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A

Camera Work: News Photography and America's Working Class, 1919-1950

by

Carol Quirke

Volume I

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2005

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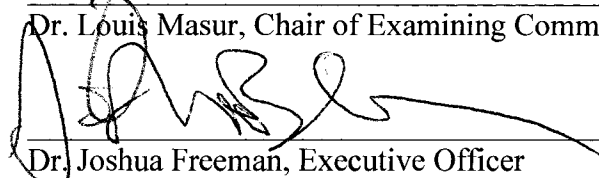
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Abstract

Camera Work: News Photography and America's Working Class, 1919-1950

by

Carol Quirke

Advisor: Professor Louis P. Masur

This dissertation examines the complex portrait of American labor that emerged in news photography of the 1930s and 1940s. It suggests that renegotiations of workers' place in American society took place in front of Detroit factory gates and in Washington D.C. corridors, but also in the pages of an ever more national, standardized, and photographic mass media. The analysis explores the nexus between mass culture and political and labor history. It shows how unions and corporations waged symbolic battles about who workers were, what unions could bring them, and how workers should flex their newfound political and economic might with news imagery. In the 1930s, technological innovations in cameras and in photographic transmission, the embracing of the photograph by government agencies, unions, and corporations, and the consolidation of mass audiences for news magazines meant that the news was brought to millions of Americans with visual immediacy. The dissertation offers five case studies of the use of news photography to advance, or retard, union drives and unionism. Three case studies examine media venues: one looks at *LIFE*, the pre-eminent innovator of the use of the photograph in the U.S.; and two others explore union newspapers, *New Voices*, of New York's Local 65 warehouse workers' union and *Steel Labor* of the United Steelworkers of America. Two additional case studies explore strikes during the CIO's rise in 1937, a

strike at the Hershey Chocolate Corporation, and a strike at Chicago's Republic Steel, which led to the Memorial Day Massacre. Using case studies permits a concrete exploration through archival records of how photographs were used to shape conceptions of organized labor. In union newspapers, national magazines, and corporate public relations campaigns, news photographs increasingly visualized workers as participants in the American Dream. However, powerful messages in news photographs constricted the political and economic terrain workers and unions could fight on, ultimately helping to contain workers' possibilities within that Dream.

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Ranier Maria Rilke writes, “Work of the eyes is done, now/Go and do heart work.” My “heart work” includes thanking the many people who contributed to this project. Mark Pascale of the Art Institute of Chicago and Rosemary Haines of the Library of Congress helped track clues for Chapter Four on the Memorial Day Massacre. Dorothy Fennell of the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations shared her work on Local 65. Laura Katzman of Randolph-Macon Women’s College, Alan Trachtenberg of Yale University, Peter Bacon Hales of University of Illinois-Chicago, Erika Gottfried of New York University’s Tamiment Library, and Jack Metzgar of Roosevelt University all offered helpful commentary on earlier portions of this work.

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Members of my supervisory committee offered encouragement and questions in equal measure and the dissertation is stronger for this. Ann Fabian of Rutgers University

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Introduction

This project began serendipitously. I was curious about representations of welfare recipients or the “welfare queen” at the moment when the federal government took responsibility for its most vulnerable citizens during the New Deal. Less interested in how elites, policy-makers, social workers, or government bureaucrats conceived of the disadvantaged, I wondered how everyday Americans encountered the poor and working poor in cultural representations. I turned to a popular source, the picture magazine *LIFE*. Many scholars linked *LIFE* to the documentary aims of this decade, comparing it with the Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographs of Depression era victims. But *LIFE* also lay at the crux of the new, national “culture of sight and sound” in historian Warren Susman’s words—an expanding mass culture that coalesced in the 1930’s.¹

As I reeled through *LIFE*’s micro-fiched pages, far less Depression-era imagery appeared than scholarship had led me to expect. Definitely no “welfare queen;” few women on relief or welfare; and only a smattering of stories—largely critical—about New Deal public works projects. *LIFE* limned its world with black and white photographs, but the America they depicted seemed closer to the technicolor Land of Oz than dowdy Kansas.

Instead there were hundreds of photographs and stories about American workers struggling to establish unions. None of my readings in labor history, nor in the visual

¹ Wendy Kozol, *LIFE’s America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 32. Kozol is one author who concludes *LIFE* printed many photos of the Depression and New Deal programs. Warren Susman,

culture of the mid-century prepared me for this. Laborers in *LIFE* could appear heroic, a common representation of labor in the 1930s, but they could also look menacing or passive. Labor leaders were lampooned—and treated with the respect of America's corporate heads. Workers demands were accepted as a right in a bounteous America, at other times they were treated with a disdain meted to the overreaching. Working women appeared typically as sexy starlets; though black, brown, and immigrant men and women hardly showed their faces. This foray into *LIFE*'s pages hinted at cultural clashes over the place of the American worker at the heart of mass culture.

“It Isn’t Only What You Do That Counts, But What People Think You’re Doing.”

Cultural critic James Agee called the camera “the central instrument of our time” in 1939, and unions and businesses joined magazines like *LIFE* in using the camera eye to shape conceptions of workers and their unions.² When sociologists Robert and Helen Merrill Lynd returned to their fabled American community Middletown in the mid-1930s, they noted that local papers featured front-page photographs of strikers being dragged off to jail whenever labor seemed poised to demand collective bargaining. Some of this coverage was purposeful. Businesses and peak associations such as the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) took advantage of the seeming veracity of news photos to stem public support for organized labor. The National Labor Relations Board

Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), 158-160.

² Agee worked for TIME Inc. as a movie critic. *FORTUNE* commissioned his and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1941; New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), 11. Editors did not run it and it took the authors several years to find a publisher.

(NLRB) called the “King of Strikebreakers,” Pearl Bergoff, to Washington in 1937 to testify about corporate union busting techniques. Bergoff related how one corporate head “staged” violence to discredit labor. News photos made unionists seem responsible for violence, and identified corporations and their minions, the “peaceful [back-to-work] pickets” with “America, free land and all that stuff.” Long before the success of “right to manage” campaigns in the 1940s, corporate strategists employed photography in well-developed public relations campaigns to limit labor’s power.³

Unions could also be attentive to how news photography influenced opinion. It’s leaders had learned, wrote labor educator and editor J.B.S. Hardman, that “it isn’t only what you do that counts, but what people think you’re doing.”⁴ Unions strategized with government officials, news reporters, church and community activists, and other allies to ensure that the public interpreted certain key photographs to labor’s benefit. Unions also professionalized their newspapers and beefed up their use of photos to interest

³ Robert Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1937), 37, 374-5, 383. NLRB District Council Office Equipment Workers Case No. C-145, quoted in Senate Comm. of Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech and Labor, National Association of Manufacturers*, 75th Congress, 1st sess. Pt.17, Exhibit 3861 and 2821, (1937), 7960-7972. Richard Tedlow and Stuart Ewen’s work on public relations specifically examines NAM’s anti-union campaigns. Ewen is the only one to analyze imagery, though his focus is not news photography. Stuart Ewen, *PR! A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); and Richard Tedlow, *Keeping the Corporate Image, Public Relations and Business* (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1979). See Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberty: 1945-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994) and Howell John Harris, *The Right to Manage: Industrial Relations Policies of American Business in the 1940s* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982) for later anti-union campaigns by business.

⁴ J.B.S. Hardman and Maurice Neufeld, “Union Communication: Publicity, Public Relations,” *The House of Labor: Internal Operations of American Unions* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1951), 171-225. Jerold Auerbach, *Labor and Liberty: The La Follette Committee and the New Deal* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966).

prospective members and educate the public. Hardman, who edited the Amalgamated Clothing Worker's *Advance* from the early 1920s on, surveyed the labor press in 1928 and found it thrown together with the "proverbial paste jar and scissors." Two decades later, Hardman and his fellow labor editors believed the labor press a "hardy institution" at its "apex of effectiveness and influence." Trained journalists edited labor newspapers, and they bolstered their message with photography and other forms of illustration.

Unions certainly had a powerful message—as working men and women were making one of the century's biggest news stories. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) recast America's social and political calculus. Throughout the 1930s workers from hamlets and cities poured out of factories, coal mines, and packing houses, but also beauty shops, elevators, novelties warehouses, and a multitude of sundry job sites to demand collective bargaining rights. Workers asserted their rights to higher wages, greater job security, safety, and better lives for themselves and their families. By the decade's end, nine and a half million workers were unionized. During WWII they gained institutional stability when the National War Labor Board (NWLB) imposed maintenance of membership contracts. As America entered the second half of the twentieth century one of every three American workers had union representation, a fivefold increase from twenty years before.⁵

The era's first historians touted labor's growing economic and political muscle as nothing less than a "new phase of national history," a "Third American Revolution," and

⁵ Nelson Lichtenstein's *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 79-81, 233; David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 173-192.

a “revolutionary response to a revolutionary situation.” Workers joined in the mass consumer economy in ways unimaginable a few decades earlier and they bargained for more leisure time and vacations, facilitating this participation. Unions never achieved the ambitiously envisioned welfare state they sought for workers, but new forms of public and private social security offered workers and their families health insurance and shielded them from economic loss due to disability, unemployment, and old age. Scholars are now more circumspect about the significance of these transformations, but few contest that American workers commanded greater political, social and economic authority in American life in 1950 than in 1900 or 1930.⁶

Corresponding to labor’s newfound strength was a populist aesthetic that suffused America’s visual culture. Hollywood’s *Meet John Doe*, the “Forgotten Men” of *The Gold Diggers of 1933*, and the sassy working girls of *Kitty Foyle* and *Baby Face* entertained movie audiences coast to coast with the exploits of beleaguered but scrappy workers. Workers also peopled all kinds of canvases and murals in mid-century America. And more than any other figure, the strapping, male laborer embodied the symbolic importance of productive labor to the nation-state. This icon could be found in post office murals and statuary outside federal office buildings, in the photographs

⁶ Arthur Schlesinger, *The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1959), 315; Louis Hack, *The Shaping of the American Tradition* (New York, 1947), 1125; Carl Degler, *Out of the Past* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 416. The New Left and social history critique of such claims is perhaps best exemplified by Alice and Staughton Lynd, eds., *Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working Class Organizers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973). A nuanced look at the gains and failure of this period can be found in Melvyn Dubofsky, “Not so ‘Turbulent Years’: Another Look at American 1930’s,” *American Studies* 24 (1979): 5-20; Gary Gerstle and Steve Fraser, *The Rise and Fall of the New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); and Joshua

appearing in *LIFE*, and even in the architectural bas-reliefs and decorative motifs of capitalism's cathedrals such as Rockefeller Center, which were constructed in this era. Women appeared too, though typically in a maternal guise. Photography also contributed to enshrining the common man and woman as the central icon of this era. The Farm Security Administration's (FSA) encyclopedic catalogue of photographs of American life is known for valorizing agricultural laborers, but many New Deal agencies took up the camera to document how the nation-state contributed to the average American's life.⁷ As the nation moved to war the "manly worker" and then Rosie the Riveter reminded all Americans of working men and women's crucial contributions to the nation's defense.

For a long time such imagery was taken at "face-value" and considered populist, but now scholars see contradictory impulses and consequences in this obsession with American working men and women. Hollywood movies may have put the "little guy" on the screen, but the homespun narratives "dictated the conversion of all political, sociological and economic dilemmas into personal melodramas," that denied any public or collective response in one film historian's words.⁸ And the social realist "heroic

Freeman's "Delivering the Goods: Industrial Unionism During World War II," *Labor History*, 19 no. 4 (1978): 570-593.

⁷ Some frequently cited accounts include: William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); F. Jack Hurley, *Portrait of a Decade: Roy Stryker and the Development of Documentary Photography in the Thirties* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972); Roy Stryker and Nancy Wood, *In This Proud Land*, (New York: Galahad Books, 1973).

⁸ This is Robert Ray's argument in *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 57. For related arguments about the conservatism of films that appear "populist," or films that centered on workers or everyday people, see: Robert Sklar *Movie Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books 2nd ed. 1994); Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (New York: Random House, 1981), 155-162 and 189-191; and Richard Maltby, "Baby Face or How Joe Breen Made

laborer” found in sculpture or in the pages of a union newspaper was never simply “democratic,” according to Elizabeth Faue and Barbara Melosh. Gendering work in the overblown body of the manly worker redressed the failure felt by all classes of men but coincided with social and economic strictures for American women.⁹ Where scholars once unabashedly celebrated the FSA’s documentation of the “common man,” they now allege the FSA Photography Section produced a nostalgia for the “agrarian, small-town way of life” being torn asunder by technocratic New Deal policies.¹⁰ When looking at

Barbara Stanwyck Atone for Causing the Wall Street Crash,” in *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader*, edited by Jackie Stacey and Annette Kuhn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁹ Analyses which emphasize the democratic impulse of this imagery include: Gerald Markowitz and Marlene Park, *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Karal Ann Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of the Post Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1982); and Francis O’Connor’s *Federal Support for the Visual Arts: the New Deal and Now* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphics Society, 1969). Feminist scholars complicate the earlier view. Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) and Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture, Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington D.C. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Two photographer-critics, Alan Sekula and Martha Rosler offered an early critique of the documentary tradition. Rosler asserts FSA photos evoked a false humanitarian universalism for middle-class viewers that limited political criticism while re-victimizing the subjects by exposing them to the camera eye. Martha Rosler asks in regards to Dorothea Lange’s “Migrant Mother,” the most reproduced image of the Depression if perhaps, “Photographic images...like civilization,” are “made on the backs of the exploited?” “In, around and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)” in Richard Bolton’s *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 317. Alan Sekula, argues that in documentary photography “the oppressed are granted a bogus Subjecthood.” “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” in *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to Present*, edited by Vicki Goldberg (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), 452-473. Scholars followed up on such criticism in the mid-1980s. Lawrence Levine notes the FSA’s incongruities without damning the project “The Historian and the Icon” in Carl Fleishhauer and Beverly Brannan, *Documenting America: 1935-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 22-3, 37; James Curtis claims the photos were taken to suit the

the 1940s some critics argue the patriotic images of workers had a conservative influence on labor. Feminist historians and filmmakers who first excavated images of Rosie the Riveter believed she illuminated women's critical contribution to the nation's economic health and war-preparedness. More recently scholars assert the image of Rosie offered "self-actualization" to middle-class women but asked working-class women for "duty" and "sacrifice." Motivational posters of working men that "transform[ed] employees into factory combatants" met company needs to "instill factory discipline," marginalizing organized labor's patriotic contribution by focusing on the supply of efficient, stable producers.¹¹

This revisionist scholarship and other cultural history opens up new ways to think of imagery but it does not explain the organized laborer who appeared in *LIFE* or in labor's papers. Scholarship retains a tight focus on much of the same imagery first believed to be radical or populist: images of the "down and out," farm workers, or Rosie. Many of these studies, tied to the work of a specific photographer or institution like the FSA, do not examine how such populist imagery lies within a larger dialogue about

photographers' aesthetic needs in *Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth: FSA Photography Reconsidered* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Maren Stange criticizes the reformist impulse behind the project, "Symbols of an Ideal Life:" *Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 130. F. Jack Hurley offers a stinging rebuttal to this scholarship which he finds grounded in a cynical post-Watergate, anti-government ideology, "The Farm Security Administration File: In and Out of Focus," *History of Photography* 17 n. 3 (Autumn 1993): 244-252. See also: Peter Daniel, et al., *Official Images: New Deal Photography* (Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987); and James Guimond, *American Photography and the American Dream* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

¹¹ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); William Bird and

working men and women. The excellent work produced from the standpoint of cultural producers—admen, corporate public relations specialists, or Hollywood filmmakers—treats class as an abstract relation. It rarely touches on the concrete battles between labor and capital in this period. Like scholarship on the FSA, it too often examines imagery in isolation from the larger dialogue of imagery at this time.¹²

Labor history also did not explain the representation of labor in *LIFE* or in labor papers. Labor historians working in the tradition of E. P. Thompson and Herbert Gutman have been less interested in how labor is represented.¹³ They remain primarily focused on the effect of working-class or labor institutional cultural production. For example, Lizabeth Cohen's lively chronicle of Depression era workers, *Making a New Deal*, upended the traditional conception of mass culture as politically anaesthetizing workers. Cohen showed how unionizing workers took advantage of mass culture to create a "culture of unity" that helped them build their unions and the New Deal welfare state. But her complex examination of mass culture showed only the advantages of mass

Harry Rubenstein *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 66-75.

¹² Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985); Steve Ross, *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). The political effects of film and television have also received greater attention from historians of journalism and media, perhaps as one commentator suggests, because of their "glamour" and financial clout as industries. Hanna Hardt and Bonnie Brennan "Newswork, History and Photographic Evidence: A Visual Analysis of a 1930's Newsroom," in *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, edited by Bonnie Brennan and Hanno Hardt (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 14.

¹³ This argument was made by Daniel Bender and Kimberly Phillips in the roundtable on "The Cultural Turn in Working-Class Studies" at the American Studies Association Annual Meeting, November 10, 2001, Washington D.C. They argued that labor historians suspicion towards cultural studies or expanding "culture" past the earlier

culture, Cohen never accounted for unions' inability to control the content of mass culture. Like Cohen's work, labor history too often examines workers and their relationship to culture in a vacuum that ignores the larger cultural context within which laborers lived their lives. Labor historians seem more interested in what workers "do" than in symbolic battles about labor, despite the effects of such battles.¹⁴

But news photos deserve attention because of their increasing prominence in the machinery of national public opinion making. Changes in technology permitted images of Kentucky backwoods miners to make their way to magazines on coffee tables in Park Avenue apartments. Just as quickly photos of thousands of workers streaming out of Henry Ford's industrial mecca to fight for their better vision of tomorrow could make

Thompsonian and Gutman definitions of culture as a "resource" that workers rely on has cut workers' culture off from the broader cultural context.

¹⁴ The original unwillingness to examine mass culture may come from the prominent mid-century view that mass culture anaesthetized workers, limiting discontent. The Frankfurt School theorists offered the best encapsulation of mass culture as a depoliticizing force. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated by John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 121-167, and especially, 121-127. For a discussion of the 1950s "Great Debate" over mass culture's effects see Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf Press, 1999). Elizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990); and George Lipsitz's *Class and Culture in Cold War America: A Rainbow at Midnight* (South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey, 1982) offer two well-received analyses of mass culture and labor. A few scholars have looked at labor and visual imagery. See Gary Gerstle, *Working Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Faue's, *Community of Suffering*. Both look at the imagery in union newspapers, suggesting what a rich resource it may be. Both fail to place their work in the larger sphere of images that circulated during the 1930s and 1940s. Faue's work on labor journalist Eva Valesh is also an interesting study of labor's self-representation. *Writing the Wrongs: Eva Valesh and the Rise of Labor Journalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002). See Paul Buhle for a traditional, labor-centric view, "The Iconographics of American Labor," in *From the Knights of*

their way to rural outposts in Alabama or Arizona. Taking advantage of such trends, media corporations borrowed the photojournal format pioneered in Europe in the 1920s. Americans responded with delight. The most significant U.S. photojournalistic experiment, Henry Luce's *LIFE*, first published in November of 1936, built a circulation of over two million by 1939, and nearly ten times that many read it each week.¹⁵

News photographs also deserve attention because of their insistent power to name reality—they have a particular authority as transcriptions of reality. The seeming absence of style in news photography establishes a way of looking that announces to the viewer that what is seen is objective. Roy Stryker who headed the FSA called news photos “noun and verb pictures,” they seemed straightforward descriptions of reality. He contrasted news photographs with documentary photographs, “adjective and adverb” pictures, which had depth and tugged at the emotions.¹⁶ As Arthur Rothstein, former FSA photographer and the photo editor for *LOOK Magazine* said, “A person viewing a good news photograph should have the feeling that he is seeing reality. He is never conscious of the photographer or of his camera.” Even a publication like *LIFE*, known for its innovative use of the photograph sought photographers who could suppress individual style for the sake of “photo-truth.” Erika Doss, editor of *Looking at LIFE* explains that the magazine depended upon photographers “‘hid[ing]’ their cameras,” which “mediat[ed] the experience of looking at pictures as a naturalized occurrence.” As *LIFE*

Labor to the New World Order: Essays on Labor and Culture (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1997), 161-197.

¹⁵ *LIFE* had the “highest ‘pass along factor’ of any mass circulation magazine, drawing in tens of millions of readers. Erika Doss, ed., *Looking at LIFE*, (Washington D.C. Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 2, 42-3.

¹⁶ Roy Stryker, “The FSA Collection of Photographs,” in Wood, *In This Proud Land*, 8.

put it in a 1940 advertisement, their editorial viewpoint was based on the camera's neutrality—the camera was “an all-seeing eye with a brain.” [Fig. i-1]¹⁷ News photos are immediately legible, explained the American Society of Magazine Photographers, they “embody an idea made clearly apparent.” News photographs have a distinctive “impartial” style tied to the mission of their institutional context: purveying objective facts about “fast moving events.”¹⁸ Many of the photos examined in this dissertation will appear almost banal in their descriptiveness. But news photography's power lies less in each image's individual capacity to persuade than in the “common-sense” truthfulness of such photographs.

