angry workers that business was responsible. But McLevy did not help the leadership by refusing to publicly question management's role in the economic downturn. "McLevy Ducks," the UE reported. (32)

In some ways McLevy did act as a labor mayor, and this solidarity transcended gender lines. He marched with women garment workers on May Day in 1936 and spoke at a rally of 1,000. On another occasion he marched on the picket line with 450 striking underwear workers from four Bridgeport factories. The Mayor's solidarity with labor sometimes extended beyond the local community. In 1936, the McLevy administration refused to award a city contract to the Remington-Rand company because workers were striking its plants in seven cities. (33) Moreover, the Socialist City Council was prepared to offer the CIO political access, even when McLevy personally declined to help. In late 1937, the local CIO unions lobbied the aldermen

32. Ibid. (Bridgeport edition), Dec, 4, 1937; (New Britain edition), May 28, 1938.

33. The New Leader, May 9, 1936; May 1, 1936; July 18, 1936.

to endorse a conference between representatives of labor, management and city officials to discuss ways to stem the rising level of unemployment. The Socialist aldermen promptly appointed a committee to help plan the conference. (34)

In general, the Socialist city government provided a narrowly defined "safe territory" for labor organizing in the community. It was safe for unions to form as long as they were not associated with Communist groups. Furthermore, despite McLevy's reluctance to support public sector unionism, because it was associated with the CIO, several public sector unions were formed with the support of the Socialist alderman and these union efforts mark a real achievement. The organization of public sector unions in New Britain, and in many other cities, awaited the postwar years.

The case of the unemployed also illustrates McLevy's cautious approach. The economic situation was dire in Bridgeport during the early depression, and McLevy, as mayor, was sometimes held responsible for these hard times. He was caught in the middle, for example, when 850 relief workers, employed by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, went on strike in 1934 protesting procedural changes in the program. The matter was further complicated because the Socialist commissioner of the Board of Education, Jack C. Bergen, was leading the strike. Bergen's action was not

34. Official Proceedings of the Bridgeport Common Council, Dec. 6, 1937, 9-12.

unusual: Socialists, Communists, and Musteites organized the unemployed all across the country and perhaps as many as two million people joined unemployed protest during the depression. (35)

A confrontation between Bergen and McLevy ensued. Bergen was secretary of the local Socialist party. He was a left-winger, who followed Norman Thomas during the 1936 split between the Old and New Guard. The disagreement between Bergen and McLevy underscored the problem of municipal socialism, as the following exchange at a Welfare Board meeting indicates.

McLevy: You realize you are part of this administration and that you never took up this matter of disagreement among the FERA workers with us. Do you realize that you have embarrassed the administration? We are doing everything in our power under the circumstances to help the city's poor and needy.

Bergen: I am not trying to embarrass the administration. I am trying to be honest about relief conditions.

McLevy: You are part of this administration and a Socialist. You never took this up with the administration, did you?

Bergen: No.

McLevy: Why didn't you present a plan to the administration? Why did you precipitate all this trouble?

Bergen: As a Socialist. Trouble is stirred. Your actions are contemptible.

McLevy: I've always fought for labor, and always

35. Roy Rosenzweig, "Organizing the Unemployed: The Early Years of the Depression," Radical America 10 (July 1976): 37-62.

will. I'm not responsible for present-day conditions. (36)

After several years in office it had become clear to many people in the community that McLevy was unable to enact sweeping reforms. The business community was relieved. Others were disappointed. The left-wing of the Socialist party attacked McLevy, just as some had attacked Hoan in Milwaukee, George Lunn in Schenectady, and in numerous other cases of Socialist municipal leadership. (37) There is also evidence that rank and file workers had become critical of McLevy. Several workers on Spruce St., who were interviewed by the Writers' Project, blamed the Mayor for not bringing about a significant social reconstruction. The pace of reform did not keep up with their working-class expectations. A toolmaker at 298 Spruce St. said, "Well Jasper is all right, but he ain't no Socialist. The only Socialist is a fellow that goes along with Norman Thomas and believes in Eugene V. Debs. There is a real man for you." (38) Another Spruce St. worker remarked of McLevy, "What kind of a Socialist is he? He shouldn't be allowed to masquerade as a Socialist." (39)

36. The Bridgeport Post, April 26, 1934.

37. Miller, "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor," 46; Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., "Tribune of the People: George R. Lunn and the Rise and Fall of Christian Socialism in Schenectady," in Stave, ed., Socialism and the Cities, 86; Judd, Socialist Cities.