The photograph's increased prominence came at a time when the “news” was itself being redefined as a product and a practice. Over the course of the twentieth century the standardization of news through the wire services and the move to political columns meant that more than ever Americans read similar news.¹⁹ And though the local daily paper remained a steady source of news, the modern “news-magazine” began to greet Americans in the twenties and thirties. Major media corporations developed these news-magazines by extending the national “mass markets” built for women's and family magazines earlier in the century. Magazines enlarged their audience by altering their

¹⁷ Arthur Rothstein, *Photojournalism* (New York: American Photographic Publishing Company, 1956), 23. Doss, *Looking at LIFE*, 15-16. The ad was published in *LIFE*, 25 March 1940, 78-79.

¹⁸ The American Society of Magazine Photographers quote is in Rothstein, *Photojournalism*, 52.

¹⁹ See Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 151-152; Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown in Transition*, 377-378, and Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States through 260 years: 1690-1950* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1950).

rhetoric to appeal across class lines. *LIFE*'s parent, TIME Inc. exemplified such changes. Two Yale graduates, Henry Luce and Britton Haddon began *TIME* in 1923. Their idea: the "news" was too cumbersome for busy readers who would appreciate pithy recapitulations of the news. Their ironic but expressive rhetoric, "Timespeak," mixed high and low popular cultures. Luce would go on to make photographs a crucial component of twentieth century media. As a result of these transformations in media, labor's national mobilization reached the general public in fundamentally new ways.²⁰

Susman argues this first national "culture of sight and sound" of the 1930s—he was also concerned with the radio and motion picture—made possible "a special community of all Americans." In Susman's mind these changes allowed for a "unity of response and action not previously possible," making us "more susceptible than ever to those who would mold culture and thought."²¹ One unexplored aspect of this growing "culture of sight and sound" were the news photographs of workers as they sought to put their imprint on American society through their unions. The national news media became an arena for competing messages about organized labor. In part this is because labor and business grew increasingly adept at crafting visual messages which appeared in the pages of this new national news media. But because major media corporations themselves flirted with including working Americans in their audience, some now offered more coverage of labor.

²⁰ Barry Karl, *The Uneasy State: The United States from 1915 to 1945*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983), 13, 54, 94; Christopher Wilson, "The Rhetoric of Consumption: Mass-Market Magazines and the Decline of the Gentle Reader," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History*, edited by Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 39-64.

²¹ Susman, *Culture as History*, 160.

Current scholarship tells us much about the multiple and contradictory meanings of the common man, but little about images of actual workers at the moment of their greatest collective transformation.²² A generation of scholars show how visual imagery transformed politics, culture, and ideology but they have shed little light on one very common way workers were depicted, the news photos of working people who struggled to unionize in the 1930s and 1940s. This analysis takes advantage of recent scholarly contributions to do just that. News photographs documented workers' revolutions in the American political and economic landscape—but this analysis hopes to show how news photography culturally refashioned labor's place in America at the same time.

“Photography is dumb”

As Lawrence Levine writes in his essay, “The Historian and the Icon,” on Depression-era photos, “photography was not merely a mechanism for depicting...changes, it was simultaneously their product and their agent.” Photography exists because of transformations in industrial production; photography also moved the world into modernity. Levine also suggests that photographers and those who supported and disseminated their images constructed a way of seeing the world, as well as reproducing it. These ways of seeing are not neutral: they are political. The gist of much

²² Some exceptions exist for specific strikes. See Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Anne Loftis, *Witness to the Struggle: Imaging the 1930s California Labor Movement* (Reno: University of Las Vegas Press, 1998); and Richard Steven Street, “Salinas on Strike: News Photographers and the Salinas Lettuce Packers’ Strike of 1936: The First Photo Essay on a California Farm Labor Dispute,” *History of Photography*, 12, no. 2 (April June 1988): 165-174.

contemporary scholarship examines how, in photo-historian Alan Trachtenberg's words, "the viewfinder is a political instrument."²³

Nineteenth-century Americans did not perceive photographs in this way, for them photography was the acme of realist representation. For essayist Oliver Wendell Holmes photographs were a "mirror with a memory," they directly reflected reality. Mimesis has defined western artistic aims and styles for centuries, but "realism," as a style and subject matter developed in the mid-nineteenth century. The chemical and mechanical processes of photography were ideally suited to the realist aesthetic. Photography linked westerners' belief in scientific progress with their belief in nature and God. English photographer William Henry Fox Talbot titled the first photo-book ever, *Pencil of Nature*, divulging the 19th century premise that photography was a scribe for God's handiwork. Writing about the stereoscope, Holmes expanded on this view for the middle-class readers of the *Atlantic Monthly*, "It is no toy: it is a divine gift, placed in our hands nominally by science, really by that inspiration which is revealing the Almighty through the lips of the humble students of nature." The nineteenth century magical artisan-photographers fulfilled God's mission by reflecting the natural world around them, whether landscape, portrait, or urban scene.²⁴ By the century's end

Also see Faue's *Community of Suffering*; Buhle, *From the Knights*; and Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism*, in footnote no. 14, above.

²³ Levine, "The Historian and the Icon," 40; Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1989), xiv.

²⁴ On nineteenth century realism see Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971), 13-56. The nineteenth-century preoccupation with the photographic image and its truth value is addressed in Oliver Wendell Holmes's essays on the stereoscope. Holmes prefigures much contemporary theory on photography, referring to the photographic image as pure truth, but simultaneously noting how with the photograph that "form is

however, the links between God and science were sundered. Americans became aware that photography was not pure truth, without ever relinquishing their belief in the medium's hold on the real.²⁵

Most photographs, of course, contain evidence of "the real." But the photograph is never, as Peter Bacon Hales points out, "a repository of facts, a raw slice of the past."²⁶ Photographers make aesthetic and editorial decisions in the field and in the darkroom that determine how "reality" is read. What the photographer included and excluded from the photographic frame affects the photograph's meaning, and the photographer's vantage matters too. A photograph taken from behind a line of strikers effects a different interpretation than one taken from behind the gates of a factory plant. Other formal elements such as focus, lighting, angle, and time contribute to the "argument" that a photograph makes. Available technology also shaped what viewers could see at any moment in time. In 1919 photographers documented the largest labor uprising ever by showing the strikers and the forces that opposed them in posed and static shots. They had to, the camera and film could not capture motion. Words, in titles, captions, and photo-stories also "anchor" a photograph's meaning. The very same photograph could suggest

henceforth divorced from matter." Here Holmes opens a Pandora's box of complications between image and reality that he analyzes. "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1859, 738-747; "Sun Painting and Sun Sculpture," *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1861, 13-19; and "Doings of the Sunbeam," *Atlantic Monthly*, 1-15. The quote comes from "Sun Painting," 28. For an analysis of early photography see Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

²⁵ For a description of how historians and history textbooks continue to use the photographs as "translucent windows onto the past" see Louis Masur, "Pictures Have Now Become a Necessity": The Use of Images in American History Textbooks," *Journal of American History* 84, no. 4 (March 1998): 1409-1424.

opposing arguments or story lines.²⁷ A line of strikers photographed with a dynamic composition that stressed the strikers' numbers might be used by a union in a story that emphasized the promise of activism, or by a mainstream news source with a caption that implied organized labor's threat to American values.²⁸ The institutional context of the photograph: who commissioned the photograph, and who disseminated it and how, also explain its argument, or ideological work.²⁹ For example, the editorial stance of national media can be detected in a publisher's desire to capture a market as well as the publisher's politics. Labor newspapers rarely printed stories a union didn't approve, and

²⁶ Peter Bacon Hales, *Silver Cities: The Photography of American Urbanization, 1839-1915* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 3.

²⁷ FSA photographer Arthur Rothstein, who went on to be the Photo Editor at *LOOK* argued that twice as many people read the caption and photograph to a story, than read the story itself. Rothstein, *Photojournalism*, 28. Roland Barthes argues that the text of the photograph "anchors" what would otherwise be a "polysemic" image. "The Rhetoric of the Image," *Image/Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday Press, 1977), 39. He claims that with press photographs "the text constitutes a parasitic message designed to connote the image, to 'quicken' it...the words...are parasitic on the image." "The Photographic Image," *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁸ One paper like *The Daily Worker* might use this visual strategy of workers taken from above in a strong diagonal to suggest labor power. See "You Can't Pass Our Line," on the Cadillac strike, 31 January 1937, and "50,000 Marchers Back Akron Rubber Strike," 7 April 1937. But the *Worker* used this same for "The Troops are Still in Flint," 21 January 1937, 3 which showed Guardsman on Flint streets; and "Graduation Goose Stepping to Capitalist Tune" which showed Rutgers graduates as "foot soldiers of capitalism." 10 June 1929, 2.

²⁹ John Tagg is the most forceful proponent of the view that photography per se has no meaning, only the institution that employs it can give it meaning. "Photography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relationships which invest it. It's nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents which define and set it to work." John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 63. Tagg ignores how composition, lighting, and other aspects of the photographic language contribute to an image's argument. Nonetheless, the idea that the photograph "performs" different work in different settings is important to this analysis. Art historians such as Rosalind Krauss argue the the "discursive spaces" within which the photo operates largely effect its

such papers would be unlikely to print a photo deemed contrary to a union's interests. The photographers and publishers intent did not always explain its reception however—viewers could reinterpret and re-narrate a photograph's content.

If “noun and verb” pictures predominated in the news, different forms of “realism” tied to different institutional photographic practices, also circulated in the news, with each style used to make different kinds of arguments. “Evidence-style” realism was common. In this style the visual elements erased the photographer's presence to an even greater degree than in news photography. The subject is centered in the foreground, the camera's angle is straight at the subject, the lighting offers a clear look at it, the focus is clear throughout so that there is an optimal view of the subject. Because the presentation is so neutral the photo makes no apparent argument.³⁰ Documentary realism, conversely, intended to have an emotional pull, it was “ammunition” in Dorothea Lange's words.³¹ These “adjective and adverb” photos could also be drawn upon in stories about organized labor. If the documentary aesthetic could be found in the news, so too did the news feature images more typically associated with corporate photography—promotional shots of workers on the job, company towns, and corporate headquarters. Such photography suggests an idealized order authored by the corporation, they are classic and timeless as nothing intrudes on the world the corporation created. Unlike evidence style photographs that demonstrate what is, these photographs

meaning, in “Photography's Discursive Spaces,” in Bolton's *Content of Meaning*, 287-301.

³⁰ Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 97-98.

³¹ Lange claimed her negatives were “loaded with ammunition” in a letter to FSA head Roy Stryker, in Milton Meltzer, *Dorothea Lange: A Photographer's Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1978), 168.

suggest what could be: they are didactic and inspirational.³² Also found in the news are photographs that I will call “hyper-real,” photographs that documented by offering affirming visions of America and its citizens. Unlike promotional photography that idealizes but seems devoid of life, these photographs were vital, exuberant, and burnished, much like a Hollywood production. James Guimond’s *American Photography and the American Dream* argues that the photojournals such as *LIFE* or *LOOK* excelled in this buoyant vision of America. He borrowed Michael Schudson’s concept of “corporate realism” to describe them. I use “hyper-real” because this “happy” realism isn’t restricted to corporations alone, even radical unions availed themselves of this style to speak to their rank and file.³³ Editors decisions to depart from “noun and verb” styles and print other realist styles often signaled a specific message was being transmitted.

Teasing meaning from photographs is a tricky task. On the one hand they appear unmediated, on the other hand, as photographer and critic Martha Rosler quips, “photography is dumb.”³⁴ Like the recent scholarship on photography this dissertation assumes photographs record reality, but not slavishly: photographs construct the reality we see. This analysis attends to the above elements: the technology employed, the visual

³² On corporate photography see David Nye, *Image Worlds: Corporate Identities at General Electric* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985). Nye calls this form of realism “mundane realism,” a term which is helpful in understanding their innocuous look. As he argues, their power comes in their repetitiveness. Nye, 49, 9, 27-29. See also Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in Big Business* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

³³ Patricia Johnston uses the term “naturalism” to describe the “emotive” and “sentimental appeal” of some ads by art and commercial photographer Edward Steichen. See *Real Fantasies: Edward Steichen’s Advertising Photography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 93-102; and Guimond, *American Photography*, 153.

³⁴ Rosler as quoted in Paula Rabinowitz, *They Must be Represented: The Politics of Documentary* (New York, Verso, 1994), 17.

vocabulary of the photograph, its rhetoric and style, accompanying text, along with the institutional context that sought to impart meaning to the photograph. Photographs are a slippery evidentiary source for the historian, but as Levine concludes, their challenge is much the same as other evidentiary sources:

Photographs...are incomplete as historical sources always are. They have been collected and filtered through other hands, as historical sources always have been. They are filled with contradictions and paradoxes, as the most valuable historical sources frequently are. In short, they behave much like other sources historians depend on. What differs is less the uniqueness of photographic materials than our tendency to see photographs as more "real" than other sources and our relative inexperience in using them historically."³⁵

Framing Organized Labor

This analysis is organized in a series of case studies that show how critical photography was in re-making labor's place in American society. An uneven archival record makes it difficult to plot a full historical narrative of the use of news imagery by unions, corporations and mass media corporations. Case studies on the other hand permit an in-depth analysis of how these actors used photography to shape conceptions of organized labor. The case studies are guided by the traditional sources of the historian: archival records of internal union and business dialogue, oral histories and memoirs of contemporaries, congressional investigations, and newspaper accounts which help explain the institutions' aims. These sources allow a reconstruction of the motives, goals, and at times even the reactions to the photography produced in this era.³⁶ Several case

³⁵ Levine, "The Historian and the Icon," 24.

³⁶ The archival and historical record is spotty. Though organized labor cared increasingly about public perception and used photography to a greater degree than ever before, they

studies examine specific labor conflicts as turmoil heightened the stakes of labor representation and mobilized parties on both sides to advance claims about organizing workers and their goals; others examine a single publication over time to chart the motifs, iconography, and themes that mark photographs about organized labor.

The dissertation identifies some critical interactions between news photography and labor's advances and retreats from 1919 through 1950. *Chapter One* examines news photographs from the 1919 strike wave through the creation of the CIO during the Depression. Photojournalism was still in its infancy in this period. This chapter provides a base to understand the innovations in news photography that made labor's story so visually compelling in the latter half of the 1930s. *Chapter Two* explores *LIFE Magazine's* coverage of labor from the publication's inception in November of 1936 to WWII. *LIFE*, an emblematic marker of mid-century American culture also established new journalistic practices. Its arguments about organized labor were read by over 20 million Americans by 1940. The tensions within *LIFE* about labor's growing stature suggest larger ambiguities over labor's political and social redefinition in American life. *Chapter Three* elevates the significance of a 1937 sit-down strike at the Hershey Chocolate Company by suggesting news photography is an element in labor relations struggles. Corporate public relations used photography to tar a union drive locally, but the dissemination of photographs in innovative news formats such as *LIFE* or *Newsweek*

left limited records about their thinking about this new medium. Similarly, transcripts of government investigations and published corporate records indicate corporations tried to use photography's power to their advantage. But few of these corporations allow access to their internal records. News corporations such as TIME-LIFE clearly made organized labor one of its top stories in its first year, but their doors are closed to researchers despite a growing interest in the Luce empire's effect on American life.

impugned the sit-down to national audiences as well. *Chapter Four* investigates one of the most commonly represented labor events of the 1930s, the Memorial Day Massacre. This chapter establishes how “conclusive” photographic evidence—news photographs and a Paramount newsreel— first “proved” the guilt of the demonstrators, and then their innocence. Unions and their allies could employ public relations tools and the power of imagery as well as corporations—in this case to condemn union busting techniques.

Chapter Five explores *Steel Labor*, newspaper of the United Steel Workers of America (USWA), the largest union in the CIO. A professionally edited newspaper, *Steel Labor* used visual imagery to communicate with its member-readers the importance of rank and file discipline and adherence to rule of law. Over time *Steel Labor* radicalized its message to readers, even as it sketched the rewards of unionism with an iconography consonant with that of mass culture. *Chapter Six* focuses on the Local 65 Wholesale and Warehouse Employees Union’s newspaper, *New Voices*, and its rank and file photographers. The union’s photo staff took images that did the work that an organizer might do, enticing workers into union struggle and educating them about collective action. Photographers represented the union as a haven of racial, ethnic and gender diversity and advanced arguments about workers’ rights to live a full, expressive life.

Much of this dissertation treats individual images, but these images have been chosen because they exemplify characteristic news images from the 1930s and 1940s. Alan Trachtenberg suggests that photographs can be read for “patterns of meaning.” Such patterns of meaning offer important clues about the symbolic battles over labor’s place at this time. The “patterns of meaning” about workers and their unions found in

each chapter's case study were neither unified nor stable.³⁷ A close analysis of these photographs and the institutions that disseminated them reveal attitudes about workers, attitudes that deeply divided Americans, and attitudes that could be shared on both sides of the class divide. The heroic labor, for example, is rightfully understood as a mid-century icon. But this icon could sound the threat about organized labor—even unions might suppress this icon when leaders felt rank and file activism would be detrimental. And, as common as the heroic laborer was in this period, so were images of workers happily enjoying the consumer goods newly available to them.

A recurring theme in these photographs characterizes workers, their leaders, and their methods for achieving unionization. Are workers militant warriors adamant about establishing their unions, or are they quiescent—directed by bosses or labor leaders? Is rank and file activism a necessary, even entertaining jolt to American society or is it a threat? Are organized labor's leaders a new managerial elite or are they thugs? *LIFE* documented the nationwide wave of sit-down strikes in 1936 and 1937 with glee. Labor publications on the other hand could express unease about rank and file militancy. Imagery often ignored workers' collective power, insisting on the power of businessmen, corporate heads, or labor's own leaders to forge the good life for American workers.

News photographs often focused on the violence so endemic to labor mobilization. Photographs frequently “framed” organized labor as responsible for civil chaos. If corporations fomented violence to tame labor's potential, knowing that photographs would document the violence, union papers might depict wounded members

³⁷ Alan Trachtenberg, “Image and Ideology: New York in the Photographer's Eye,” *Journal of Urban History*, 10, no. 4 (August 1984): 453-464.

as exemplars of union might. Other union papers ignored the violence of strikes even when its own membership was the victim.

What were the rewards for unionism? Surprisingly labor unions and corporations alike suggested a consumer “fable of abundance” as a prize that workers could bag as a result of joining a union.³⁸ Whether it was the bounty of financial gains expressed in jumbo checks given to workers much as a lottery win, or a brightly imagined consumer paradise sketched for workers as one might find in *LIFE*, workers aspirations, and their gains were often spelled out in concrete material things. Images of solidarity, union community, or working-class community were rarely objectified in photographic prints as something worth fighting for.

Workers were divided by race and gender in news photographs. Women workers rarely appeared as co-participants in the quest for social and economic justice, but rather as objects to be consumed. In the 1930s the percentage of working women increased despite the pressures to stay out of the workforce, in the war years the numbers of working women increased again. Even in 1950s when women were forced out of jobs for returning veterans, their numbers didn’t diminish, women continued to pour out of their homes in greater numbers.³⁹ Yet the labor press and the mass media often ignored women’s needs. When female labor was represented, it was often sexualized in ways that

³⁸ This is the title of Jackson Lears’s book on advertising. *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*, (New York: Basic Books, 1994). Roland Marchand evokes a similar concept with his description of 1930s advertising that spoke to workers in the vernacular, with the “Parable of the Democracy of Goods.” *Advertising the American Dream*, Chapter 7, “The Great Parables.” See too Stuart Ewen’s discussion of “marketplace democracy in, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976).

erased the women's class. Labor was typically identified as a male worker. This gendering of labor had implications for how workers were perceived in the larger culture, and how workers perceived themselves. The needs of black workers rarely even entered into the news. Workers were raced as normatively white. Even in the labor press black workers were represented, at best, as tokens. This too ignored the reality of America's workforce, limiting the future solidarity of black and white workers.

News photos addressed questions regarding the right relationships between the classes. Are company heads friends to the ordinary worker or permanent enemies? How were workers' and managers' social and personal identities depicted? Corporate leaders like Walter Chrysler or Henry Ford were humanized in folksy fables where the camera eye perused their domestic lives and hobbies. Such tales made corporate heads "everyman," enhancing Americans identification with corporations. Visual narratives of class harmony were also common in the national press. On the other hand, workers lives at home were often ignored. Workers existed in the vacuum of their institutional life. These visual "silences" about workers lives must be read as well.

The elisions, ambiguities and contradictory messages about labor offer clues to the historian about the contours of the negotiations that took place not just at the factory gates in Akron, or Detroit, nor in Washington D.C. office buildings, but in the pages of the news in the 1930s and 1940s. Union leaders believed that notwithstanding the populist aesthetic of the New Deal era, that the mainstream media often treated struggles for unionization, and for the rights of flesh and blood workers, unkindly.

³⁹ Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out-to-Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 276-301.

Organized labor's frustration with the mainstream press is apparent in one cartoon printed in the CIO's national paper, the *CIO News*, in 1938. It showed two grinning, corpulent men who represented the ship owners and the investigator from the Copeland Committee, which tracked ties between organized crime and organized labor. The investigator painted a canvas of "the American Seaman" with a palette consisting of lies, slander and red-baiting. [Fig. i-2.]⁴⁰ The model, the square-jawed "American Seaman" stood in near military precision with arms by his sides, erect posture, and a bland forward-looking gaze. In the Committee's painted canvas he is a thug: his forward thrusting brow is pulled downward by his brutal mouth, his tightly grasped club will surely fall on some unhappy object unless his attention is grabbed by the liquor held in his other hand. The caption, "It's An Art," commented on the Committee's success in transforming upright laborers into a threatening menace and emphasized labor's awareness of the negative press portrayal of organized labor. Indeed CIO leaders often faced a "public relations nightmare" that photographs helped to create.