38. "Spruce St. Survey, Interview No. 18," box 27, CEGS Storrs.

39. Ibid., Interview No. 30.

However, McLevy's overall popularity withstood such criticism. He continued to garner solid electoral support among local workers and his showing in the 1938 governor's race pointed to significant support statewide.

If Socialist legislative achievements were moderate in scope, it can be said that a significant change did occur with the new working-class presence in electoral politics. (40) One important change concerned the style of politics. The Socialists helped to democratize politics, to bring it into the streets. Perhaps this is one reason that so many registered voters went to the polls in both presidential and local elections. As the Writers' Project said, "The technique of local political campaigns has been changed. The author of the change is Jasper McLevy. It was he who began years ago addressing rallies at street corners and factory gates instead

40. It has been suggested recently that the New Deal only marginally impacted local life during the 1930s. Whereas Progressive historians often claimed that the New Deal was a breakthrough (perhaps even the Third American Revolution), and New Left historians noted that New Deal reform was essentially conservative and helped save the capitalist system, this newer point of view highlights the limited effect of the New Deal. There is much to be gained from this latter interpretation, although we should not minimize the favorable setting that the NIRA and the Wagner Act provided for the rise of industrial unionism. Representative literature in each tradition include Carl Degler, "The Third American Revolution," in Out of Our Past (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 379-416; Barton Bernstein, "The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform," in Bernstein, ed., Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), 263-288; and Jo Ann E. Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore: People and Government in the Great Depression (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

of confining himself to the conventional and dignified indoor rallies which furnished the keystone of the old style campaign. Now all the parties have adopted the McLevy technique."⁴¹ This approach to politics characterized other Socialist cities as well, and may well point to the single major difference between the achievements of municipal Socialists and Republicans and Democrats. If radical reform was very difficult to enact within the framework of American urban politics, Socialists often were able to transform the social basis of politics by bringing large numbers of workers into city leadership. As Richard Judd notes, in many cases, "Socialists shifted the class composition of city governments. The Socialist claim that a vote for socialism was a vote for the working class was literally true." (42)

McLevy and other Socialist leaders in Bridgeport rarely used a language of class conflict, of the opposing interests of workers and capital. Rather, they identified with worker interests without attacking capital. Their city leadership was different from other "reform" administrations because of the dominance of workers in leadership posts. However, their legislative achievements were mixed. Efforts at municipal ownership were only marginally successful, while measures for efficient and clean government were widely instituted. The

41. "Growth of Bridgeport," n.d., box 134, CEGS Hartford.

42. Judd, Socialist Cities, 33.

limits of power in municipal government were a determining factor in shaping this record. While Bridgeport Socialism did not move significantly beyond the New Deal (and shared the New Deal's cautious embrace of the CIO), it does represent an important case of independent working-class political power on the local level. Workers made an important contribution to the reform tradition.

CONCLUSION

Recent social and labor history stresses the autonomy of workers. The United States did have a "working class," and scholars explore distinctive worker identities and experiences on the job and in the community. This class presence is shown to exist not only in traditional institutional forms such as trade unions and political parties, but also in more informal settings such as saloons and holiday celebrations. The literature often focuses on the ways immigrant families made "lives of their own." (1) But there is little historical analysis of the particular experiences of the second generation and the ways they forged their own group identity. This study, by locating the emergence of this generation, highlights an important demographic change within the working class.

Familiar developments of the 1930s take on new meaning. For example, the pivotal role of the second generation in the rise of the CIO helps to recast the early history of industrial unionism. The resurgence of the labor movement parallels the emergence of this new group as adult workers.

1. See, for example, John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael Weber, Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh 1900-1960 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

The organization of the mass production industries occurred in large part because of the social vision of these younger workers. The Chicago School's marginal man was New Britain and Bridgeport's union pioneer. Starting out during the difficult 1930s empowered many in this generation to take control over their work lives. The history of the early CIO takes on new meaning when we investigate the lives of workers at the grass-roots.