This dissertation explores this anti-union bias, but it also shows how workers could be accepted as participants in American life in ways unimaginable prior to the thirties. This analysis focuses almost exclusively on the CIO. While the AFL certainly

⁴⁰ *CIO News*, 19 February 1938. During WWII *Steel Labor* printed a cartoon with a similar theme. This time the anti-labor press is depicted as a news editor, crouched down with a magnifying glass to focus on a miniature-sized worker on strike. The cartoon suggested the press exaggerated the number and import of job actions during the CIO's no-strike pledge. *Steel Labor*, October 1944, 10. See also the racist "The Jungle Brotherhood" which appeared in the *UAW Worker*, December 1945, 7, and which came from the *United Rubber Worker*. It shows "labor," a white man, tied to the tree of "the high cost of living." Standing in front of a boiling pot of "public opinion" are four National Association of Manufacturers' "savages," who look like primitives in black-face. This odd conflation of NAM with racist caricature deserves greater study.

brought in more members in the 1930s and 1940s than did the CIO, and though scholars now recognize that the AFL was not as conservative as once believed, it is generally true that the CIO took advantage of mass culture to a greater degree than did the AFL. Moreover, it was the CIO's bold invitation to industrial workers that shook up America's economic equation.⁴¹

The messages in news photographs of organized labor never fell along expected partisan lines. Union newspapers might promote consumerism for workers as much as the new photojournal *LIFE*. Black workers might be ignored both by the mainstream press and by the labor press. Photojournals might celebrate labor's uprising, treating it as a fad that swept the nation; while labor papers might be more circumspect, using their images to promote order among rank and file members. This cacophony of images about organized labor makes sense—labor's place in society was being renegotiated. Photographs offer intriguing evidence about business and labor uncertainty when facing these questions, but they also show what certain groups hoped for and they are evidence of how many parties sought to re-imagine this new polity.

⁴¹ For the CIO's use of mass culture see Cohen's *Making a New Deal*; Michael Denning *The Culture Front: The Laboring of American Culture* (New York: Verso, 1997); and Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, "Promoting a Labor Perspective in the American Mass Media: Unions and Radio in the CIO Era, 1936-1956," *Media, Culture, and Society* 22 (2000): 285-306. For debates on AFL and CIO possibility and efficacy see Christopher Tomlins, "AFL Unions in the 1930s: Their Performance in Historical Perspective," *Journal of American History* 65, no. 4 (March 1979): 1021-1042.

Chapter One: "The Quick Nervousness of Pictures is a New Language"

Photography's history is entwined with the medium's representation of working people.

In the camera's first decades photographers churned out endless chemical images that aped artistic subjects and conventions centuries old—portraits, both august and sentimental, and landscapes, sometimes cityscapes of worlds old and new. But when photographers represented contemporary life and looked at working people the camera lens broke artistic conventions creating new ways of seeing.¹

The first photograph ever to appear in a newspaper, "Scenes of a Shanty Town," showed a worker's hovel sitting on a patch of Manhattan schist. Appearing in the *New York Daily Graphic* on March 4, 1880, the half-tone print though clumsy by today's standards was a great improvement over earlier attempts to wed text and photographic

¹ Of course workers were represented prior to the development of photography. One important way they were represented was in the genre style—both paintings and lithographs. Genre is typically understood to look "at" workers, as a form of humor for the middle classes. Itinerant portraitists also plied their trade to workers by the mid 19th century. But workers and their lives were recorded far less frequently than the middle and upper classes. See Raymond Grew, "Picturing the People: Images of the Lower Orders in Nineteenth Century French Art," in Robert Rotberg and Theodore Rabb, *Art and History: Images and Their Meaning* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 203-231; David Lubin, *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); and Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). With the development of the inexpensive tintype, workers could get their portrait made. See Michael Carlebach *Working Stiffs: Occupational Portraits in the Age of Tintypes* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002). A parallel should be drawn. The inclusion of workers in the reading public altered newspapers' forms in the 19th century with the rise of the penny press and then the "yellow press." See Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 132-148; and Stuart Ewen and Liz Ewen, *Channels of Desire, Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 11, 16.

image together. In the half-tone print, the photographic image is screened into a series of dots that can be reproduced with a printers' raised text with greater ease. Why the *Graphic* printed the "scene" of workers' abode is not recorded, for the paper could have shown instead one of the metropolis's broad avenues or architectural gems.² This interest in "the other half" became the primary focus of early documentary photography, a new genre that has been historically tied to representing workers and the poor.

Most photo-historians credit Jacob Riis as the "father" of the documentary tradition. In 1888, Riis, a police reporter for the *New York Sun*, took two members of New York's Society of Amateur Photographers to record the haunts of "the Poor, the Idle, and the Vicious." His resulting article, "Flashes from the Slums: Pictures Taken in Dark Places by the Lightning Process," showed the perfidy it promised in images entitled "White Slaves," "Growler Gangs," and "Street Arabs." But other photographs like "Baxter Street Alley" and "Bandit's Roost" recorded the cramped, menacing neighborhoods of many working New Yorkers, and implied workers' menace as well. In *How the Other Half Lives* Riis wrote about disarming "the man with the knife," whom he imagined countenanced "the masses against the classes." Riis differentiated the "dissolute" from the deserving working poor in his text, but in his photographs, the English coal heavers, Bohemian cigar-makers, and "sewing and starving" sweat shop girls looked hardly different than New York's tramps and beer dive denizens who New

² Stephen H. Horgan is credited with creating this half-tone process, though it is unclear if he took the *Daily Graphic* photograph. See Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene* (New York: Dover Publications, 1938), 432-440; and Gisèle Freund, *Photography and Society* (Boston: D.R. Godine, 1980), 103-4.

Yorkers were to fear. [Fig. 1-1.]³ Riis's concentration on the marginalized, including workers, remained a trademark of documentary photography until after World War II. And how easy it was to confound the two in generations in which many working Americans toiled hours on end without attaining wages for adequate shelter, clothing, or even diet.⁴

Riis privileged photographic truth, arguing to *Sun* readers that pictures showed "as no mere description could, the misery and vice" of the city. But *Sun* readers more often encountered the "poor and idle" not in photographs but in crude wood-blocks. The half-tone, first appearing eight years earlier, was not typical. Handmade drawings looked more distinct on poor quality newsprint and newsroom deadlines made getting good photos difficult. Resistance by sketch and graphic artists also slowed assumption of the half-tone. Through the early 1890s the most photograph-friendly papers, like the *New York Herald* or the *New York World* printed at most four to eight photographs. Only

³ "Shoemaker, Broome Street," in Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 16.

⁴ "Flashes From the Slums," *New York Sun*, 12 February 1888. Some of Riis's work is quite sympathetic, for example "Katie—I Scrubs" or "Italian Woman on Jersey Street." But many of his photographs betray the distance he felt from his subjects. Riis's glass plates are archived at the Museum of the City of New York, and additional plates are held by the New York Historical Society. John Szarkowski, the Museum of Modern Art's former photography curator, who is perceived as arbiter of the photographic canon, coined the label the "New Documentary" for the work of photographers like Gary Winograd and Diane Arbus who rejected the social engagement of earlier documentary photographers. See Abigail Solomon-Goudeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic Histories, Institutions and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). Traditional documentary was still produced, but it lost its cultural authority. Edward Steichen's "Family of Man" exhibition at MOMA is seen as the last hurrah of this sensibility. See also Lili Corbus Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal into the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999), particularly her chapter on Edward Steichen's Family of Man exhibition at MOMA and Robert Frank's *Americans*.

magazines and weekly papers—with more deadline time and better paper to print on—published more photos in this period.⁵

Yet another photographic first involved workers. In 1941 the Pulitzer Prize committee extended its journalism awards to news photography and the first winner was an image of eight or nine UAW members pummeling a scab. The photographer, Milton Brooks of the *Detroit News* stood so that the walls of the River Rouge plant, owned by one of America's most virulent anti-unionists, Henry Ford, lie as a backdrop. [Fig. 1-2.]⁶ Brooks caught the UAW members in full attack. Their clubs and fists coiled back before striking the ill-fated victim who pulled his coat over his head, and curled his hands round his face. The facial expressions of the strikers are a wonder. Several, intent on their beating have their tongues out; others bite their bottom lips; yet others seem to grin. The photograph trades on one of photography's assets, the capacity to capture a split second—yet the photographer framed the attack with more timeless rules for composition. The onlookers create a horizontal against the Rouge plant, and the inner group of miscreants creates a triangle that pierces this line. The wide-legged stance of

⁵ Riis's photographs circulated to audiences in many forms. He lectured with a magic lantern slide show and then published expanded versions of his exposé "journey through the city." His 1890 article for *Scribners*, "How the Other Half Lives," he copyright as the title for a book. Unlike the *Sun* article, *How the Other Half Lives* printed about a third of the images as half-tones. Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 463; Michael Carlebach, *American Photojournalism Comes of Age* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 28; Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States through 260 years: 1690-1950* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1950), 503. Szarkowski suggests that advertisers pushed magazines for quality photographs to better ply their products, explaining magazine's earlier use of the photograph. *Photography Until Now* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1990), 189.

⁶ Milton Brooks, Battle at River Rouge, 1941 in Sheryle and John Leekey, *Moments: The Pulitzer Prize Photographs* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1978), 12-13.

many of the photo's participants echoes this triangular pattern. Newsworthy and aesthetically powerful, the Pulitzer Prize winning photograph can also be read as a signal of the transformations that unionization would effect in workers' lives. If the nineteenth century Riis, like many photo-documentarians, took workers as their subject because of the dire circumstances of their lives, organized labor's growing power during World War II, led to a divergence in representations of the average worker and the poor and down-and-out. Photos did not just document these transitions for working Americans. Photos of workers and their battles to develop collective organization helped transform workers' status in American society.

"Photography Was Slow"

Before the mid- to late 1930s photographs played a more limited role in labor's fortunes. Workers struggles for union protection had certainly been represented in photographs prior to the 1930s. In what is considered "the earliest surviving photographs of an American labor dispute," Pittsburgh photographer Seth Voss Albee caught the tumultuous 1877 railroad strike. Albee arranged his photos into forty-two stereograph cards that he marketed as a set. [Fig. 1-3.]⁷ The stereograph cards showed the burned

⁷ Pittsburgh Revealed: Photographs since 1850 (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Museum of Art, 1997), 149, 155. Twenty-six of Albee's stereograph cards may be viewed online at www.library.pitt.edu/labor_legacy/rrstrike1877.html. They are archived at the University of Pittsburgh's Archives Service Center. For a discussion of the ways in which stereograph cards operated as souvenirs to middle-class Americans, and the complicated ways in which "seeing" was constituted as "knowing," see Richard Masteller, "Western Views in Eastern Parlors: The Contribution of the Stereograph Photographer to the Conquest of the West," *Prospects* 6 (1981): 55-71; and Oliver Wendell Holmes's essays on the stereograph which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. "The Stereoscope and the

roundhouse, the remaining corner brickwork of the machine shop, and the engines and railcar wheels—material survivors of the labor turmoil. These remnants appeared as the classical monuments that were such a common subject of the stereographic cards filling the parlors of America's middle class. In many of the cards onlookers stood stock-still, overseeing the wreckage and the camera eye before them. These stereograph photographs of a battle that rocked the nation are souvenirs of an event, rather than "news" photographs that influenced labor's possibilities.

The illustrated press also made labor's job actions a staple story. The illustrated press was the primary means by which nineteenth century Americans educated themselves about current events in a visual format. But as Joshua Brown's work argues, though the news was made "palpable" through the illustrations in *Harper's Weekly*, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated News*, and the *Illustrated American*, events were "constructed...into visual performances." Brown notes that most illustrations were "framed in proscenium-like compositions" that imparted a "narrative" of "cause and effect." The illustrations' power came, in part, from their connection to photographs. However, illustrations that strictly drew from the photographic image had in Frank Leslie's words, a "corpse-like literalness" with less punch than the dramatic visual reenactments.⁸ Illustrations of the 1892 Homestead steel strike demonstrate these two forms of representation. Images either appeared as wood-blocks that crudely indicated

Stereograph," June 1859, 738-747; "Sun Painting and Sun Sculpture," July 1861, 13-19 and "Doings of the Sunbeam," 1863, 1-15.

⁸ From Joshua Brown, "Reconstructing Representation: Social Types, Readers, and the Pictorial Press, 1865-1877," www.ashp.cuny.edu/reconrep.html based on an article in the *Radical History Review* 38 (Fall 1996): 5-38. See also his *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial*

crowds of men, rigidly posed within Homestead, or grander scenes of battle that draw from the conventions of historical painting. *Frank Leslie's* cover for the strike showed a full-skirted woman astride a rail line with her arms raised and a crowd behind her with the instruments of battle in hand. [Fig. 1-4.]⁹ The cover mimicked Eugene Delacroix's famous 1830 "Liberty Leading the People" with workers as exemplars of freedom.

It wasn't really until the massive labor dislocations of 1919 strike wave however that Americans would get a closer look at labor conflict through photographs.¹⁰ As innovators in the use of the photograph, two publications, the *Mid-Week Pictorial* and *New York Daily News* deserve the most attention. The first, a roto-gravure press, offered New Yorkers and a limited national audience a weekly recapitulation of the news through

Reporting, Everyday Life and the Crisis of Gilded Age America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), particularly, 131-136; 152-169; 174-188; 196-211.

⁹ A good source for images of the Homestead strike is David Demarest, ed., "*The River Ran Red: Homestead, 1892*" (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992). *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly's* cover illustration of the Delacroix influenced woman with raised arm is included in the Demarest, *River Ran Red*, 87 and is from 14 July 1892. Also included is Rina Younger's essay "A Working-Class Image of the Battle," that examines a broadside based on the events produced by Homestead resident Edwin Rowe, *Ibid.*, 156-157.

¹⁰ Nan Enstad makes a compelling argument about New York City working women who labored in the garment trades. She claims news photographs of their 1909 strike helped build confidence in the union. Women would have seen the "lady-like" dress of workers photographed in the New York papers echoing their "utopian entitlements" towards "working ladyhood." She also believes women would have had a "gratifying identification" with women like themselves who grabbed the "limelight" of the popular press. She further argues that the strength and bravery of these strikers matched their subjective connection to the women they read about in other vernacular literature. Enstad offers a careful reading of a number of popular cultural texts against women's activism. *Ladies of Labor: Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 119-160. My work is less concerned with workers' subjectivities, as I found less evidence of the relationship between imagery and worker motivation. Given the paucity of literature on news photography as it relates to the new national public created through

photographs. Unlike photos that appeared in newspapers in the half-tone, the roto-gravure was a supplement typically appearing in the Sunday edition of the paper. Fifty papers had such supplements by the war's end. The *New York Daily News* took photojournalism in another direction entirely. As Michael Carlebach's work on American photojournalism notes, the *Daily News* was backbone to the "spectacle and ballyhoo" of the twenties. The "tabloid," as the *Daily News* and its imitators would be called, filled the front, back, and center pages with photographs. Often a single image filled the cover. The tabloid's visual and rhetorical style paralleled the jangle of 20th century life that the tabloid helped to create. Both papers found visual interest in the labor strikes of 1919.¹¹

The massive wave of labor dislocations that brought one of five workers out on strike erupted with a Seattle general strike. Hotel maids, violinists, and garbage collectors all came out in support of that city's shipyard workers. Frustrated by limited wage hikes overseen through federal labor negotiations, ship-workers came out in late January, with others following in solidarity two weeks later. Simultaneously, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where immigrant textile workers had thrilled many with their failed 1912 Bread and Roses strike, workers struck in January of 1919. This time they won: a six-hour cut in weekly work hours at the same wages. In the mid-west, Chicago garment workers walked out and won the 44-hour week. Each month from March through August brought hundreds of strikes. In August, New York found itself paralyzed when Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx's transport workers left their jobs.

the news, I am more interested in plotting the representations of workers and unions that developed in popular and union press in the hopes of future work in this area.

Also striking in Gotham were jewelry makers, pharmacists, and Broadway actors. In October, longshoremen from Hoboken, New Jersey joined Manhattan and Brooklynites who tied up the docks that were conduits to national and international trade. The strikers left ocean-liner passengers stranded, food to rot, and mail in piles. Boston became the scene of national attention when its police force struck for several days in September. The cradle of Liberty became the capital of libertinage with looting of stores and gambling on the Commons. The biggest national strike involved a third of a million steelworkers who came out en-masse on September 22nd. Western Pennsylvania steel towns became “armed camps” where workers and organizers were beaten at corporate whim. In Gary, Indiana, steelworkers who were former veterans got around martial law by donning their uniforms for parades. Bituminous coal workers stayed out of the mines in November, even after UMW leaders decided a strike was too risky. School children broke up crates for their families’ stoves, and city streets went dark as no coal could be found to fuel the lights. In total, four million Americans walked off their jobs, a number that, as Melvyn Dobofsky notes, was not surpassed until the CIO’s 1937 upsurge.¹²

¹¹ Carlebach, *American Photojournalism*, 146.

¹² For general descriptions of the 1919 strike wave see: David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 332, 385-395; Nell Irwin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1987), 344-380; Robert Zieger, *The CIO: 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 9; David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1980), 3-47; and Melvyn Dubofsky, *Industrialism and the American Worker, 1865-1920* (Arlington Heights, IL: AHM Publishing Corp, 1975), 119-134. Descriptions of specific industries or locations can be found in Dana Frank’s *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15, 34-39; David Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Non-Union Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 231-262; and Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal:*

The sources of this volatility lie in labor's expectations, a post-World War I corporate backlash against labor's wartime gains, and the government's decision to step back from negotiating labor relations. Before WWI, labor unrest was on the rise, and only Woodrow Wilson's intervention settled labor's unwillingness to work without a better compact for itself. In an attempt to rationalize defense production, quell the 1917 strikes, and limit collaborations between labor and peace proponents, Wilson established the National War Labor Board. The Board ceded labor's right to organize without "fear of reprisal," a "first" in "the nation's history" and mandated the eight-hour day, labor's decades-long goal. The end result was union growth, particularly in defense industries. Companies assured profits through cost-plus contracts with the government, "capitulated" to the closed shop and wage and hour controls. With federal support, union membership doubled from 2.6 million prior to the war, to 5.1 million by 1920.¹³

In the war's aftermath unions sought to consolidate wartime gains and address the inflation and job loss that threatened members. Demands for better wages and job security were often joined with, in David Montgomery's words, "bold visions of social change," often inspired by socialist, One Big Union, communist, or religious reform

Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 41-48. New York strikes information is found in footnotes on 1919 strikes below. For coal strike see *Daily News*, hereafter *DN*, 13 November 1919.

¹³ Wilson's overtures to labor included speaking—at his request—to the AFL's 1917 convention. He was the first president ever to meet before the presiding body of a labor union. Brody, *Workers*, 41-42; Dubofsky, *Industrialism*, 122-3; Frank, *Purchasing Power*, 25, 30; and Montgomery, *Workers Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 91-122; and Montgomery, *Fall*, 332. Montgomery claims the National Industrial Conference Board calculated over six million work-days were lost due to strikes in 1917. For Montgomery, the AFL refused to take advantage of the war to pursue labor's goals,

ideals. Such hopes were misguided.¹⁴ With the armistice, the federal government “immediately reversed course” and suspended the War Labor Board in August when federal supervision was most necessary.¹⁵ Federal attempts to lead voluntary cooperation between labor and management went nowhere. Most corporations saw no need for continued dialogue. Government attacks on radicals further weakened labor’s position. All levels of government had repressed “radicals” during the war, and concerned that the Bolshevik revolution not gain a foothold in this country, the Federal government stepped up its surveillance, detention, and deportation of radicals culminating in the red-scare dragnets.¹⁶ Business hastened to link their open shop “American Plan” movement with the government’s anti-radicalism efforts. The volatile mix of worker expectation, corporate rebuff, and the government’s return to a hands-off relationship in labor relations led to 1919’s explosiveness.

but rank and file workers used labor activism to express their “desire for a life different than the one they had been leading.” *Fall*, 370, 373, 378.

¹⁴ Frank, *Purchasing*, 25-27; With the Plumb Plan railroad workers and reformers hoped to put the railroads in the national government’s hands. UMWA members in Springfield Illinois demanded “the transfer of ‘the mines to the miners’” Montgomery, *Fall*, 388-391. Many AFL unions reached out to marginalized workers: the unskilled, women, immigrants and African-Americans in this period.

¹⁵ Dubofsky, *Industrialism*, 123 With the failure of the Plumb plan to nationalize the railroads, the government got out of the business of regulating relations between labor and capitol. Brody, *Workers*, 44. Montgomery notes that Wilson embraced the “lack of a plan,” for the post-war economy. Business found the National War Labor Board and the Fuel Board “Frankenstein monsters” for their encouragement of unions, wage fixing, and limits on managerial prerogatives.” Montgomery, *Fall*, 392.

¹⁶ William Preston Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 180-237. Preston shows how the repressive tactics local officials and vigilantes used against labor radicals moved upwards to federal officials in the Department of Labor and the Immigration Bureau. See also Frank, *Purchasing Power*, 33-34; and Montgomery, *House of Labor*, 393, 395, who suggests that by late 1920s, 38,000 immigrants were deported annually. Labor scholars

Strike photographs demonstrate that the news had further developed its capacity to visualize current events—even though coverage remained limited. The *Mid-Week Pictorial* began circulating nationally in 1914 to provide Americans with imagery of the war in Europe. It continued this focus with the war's denouement. A year after the war's end, the marred splendor of the wide-avenued European capitals; the sublime but ravaged European countryside; the arriving troops parading in broad swaths in their return to America's ports; and the panoramic views and intimate portraits of world leaders negotiating the peace filled the *Pictorial's* pages. The *Pictorial* was part visual digest of war events, part war memento, and its coverage was heavy with the gravitas attendant on world matters.¹⁷

This roto-gravure's emphasis on international affairs and its desire to be a permanent record limited the *Pictorial's* strike coverage; readers might have had a difficult time guessing the extent of that year's labor strife. The *Pictorial* provided no coverage of the strike in Seattle, devoting its January and February issues to the armistice. It began coverage of the strike wave in August, but even then, of the hundreds of strikes which occurred it covered just five—the New York City strikes of transit workers and longshoremen, the Boston police strike, and the nation-wide strikes in steel and coal.

The *Pictorial's* coverage pushed one theme: how strikes ruptured established authority and order. One category of photographs depicted America's corporate and governmental elite with stern countenances and pursed lips. As is typical in head-shots,

believe that AFL conservatism played into the government's hands. Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 39-40; and Brody, *Workers*, 42-3.

their eyes were directed at the viewer, or at times just slightly off to the side. These men were presented as the forces of order who sought to head off strikes. Only three photographs showed union leaders. Another predominant category of photographs showed the army poised to assert “necessary restraint.”¹⁸ In these photographs soldiers often stood at full attention, their rifles slung over their shoulders as they stood guard. In more menacing photographs soldiers stood with their guns perpendicular to their bodies as they marched forwards towards their foe. Workers appeared in only three guises: when they milled in the streets in indistinguishable clumps of humanity; when they were being restrained or beaten by police; or when they worked diligently under managerial supervision. Hence three pages of photographs of the Boston Police strike showed the National Guardsman called out by Massachusetts Governor, Calvin Coolidge, against “looters terrorizing the city.” [Fig. 1-5.]¹⁹ Similarly, in the steel strike the Pennsylvania Constabulary used “necessary force,” ostensibly to restrain the “sullen and threatening” workers. Photos showed a small number of working men garbed in suits and caps and fedoras walking through the business district of Homestead. [Fig. 1-6.]²⁰ The photos could have shown any passers-by, and only the extended arms of the constabulary with their upswept billy-clubs suggested the captions’ violence.

¹⁷ Carlebach, *American Photojournalism*, 183-4.

¹⁸ In the *Pictorial*’s coverage from January through December of 1919 there are fifty-eight photographs. Fourteen individual or group portraits of corporate and governmental officials appear and there are fifteen shots of soldiers or constabulary. Of the nine photographs of strikes there are no photographs of picketers, and only two or three of men massing, parading or walking in the street.

¹⁹ “Boston Police Strike,” *MWP*, 25 September 1919, 4-6.

²⁰ “Steel Strike Now in Progress,” *MWP*, 2 October 1919, 6-7.

The only photographs that did not represent workers as threatening were those where workers were the clear object of scrutiny: as a type or as a laborer working under supervision. These photographs all appeared in a single issue accompanying a long story on the November coal strike. The *Pictorial*'s cover photograph for this story was of a miner in profile, garbed in work clothes with a day's accouterment of water and his lunch pail. [Fig. 1-7.]²¹ The miner, poised to light his cigarette, looks stuck in this position, not ready to move. The narrow depth of field left the background industrial structure unfocused, making the miner stand out. He does not look undignified—his expression and pose are serious. But unlike Lewis Hine's documentary studies where workers look directly and searchingly at the camera, seeming to demand contact and human recognition from the person who sees the image, this miner looks away. [Fig. 1-8.]²² The miner appears as a "type," indeed the cover's caption tells readers he is "typical of the 400,000 who went on strike, November 1." The miner is posed to offer viewers a side view, his gaze is away from the viewer. His "typing" matches the stance of scientific and evidence photographs intended to give the viewer a total view at the human as object: like mugshots, "scientific" studies of slaves and Native Americans, and medical photography. [Fig. 1-9.]²³ This typed miner is a perfect introduction to what

²¹ "Coal Miner Typical of 400,000," *MWP*, 13 November 1919, cover, and 8-11.

²² Lewis Hine, "Steelworkers at Russian Boarding House, Homestead, Pennsylvania," taken in 1907/08 in Walter Rosenblum, Naomi Rosenblum, and Alan Trachtenberg, *American and Lewis Hine: Photographs: 1904-1940* (New York: Aperture, 1977), 62.

²³ Daguerrotype of Jack the Driver, from the plantation of F.T. Taylor, Esq. is held by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University and is reprinted in Martha Sandweiss, ed., *Photography in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 84. For "scientific photography" see Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1989), 52-60; Elizabeth Edwards "The Resonance of Anthropology," in *Native Nations*:

would appear inside the *Pictorial*, for instead of strikers, the photos show miners laboring above and underground. The photographs drew from a corporate-photography style, which shows the work site being organized through managerial foresight. They labor in conjunction with the mining equipment and their tools and they seem part of a choreographed order that does not depend on their consciousness. [Fig. 1-10.]²⁴ Readers could marvel at the intricacies and risks of the miners' jobs, but the photos highlight the work-site as an organic whole that seems to operate independently of individual laborers. The strong diagonal lines of the machinery and infrastructure, and its pure dwarfing bulk impress themselves upon the viewers' eyes. Even photos with miners poised with their hammers seem static, as if they have been set down in a pre-determined order.²⁵

Coverage of labor and its struggles was new—but labor's representation would be redefined more significantly in the 1930s. The *Mid-Week Pictorial*'s conventions for representing labor's uprising in 1919, which show corporate and governmental elite as a bulwark of order, against labor whose demands spiral downwards to chaos continued into the 1930s in many news venues. But the 1930s photographic news portrait became more nuanced. Labor would be represented more, and workers would begin to be shown as

Journeys in American Photography, edited by Jane Alison (London: Barbican Gallery, 1998), np; Sandra Phillips, ed, *Police Pictures: The Photograph as Evidence*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1997).

²⁴ *Mid-Week Pictorial*, (hereafter *MWP*), 13 November 1919. For an analysis of industrial photography see David Nye, *Image Worlds: Corporate Identities at General Electric* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 55, 66-69.

²⁵ The bulk of photographs featuring workers appeared in a single November 1919 story on the coal strike. Hine's later work has been criticized by some for losing its insistence on workers' subjectivity. In much of his work of the 1920s and 1930s workers look away and their engagement with their machinery is so great some scholars argue they become part of them. Judith Mara Gutman, *Lewis Hine, 1874-1940* (New York: Grossman, 1974) 43 as quoted in Guimond, *American Photography*, 86.

participants in the American public sphere. Moreover, photos would begin to look more like an up-to-date news record. As John Szarkowski writes, news “photography was slow” until the 1930s. If a photographer was not present, the event was not recorded, and even if it were recorded, it might take days, even months for the photograph to appear.²⁶ A technology’s existence is not tantamount to its usage. Most Americans hardly “saw” the news in the same way. Histories of photography frequently pose the period of the First World War as the moment when Americans began to see current events more frequently. This view needs to be qualified. The fifty roto-gravure supplements that existed by the war’s end could be found in only twenty-nine cities. Moreover, following a nexus of media established in the mid-nineteenth century, cities in the populous northeast, mid-west and mid-Atlantic regions enjoyed these supplements. Only two western cities and four southern cities had them.²⁷

²⁶ Szarkowski, *Photography Until Now*, 194. Szarkowski notes how photos of the celebrated Lindbergh trans-Atlantic flight of 1927 took eleven days to make it to the U.S. In 1919 many war photographs in the *Pictorial* were taken months before they were printed.

²⁷ The rotogravure is based on intaglio printing on a cylinder, instead of a plate. Data comes from the *IMS N.W. Ayer and Sons Directory of Publications* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayers and Sons), 1919. Los Angeles and Denver had the rotogravure in the West, as did Louisville, Birmingham, New Orleans, and Nashville in the South. The *Mid-Week Pictorial* reported a circulation of 434,157 in 1919, but 70,000 the following year. The former figure corresponds to the circulation of the *New York Times*, so it seems likely that most of those copies were not distributed nationally, but in New York. The latter figure is in all likelihood the national distribution of the *Pictorial*. The “new journalism” of the turn of the century, promoted by William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer is perceived to rely on illustrations. Hearst papers were especially pioneering in their visuality. Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 91-106; Carlebach, *American Photojournalism*, 14-15, 165, 175. Photographs did increasingly define the news, but photos appeared static, and it still took a long time to transfer news photographs. See note 25 above.

Unlike the *Pictorial*, America's first tabloid, the *New York Daily News*, covered labor's uprising from the paper's inception in mid-1919. Joseph Medill Patterson, the *Daily News*'s primary publisher promised the *News* would offer "the best and newest pictures of the interesting things that happened in the world," as with pictures, "the story...can be grasped instantly." The *Daily News* would soon become New York's most popular, if not its foremost daily. Labor's story would be part of the *Daily News*'s staple "shock, titillation and gritty realism."²⁸ The *Daily News*'s record of the strikes presaged shifts in twentieth century journalism and mass culture.

The *Daily News*'s portrait of the strike included labor to a greater degree in keeping with the increasing democratization of the public sphere in the 20th century. Like the *Pictorial*, the *Daily News* showed many shots of America's economic elite, but unlike the *Pictorial*, the *Daily News* represented labor's leaders too. Company heads like U.S. Steel's Eldred Gary often appeared in the three-quarters bust portrait, long implying mastery in the world. Yet the *Daily News* also featured sour-faced Samuel Gompers, stubby cigar by his side. [Fig. 1-11.]²⁹ Gompers might even be shown presiding over AFL leaders who sat around a table with patriotic bunting as their backdrop. And though the *Daily News* might print photographs of union leaders that appeared like mugshots—with the frontality and brutal lighting characteristic of an evidentiary document—the paper also showed leaders speaking to crowds, or attending meetings in Washington D.C.

²⁸ The *Daily News* began publication as *New York's Illustrated Daily News* in July of 1919, Carlebach, *American Photojournalism*, 144-147.

²⁹ The *Daily News* photo of Gompers with cigar appeared on 27 August 1919 and was accompanied by a portrait of Eldred Gary. Gary was seen on 4 September 1919, with heads of other unions, and "capitalists" John D. Rockefeller and J.P. Morgan, and again

Like the *Pictorial* the *Daily News* emphasized the inconvenience caused by the strikes—Staten Islanders forced to ferry their vegetables to market, continental travelers ending their travels with trunks atop their backs, and New Yorkers “legging it” along the East River instead of grabbing their usual public conveyance. But the *Daily News* also showed rank and file workers helping stranded passengers onto impromptu transport during New York’s rapid transit strike, sprightly dressed laundresses in a picket promenade, and mining families hugging one another and looking imploringly at the viewer. Gothamite readers of the *Daily News* would have been treated to photographs of mustachioed immigrant steelworkers daintily holding up letter-sized advertisements of their job action; New York jewelers standing snappy in suits and brimmed hats; or coal workers “off after rabbits.”³⁰ The *Daily News* also showed photographs of strike violence. A *Daily News* reader could see strikers’ opponents: the Harvard men who came out against striking Boston Police, led by Percy Haughton their football coach; the

on 2 September 1919. On 28 September 1919 he appeared on the cover in a photo with his bodyguard, implying some menace to him, all *DN*.

³⁰ Gompers appeared on the cover with other union leaders, 30 August 1919. Leaders of the New York Transit strike appeared with the frontality and harsh lighting of mugshots, 8 August 1919; but they also appeared speaking to members, 24 September 1919, or in portraits of group shots in Washington D.C. where they had the same stature as corporate heads, 25 September 1919 and 3 October 1919. New Yorkers carrying their trunks appeared on 14 October 1919, transit rider “legging it” appeared on the cover, 7 August 1919. Several photos of rapid transit workers helping stranded pedestrians appeared on 9 August 1919; New York laundresses on 11 October 1919. A miner’s family appears on 5 November 1919 under the caption “The Family End of the Coal Strike;” and a photo of young girls in the coal district appears on 6 November 1919 under the caption “no race suicide here.” The steel workers appeared on 23 September 1919; and coal miners “off after rabbits” appeared on 6 November 1919, all *DN*. Because the publication was new, N.W. Ayers does not list circulation numbers for the *Daily News* in 1919 or 1920 so it is impossible to know how far these images circulated. Roland Marchand *Advertising the American Dream* claims within two years the *Daily News* was New York’s top paper, 59 quoting Mott, *American Journalism*, 666-669, 672.

Mounted Constabulary of Pennsylvania, whose “mettle” would be “tested”; and the U.S. Regulars, soldiers home from the war who made “first rate” longshoremen.³¹ The *Daily News* photographs were hardly titled towards labor, but they represented workers with far greater variety and perhaps, even sympathy.

Even so, Szarkowski’s claim that “photography was slow” pertained to the *Daily News* as well, where photographs seemed stiff and posed, and readers rarely saw current events as they occurred. In their coverage of the Boston Police strike in mid-September department store owners and their assistants scowled at the camera, their left arms holding pistols tightly across their trunks as if poised to shoot. Another photo showed a Harvard man in suit and boater hat, his arm out-thrust with a drawn pistol. [Fig. 1-12.]³² At the height of the steel strike in October, when federal troops were called to Gary, Indiana the *Daily News* devoted a centerfold to labor troubles. Readers could see General Wood meeting the city’s mayor, and troops marching with caissons through Gary’s shopping district. Also presented were photos of AFL labor delegates, farming delegates and corporate delegates at Wilson’s industrial summit. The bottom of the centerfold also had a photograph of a crowd of longshoremen out on a wildcat strike. Despite the photos’ diversity, they remained static. In each photo the subjects—whether a handful or hundreds—stand clumped together, sometimes self-consciously posing for the camera

³¹ For the photo of Percy Haughton and the Harvard students who fought strikers see 12 September 1919; the Pennsylvania Constabulary see 22 September 1919; and the soldiers as longshoremen, 15 October 1919, all *DN*.

³² The photo of Boston businessmen with pistols across their bodies appeared 12 September 1919, and the Harvard boy with boater and drawn pistol is on 16 September 1919, all *DN*.

eye, other times posed in the gestures of power. [Fig. 1-13.]³³ During the New York City transit strike, even a bulky matron being passed from a truck into the spindly arms of a waiting man seemed poised in midair, notwithstanding her grin, and the *News*'s lighthearted representation of the strike.³⁴

If the *Mid-Week Pictorial* looked backwards with its presentation of heroic leaders, armies on the march, and well-ordered, massive monuments to industrial capitalism, the *Daily News* signaled transitions in 20th century media towards a more visually kaleidoscopic presentation of current events. Nonetheless, Medill Patterson's claim readers could "grasp instantly" the story through the *News*'s photographs just wasn't so. The *Daily News* publisher might have wanted the perfect photograph to explain events, but this is a herculean task for a single image. Individual photographs typically eluded a clear narrative, and their placement on the *Daily News*'s pages didn't confer any additional understanding. A photograph of New York City docks full of the remittances that immigrant New Yorkers sought to send back to Europe appeared next to a photograph of the Irish Republic's provisional president, Eamon DeValera, meeting with Chippewa garbed in full headdress; photographs of striking coal workers joined photos of Wellesley girls costumed as goats and elephants.³⁵ When looking at the *Daily News* photographs, one is more struck by the mere slivers of reality that photographs capture. A full picture of the events, even with multiple photographs rarely emerges.

³³ Photos of the Gary strike in steel appeared on 10 October 1919, *DN*.

³⁴ "A Touch of Comedy," *DN*, 19 August 1919, 1.

³⁵ DeValera with Chippewa Indian and the longshormen's strike is seen on 23 October 1919; Wellesley girls with coal strike appeared on 6 November 1919, all *DN*.

Only changes in technology, and changes in how editors joined image and text would allow the photograph to “speak” to a much greater degree in the late thirties.³⁶

Moreover, though photographs in the *Midweek Pictorial* and in the *Daily News* offered Americans a new capacity to see events, they did not figure in labor battles as they would in the latter half of the 1930s. Photographs circulated more in the first decades of the twentieth century, but few Americans saw the same photograph, with the same description of that photograph as they would several decades later. In 1919, the papers with the greatest number of images, the *New York Daily News* and the *Mid-Week Pictorial* had circulations below one million, and many readers, if not most, were New Yorkers. This was a far cry from the tens of millions of Americans who would read the same message in *LIFE* in the late 1930s. And no group of Americans, such as workers, received their news—with photographs—from a labor viewpoint. The democratic potential of the camera, a potential Lewis Hine sketched in 1909 and European workers realized in the twenties was not developed in the U.S. until the late 1930s and 1940s. There were clear technological limits to recording news events, a limited number of images that were disseminated, and splintered accounts of given images so that it would be impossible to say that Americans shared a national visual culture.

The steel strike that brought out tens of thousands of Americans from September of 1919 through January of the following year offers an excellent example of the limited

³⁶ Like the yellow journalism of the late 19th century, tabloids were seen to speak to the debased, those of “the lowest mental common denominator” even if many in the middle-class did purchase them. Critic Silas Bent compared the “primitive” readers of the tabloids to those who liked jazz according to Carlebach, though as Carlebach notes, the middle-class may still have been the *Daily News*’s primary audience, *American Photojournalism*, 145-146.

power of news photographs in this era. The Interchurch World Movement (IWM) analyzed the failure of the strike, a failure arising from misinformation to steelworkers and the general public, a shutdown of civil liberties in the nation's steel districts, violence, and the steelworkers' own inadequate organization. The IWM's *Report on the Steel Strike of 1919* chronicled the strike, documented the twelve-hour day still worked by many in steel, and the low wages which impelled workers to strike. An ancillary report, *Public Opinion and the Steel Strike*, was even longer than the primary account. A hallmark of Progressive Era reform was its sensitivity to the power of public opinion, which explained this focus on press coverage of the strike. Harcourt and Brace published both studies, despite attempts to suppress them by corporate "under-cover men."³⁷

The IWM found that local coverage of the strike in the Pittsburgh area where many battles occurred was uniformly biased against the strike. Despite seven metropolitan dailies, they found the Pittsburgh press had a monolithic view. Readers received no investigative or independent eyewitness accounts, nor did they get a historical synopsis of the conflict, nor a summary of opposing viewpoints. When workers' demands were mentioned they seemed "unwarranted," as grievances were "unfounded." Violence was attributed to strikers, "as a matter of course." The

³⁷ The religious reformers of the Interchurch World Movement were joined by the staff of the Bureau of Industrial Research, which included Heber Blankenhorn. His career followed a familiar publicist's arc. A former *New York Evening Sun* reporter, he went on to become a propagandist for the U.S. government during WWI. Unlike others who became corporate public relations specialists, Blankenhorn promoted their nemesis, organized labor. He would be the impetus for the LaFollette Committee's investigations into civil rights abuses against organized labor in the 1930s. He believed congressional investigation into corporate anti-unionism might stop them. See Interview transcript of Robert Wohlforth by Jerold Auerbach, November 6, 1963, 53-54, in the Oral History Collection of Columbia University, hereafter Wohlforth, *COHC*.

researchers found that news coverage ignored labor or distorted its story, and promoted corporations' aims. Unions and workers were painted as foreign, alien, and Bolshevik, and papers reported that the plants were open when they weren't which confused workers and the general public. *Public Opinion and the Steel Strike* argued that Pittsburgh's press was the worst, worse than papers in other steel towns like Youngstown Ohio, but even so, it maintained that Pittsburgh coverage tended to be broadcast nationwide as emblematic of strike activity. "A marked agreement existed between the viewpoint of Pittsburgh newspapers and the viewpoint of Pittsburghers, 'The Pittsburgh mind.' The Pittsburgh mind, in turn, weightily influenced national opinion by influencing newspaper and news association correspondents in Pittsburgh."³⁸

Labor felt so blindsided by the power of negative press during the steel strike that it beefed up its own capacity to get its story out. Labor supporters established the Federated Press, labor's first national news service, and labor dailies wanting to ensure they could get their message out "banded together to buy their own paper mill." For all the reformers' attention to bad press, their report ignored the photographs just beginning to appear in the news.³⁹ Their concern with publicity lay with the power of the word, not the image. This too would change in the mid-1930s.

³⁸ Interchurch World Movement of North America, (IWM) *Report on the Steel Strike of 1919* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920); and IWM, *Public Opinion and the Steel Strike* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1921), 131, 113, 88-91. See also Robert R.R. Brooks, *As Steel Goes: Unionism in a Basic Industry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), 39-40.

³⁹ IWM, *Public Opinion*, 307, 89. As David Montgomery notes, by 1923 the AFL was repudiating the Federated Press for criticizing AFL leaders. The AFL insisted on "ideological orthodoxy" among member unions. Montgomery, *Fall*, 433. The IWM themselves used photographs in their reports which corporations took aim at. The trade

Hard Times

1919 would not be the last year of post-war labor upheaval. Indeed, for several years workers struck to assert their demands, but labor moved to a defensive position. By 1921 the vast majority of strikes were union sanctioned as corporations sharpened their attack on workers' wages and on unions themselves. After 1922, the number of strikes dropped precipitously.⁴⁰ Labor's failure registered in a retrenchment in membership numbers and a timid movement that sought accommodation for survival. Between 1920 and 1923 the AFL lost twenty-five percent of its membership, and some unions like the International Association of Machinists and the textile union lost nearly three times that proportion. Overall, the movement bled some 1.5 million members as a result of the post-war strike failure. One in five workers were union members in 1920, a decade later only one in ten workers said the same.⁴¹ Aspiration was squelched as well. In bouts of internecine warfare won by Samuel Gompers and shifting groups of allies, progressive and socialist elements of the AFL were sidelined or expelled. The AFL moved to espousing labor-management cooperation, something which might have worked with

paper *Iron Age* charged that the IWM "faked" strike photographs to make their case and the *Wall Street Journal* reprinted their claims. Despite the clear awareness of photography's power, the IWM did not comment on them. *Public Opinion and the Steel Strike*, 310.