A second-generation perspective opens a new window on the culture of the thirties. Cultural historians, following the lead of Warren Susman, often stress the new preoccupation with an American collective identity. As Susman suggested, "It was during this period that we find, for the first time, frequent reference to an 'American Way of Life.' The phrase 'The American Dream' came into common use; it meant something shared collectively by all Americans." (2) Critics of Susman and other "popular" culture studies point out that this focus is often too narrow, with its emphasis on the white middle class. However, recent studies of white workers (mostly male) also affirm that American cultural nationalism was important

2. See Susman's seminal essay, "The Culture of the Thirties," in his Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 2. See also Ronald Edsforth, The Making of Mass Consumer Society in Flint, Michigan (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987); and Jackson Lears, "A Matter of Taste: Corporate Cultural Hegemony in a Mass-Consumption Society," in Larry May, ed., Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of the Cold War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 41-42.

during the 1930s, albeit a "militant Americanism" that gave a class-based meaning to American values. (3) We can point to similar class-based uses of American values in Bridgeport. UE 203 emphasized that "The American Way is the Union Way," and this class version of Americanism was understood to apply across gender lines, as when the Local noted that "the girls throughout the plant are showing a real American spirit by joining our local." (4) But, it is important to recognize that the large second-generation rank and file of UE 203 -- and the second generation in general -- moved in a variety of cultural worlds. An American world was only one of them, and this American world often had meaning for this generation as it was experienced in a multiethnic context. This context for their cultural reception of American values is crucial to understand. Where immigrants and their children formed a sizable portion of a local population (which occurred in much of industrial America during the 1930s), their understanding of an American Way of Life was, in all likelihood, shaped by their daily experience of cultural heterogeneity. In

3. Gary Gerstle, Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); "The Politics of Patriotism: Americanization and the Formation of the CIO," Dissent 33 (Winter 1986): 84-92; Bruce Nelson, Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 174-183; Larry May, "Movie Star Politics: The Screen Actors' Guild, Cultural Conversion, and the Hollywood Red Scarce," in May, ed., Recasting America, 129-136.

4. People's Press (Bridgeport edition), June 5, 1937; Oct. 2, 1937.

Bridgeport and New Britain, we have seen the cultural heterogeneity of the second generation in public schools and trade schools, on sports teams, in chain stores, at the movies, inside the CIO and in working-class neighborhoods that often resembled a cooperative "League of Nations," rather than an insular ethnic enclave. It is worth repeating the observation of UE 203 leader Frank Frazekas about interethnic relations in the factory. "The men jokingly called each other 'Hunky' or 'Wop', but only in fun and without sense of discrimination." (5)

Focusing on the second generation also opens up new ways of studying the years after 1940. We can better understand the social basis of working-class life during World War Two, and recognize the major disruption that the War had on the second-generation workers' world, as many younger members served in the armed forces. What happened to the new industrial unions when a significant number of the young CIO leaders suddenly left the workforce (and the country) to fight in Europe? What changes took place in the unions, and how is this related to rank and file militancy during the war years? What happened when these young workers returned after the war? Did they resume union leadership? Did they participate in the post-war strike wave of 1946? The anti-Communist union purges of 1947-1950 also take on new perspective. In what ways did

5. Frank Frazekas interview, March 1, 1939, box 133, CEGS Hartford.

the Red scare turn union brother and sister against one another, and while the stated goal was to expel Communists, did the purges also disrupt the class development of the second generation in general? Did the social justice unionism that the second generation cultivated during the 1930s survive the War and the union purges? To chronicle the history of the second generation over time -- especially the period 1935 to 1960, when they moved from young workers to middle-aged workers -- is also to chronicle the high-point of trade union membership and organization in the 20th century.

This generation had notable beginnings. I have emphasized the new solidarity of workers in the late 1930s. Their social activism did not decline near the end of the decade, even though the New Deal movement for reform lost momentum. In fact, the period 1935-1939 marks a high point of working-class mobilization. (6) The sharing of union leadership among skilled and nonskilled workers is one indication of the new solidarity. Indeed, this sharing of power represents a historical breakthrough. If there ever was the possibility of a worker reconstruction of society during the 1930s, it needed to build upon such cross-skill unity.

Ethnic tensions also were on the decline. Interethnic cooperation characterized the union and political experiences

6. This is also the emphasis in Gerstle's Working-Class Americanism and in Nelson's Workers on the Waterfront.

of workers in Bridgeport and New Britain, and this cooperation was based in the new multiethnic neighborhoods and in the relatively pluralistic lives of the second generation. A new view of pluralism is advanced here, recognizing pluralism among workers as an aid to class mobilization, not as an ideology in opposition to class awareness.