⁴⁰ In 1920 1.4 million workers came out on strike, a year later 1.1 million workers came out, in 1922 the number again increased to 1.6 million. In 1919 and 1920 workers struck in anger at their economic situation. They sensed possibility in federal oversight and the war economy. By 1921 strikes were defensive. Montgomery, *Fall*, 402, 407.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 406. See also Brody, *Workers*, 45; Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 84.

government pressure and oversight, but which had little meaning when corporations alone decided the terms of cooperation.⁴²

Corporations did feel the sting of these battles and batted around experiments in cooperation, worker representation, and welfarism to ward off bad publicity and maintain productivity. In place of mutual cooperation, corporations supported managerial-led employee representation without government or union interference. In place of rational discourse between equal partners, many corporations instituted internal personnel plans that considered workers irrational, but controllable through industrial psychology. They also tried rationalizing the practices of their lower management and foremen to limit worker discontent. According to David Montgomery, “as far as most workers were concerned, the only version of workplace organization they might have encountered in 1923 was one favored by corporate executives,” though most work-sites didn’t have even that. By 1928 only 400-odd firms had such Employee Representation Plans (ERPs), and they embodied a “ghostly echo” of earlier ideals towards managerial and labor cooperation.⁴³ Ironically, workers’ frustration would lead them to use the ERPs as springboards for CIO organizing efforts.⁴⁴

⁴² As David Montgomery notes, at the 1923 convention the AFL celebrated American capitalism and rallied unions to “drive out” radicals. He concludes that workers had in many cases retained the shells of their unions in 1922, but “those unions emerged shrunken and humbled.” A few unions like the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union still developed plans in labor management cooperation, but most unions could not do the same, as business repudiated the ACWU’s attempts to replicate their programs. He sees labor as “defeatist” and “complacent” in this period. *Fall*, 406-408, 423-424, 454; and Brody, *Workers*, 45. Frank, *Purchasing Power*, 4 suggests that workers funneled at least part of their activism in the 1920s into consumption struggles with the union label, cooperatives and boycotts, versus struggles at the point of production.

⁴³ Montgomery has shown how Bethlehem Steel shop committees failed to prevent the 1919 strike. The company remade the committee structure to fit its needs, keeping the

Welfare capitalism, the notion that corporations should shoulder some responsibility for advancing their employees' welfare, was another means by which companies sought to bind labor to corporate needs. For Elizabeth Cohen, the dual threats of labor chaos and state intervention led large corporations, particularly those in the mass production industries to embrace welfare capitalism in a "kind of conversion experience."⁴⁵ Dressing facilities and cafeterias, health care services, and the sponsoring of newspapers or bowling teams aimed to nurture employees' identification with the company and give the corporation a positive face in the larger community. Companies also sought to increase workers' economic stability and loyalty to the corporation via profit sharing, stock ownership plans, or unemployment insurance. Some programs were driven by old-fashioned paternalism, indeed the U.S. Chamber of Commerce head cloaked such programs in the lambent light of the golden rule when he claimed business was just following the "decent and right conduct of Jesus of Nazareth." Other programs were informed by up-to-date notions of psychological assessment and managerial efficiency. Businessmen thought welfare programs would blunt labor conflict by giving

union out. In 1921 the Pennsylvania Rail Road kicked one union out, determined to speak only with members of its ERP. *Fall*, 415, 403, 411-3, 421. Like the representation plants he studied at GE, one of the most forward-thinking corporations, ERPs had devolved into "transmission belt[s] for presentation of company policies to employees." Montgomery, *Fall*, 437-8, 456.

⁴⁴ For U.S. Steel see George Patterson, "Embryo of a Steelworker," 18-19, 82-83, in George Patterson Papers, b9f6, Chicago Historical Society, (hereafter, *Patterson, CHS*); Brooks, *As Steel Goes*, 5-9; and Gerald Zahavi, "Negotiated Loyalty: Welfare Capitalism and the Shoeworkers of Endicott Johnson, 1920-1940, *Journal Of American History*, 70, no. 3 (December 1983): 602-620.

⁴⁵ Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 160.

workers a stake in capitalism, opined U.S. Steel's Judge Gary, "Stock ownership makes the wage earner an actual partner...a real capitalist."⁴⁶

Cynicism alone does not explain these welfare practices, of course. From the late 19th century through the Depression many Americans believed that science, technology, and the rational organization of production—or society for that matter—could transform the world. The miracles of mass production were thought to alleviate what had long been considered mankind's eternal condition—material want. Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards* (1888) popularized the notion that an efficient, organized, and nationalized economy could provide for all with the ease of a trip through the pneumatic tubes that were the circulation system for this new economy of consumer goods. Architects of the new social sciences imagined the possibilities in terms no less dazzling. Wharton professor of Economics, Simon Patten, argued mass production made scarcity—a "Pain Economy"—obsolete. Instead, Americans should indulge themselves in the new

⁴⁶ Cohen suggests corporate welfarism could be divided into five related programs: "restructuring interpersonal relations at the plant," by dividing up ethnic groups and regularizing relations between upper management, foremen and employees; "rewarding workers through wages and promotions; experimenting with industrial democracy," either by establishing employee relations plans, or meeting with individual workers on a regular basis to establish lines of communication between upper management and workers on the line; "instituting welfare programs" such as sickness pay, pensions, or stocks options plans; and assuming community responsibilities," *Making a New Deal*, 163, 175-179. See also Brody, *Workers*, 48; Zahavi, "Negotiated Loyalty," 602-620. For a contrary view of twenties welfarism see Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years*, 170-189. For corporate heads and their sense that consumption for the masses could save capitalism, see Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976), 26-30, 91-92.

“Pleasure Economy,” which might lead, soon, to a “Creative Economy” of “cooperation, self-direction, and altruism.”⁴⁷

Middle-class religious and political reformers had also sought to ameliorate industrial capitalism’s ravages. Growing numbers in the middle class demanded a cessation of hostilities between the classes. Some articulated their solidarity with labor. Whether it was Jacob Riis’s call for New Yorkers to assist the poor to keep “the man in the street with a knife” from striking, Jane Addams’s gentle admonition for social democracy, or Florence Kelley’s strident cries for socialism, many middle class reformers imagined expanding democracy into the economic realm. Their concern led to some of the first welfare capitalism experiments in department stores, as middle class women pushed retailers to better the conditions for clerks or lose their business.⁴⁸ Many of these middle-class reformers, a group that included progressive businessmen, would contribute to the regulatory and welfare-state under FDR or mentor those who would.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backwards* (New York: Signet Classics, 1960, first edition, 1888). For an extended analysis of Simon Patten see William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 231-244. For the quote see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search For Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 141. A less rosy view of Patten’s theory is found in Ewen and Ewen, *Channels*, 47-52.

⁴⁸ Consumer industries like department stores were particularly vulnerable to public opinion and hence apt to develop welfare programs. Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Workers, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Katherine Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation’s Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 307-310; Leach, *Land of Desire*, 118-9.

⁴⁹ The idealism and ideology of late 19th century reform efforts gave way to a discourse of expertise by the 1920s and 1930s. Social experts could be found in voluntary organizations, the social sciences, foundations, state and local government and even business. Drawing on older traditions of reform, but embracing up-to-date managerial practices, major figures in American business—retailer Edward Filene, GE’s Gerald Swope, and U.S. Steel’s Myron Taylor—allied with other businessmen, foundation staff,

However well-articulated the ideals of industrial democracy, planning, and welfare capitalism were, they were hardly a reality in the industrial landscape.

Corporations initiated their most creative new programs during the heyday of labor's activism, from 1916 to 1922. With the economic downturn, beginning in the mid-1920s, many corporations turned away from these ideals and programs, exposing them as a "façade" to many workers.⁵⁰ Corporations professed a new world for workers, one where workers shared corporate financial success, engaged in dialogue with their bosses, and put aside worries of earlier privations—yet for many working Americans this world was

academics and industrial relations specialists participated in the crafting of the Social Security Act, a cornerstone's of America's growing welfare state. The plan they crafted was one financed through highly regressive payroll taxes. Though many of these leaders saw the need for workers' security, their commitments to privatism, and business often overrode and interest in growing the state to take responsibility for such security. Some corporate liberals, as this group of forward looking, social thinkers are often referred to, supported the Wagner Act in 1935. The Wagner Act gave organized labor a helping hand from the government that allowed activity from below to flower. Martin Sklar provides an overview to some important historiography about this growing technocratic elite, and on transformations in reform, *Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916: The Market, the Law, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). I have relied on Thomas Ferguson, "Industrial Conflict and the Coming of the New Deal: The Triumph of Multinational Liberalism in America," in Steven Fraser and Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 7-11, 19-20; and Steven Fraser, "The Labor Question," *Ibid*, 59-60. Fraser focuses upon the Taylor Society as a "crossroads" for discussion among economic planners, and managers of newer, mass consumption industries like the movies, clothing and appliances. Ferguson also sees the Taylor Society as an important agent. I would qualify Steven Fraser's notion that "a decade before Flint and the Memorial Day Massacre, a Great Depression away from the general strikes of San Francisco and Minneapolis... the CIO already existed. It existed, that is, strictly as a managerial-political formation." The CIO may have had a "strategy...social perspective...general staff...a cadre school...an ideology...and a strategic alliance," but it needed a spark to be realized and workers' sacrifices and leaders' savvy were key components this dissertation focuses on.

⁵⁰ See Montgomery, *Fall*, 455 for the chronology on corporate welfare plans. Cohen says seasonal employment and unemployment eroded workers confidence, the foreman's

as chimerical as the movies they watched, or the *True Stories* they read. Lizabeth Cohen writes of Bernarr McFadden's *True Stories*, which in 1929 featured "true stories" of working-class readers who had entered the new "economic millenium." Parroting German sociologist Werner Sombart's thesis of "Why there is no socialism in America?" *True Stories* narrated workers joyful relinquishing of their centuries long war against capital. American prosperity—workers' eight-hour days, their three-fold increase in salaries, their homes in the suburbs, and the gleaming cars that ferried them back and forth—led them to be true worshipers of capitalism. Calvin Coolidge's avowal, "The man who builds a factory builds a temple, the man who works there worships there," could be extended to all citizens under mass consumer capitalism according to *True Stories*—workers were congregants in the new economic order.⁵¹ Certainly some workers did find the 1920s easier than earlier decades. Wages increased in real dollars, some workers enjoyed pensions, vacations, and even stock ownership. Some segments of the workforce, particularly union workers, those doing skilled work, and those living in the Midwest found that they could buy the refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, and automobiles that were the backbone of the new consumer economy.⁵² But for many, if not most workers the economic security that allowed purchase of these items or the leisure to use them remained an advertiser's dream.

Economic insecurity and even privation plagued workers, even in the midst of a touted prosperity. The ballyhooed eight-hour day was worked by few. As Irving

culture remained untouched, and the ERP's were a "façade" of democracy, *Making a New Deal*, 184-5, 188, 190, and 238-246.

⁵¹ For the Coolidge quote see, Robert McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America 1929-1941* (New York: Times Book, 1984), 16; Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 101-102.

Bernstein notes, Alabama had no hour limits, two other Southern states allowed workers sixty-hour work-weeks. In the steel industry workers averaged nearly fifty-five hour weeks, but one in seven workers were at their jobs for more than sixty hours. NAM and the national Chamber of Commerce fought to keep it that way, seeing any attempt to limit workers hours as an attack on managers' prerogatives.⁵³ Similarly the provision of fringe benefits was limited despite many employers understanding that economic insecurity chipped away at workers' loyalty and productive capacity. Some companies experimented with pensions, vacations, holiday time off and overtime pay in the 1920s, but such benefits were hardly the norm.⁵⁴ Wages too increased, but only slightly, and only for some workers. If many manual workers did better in the 1920s than they had in the teens, particularly auto workers, printers, and those in the building trades or on the railroad, many others did worse—women factory workers, common laborers, foundry workers and those working in the South and the Northeast. As Bernstein writes, when it came to management's new "high-wages philosophy" company heads "activated" their "vocal chords more than their purse strings."⁵⁵

But what contributed most to workers' insecurity was persistent unemployment from seasonal layoffs and increasing mechanization. Lizabeth Cohen reports on one

⁵² Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 319-321.

⁵³ The thirty-year decline in the number of hours worked weekly flattened out in the 1920s. Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 9-11, 180-181; Brody, *Workers*, 59.

⁵⁴ Bernstein claims the U.S. Department of Labor's *Handbook of Labor Statistics* records only vacation with pay, and that very few workers enjoyed this benefit, *Lean Years*, 73; David Brody notes that the National Industrial Conference Board found that eighty percent of companies provided no pensions, stock purchase plans, or savings and loan plans. Even when companies provided benefits, workers may have lacked eligibility, *Workers*, 59-60.

study of Chicago area workers that found that half of workers lost more than a month's wages annually because of layoffs or illness. "Normal times" in the steel industry had one out of eight workers at home, unemployed, instead of on the job. And in Chicago area packing companies over eighty percent of workers were let go at some point in the two-year period of 1928-1929. The Lynd's famous study of *Middletown*—Muncie, Indiana—found that in 1924 more than forty percent of Muncie workers lost at least a month of work; half of those lost more than three months of work. A report prepared for the U.S. House Committee on National Resources during the Depression maintained that unemployment never went below ten percent in the years from 1923 through 1929, and for three years it was as high as thirteen percent. Of course the actual unemployment numbers for American workers are always a crude estimate. As William Stott gibes, the U.S. kept more statistics on its pigs than it did on its labor force. The net result of limited wage increases and regular job loss was working-class poverty—some forty percent of America's population lived below the poverty line. One scholar of labor statistics for this period has written, "the struggle for economic security, not the struggle to keep up with the Joneses dominated working-class life in the prosperity decade."⁵⁶ The Depression shattered even this relative prosperity.

⁵⁵ Frank Stricker, "Affluence for Whom?—Another Look at Prosperity and the Working Classes in the 1920s," *Labor History*, (1983): 15-17; Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 70.

⁵⁶ Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 102, 185; Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 59; William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 71. As Stricker notes, economic circumstances were so dire for so many workers

The Depression and Workers' Response

Herbert Hoover fastened on the term "Depression." He thought admitting to a "panic" as business downturns had been called, would prolong the economic bust, but the new nomenclature came to signify the worst economic crash Americans ever faced. Agricultural sales and construction starts which languished from the mid-1920s dropped even further; farm products rotted in fields and grain elevators because Americans could not pay for them; and construction levels fell by one-quarter in 1930, nearly one third a year later, and by almost half in the following year. Investment in business dropped precipitously in the same period—a staggering 98 percent.⁵⁷ Many large businesses voluntarily agreed not to cut wages in the Depression's first year, but to make up for lost profits they cut production, which further aggravated the economic tumble. Those who didn't work, or feared they wouldn't work, limited their consumption as did corporations, which further weakened the economy. Banks also failed in ever increasing numbers. On March 4, 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's inauguration day, only ten states had open banks, the other thirty-eight closed for the day.⁵⁸ The Lynds, writing of "Middletown" wrote, "The great knife of the depression had cut down impartially through the entire

that it was impossible for contemporaries to distinguish "independent families" from "dependent ones," *Affluence*, 20, 32-33.

⁵⁷ McElvaine, *Depression*, 72, 74-75; for agricultural products see William Leuchtenberg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1963), 23.

⁵⁸ Seven thousand banks failed in the 1920s, 1,345 in 1930, and 2,000 in 1931. To stave off failures state governors took to calling bank holidays. McElvaine, *Depression*, 137; and Leuchtenberg, *Roosevelt*, 39.

population cleaving open lives and hopes of rich as well as poor.”⁵⁹ Hoover had imagined “banishing” “poverty...from this nation,” and he promised a mass consumer capitalism of “permanent prosperity” but these boasts lay gutted for all to see.

Nor was the knife truly “impartial”—America’s workers bore the brunt of the Great Depression’s thrusts. Kentucky coal miners ate weeds. Perhaps seeking a distinctive address a New York City couple camped out in a Central Park cave unlike those who crowded the “Hooverville” that lined forty city blocks along the Hudson. Students in Appalachia and in Utah trekked to school with cardboard lined shoes, though many shoeless children gave school up entirely. Many Americans, perhaps as many as two million—most of them young, many of them women—took to the rails looking for work. Immigrants returned home, others were forced out. The U.S. government “repatriated” half of Chicago’s sizeable Mexican population. Many small companies cut wages by 1930, and early the following year bigger firms like National Cash Register, International Harvester, and Chrysler did the same. In the summer of 1931 U.S. Steel cut wages by ten percent, and GM, US Rubber, and other behemoths followed. Henry Ford, who had actually increased wages in 1929 to fend off the Depression, now cut wages by twenty-five percent.⁶⁰ Workers might have rejoiced at such wage cuts, many faced total loss of employment.

One big drop in employment came in the crash’s aftermath. In just two weeks, claimed one public official, the national unemployment rate went from seven hundred

⁵⁹ Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1937) as quoted in Leuchtenberg, *Roosevelt*, xii.

thousand to over three million, a four hundred percent increase. Employment picked up, then fell, but the trend was ever downwards. By the 1932 election, about a quarter of the workforce, or about thirteen million workers had no work, and when Hoover left office that number rose to fifteen million Americans, or one in three wage and salaried workers.⁶¹ Specific communities, demographic groups and industrial sectors were hit harder. By Roosevelt's election victory one-half of African-American workers nationwide could not find a job. Toledo, where the automobile industry dominated had an unemployment rate of forty percent. New England mill towns were even worse—in Lowell six of ten workers had no jobs, and Lawrence and New Bedford were no better. But even they were better off than some Illinois and Pennsylvania coal towns where less than ten percent of the population worked. Industrial giant U.S. Steel, which had nearly a quarter of a million employees on their payroll in 1929, had not a single full-time worker four years later, and only half the number of part-time employees.⁶² Almost a third of the 1.7 million railroad workers were fired between 1929 and 1931, and another third of the workforce was put on part-time status. In Massachusetts, Brockton and Lynn shoe factories closed their doors for half the year. Even when they could say they had a job, many, many Americans clocked in one or two days of work a week, hardly enough to sustain their families.⁶³

⁶⁰ Leuchtenberg, *Roosevelt*, 3-4, 22-23; Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 259, 313, 325-330; Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 242-3.

⁶¹ McElvaine, *Depression*, 75, 134; Leuchtenberg, *Roosevelt*, 1, 19; Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 254, 316.

⁶² McElvaine, *Depression*, 187-8; Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 254-5, 316; Leuchtenberg, *Roosevelt*, 19.

⁶³ Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 314-5; Leuchtenberg, *Roosevelt*, 23; Michael Bernstein claims there was a decennial unemployment average of eighteen percent, in "Why the Great

Hoover's failure to respond to this economic devastation—or to even acknowledge it—and Franklin Delano Roosevelt's promise of change gave Roosevelt a place in workers' hearts, even if his commitment was less thoroughgoing than his words.⁶⁴ The “progressive” Hoover, who prior to the Depression railed against “excessive fortunes,” favored unions, and extended state capacity to aid American business, particularly the nascent consumer economy, recoiled at state support for distressed working and unemployed Americans. Hoover admonished that Americans could not “squander ourselves into prosperity.” Nonetheless, he did initially push for public works projects to mitigate the Depression's effects, an unusual approach for a President faced with dwindling budgets. By 1931 however, the head of Hoover's President's Organization for Unemployment Relief, AT&T's president Walter Gifford, told a Senate committee that “Federal aid would be a disservice to the unemployed.” In contrast Roosevelt pledged government assistance to the “forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid.”⁶⁵

Roosevelt's commitment to workers was always partial, but the cadre of brain trusters he brought into government, the continued failure of the economy, and workers own activism directed, if not forced Roosevelt's hand. His New Deal ushered in a sea change in relations between the state, business, and working Americans and their unions. Roosevelt immediately expanded federal spending to employ Americans in public works projects. Early New Deal programs included the Federal Emergency Relief Association

Depression was Great: Toward a New Understanding of the Interwar Economic Crisis in the United States,” in Fraser and Gerstle, eds., *Rise and Fall*, 33.

⁶⁴ See McElvaine, *Depression*, 115-6 for a description of workers' adulation towards Roosevelt.

(FERA), which funneled money through the states; the Public Works Administration (PWA) under the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), which built bridges, dams, schools, and hospitals; and the Civil Works Administration (CWA), which hired millions of Americans on public works projects from 1933 to 1934.⁶⁶ Most significant for organized labor, if inadvertent on Roosevelt's part, was section 7(a) of the NIRA. Lewis hailed 7(a) as "the greatest single advance for human rights since Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation."⁶⁷

With the NIRA Roosevelt sought to remedy an economy resisting recovery. The National Recovery Administration (NRA) instituted under the NIRA developed industry based price codes in the hopes of raising prices and profits, limiting competition, and ultimately stabilizing industry and therefore the economy. Each industrial sector established their own codes, in what scholars term, "government-sanctioned price fixing" or "legalized cartels in American industry." In return for business control in setting prices, it agreed to eliminate child labor and offer workers minimum wages, maximum

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 67, 78-9, 125.

⁶⁶ McElvaine, 151-155. FDR remained suspicious of public works programs believing the government should balance its budget and therefore limit spending. Lobbying by Frances Perkins, Robert LaFollette, Harry Hopkins and Edward Costigan convinced him otherwise, though he consistently cut back relief programs, leading, according to many historians, to the 1937 "Roosevelt Depression." Leuchtenberg, *Roosevelt*, 52. Federal programs could support labor at times. Nelson Lichtenstein, notes how Roy Reuther was paid by the Federal Emergency Relief Association to hone his skills teaching labor history, in *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 51.

⁶⁷ From Melvyn Dubofsky, *The State and Labor in Modern America*, 112 as quoted in Lisa Ann Wunderlich Phillips, "The Labor Movement and Black Economic Equality in New York City and District 65, 1934-1954," Ph.D. Dissertation, Rutgers University, 2002, 36.

hours, and better working conditions.⁶⁸ Section 7(a) of the NIRA specified that labor and business should arrive at the proper resolution of such questions through collective bargaining. The NIRA brought to fruition the thinking of one cadre of businessmen, academics, public officials, and union leaders. In the general outlines the NIRA followed General Electric President Gerard Swope's 1932 call for coordinated corporate economic planning from "production to consumption," with general guarantees for workers' security under federal supervision. Indeed Section 7(a) came about from New York Senator Robert Wagner's belief that organized labor had a role in American economic planning.⁶⁹

Workers had their own varied responses to the Depression. Many felt shamed by their dependency, others felt an anguished torpor. Yet the Depression's economic devastation led many to countenance new understandings of their relationship to corporations and the state including collective action to better their economic situation. Midwestern farmers organized penny auctions to keep local banks and sheriffs from

⁶⁸ McElvaine, *Depression*, 59; and Ferguson, "Industrial Conflict," 4.

⁶⁹ Alan Brinkley finds several groups clustering within the New Deal with different motives who often worked at cross-purposes. He sees a group of businessmen who had experience with the War Industrial Board under President Wilson. Believing business stability lie in cooperation they were open to limits in competition. This group was willing to countenance greater security for labor, and a greater voice for labor, though it tended to be less concerned with unions per se. Brinkley includes in this group Swope, Filene, and members of the Taylor Society. Academics like Columbia University professors Adolph Berle and Gardiner Means believed such cooperation necessary, but thought greater public supervision was necessary given the "public" power exerted by the corporation in American life. New Dealers like Hugh Johnson and Donald Richberg wanted government intervention, but were less concerned with unions as labor representatives. Other New Dealers like Dept. of Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, or New York Senator Wagner, were committed to unions as the only means by which labor could be powerful enough to assert their interests, in *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 37-44.

selling off their neighbors' land and farming implements. In many cities the Communist-led unemployment councils organized community members to prevent evictions. And, of course, unions became a powerful institutional vehicle for worker protest.⁷⁰

The AFL coasted through the 1920s with its cooperative stance towards management and was ill-prepared for workers' resurgent interest in unions.⁷¹ AFL leaders embroiled themselves in the jurisdictional ramifications of having industrial workers join them—and, despite their failing operations, many leaders still shunned the unskilled laborers who formed the bulk of the industrial economy. As a result, the hobbling organization became even weaker—from 1929 to 1933 the AFL lost another half million members. Unions cut their organizers, their strike funds, their labor newspapers, even leaders' salaries. In the first years of the Depression the number of strikes also dropped to the lowest number in the century and desperate unions bargained

⁷⁰ For workers' response to the Depression see McElvaine, *Depression*, 170-195. For fictional or semi-fictional accounts of workers' response see Jack Conroy, *The Disinherited* (1933; reprint, with an introduction by Daniel Aaron, New York: Hill and Wang, 1963); and the reportage of Meridel LeSueur found in *Ripening: Selected Work, 1927-1980*, ed. Elaine Hedges (Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press, 1982). Lizabeth Cohen argues the failure of government, ethnic associations, and corporate welfare plans led workers to make demands of the state for economic security which unions helped them meet. See McElvaine on the penny auctions, *Depression*, 135. For the Unemployment Councils see Daniel Leab, "United We Eat: The Creation and Organization of Unemployed Councils in 1930," *Labor History* 8 no. 3 (1967): 300-315.

⁷¹ The building and printing trades "held their own" in the 1920s. Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 86. A few unions like the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union succeeded in the 1920s in developing amicable working relations with corporations to increase productivity and better the position of its membership. The AFL failed to sell this model to other corporations. *Ibid.*, 102-103; and Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 121, 165.

over wage cuts.⁷² As the Depression deepened, foiling Hoover and the AFL's hopes for wage stability, the Federation reluctantly pursued a new course. By the winter of 1932 the AFL relinquished its long held commitment to voluntarism, voting for state guaranteed unemployment insurance. UMW leader John Lewis and Sidney Hillman, of the independent Amalgamated Clothing Workers also advocated for the NIRA, believing with government's support, they might gain union security.⁷³

With the NIRA workers poured into unions. Workers saw Roosevelt and organized labor as a means to strengthen their economic hand. A few union leaders saw the NIRA as a stimulus for organization. Famously, John Lewis's UMW staff entered the field proclaiming "the President wants you to organize," and the UMW impulse succeeded in reversing its disastrous decline of the 1920s.⁷⁴ Ninety thousand steelworkers entered the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers (AAISTW); one hundred thousand autoworkers now tripled the number of auto union locals; sixty thousand rubber workers joined up; and even in the non-union South tens of thousands of textile workers saw their new day with the NIRA.⁷⁵

Business gave lip service to dialogue, but in most instances fought unions, or sought deliberations with workers through their own company unions leading to labor turmoil early in Roosevelt's first term. Thomas Girdler, head of the American Iron and

⁷² Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 314-344.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 346-353; Edward Levinson, *Labor on the March* (1938, with an intro. by Robert Zieger, Ithaca: ILR Press, 1995), 50-51.

⁷⁴ For the UMW efforts see McElvaine, *Depression*, 161.

⁷⁵ As labor chroniclers maintain, the "core of section 7 (a) had meaning only when labor enforced" it. Levinson, *Labor*, 52. As Steven Fraser puts it, the 1934 uprising was labor's attempt to implement the promise of FDR's policies. In "The 'Labor Question,'" in Fraser and Gerstle, *Rise and Fall*, 68.

Steel Institute vowed he'd sooner raise apples and potatoes than negotiate with the likes of John Lewis. The result of this corporate cold shoulder was a spectacular strike wave of industry-wide and general strikes in 1934 as workers sought to make good on 7 (a)'s promise.⁷⁶ In Minneapolis, the Teamsters called a general strike, and the city's civic association and police ended up in armed warfare with strikers in the spring and early summer. Workers at the Electro Auto-Lite plant in Toledo came out—and shooting in the streets left several dead. Another week, another strike, this time of San Francisco longshoremen. Again violence left dead littering the streets. On Labor Day, East Coast and Southern textile workers struck in a “human tidal wave.”⁷⁷

Americans could see rank and file workers and police, National Guard, and private security forces duking it out in the national media—though as with 1919, visual coverage in the national news remained limited. *TIME Magazine*, one of the nation's premier news magazines reported on the rumblings in industrial quarters, particularly from May through October, but it had few pictures of the strikes. The magazine featured photographs of union leaders like the AAISTW's Michael Teague and Thomas McMahon of the United Textile Workers. Sometimes it put bust shots of union and governmental or corporate leaders side-by-side, as with the San Francisco General strike when it depicted the longshoremen's Harry Bridges and the city's mayor, Angelo Rossi

⁷⁶ *Newsweek*, 16 June 1934, 3

⁷⁷ Overall, in 1934 some 1.5 million workers came out in 1800 strikes, McElvaine, 225-228 and Levinson, *Labor*, 52-77. For the Minneapolis General Strike see LeSeuer, “I Was Marching,” 158-165, Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women and Men in the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 47-99.

who called on California's governor to send in the National Guard. [Fig. 1-14.]⁷⁸ In six months only two photographs of actual conflict appeared. One photo from the Minneapolis general strike showed a teamster with swinging bat at full extension. No one approached the circumference of his bat except a lone scab crouched like a sick animal in the corner of the photo frame.⁷⁹ *TIME*'s photos represented the union and corporate chiefs who could rightfully negotiate economic realities in the nation, or it showed everyday workers creating disorder, even violence. The tropes *TIME* Inc. relied on would continue in the news into the 1930s and 1940s, but its own publications' portrait became more complex, signaling workers entrance into full political and consumer citizenship.

Newsweek, *TIME*'s competitor, broke with this rigid visual formulation—creating a new way of looking at labor and its struggles. *Newsweek* did have plenty of photographs of labor violence. It published the same photo that *TIME* did of the teamster swinging his bat in Minneapolis. And its coverage of the troubles in Toledo, San Francisco, Seattle, and the textile strike in the Carolinas and Georgia focused mostly on violence. Readers could see Minneapolis teamsters overturning vegetable carts, and the National Guard marching against Ohio strikers in a scene so warlike that editors' ironically advised readers that the scene was not from "the Western Front." *Newsweek* also printed portraits of multiple players in the new labor relations calculus: corporate

⁷⁸ "Paralysis on the Pacific," *TIME*, 23 July 1934, 10.

⁷⁹ Another photo showed Wisconsin's Walter Judok Kohler, plumbing king and proponent of "model industrial towns" whose workers struck, keeping "loyal" workers inside the plant under siege. The photo showed a grim faced Kohler rearranging his hat after having stepped under a rope strikers set up to maintain boundaries. *TIME*, 23 July 1934; 4 June 1934, and 30 July 1934.

heads like Tom Girdler and Eugene Grace, union chiefs like Harry Bridges and Michael Teague, along with rank and file leaders like steel's Earl Forbech, governmental officials involved in labor battles, and strike breakers like Pearl Berghoff.

What was new in *Newsweek* was its willingness to print photographs that articulated labor's perspective, and its use of photographs to dramatize the conflict between capital and labor in aesthetic or entertainment terms. Its visual coverage of the Auto-Lite strike in Toledo emphasized violence, but the magazine also featured photographs of the inquest into the death of two strikers. The photo was quiet, showing jurors huddled around a table, possibly examining evidence, but the caption provided additional information, telling readers that the inquest was resulting in a "turn in public opinion in favor of workers." *Newsweek* suggested the public stood with labor—that violence was not the union's fault. *Newsweek's* coverage of the July San Francisco general strike showed a typical image of police chasing strikers through the city's streets. Below that *Newsweek* printed a photograph of two dead protesters, and then a photograph of unionist's "sidewalk memorial" to the dead strikers that was "inscribed in chalk, 'Murdered by Police.'" [Fig. 1-15.]⁸⁰ The chalk lettering, its central position in the composition, and the arms and hands of the unionists who circled round towards the words heightened the union message's visibility. In this photograph, workers who recorded their feelings about the death of their peers had them sent out to a nationwide audience of tens of thousands.

Newsweek's covers played up the drama of labor conflict, but highly stylized images stressed entertainment and modernity as well. One cover photo of the

Minneapolis general strike, "Mopping Up In Minneapolis," was taken from above.

[Fig. 1-16.]⁸¹ It showed seven men armed with rifles and billy-clubs stalking across a street in a tight pattern. It must have been sunny, the men and their shadows stood in stark contrast against the street. The direction of the men's bodies and weapons, the glances they sent in opposing corners of the photograph, the fact that the men formed two lines that wave across the composition, and the framing made for a visually dynamic photograph. Indeed the armed men looked as if they might leave the frame and walk off the page into any community in America, the image's lack of specificity made this possible. Equally dramatic was an ostensible portrait of a workman appearing on *Newsweek's* cover during September's textile strike. [Fig. 1-17.]⁸² His eye-narrowing and hard-lipped disdain, his thumbs-down gesture made a direct, if ambiguous proposition to the viewer. The cover's drama was further exaggerated by the lighting which came from below and sculpted his features and hand, but left the rest in deep darkness. As Michael Carlebach notes, the "moody" portrait was produced by Chicagoan Valentine Serra for the advertising agency Batten, Barton, Durstin, and Osborne. It represented an idealized, and commercialized image of a laborer.

Both of these photos compel with their ambiguity. Carlebach calls the "leering" laborer "thuggish," and certainly his narrowed eyes suggested a close, possibly threatening assessment of the viewer. Similarly, the Minneapolis police who spread in all directions hardly felt like the law and order forces as they were usually represented in the press. They're too active, too ready to shoot in any direction. But the implied threat of

⁸⁰ "Murdered by Police," *Newsweek*, 14 July 1934, 5.

⁸¹ "Mopping Up in Minneapolis," *Newsweek*, 28 July 1934, cover.

both shots was overshadowed by the photographs' dramatic, even cinematic ambiance. The police could be cowboys in a western shootout, or hunters on the range. The workman in cap is no object, even as he is constructed in a photographer's studio. Unlike the 1919 *Midweek Pictorial* cover photograph of the miner that allowed readers to examine the resolute stance, clothing and accouterments of a worker in close detail, this thumbs-down workman reaches out to say something directly to readers. Even though his point is ambiguous, he has a subjectivity that is new. Both *Newsweek* photos use workers and their stories to entertain the reading public. And they suggest multiple points of view exist. *Newsweek* was eating away at *TIME*'s readership, in part believed *TIME* staff, because of *Newsweek*'s "bold" use of photographs. As we'll see in the following chapter, just two years after the 1934 uprising of workers, the *TIME* publisher, Henry Luce, would use news photography and a new narrative style in *LIFE* and embrace the new working man and woman. Workers too would use photography to remake their position in American society in their union newspapers.⁸³

Labor took the NIRA at face value and struck for union led collective bargaining, but its discontent changed little. FDR had never committed to labor organization through unions. He pushed the NIRA to outflank other legislation that would limit workers' hours and appropriate more ambitious public works funding. FDR and NIRA heads Hugh Johnson, and his successor Donald Richberg perceived labor volatility an obstacle to economic stability. As for representation, Roosevelt told reporters that workers could

⁸² "Strike!" *Newsweek*, 22 September 1934, cover.

⁸³ Daniel Longwell, who sought to increase *TIME*'s use of photographs said *Newsweek* used pictures better. Loudon Wainwright, *The Great American Magazine: An Inside*

rely on the Royal Society of Geography to promote their interests for all he cared.⁸⁴ In case after case, industry after industry, the NRA boards refused to side with labor, or at times, even listen to their complaints.⁸⁵ The NIRA fell apart once small companies realized that larger firms made the industrial price setting codes work to their competitive advantage. And the U.S. Supreme Court found in late May of 1935 in the *Schechter Poultry Corp v. United States* that the law was unconstitutional—the federal governmental had overstepped its bounds in regulating interstate commerce this way.⁸⁶

As deadly to organized labor as the NIRA's foiled promise was the AFL's relationship to the hundreds of thousands of workers who wanted unions. The federation's timid attachment to industrial workers and its organizational ineptitude led it to take little advantage of the law. The AFL suffered as a result: of the 100,000 workers who joined auto-workers locals from 1933-1934, by that period's end only 20,000 remained. Steel was worse. Some one hundred thousand or twenty percent of the workforce signed up from 1933 to 1934. After the AFL's neglect workers fled, and only 8,600 members remained.⁸⁷

History of LIFE (New York: Knopf, 1986), 21; and Carlebach, *American Photojournalism*, 184-5.

⁸⁴ McElvaine, *Great Depression*, 161; Leuchtenberg, *Roosevelt*, 108. Robert Zieger maintains that for FDR, section 7 (a) was nothing more "than a restatement of progressive homilies," in, *CIO*, 17.

⁸⁵ Levinson, *Labor*, 56-76. In the textile industry, thousands of workers were fired, and hundreds blacklisted. *The Uprising of 1934* is a compelling documentary about the textile strike and its affect on southern organizing. George Stoney, Judith Helfand and Susan Rostack, (New York: First Run/Icarus Films, 1995).

⁸⁶ Ferguson, "The Coming," 18-19; Brinkley, *End of Reform*, 18; McElvaine, *Depression*, 162.

⁸⁷ Relations between the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers and newer members were so bad that the union president called police against them at its 1934 convention. Levinson, *Labor*, 65-78.

Despite these reversals, labor rebounded. The state again stepped in with the passing of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), and labor itself reasserted itself organizationally, with the creation of the CIO and in the field, with labor's uprising. Even as the Supreme Court ruled against the New Deal with the *Schechter* case, labor and its allies crafted legislation aimed at reasserting labor's right to collective bargaining. The NLRA or the Wagner Act, named after its sponsor, Robert Wagner, passed in July of 1935. Wagner remained convinced that America's economic recovery depended on labor having more economic clout with their employers and with their pocketbooks. Wagner had worked on the provisions of the legislation with department store magnate Edward Filene's Twentieth Century Fund, Walter Teagle of Standard Oil, GE's Swope, and Taylor Society members. Labor's decision to accept the state's guiding hand in labor relations was critical for the legislation's passage. AFL lawyers fended off business attempts to apply "unfair labor practices" provisions to labor, strengthening labor's hand.⁸⁸ Why FDR promoted the Act remains unclear. The President never gave labor his undivided support, though his and several "New Deal" governors' unwillingness to call out federal troops against strikers seemed tantamount to tacit support for workers.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Fraser notes that Sen. Wagner and those who connected him to the ACWU's Hillman sought this re-negotiation of relations between the state, business, and organized labor, "The 'Labor Question,'" 68-69; Ferguson offers a discussion of corporate support for the NLRA, and argues some railroad leaders also supported the bill, "Industrial Conflict," 20, 29 n. 41.

⁸⁹ The NLRA would be considered a cornerstone legislative piece FDR's "second New Deal," so called for the more aggressive stance taken towards business in the post 1936 elections. For Roosevelt and his unwillingness to use troops against labor see Paul Milkman, *PM: A New Deal in Journalism, 1940-1948* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 108.

As with Section 7(a), the Wagner Act's meaning was only worked out in the conflict between labor, capital, and the state; but over time it revolutionized labor's place in America. The Act stayed corporations' union busting activities, and institutionalized rule-of-law unionism administered through the state. Provisions in the act outlawed the company unions that corporations had relied on to stem workers discontent. More importantly, the Act stated employers could not "interfere with, restrain, or coerce" workers who pursued collective bargaining rights. Workers could organize without fear of dismissal, blacklisting or other "unfair labor practices." The Act also established the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) with investigative and enforcement powers to arbitrate disputes between corporations and unions. The NLRB decided what constituted a bargaining unit. Additionally, the act mandated that corporations negotiate with workers' elected representatives. Once a unit elected a union representative, the NLRB certified the union, offering it government protections.⁹⁰

The Committee of Industrial Organizations coalesced in tandem with these legislative developments. As Robert Zieger writes, the CIO symbolically began at the AFL's 1935 Atlantic City convention when Lewis hurtled out of his chair and punched William Hutcheson, head of the carpenters union, who was refusing to let rank and file rubber workers address the AFL membership. For months, Lewis and other leaders had been pushing the AFL to take advantage of industrial workers' anger. The AFL professed a desire to reach out to these new sectors, but never delivered on its promises. Lewis, Hillman, and Dubinsky feared a repeat of what happened in 1933 and 1934. Dubinsky and Charles Howard of the International Typographical Union also feared if

industrial workers weren't organized by the AFL they would turn to the Communist Party or the reactionary groups which actively courted them. Frustrated with the AFL's unwillingness to move forward, these men met to coordinate the CIO within the confines of the AFL. Joining them were leaders of four other marginal unions, Max Zaritsky from the Hatters Union, John Sheridan of the Mines and Mills and Harvey Freming from the Oil Workers, and McMahon from the textile workers. They pooled resources and leadership to support industrial workers in steel, autos and rubber.⁹¹

It didn't take long for the CIO to break from the AFL. Leaders were sedulous in respecting AFL craft boundaries, even as Lewis and William Green publicly sparred over the organization of industrial workers. But workers, particularly rubber and auto-workers, had little respect for the federation's vacillation. In the aftermath of FDR's landslide victory, a victory handed to him through labor's support, workers' discontent bubbled up in a series of strikes, many of which used a new technique, the sit-down.

Straining actual chronological boundaries, the burst of sit-downs began in late fall of 1936 and picked up speed when GM autoworkers sat down in the last days of that year. In eight months, from September of 1936 through the following May, close to half a million Americans sat down on their jobs, idling an equivalent number of workers.⁹² Rank and file workers initiated the sit-downs as spontaneous redress for shop floor

⁹⁰ Leuchtenberg, *Roosevelt*, 150-151, Brody, *Workers*, 100-103.

⁹¹ The AFL proposed three-quarters of a million dollars to fund a drive in steel, but member organizations did not contribute one percent of this sum, even after the CIO was established. Ziegler, *CIO*, 23-36.