The working-class "heyday" of the late 1930s also was rooted in common experiences among white workers in the labor force, including economic discrimination; displacement by machinery; and the blurring of distinctions between blue-collar and white-collar jobs. When the Bridgeport Adult Guidance Service asked in 1939, "Why so many white collars?", it partially acknowledged that working-class development was not blocked by social mobility. Of the two sectors of work, the Service reported, many workers found blue-collar jobs to offer more resources. Moreover, it is worth highlighting that an important historical source used in this study -- the interviews and reports of the Connecticut Writers' Project -- date from the end of the decade. The sense of class awareness contained in many of these interviews does not belong to an earlier year, such as after the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933 which guaranteed labor's right to organize; or during the great sit-down strikes in 1936 and early 1937.

But it is possible to see some ways that the emergence of the second-generation working class disrupted a workers'

tradition. As they remade working-class life both within, and apart from, their parents' world, they came into conflict with their elders. Even when generational differences were not an explicit source of tension, these differences made it difficult to perpetuate a common worker perspective about American society. In short, second-generation autonomy was double-edged from the perspective of working-class development. A generational crevasse underlay the new worker unity.

APPENDIX A

HOMEOWNERSHIP, BRIDGEPORT, 1937 (BY HOUSEHOLD)

street	households n.	homeowners n.	homeowners %
Clinton Ave. (bound by Railroad Ave. & State St.)	107	19	17.8
Spruce St. (bound by Hancock & Bostwick Avenues)	79	9	11.4
Bostwick Ave. (bound by Spruce & Pine Sts.)	12	2	16.7
Hancock Ave. (bound by Spruce & Pine Sts.)	51	2	3.9
Pine St. (bound by Hancock & Bostwick Avenues)	63	11	17.5
Willard St. (bound by Pembroke & Hallett Sts.)	73	11	15.1
Hallett St. (bound by Pembroke & Willard Sts.)	159	12	7.5
combined	544	66	12.1

Source: Bridgeport City Directory 1938; 1937 Directory used
for Willard and Hallett Sts.

APPENDIX B

RESIDENTIAL PERSISTENCE AT SAME ADDRESS, BRIDGEPORT, 1930-1939 (BY HOUSEHOLD)

street	households n. 1930	households n. persist 1939	% persist 1930-1939
Clinton Ave. (bound by Railroad Ave. & State St.)	121	28	23.0
Spruce St. (bound by Hancock & Bostwick Avenues)	76	23	30.3
Bostwick Ave. (bound by Spruce & Pine Sts.)	12	3	25.0
Hancock Ave. (bound by Spruce & Pine Sts.)	49	21	42.9
Pine St. (bound by Hancock & Bostwick Avenues)	68	19	27.9
Willard St. (bound by Pembroke & Hallett Sts.)	71	33	46.5
Hallett St. (bound by Pembroke & Willard Sts.)	165	35	21.2
combined	562	152	27.0

Source: Bridgeport City Directory 1931, 1940; 1939 Directory
used for Willard St. and Hallett St.

APPENDIX C

RESIDENTIAL PERSISTENCE AT SAME ADDRESS, BRIDGEPORT, 1933-1939 (BY HOUSEHOLD)

street	households n. 1933	households n. persist 1939	% persist 1930-1939
Clinton Ave. (bound by Railroad Ave. & State St.)	107	45	42
Spruce St. (bound by Hancock & Bostwick Avenues)	71	43	61
Bostwick Ave. (bound by Spruce & Pine Sts.)	12	3	25
Hancock Ave. (bound by Spruce & Pine Sts.)	51	30	59
Pine St. (bound by Hancock & Bostwick Avenues)	63	35	52
Willard St. (bound by Pembroke & Hallett Sts.)	66	33	50
Hallett St. (bound by Pembroke & Willard Sts.)	152	62	41
combined	522	254	49

Source: Bridgeport City Directory 1934, 1940; 1939 Directory used for Willard St. and Hallett St.

APPENDIX D

UNION BACKGROUNDS OF CIO LEADERS, NEW BRITIAN*

individual	AFL experience	father's AFL experience
Louis Huevelman	carpenters	cigarmakers
Alfred Czerepuszko		miners
Mike Petannovitch	cafeteria	
Michael Stein		machinists

*Information is available on 12 leaders.

Source: CEGS interviews of Huevelman, Czerepuszko, Petannovitch, Stein, Ladislaus Michalowski, Joseph Caiazza, Edward Smolenski, James Wilson, Joseph Salwocki, Dan Dragone, Nicholas Tomessetti, and Robert Barrows.

APPENDIX E

HOMEOWNERSHIP, NEW BRITAIN CIO LEADERS, 1937

individualhomeowner

Anthony Adomaitis	X
Vincent Asal	
Peter Bardoorian	
Robert Barrows,	
Patrick Brayman	
Emanuel Brunetto	
Joseph Caiazza	
Carl Carrubba	
Loren Clary	
Rupert Crossman	
Al Czerepukszo	
George Danis	
Dominick Deldonna	
Dan Dragone,	
George Kevorkian	
Henry Kosinski	
Michale Kriniski	
Dan Larese	
Gustav Lux	
Eric Marschner	
Joseph Maczko	
George Matascik	
Ladislaus Michalowski	
John Niemiec	
August Orlick	
Henry Rowe	X
Clarence Rund	
Joseph Salwocki	
Frank Satalino	
Chester Skurzewski	
Edward Smolenski	
John Socka	
Michael Stein	
Walter Surko	
Lester Thompson	
Edward Timo	
Nicholas Tomasetti	
Kenneth Ward	
Arthur Williams	
James Wilson	
Carl Wischenbart	
Aleck Zaleski	

Source: New Britain City Directory.

APPENDIX F

UNION POSTITION AND OCCUPATION OF NEW BRITAIN CIO LEADERS, BY
LOCAL AND YEAR, 1937-1939

individual	title	occupation

UE 207 (Landers)

1937

Rupert Crossman	president	plater
Lester Thompson	vice-president	foreman
Alfred Czerepuszko	finanical-secretary	timekeeper
Loren Clary	recording-secretary	stationary
Clarence Rund	treasurer	engineer
Frank Satalino	general shop chair	assembler
		mach. operator

1938

Dan Dragone	president	scalemaker
Frank Satalino	vice-president	mach. operator
Joseph Petanovitch	financial-secretary	NA
Arthur Williams	recording-secretary	assembler
John Niemiec	treasurer	plater
Joseph Kowalewski	general shop chair	molder

1939

Dan Dragone	president	scalemaker
Frank Satalino	vice-president	mach. operator
Alfred Czerepuskzo	financial-secretary	timekeeper
Arthur Williams	recording-secretary	assembler
Dan Larese	treasurer	mach. operator
Nicholas Tomassetti	business agent	press operator
Joseph Kowalewski	general shop chair	molder

UE 232 (American Hardware)

1937

Anthony Uccello	president	timekeeper
Carl Currubba	vice-president	assembler
Ladislaus Michalowski	financial-secretary	shipping clk.
Joseph Salwocki	recording-secretary	timekeeper
John Rurak	shop chair	NA
Walter Surko	shop chair	lockmaker
Henry Rowe	shop chair	assembler
Chester Skurzewski	shop chair	NA

1938

James Wilson	president	inspector
Carl Currubba	vice-president	assembler
Ladislaus Michalowski	financial-secretary	shipping clk.
Robert Barrows	recording-secretary	stock clerk
Joseph Salwocki	business agent	timekeeper

1939

James Wilson	president	inspector
Henry Kosinski	vice-president	mach. operator
Ladislaus Michalowski	financial-secretary	shipping clk.
Robert Barrows	recording-secretary	stock clerk
Vincent Asal	treasurer	NA
Joseph Salwocki	business agent	timekeeper
Gustav Lux	shop chair	assembler
Carl Anderson	shop chair	NA
Carl Carrubba	shop chair	assembler
Joseph Maczko	shop chair	polisher

UE 235 (Union Manufacturing)

1938

Anthony Adomaitis	president	foreman

1939

Anthony Adomaitis	president	foreman
Eric Marschner	financial secretary	mach. helper
Eric Loef	recording-secretary	NA

UE 245 (North and Judd)

1939

Andrew Hanisian	president	NA
John Boucino	vice-president	plater
Edward Timo	financial-secretary	plater
Anna Mack	recording-secretary	NA
Joseph Caiazza	business agent	NA
August Orlick	sargent at arms	plater
Henry Martino	chief steward & trustee	NA
Carl Wischenbart	trustee	plater
_____ Amadore	trustee & shop steward	plater
Nellie Borkowski	shop steward	press operator
George Kevorkian	shop steward	buffer
_____ Sitz	shop steward	polisher
Joe Chianci	shop steward	NA
_____ Koppy	shop steward	NA

UAW 197 (Standard Steel)

1937

Edward Smolenski	president	mach. operator
Emmanuel Brunetto	financial-secretary	mechanic