⁹² Levinson, *Labor's on the March*, 169

grievances, but most often to achieve collective bargaining rights.⁹³ What began as a trickle, with sit-downs in Toledo, Akron, and Flint, became a wave of protest when more and more workers came out each month. In sheer numbers of job actions, there had never been so many strikes. In October, some 9,000 workers came out, in January, 44,000 workers, and in March, over four times that amount. Transit workers in New York, chocolate workers in Hershey, Pennsylvania, pencil makers in Chicago and golf-ball makers in Detroit, wet nurses, char women, lunch delivery boys, pie bakers, glassmakers, bed-makers—all sat down to gain the upper hand with their bosses. CIO leadership rarely organized these strikes, but neither did they eschew them.⁹⁴

The sit-down became a lever to establish industrial unions, particularly before the Supreme Court established the constitutionality of National Labor Relations Act in March of 1937 in the *Jones and Laughlin* case. The tactic countered management's traditional union busting techniques—techniques companies weren't giving up even with the Wagner Act. Because company heads were loath to damage plants or equipment

⁹³ Florence Peterson, "Review of Strikes in United States, *Monthly Labor Review*, vol. 46 (May 1938): 1062-1063; Brody, *Workers*, 139 says over half the time strikes were for the right to unionize. See also Zieger, *CIO*, 52-3.

⁹⁴ Peterson, "Review," 1063. For two excellent accounts written by contemporaries see Henry Kraus, *The Many and the Few: A Chronicle of the Dynamic Auto Workers* (Urbana, IL: University Illinois Press, 1985, 2nd edition); and Levinson's *Labor on the March*. For wet nurses see *LIFE*, 5 April 1937: 21; for golf ball makers, char women and lunch delivery boys see Howard Zinn, Dana Frank, and Robin D.G. Kelley, *Three Strikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls, and the Fighting Spirit of Labor's Last Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 76. Internal discussion at CIO Executive Board meetings indicate leaders struggles with how to address being, in Sidney Hillman's words, "successful beyond expectations." They were concerned about being seen as One Big Union, competition with AFL and local labor boards, and "unauthorized activities," by workers, and obligations from affiliation. John Brophy's report to the Board claimed the CIO was "besieged," by requests it couldn't possibly meet. CIO Executive Board

labor foiled corporate violence. And by establishing their presence in the plant workers could defend against non-union labor. Staying in the same place also allowed workers to nurture collective morale. The sit-downs did not always lead to union representation as it did in the GM strike, and they did not always bolster public support for organized labor. But workers across the nation, in all kinds of industries, told management and the general public that they would rely on themselves to exert the necessary pressure to gain collective bargaining rights. It was, truly, the uprising of 1937.

“The Central Instrument of Our Time”

Americans would see labor’s uprising in new ways as the camera “worked” in a profoundly different fashion; it found new practitioners and new audiences in the 1930s.

Technological changes such as high-speed cameras—the Leica and Contac—and high-speed film gave photographers greater versatility in covering events. Over the course of the decade “action” and “candid” photography became more popular. European photographers took to these cameras in the 1920s but it wasn’t until the mid-1930s that the American press saw value in this new technology. Thomas McAvoy’s candid photographs of FDR, made with a Leica, convinced editors to exploit this technology.⁹⁵ If in the teens the *Midweek Pictorial* had a weightiness corresponding to

meeting, March 9 1937, Reel One, *CIO papers*, Catholic University of America, hereafter *CUA*.

⁹⁵ For the role of candid photos of Roosevelt in breaking editors’ resistance to the Leica, see Carlebach, *American Photojournalism*, 177-188; Robert Elson, *TIME, Inc.: The Intimate History of a Publishing Enterprise, 1923-1941* (New York: Atheneum, 1968),

the themes it covered, the “candid moment” of the tabloid sensibility entered the news more pervasively in the 1930s. Henry Luce suggested a rationale. “Today I may not be in a mood nor feel the need to read the finest article about the Prime Minister. But I will stop to watch him take off his shoe.”⁹⁶ Though publishers did not universally embrace the Leica, *LIFE* and other venues increasingly focused on the intimate, off-the-cuff renditions of reality and refashioned a more casual attitude to the news.⁹⁷

The dissemination of photos also altered significantly in this same period. When the Associated Press (AP) perfected its wire transmission system for photographs in 1935, “for the first time in history the news picture and the news story rode the wires together.” Editors of a 1939 text for news photographers and news editors claimed this “technological advance...has counted more than any other single factor in making photographic news reporting practical.” A photograph could be taken, developed and printed, and sent across the wires in a few hours. AP’s President vouched that with wired photographs, the news could be told “more rapidly, more graphically, more completely,

271; and James Baughman, *Henry R. Luce and the Rise of the American New Media* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 85.

⁹⁶ *LIFE*’s original editor, John Martin spoke of ways to get subjects’ confidence. “We were planning to develop further Dr. Salomon’s idea of the candid camera and that meant you had to get into people’s boudoirs and offices and take pictures of them in action, and to do that you had to learn how to reach people, how to handle them, how to kid them into being candid, candidly cameraed.’...Such a seduction is a commonplace of these times, especially by the more revealing and unblinking eye of the television camera. But in the thirties the mildest sort of photographic invasion of privacy seemed a considerable accomplishment.” Wainright, *Great American Magazine*, 8, 11.

⁹⁷ For *LIFE*’s dependence on the “miniature camera revolution,” see Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 98. Newspapers continued to rely on the slower high definition 4x5 speed graphics as it produced high-contrast prints that could be easily reproduced in letterpress news and photogravures. John Loengard, *LIFE Photographers: What They Saw* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1998), 7.

and with the honesty and fairness of the camera.” This change facilitated the growing
visuality of American news and American culture.⁹⁸

The AP President’s suggestion that the camera provided an “honest and fair”
appraisal of the world offers another clue for the photo driven world of the 1930s. With
the ubiquity of the photograph today, it’s hard to imagine how novel the joining of text
and photograph still was in the 1930s. Social reformers, advertisers, the roto-gravure
press, the tabloids, and magazines had all integrated imagery and text prior to the 1930s
as we’ve seen. But it is too easy to read backwards the sophisticated joining of image
and text by examining specific instances of this happening prior to the 1930s. The
prominence of the photograph was hardly normative in newspapers, magazines, nor in
labor journals before this period. But in the 1930s the government would experiment
with the photograph, media companies like TIME-LIFE would gather millions of readers
to their bold joining of image and text, corporations would use photos more, and labor
unions themselves would use the photograph to ever greater degree—because of its
apparent objectivity.⁹⁹

In the Depression’s midst the documentary photograph became a pervasive
medium of persuasion. Dorothea Lange, one of the era’s most famous documentarians
described taking her first photographs of the down-and-out in San Francisco streets.
Lange, an art photographer and commercial portraitist, looked out her window at a

⁹⁸ Jack Price, *News Pictures* (New York: Roundtable Press, 1937), 178. Laura Vitray,
John Mills and Roscoe Ellard *Pictorial Journalism* (New York: Mc Graw Hill Book
Company, 1939), 18-22. I found *Pictorial Journalism* in a used bookstore. Rubber
stamped on its frontpiece was, “Property, PM Library.”

⁹⁹ Stott’s *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* is the classic articulation of this
argument.

breadline and felt compelled to record what she saw. Lange had no words to explain what she was doing. Photographers like Riis had photographed New York City's marginalized urban dwellers, and Lewis Hine had developed a decades-long record of America's industrial workers by this point. Yet the practice of "social photography," as Hine called it, this attempt to "sympathetically interpret" photographs so that they could be a "lever for social uplift," lie dormant in the 1920s and early 1930s.¹⁰⁰ The documentary photograph received its current name in a 1938 *Parnassas* article penned by the head of the Museum of Modern Art photography's section, Beaumont Newhall. Newhall could look at Lange and many other photographers who shifted from art photography to documenting the world around them in "documentary" terms.¹⁰¹

The U. S. government's patronage was perhaps the critical push to this new documentary style. FDR's New Deal agencies, particularly the Resettlement Administration (RA), later renamed the Farm Security Administration (FSA) employed photographers to document the travails of unemployed and low-wage agricultural workers. Roy Stryker who had worked for Rexford Tugwell when he taught economics at Columbia University, was hired by Tugwell to head the Historical Section of the RA, where he would document and publicize the RA's work through photographs. Stryker

¹⁰⁰ Others recorded social conditions prior to this point, notably Jacob Riis's New York City photographs of immigrant slum life and Lewis Hine's examination of child labor. But photographers didn't really understand this as a tradition. Milton Meltzer, *Dorothea Lange: A Photographer's Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1978), 71-83. For Lewis Hine see "Social Photography; How the Camera May Help in Social Uplift," *Proceedings, National Conference of Charities and Corrections* 1909 in *Classic Essays on Photography*, edited by Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 109-113.

recruited artists, like Lange, Walker Evans, and Ben Shahn, but he also handed cameras to relative unknowns like Russell Lee and Jack Delano. The FSA's sophisticated use of photographs is well known, but many of FDR's alphabet soup of newly created government agencies used photographs to promote the growing welfare and regulatory state to Americans.¹⁰² This federal experiment in mass persuasion elevated the status of the photographic image in social and political discourse.

From the trove of imagery taken by the FSA, photographs appeared in special exhibitions, in newspapers and magazines, and also in photo-books. To grapple with the desperate times faced by Americans, Lange and her husband-collaborator economist Paul Taylor, novelist Richard Wright, and critic James Agee and photographer Walker Evans, all experimented with the integration of text and image in *American Exodus*, *Twelve Million Black Voices*, and the classic *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Others like *LIFE* photographer Margaret Bourke-White and her husband Erskine Caldwell tried their hand with their own photo-book, *You Have Seen Their Faces*. Whether wild with stereotype, as Bourke-White's work is now thought to be, earnest and emotional as Lange's work, or cantankerous, even perverse as Agee and Evans's work, the photo-book emerged an emblematic form in this period.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ See Sally Stein, "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors: American Resistance to Photomontage Between the Wars," in Matthew Teitelbaum, ed., *Montage and Modern Life, 1919-1942* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 153.

¹⁰² *Documenting America* provides the most thoroughgoing examination of New Deal photography; Carl Fleishhauer and Beverly Brannan, *Documenting America: 1935-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). For the RA and FSA project see Stuart Ewen, *PR!: A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996) 273, and Hartley Howell, "You Have Seen their Pictures," *Survey Graphic* (April 1940): 236-241.

¹⁰³ Richard Wright, *12 Million Black Voices*, Photo Direction by Edwin Rosskam (New York: Viking Press, 1941); Dorothea Lange and Paul Schuster Taylor, *An American*

Corporate American, equally attentive to the photograph's pull, employed photographs more than ever. Roland Marchand's research shows how as late as 1925 only six percent of news advertisements were photographic. Magazine advertisements also "advanced haltingly" towards the use of photographic image. In the Depression, photographic ads "won increasing favor," and one ad-laden publication, the *Ladies Home Journal*, had photos in half of the ads. A 1932 George Gallup poll maintained that "readers... ranked photographs as more effective than other illustrations" in merchandising. Photographs conveyed a "sincerity" hard to find in other visual forms. Not only advertising campaigns, but internal corporate publications such as employee handbooks and employee newsletters; and public relations campaigns, found business relying on the photograph to get their message across. Managers believed that the "realism" of the photograph addressed the worries of consumers and workers.¹⁰⁴

As the next chapter will show, Luce's TIME corporation built a media empire by re-imagining how the image was used in magazines with its new publication, *LIFE*. Like

Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion (New York: (Reyanl and Hitchcok, 1939); James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1941); Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (New York: Viking Press, 1937). Scholarship on these photo-books includes Paula Rabinowitz, *They Must be Represented: The Politics of Documentary*, (New York: Verso Press, 1994), Stott, *Documenting America*, and John Rogers Puckett, *Five Photo-Textual Documentaries from the Great Depression* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984).

¹⁰⁴ Where once illustrations offered a "class" note to mass-produced products, now photos sold products' modernity and efficacy in an era of financial restrictiveness. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the America Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 149-153. He notes that advertisers relied on the parable of before and after, where the past was represented with an illustration, but the "new" present, with a photograph. See also his *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and Patricia Johnston, *Real*

Lange who had no name for what she was doing, the photographers and editors at *LIFE* fumbled to describe their mission. Peter Stackpole, one of *LIFE*'s first photographers, claimed in a later oral history that he "was not thinking in terms of photojournalism" when he took his photographs as "the term hadn't even come up yet." *LIFE* managers instead used the cumbersome term "mind-guided camera." Luce coined the term "photo-essay" to describe *LIFE*'s product.¹⁰⁵ *LIFE* refashioned how words and pictures would be integrated within journalistic mediums.

Just as mass media became more visual, so too did the labor press that reached increasing numbers. As the AFL and CIO reached out to hundreds of thousands of potential members in this decade so did their papers. Hundreds of thousands of steel workers became union members for the first time in the late 1930s. Many must have leafed through the paper of SWOC, *Steel Labor*. By 1940, almost 400,000 Americans received it in their homes each month. Two years later some 657,000 members received it monthly. Labor papers were also disseminated to libraries across the country. SWOC alone distributed *Steel Labor* to some 75 colleges and universities in the first eighteen months of the organizing drive. Similarly tens of thousands of New Yorkers read *New Voices*, the paper of New York's warehouse and retail workers union. When the war came it was sent around the globe to appreciative members. With the growth of unions in the 1930s and 1940s labor papers circulated to far greater numbers than ever before. Over 800 labor periodicals reached as many as sixteen million unionists by the mid-

Fantasies: Edward Steichen's Advertising Photography (California: University of California Press, 1997).

1940s. As one labor editor posited, if one or two family members were to read the labor press, it would have reached a “third or better” of the American public.¹⁰⁶

The labor press had long met the instrumental needs of trade unions. Union papers kept members up-to-date about institutional union activities such as local meetings, annual conventions, legislative initiatives, and organizing drives. Union newspapers were “house organs,” in J.B.S. Hardman’s words, “an announcing device” or “an advertisement” for the union itself. Union papers also enlisted membership in union campaigns, and provided the framework for a larger union movement. Newspapers legitimated the union to workers who might have been unfamiliar with or frightened by joining an organization that could lead to their dismissal. Editors believed their papers were a “lone” voice on the concerns of working Americans. The papers were a “battle arsenal in fighting for what the unions are out to achieve” that workers needed to “counter the controlled opinion of the daily press and its vested interests.”¹⁰⁷

It would be unwise to overstate the importance of union publications to rank and file workers. Anecdotal evidence Hardman compiled in the 1950s indicated members

¹⁰⁵ Loengard, *LIFE Photographers*, Interview with Peter Stackpole, San Francisco, August 16 1993, 59, 8. Stackpole was a staff photographer from the magazine’s inception through 1960.

¹⁰⁶ For SWOC see SWOC, *Proceedings of the First Wage and Policy Convention*, (December 1937), 64; SWOC, *Second Wage and Policy Convention*, (May 1940), 28; and United Steel Workers of America, *Proceedings of the First United Steel Workers Convention*, (May 1942), 41. *New Voices* Report to Executive Committee October 23, 1941, b1f6. *New Voices* increased circulation over 20,000 in 1946 when it included Locals 830 and 144 in their subscription base. “Report on Union Voice,” Thomas Mooney Hall Association Notes, b67f21, 1946, District 65 UAW papers at the Tamiment Institute and Wagner Labor Archives. For estimates on general circulation of labor papers see J.B.S. Hardman and Neufeld’s *House of Labor: Internal Operations of American Unions* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1951), 180, 188 and 214.

may have seen union newspapers as so much “preachin’.” One union official complained of “bundles of union papers gathering dust on the shelves of local meeting halls.” Union members who received the paper in their homes might have just as likely wrapped their dinner remains in it than look for compelling information or opinion. Many union newspapers served as leaders’ mouthpieces, avoided dissent within the union, and workers’ larger concerns in American society. The uniformity of perspective could also make for a monotonous read.¹⁰⁸

These caveats notwithstanding, labor papers had a strong enough pull that corporations paid attention to them. Whether as an act of symbolic might, or because they thought the union message incendiary one major corporation tried to keep *Steel Labor* out of its company town.¹⁰⁹ Corporations kept tabs on the labor press to remain up-to-date with the union movement and their own workforce.¹¹⁰ Edward Bernays, father of public relations, and advisor to some of the most successful U.S. corporations believed that the commercial media was joined by “the specialized media owned and operated by the many organized groups in this country.” In the “duplicating, crisscrossing and overlapping... web of communications” he thought labor papers must be reckoned with as a “social force for good or evil.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Hardman and Newfeld, *House of Labor*, 222, 224 and 17. Achieving a proper balance between organizational and member needs troubled labor editors such as Hardman.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 197-8, 204, 223. Additional insights on *Steel Labor* comes from an oral history interview with William Garvey, former publicity staff in the Chicago Office of the USWA. Interview by Helmut Golatz, March 4, 1975, for the Historical Collections and Labor Archives at Pennsylvania State University (hereafter *PSU*), 20A.

¹⁰⁹ SWOC, *Proceedings of the First Wage and Policy Convention*, 64.

¹¹⁰ Hardman and Neufeld, *House of Labor*, 192.

¹¹¹ Edward Bernays, “The Engineering of Consent,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 250 (March 1947): 113-120.

With the CIO's rise, many unions modernized their papers and they used imagery, particularly photographs, to do this. In a 1926 survey, union newspaper editors believed they should "spice" up their papers with imagery. By the mid-1930's most unions had accomplished this end.¹¹² The papers under study here, *Steel Labor* and *New Voices*, reflected labor journalism's trend towards editorial and visual sophistication. *Steel Labor* hired a journalist for their editorship, not an insider, exemplifying the move to an increasingly professional staff. The paper also gave its readers a wealth of imagery with cartoons, line drawings, and photographs supplied by union members, the staff photographer, government agencies and even the new wire services. *New Voices* also put out a professional, even innovative paper. In keeping with the union's activist bent, members edited the paper and wrote the copy. In an unusual move, warehouse workers even took most photographs that appeared, fulfilling Lewis Hine's hope that "those in the thick of battle," would themselves take up the camera. Both union papers used a "tabloid-like" style, seeking even greater popular appeal. With the new labor journalism workers encountered sophisticated outreach tools aimed at their concerns as workers, as prospective unionists, as members of the working class, and as American citizens.¹¹³

¹¹² Taken from a survey by Phil Ziegler (editor of *Railway Clerk*) and published initially in *American Labor Dynamics*, J.B.S. Hardman (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1928), as quoted in Hardman's *House of Labor*, 210.

¹¹³ The differences between the two union papers should come as no surprise for the industries, organizations, politics, and culture of SWOC and Local 65, as the Wholesaler's Union was known, were entirely different. Steel was a multi-billion dollar industry that was centralized into a handful of corporations, the distributive trades covered a multitude of shop owners. SWOC was the national union of steelworkers with locals flung across the nation. Local 65 was a nationally chartered union, but was almost exclusively based in New York City. The steel union's leadership was conservative, largely Catholic, and they ran a top-down union. After its failed Little Steel drive SWOC largely grew through legalistic and administrative measures. The Jewish

The transformation to a more visual news can be understood by recognizing the limits of photographic journalism in the 1930s, and the persistent suspicion towards the medium. Though newspapers carried photographs from 1880 onwards, access to images remained limited. As late as 1937, a key event such as the Memorial Day Massacre received only one, or at most two photographs in many metropolitan papers. The Chicago, New York, and Washington D.C. papers carried multiple photographs of the event, which happened on Chicago's South Side. But major dailies, like the San Francisco *Chronicle* carried just one image of the event. Other dailies, like the New Orleans *Time Picayune* did not carry a single image. However, millions of Americans could see dozens of images in *LIFE*.

Many in the news business still considered photographs subservient to the word, photos spoke to the emotions and to a lower strata of society. Even at TIME Inc. dissension over the status, popularity, and possibilities of showing the news through pictures persisted. Ralph Ingersoll wrote in one Luce publication that photographs were "still regarded as a sort of mechanical sideline to the serious business of fact narration—a social inferior which, on certain regrettable and accidental occasions, may steal the show." Daniel Longwell who Luce hired to kick-start the use of photographs in his publications, wrote that *TIME*'s editors, "charming, affable and exceedingly intelligent" men, when "faced with a picture other than a face, become insufferable stuffed shirts," who "start talking about *TIME*'s traditions." *TIME*'s ad men found that businessmen who should have been open to something new if lucrative, also had reservations. Wrote

leadership of Local 65 had close ties to the Communist Party and they relied on active rank and file mobilization for their success. SWOC was known for limiting rank and file

one *LIFE* chronicler, “Many advertisers, the new salesmen found, had a low regard for pictures, they thought, scornfully, snapshots of babies and dogs would never hold the readers’ attention long enough to make it worth the advertiser’ dollar.” Luce’s own advertising head concurred. P.I. Prentice wrote *TIME* managers that he rejected the notion that “any large segment of the American public wants to see a lot more pictures.” He thought the *Mid-Week Pictorial*’s limited circulation at the time, at “about 10,000 newsstand sales” confirmed his belief “that the American public’s tongue is not hanging out for just any picture magazine.”¹¹⁴

The “stuffed shirts” were wrong however. Americans wanted to “perceive simply” what James Agee called, “the cruel radiance of what is.”¹¹⁵ Photography enjoyed greater salience in public culture as a result of the variety of players who relied on it to shape perception, but also because Americans responded so to visual news. A common icon from this period was the circulation system of mid-century America’s vibrant mass culture—the networks of mass communication symbolized by the newsstand. In 1938, FSA photographer John Vachon photographed a newsstand in Omaha, Nebraska. National magazine covers for *Colliers*, *Screenland*, *TIME*, *True Story*

involvement; Local 65 for embracing it at every level.