UAW 288 (Fafnir Ball Bearing)

1937

George Danis	president	mach. operator
George Matascik	vice-president	mach. operator
Peter Bardoorian	recording-secretary	mach. operator
Michael Stein	financial-secretary	inspector
Michael Kriniski	treasurer	inspector

1938

George Danis	president	mach. operator
George Matascik	vice-president	mach. operator
Vincent Matus	financial-secretary	NA
Michael Stein	recording-secretary	inspector
Patrick Brayman	treasurer	grinder
Eve Negrini	guide	grinder

1939

Aleck Zaleski	financial-secretary	mach. operator
Michael Stein	recording-secretary	inspector

SWOC (Stanley Works)

1937

Richard Fink	president	NA
Dominick Deldonna	vice-president	floorman
John Socka	financial-secretary	roller
Kenneth Ward	recording-secretary	gauger
Earl TomasStti	treasurer	mach. operator

APPENDIX G

LENGTH OF RESIDENCE OF 24 CIO LEADERS, NEW BRITAIN

individual	born in city	settled before 1930	settled after 1930
Robert Barrows	X		
Emanuel Brunetto		X	
Joseph Caiazza	X		
Rupert Crossman		X	
Alfred Czerepuszko			X
George Danis			X
Dan Dragone		X	
Louis Huevelman			X
Michael Kriniski			X
Eric Loef		X	
Eric Marschner		X	
Harold Mastin			X
George Matascik		X	
Ladislaus Michalowski	X		
Mike Petannovitch	X		
Jospeh Salwocki		X	
Frank Satalino		X	
Edward Smolenski		X	
Michael Stein	X		
Edward Timo			X
Nicholas Tomassetti		X	
Arthur Williams		X	
James Wilson	X		
Aleck Zaleski	X		

Source: CEGS interviews of 12 leaders (Barrows, Caiazza, Czerepuszko, Dragone, Huevelman, Michalowski, Petannovitch, Salwocki, Smolenski, Stein, Tomassetti, and Wilson); New Britain City Directory 1920-1937.

APPENDIX H

UE LOCAL 203 (GENERAL ELECTRIC) OFFICIALS, WITH
OCCUPATIONS, 1937-1939

individual	title	occupation

1937

Oliver Arsenault	president	mach. operator
John De Francisco	vice-president	mach. operator
Peter J. DeMarco	financial-secretary	tuber
Frank Kogut	treasurer	NA
Joseph Julianelle	business agent	serviceman

1938

Oliver Arsenault	president	mach. operator
Andre Maye	vice-president	NA
John K. Doelling	financial-secretary	toolmaker
Joseph Julianelle	business agent	serviceman

1939

Oliver Arsenault	president	mach. operator
Andre Maye	vice-president	NA
John K. Doelling	financial-secretary	toolmaker
Leonard Revet	recording-secretary	NA
Frank Fazekas	treasurer	tuber
Joseph Julianelle	business agent	serviceman
William Farrell	trustee	NA
Mary Pribula	trustee	assembler
Peter Ross	trustee	NA
Lena Strouse	trustee	assembler
Harry Hollywood	trustee	toolmaker
Katherine Fentowsky	trustee	clerk
Vera Kosteka	trustee	NA
George Patrick	sarget at arms	assembler

APPENDIX I

UE LOCAL 203 (GENERAL ELECTRIC) COMMITTEE MEMBERS, WITH
OCCUPATIONS, 1938-1939

individual	occupation

Code & Wire Section Entertainment Committee

Louis Jiroudek	braider
Louis Stephano	braider
Steve DeMatteo	mach. operator
Steve Micholick	NA
Michael Pekar	NA
Frank Frazekas	tuber
John K. Doelling	toolmaker

Sick Committee (incomplete)

Peter Makarevich	shipper
Mary Pribula	assembler
Vera Kosteka	NA

Housing Committee (incomplete)

Steve DeMatteo	mach. operator
Frank Patterson	NA

Medical and Hospitalization Committee

Sam Ellam	reel tender
Harry Cannon	mach. operator
Walter Clarke	sprayer
Louis Stephano	braider
Elmer Peterson	toolmaker
Stephan DeMatteo	mach. operator

Sports Committee

Dan Crone	NA
Frank Fazekas	tuber
Dan Ryan	mach. operator
Charles Cadwell	mechanic

Education Committee

Dan Crone	NA
Leonard Revet	NA
Charles Cadwell	mechanic
Dan Ryan	mach. operator

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