¹¹⁴ Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 41, 63-64. As late as the early 1940s, *LIFE* staff memoed their superiors of those who “sneered” at news photographers, believing them “broken-down hacks.” *Ibid.*, 136-7. James Baughman quotes one editor who claimed that publishing too many photos “might pull down the integrity of the American press.” *Henry R. Luce*, 84. Ralph Ingersoll, who went on from *TIME*, Inc. to found *PM* believed even after *LIFE*’s advent, that photos appeared mostly as “ornaments,” they were not well used, Milkman, *PM*, 40.

¹¹⁵ Baughman reports that the Cowles Brothers who ran the Des Moines Register had public opinion polling that showed circulation doubled when a Sunday pictorial supplement was added. He adds that “readers were three to four times as likely to look at

and *Redbook*, and picture magazines like *Look*, *Pictorial Review*, and *LIFE*, vied for viewers' attention much as they might have to a prospective consumer. [Fig. 1-18.]¹¹⁶ Similarly, any number of photographers showed Americans enjoying their increasingly visual world, as embodied in *LIFE*. An anonymous National Youth Administration photographer showed two teenagers from rural, Quoddy, Maine hanging out. One talked on a short wave radio, the other lay back in bed, reading *LIFE*. [Fig. 1-19.]¹¹⁷ Another government photographer caught a retiree enjoying *LIFE* beside his car in a Florida trailer park, suggesting the picture magazine's appeal across the age spectrum. As the magazine's eponymous title intended to suggest, *LIFE* was everywhere.¹¹⁸ So too were photographs.

Not all shared Agee's reverential attitude towards the increasing turn to the photograph. For Alfred Kazin, "the fascination of the camera represented, in a word...a kind of sick pride in its fiercely objective 'realism.' The camera did not fake or gloss over; it told 'the truth of the times.'" Kazin criticized the camera for fostering a "fractured" and passive relationship to reality, but like Agee who saw the camera as "the

a picture as a news story." *Henry R. Luce*, 84. Agee and Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 11.

¹¹⁶ John Vachon, "Newsstand, Omaha, Nebraska, 1938," Farm Security Administration Records, Library of Congress. Vachon's newsstand photograph appears to be the most reproduced, but eleven different FSA or OWI photographers took dozens of pictures of the newsstand, or Americans enjoying magazines. Photos were from urban centers like New York and Los Angeles, but also Oregon, Louisiana, Florida, New Hampshire, and Tennessee.

¹¹⁷ "An All Night Session of the Rag Chewers Club" was taken by the Quoddy, Maine Photography Workshop and is listed as NYA119-G-3250-D at the National Archives.

¹¹⁸ The photo of the retiree, "Reading Magazine Beside His Trailer Home, Sarasota, Florida," was taken by Marion Post Wolcott. It is archived at the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-05707-D.

central instrument” of this decade, Kazin believed Americans trusted the ever more ubiquitous photograph.¹¹⁹

Longwell, the diligent TIME Inc. employee, goaded Luce to get *LIFE* off the ground, “minds are getting restless” he told Luce. He argued Americans demanded a journalism in keeping with the times, and that meant a photographic journalism. In 1936, mere months before *LIFE* came off the presses, Longwell pushed an at times quavering Luce. “The quick nervousness of pictures is a new language as sure as Rudyard Kipling or Ernest Hemingway were. Or *TIME* itself.”¹²⁰ *LIFE* editors would use the “quick nervousness” of this new picture language to depict labor’s uprising.

¹¹⁹ Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1942), 494-6.

¹²⁰ Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 21.

Chapter Two: Consuming Labor: *LIFE Magazine* and Rise of Mass Production Unionism, 1936-1942.

The great revolutions of journalism are not revolutions in public opinion but revolutions in the way in which public opinion is formed.

Archibald Mac Leish, 1936 telegraph to Henry Luce

The photograph is the most important instrument of journalism since the printing press.

Henry Luce, 1937 speech to Institute of Human Relations¹

“Everybody’s Doing It” headlined a *LIFE Magazine* photo-essay showing Americans “sitting down” in March of 1937. *LIFE* began publishing in November of the previous year—at about the same time the sit-downs began in earnest—and it avidly followed the developing labor scene. The photo-spread’s title suggested workers’ glee as they established unions in what Michael Denning calls “the age of the CIO.” [Fig. 2-1.]² Workers in unorganized industries sat down at their jobs, taking over plants—or taxis, hotels, stores, bowling alleys, even movie projection booths—where they worked. Taking advantage of the new National Labor Relations Act, workers used this tactic and

¹ In Loudon Wainwright, *The Great American Magazine: An Insider History of LIFE* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1986), 33; Luce quote in September 2, 1937 speech to the Institute of Human Relations, Williamstown, Massachusetts in John Jessup, ed. *The Ideas of Henry Luce* (New York, Atheneum, 1969), 43.

² “Everybody’s Doing It,” *LIFE*, 22 March 1937, 20-21. *LIFE* told readers that the sit-down phenomenon was thirteen months old, though Akron rubber workers pioneered the sit-down in 1934. Daniel Nelson, “Origins of the Sit-Down Era: Worker Militancy and Innovation in the Rubber Industry, 1934-1938,” *Labor History*, (1982): 198-225.

forced employers to negotiate.³ By December of 1936, rank and file's creative sally was in full swing with thousands of workers sitting down nationwide.

LIFE's cheery title, "Everybody's Doing It," universalized, minimizing socio-economic differences and translating socio-economic issues into entertainment terms. In "Everybody's Doing It," the "loafing" and "lolling" kitchen staff replete with chefs' toques grinned at the camera from the Washington D.C. Willard Hotel; Perth Amboy barbers perched in their clients' chairs; and "girl" strikers "slept snugly" in a wooden buggy inside the National Pants Company. The lone disquieting notes were photographs of an "embarrassed" Memphis strike-breaker shorn of her clothes by unionists but captured for the delectation of *LIFE*'s viewers' eyes and one of the Chicago taxi strike, where dozens of drivers, arms upheld, stood against a wall under the surveillance of a plainclothesman with pulled revolver. The essay treated the strikes breezily. Strikes were so lighthearted that other citizens, according to *LIFE*, imitated this tactic. The photo-essay showed an Illinois driver who "sat down" to pressure his town to upgrade its roads when his roadster got mired in the muck.

As we will see, "Everybody's Doing It" joined many photo-essays in the publication's early years that accepted organized labor. *LIFE*'s tolerance was a far cry from the censure found in other mass-market magazines of this era. But the magazine's wide-armed embrace of labor's tactics would not last long. By the time this photo-spread appeared in March, *LIFE*'s stance had become cautionary, at times even critical. The magazine worried with increasing stridency about the social strife that accompanied

³ For the strike of bowling alley pin boys in Flint, Michigan, see George Morris, "Sit Down!" *Sunday Worker Magazine*, 17 January 1937, 1.

labor's organization. And it wondered if labor's demands were not too much. Even as *LIFE* chided labor activists however, it would continue to champion stable, rule-of-law unionism. It admired labor's new leaders and imagined them as part of a new power equation in American life—a power equation heralding security in workers' lives. *LIFE*'s initial openness to labor activism, the magazine's subsequent reproach, and its simultaneous acceptance of collective bargaining and its rewards offers historians an unusual window onto shifting social and economic relationships in the late 1930s.

LIFE's labor coverage signaled working Americans enhanced participation in the American polity. Economically, workers gained increased power vis-à-vis their employers; politically, organized labor translated its numbers into a voting bloc and an effective alliance with the Democratic Party; and culturally, workers as a subject in the news, and with more money in their pockets—as consumers—entered mass culture as never before.⁴ But *LIFE* did more than document or comment on labor's improved status. As one of the premier vehicles of a growing mass culture of “sight and sound,” *LIFE* re-imagined working Americans and their unions in American society. *LIFE* pictures mattered—they culturally recast workers into America's mainstream.

“A Penetrating All-Seeing Eye with a Brain”

From the start *LIFE* was a smash hit; publishers could have crowed “Everybody's Reading It!” A quarter of a million copies were sold on *LIFE*'s first day of sale and within three months the magazine sold one million copies weekly. Throughout its first

year *LIFE* could not meet demand and its circulation doubled by 1938. By the war years almost three million people subscribed each year, and by the end of the 1940s, the magazine added another two and a half million subscribers.⁵ No magazine was read by as many Americans. In 1939 *LIFE* editors thought each issue passed through the hands of nineteen million readers and a decade later one in five Americans over ten years old flipped through *LIFE*'s pages. If success is gauged by imitation, here too *LIFE* had it, spawning *Look*, *Click*, *Focus*, *Foto*, *Photo*, *Picture* and *See*.⁶

LIFE's popularity must be qualified, of course. *LIFE* was always more popular with middle-class readers than with workers. And *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post* edged out *LIFE* in circulation. Other forms of mass media—radio and the movies—drew larger and more diverse audiences.⁷ In addition, the magazine received

⁴ Some news companies, like Scripps-Howard, were known to be open to labor. Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States through 260 years: 1690-1950* (New York: The MacMillan Company 1950), 554, 557.

⁵ In an unusual experiment to gauge demand the company sold an unlimited supply of *LIFE* to Worcester, Massachusetts news-stands. The experiment suggested they could sell five or six million copies nationally. Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 82. James Baughman, "Who Read *LIFE*?: The Circulation of America's Favorite Magazine," in *Looking at LIFE*, edited by Erika Doss (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 44.

⁶ *LIFE* had George Gallup's American Institute of Public Opinion document how readers shared *LIFE*. Other publishers believed this a ploy to boost ad sales but statisticians bore out *LIFE*'s claims. Erika Doss, ed. *Looking*, 2-3; Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 98. William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 129; and Wendy Kozol, *LIFE's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 35. *LIFE* spurred a revolution in corporate publications as well. Companies began to pepper annual reports and employee communications with photographs, believing them a "classless" visual lexicon. These publications often aped *LIFE* down to the red slug logo from the magazine's upper right-hand corner. Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 125, 133.

⁷ Doss, *Looking at LIFE*, 3, 5

disapprobation as well as accolades. In 1938 historian Bernard DeVoto described *LIFE*'s biggest stories, of the war in China, of Southern lynching, of a baby's birth, and of a woman undressing as crass: "equal parts of the decapitated Chinaman, the flogged Negro, the surgically explored peritoneum, and the rapidly slipping chemise." A decade later, media critic Marshall McLuhan called *LIFE* "nursery entertainment" for "homo-boobiens." For some, *LIFE*'s sensationalism and gushing patriotism represented all that was wrong with America.⁸

Nonetheless, as *LIFE*'s circulation numbers attest, and as the TIME-LIFE corporation's media empire indicate, the company manufactured a product that Americans could not get enough of. Hollywood mogul Sam Goldwyn, historian Carl Van Doren, and illustrator James Montgomery Flagg wrote to commend *LIFE*. "All the newsreels on your knee," said Flagg. "*LIFE*," Ginger Rogers wrote, "makes still pictures move and talk." A Vice President of Penn Mutual Life Insurance told *LIFE* that he found it hard to "resist the temptation to buy the 'cheap illustrated papers,' but with *LIFE* he would feel no shame. Photographer Elliott Erwitt remembered, "In those days before television, [*LIFE*] was terribly important. Every Thursday when it came out was a great event. You had to see it to see what was going on."⁹ Scholars agree. William Stott sees

⁸ Carol Squiers, "Looking at *LIFE*," *Artforum* 20, no. 4 (December 1981): 62; W.A. Swanberg, *Luce and His Empire* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1972), 145; Doss, *Looking at LIFE*, 14 n. 29. Not all highbrow critics targetted *LIFE* for abuse. Edmund Wilson wrote in a letter to Harold Ross that only two American magazines showed "imagination": Ross's *New Yorker* and "the Luce group." Letter to Harold Ross, April 22, 1942 in Edmund Wilson, *Letters on Literature and Politics, 1912-1972* edited by Elena Wilson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977 edition), 402.

⁹ "*LIFE* Begins," *LIFE*, 7 December 1936, 7; Kozol, *LIFE's America*, 6; for Goldwyn, van Doren and Flagg quotes see Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 82; for the Erwitt quote see Russell Miller, *Magnum: Fifty Years at the Front Line* (London:

LIFE at the nexus of the 1930s “documentary imagination” that sought to identify America’s essence to itself. And Richard Pells’s classic work on 1930s culture maintains “one’s attitude towards social issues grew increasingly dependent on the Lucean perspective of *LIFE* and *The March of Time*.” These historians echo the words of *LIFE*’s founder who saw publications like his as a national “glue.” For Luce, “because we are a vast continental nation” the magazine “far more than the newspaper... held the country together in a nationwide community.”¹⁰

Scholars date the “magazine revolution” from the turn of the century. Mass production moved businessmen to peddle their wares with advertising’s new lexicon. This new consumerist fantasia let publishers slash their prices to attain mass circulation and cover costs with advertising revenue. By 1910 the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Ladies Home Journal* each reached the homes of one million Americans. Like *LIFE*, these magazines were an agent of a new national culture of consumption. Newspapers too had nationalized and standardized. With chains like Gannett and Scripps, the wire services, syndicated columnists, the funnies, and Sunday magazine supplements, millions of Americans traversed the same reading terrain.¹¹

Pimlico, 1999), 107. Advertisers found the magazine significant, both Bakers Chocolate and Chrysler noted immediate boosts in sales from *LIFE* ads. Baughman, *Henry R. Luce and the Rise of the American News Media* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 94.

¹⁰ Stott *Documentary*, 129-130; Richard Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 263. *The March of TIME* was Luce’s newsreel production. See also Barry Karl, *The Uneasy State: The United States from 1915 to 1945*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983), 13, 54, 94. For Luce quote see Baughman, “Who Read *LIFE*?,” 42, n. 7.

¹¹ For the massification, nationalization, and standardization of news see: Mott, *American Journalism*; Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies’ Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880-1910* (Albany: State University of New York, 1994); Matthew Schneirov, *The Dream of a New Social Order:*

LIFE epitomized and furthered transformations in American media. *LIFE* was the fourth magazine in Luce's growing media empire. After Luce and Britt Haddon founded *TIME* in 1923, Luce inauspiciously began *Fortune* in the Great Depression's first year.¹² *LIFE* bridged the magazine revolution to the coming television revolution, becoming a visual mainstay in mid-century America. Virtually no magazine or newspaper had as broad a circulation base; no magazine or newspaper was as uniform a consumer product; and no publication was as visual as *LIFE*. Even the chain papers sold fewer copies than *LIFE*, and the only two top-sellers over *LIFE*, the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's* took decades to build their base. Chain papers were known for the voice and political persuasions of their owners, such as Hearst; columnists were chosen for their distinctive voices. *LIFE* had a special voice that was mass-produced and seemed "omniscient" and above partisanship.¹³ And though magazines had long printed photographs, it was rare

Popular Magazines in America, 1893-1914 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); and Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf Press, 1999), 82, n.26; 87, n.40 and Chapter 7, n. 17 and 21. Robert Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1937), 375-7 claimed that about half Middletown's news came from national syndicated columnists.

¹² Time, Inc. also published *Architectural Forum*.

¹³ Christopher Wilson informs my work here. Wilson characterizes the period from 1880 through 1920 as establishing mass audiences, in part through rhetorical strategies that differed from the earlier genteel publishing forms. The rhetoric of realism in these new mass-market magazines drew on the dual traditions of "respectable" journalism and "sensationalism." He argues the ethos of managerialism reoriented magazine fare to "practical" and "timely" issues, with a "new realistic voice- colloquial, forceful, direct, and seemingly personal." Magazine fare "maintain[ed] trust" and "stimulate[d] the readers attention" by offering the most up-to-date information and "the inside dirt"; using photographs to highlight truthfulness; proffering "common-sense" advice, scientific objectivity or "confidences" to their readers. Wilson argues the "realism" of mass-market magazines extended to the "design strategies" and "narrative devices" which engineered an "aura of authenticity by exerting greater influence over the reading process." *LIFE* exemplifies all these changes. Christopher Wilson, "The Rhetoric of Consumption:

for more than one photo to appear on a page. Even in the popular *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's* most pages lacked photos. More common in these publications were illustrations, bowing down, perhaps, to that genteel perception that the photos were appropriate for tabloids.¹⁴ Metropolitan newspapers had increased their use of photographs but still often printed a lone photograph for events deemed newsworthy. In the original "photo-magazines," such as the *Midweek Pictorial*, photos were plopped on the pages with little attentiveness to the relationship between the images or to a larger narrative. A modern photo-editor suggests the photo-gravure press was nothing more than a "parking lot of photographs." And the *Pictorial* never sold more than 10,000 copies at the newsstands. In contrast Luce wanted photos to communicate the news in as complex a fashion as the *New York Times*. He never achieved this end, but he transformed how publications used the photographic image.¹⁵

Luce and co-editor Haddon started *TIME* as a magazine to match the tempo of modern times. They filched news from metropolitan dailies and with a bit of "slicing,

Mass-Market Magazines and the Decline of the Gentle Reader, 1880-1920," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1920*, edited by Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 55; and Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 83, Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 46-7 uses the term omniscience.

¹⁴ A quick flip through *Collier's* or the *Post* substantiates this claim. It's worth noting that the *American Magazine* and *Collier's* both folded several years after television became popular. Their small town, genteel roots did not correspond to the desires of the new mass culture. See Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 86. Though *LIFE* folded in the early 1970s, it coexisted for two decades with television, in part because it embraced a more modern, cosmopolitan, and mass view of culture. Kammen, *American Culture*, Ch. 7 n. 58 on TV's effect.

¹⁵ Harold Evans attributes the "parking lot of photographs" quote to photojournalist Eugene Smith. Evans called the picture pages a "half-tone ghetto." Harold Evans, *Pictures on a Page: Photojournalism, Graphics and Picture Editing* (London: Pimlico,

trimming, flavoring, coloring and packaging” made it “more interesting and more salable than it was in real life” claimed one Luce biographer.¹⁶ The publication’s rhetoric was as confident as the decades they were born in, “the Real Dope, straight from the shoulder” said Dwight McDonald, a former writer. *TIME* joined “respectable” journalism and “sensationalism,” presenting “timely” issues meant to ground Americans in their rapidly changing environment.¹⁷ When Luce and Haddon sought financial backers their prospectus insisted “NO PUBLICATION HAS ADAPTED ITSELF TO THE TIME WHICH BUSY MEN ARE ABLE TO SPEND ON SIMPLY KEEPING INFORMED.” Almost two decades later Luce promoted the same journalistic project for *LIFE*. In a 1939 speech to the Stamford Connecticut Women’s Club, Luce told women-members that the TIME-LIFE enterprise was “exclusively devoted” to keeping “certain people widely and variously well informed” so that they could “understand where we stand between the mud and the stars.”¹⁸ The Time Corporation’s “information for information’s sake” allowed its readers to navigate reality as it stretched from the base to the sublime.

1978), 245. For the *Pictorial*’s limited newsstand sales, see Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 64, who quoted P.I. Prentice, Time, Inc.’s advertising head.

¹⁶ *TIME* editors lopped sixty pages or almost two-thirds of space over the then-leading news digest, the *Literary Digest*, with a circulation of 1,200,000, much of it to the “respectable, fumed oak table” crowd. Swanberg, *Luce*, 50, 57, 59.

¹⁷ Dwight MacDonald, “*TIME* and Henry Luce,” *The Nation*, 1 May 1937, 501. For the quotes on “Time-Speak” see Swanberg, *Luce*, 57, 60, 87, 122, 123; James Guimond, *American Photography and the American Dream* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 154 provides an apt description here.

¹⁸ For the *TIME* prospectus see Swanberg, *Luce*, 53; for Luce’s aims for *LIFE* see Jessup, *Ideas of Henry Luce*, 53.

Luce wanted to be the first to publish a picture magazine. He claimed chatter about them filled cocktail parties from the early 1930s.¹⁹ American publishers looked to Europe where photo magazines caught the imagination in the 1920s. Germany had the *Munchner Illustrierte Presse* and the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. There workers even produced their own photo-magazine, the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, based on photographs from Germany's many worker camera clubs and avante-garde photographers like John Heartfield. France had *Vu* and *La Vie Parisienne*, Britain had the *Illustrated Weekly*. Over the twenties and thirties mass market magazines such as *McClures*, *Vanity Fair*, *National Geographic*, and *Collier's* began to experiment with photography's allure, and nipping at *TIME's* heels, *Newsweek*, subtitled their publication *The Illustrated News Weekly*.²⁰

¹⁹ Many were considering such a magazine, including the Cowles brothers of the *Des Moines Register*, H.E. North, a public relations executive at A&P, and Crowell publishers, who put out *Collier's*. Some place the idea for *LIFE* with Luce's wife, Claire Booth Luce, who tried to interest her Conde Nast employers in one. Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 2-4. But Luce flirted for years with developing a picture magazine. Time, Inc. set up a research division for a photo magazine in 1933 under Daniel Longwell, *Ibid.*, 6, 18. Roy Hoopes's biography of Ralph Ingersoll gives Ingersoll credit for implementing the magazine, arguing that Luce took Ingersoll's "baby" from him because *LIFE* was "big" and it "belonged to him." Roy Hoopes, *Ralph Ingersoll: A Biography* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), 13-15.

²⁰ Kozol, *LIFE's America*, 29; Squiers, "Looking at *LIFE*," 59 claims all newsmen had a dummy photo magazine in their pockets. Elson, *TIME*, 270, and 272 on *Newsweek*. Wainwright claims that Luce nagged at *TIME* staff in the early 1930s to suggest "surefire pictures" to the Managing Editor, *Great American Magazine*, 6. Many believed *TIME* had a more sophisticated understanding of the photographic image. Claimed art and commercial photography luminary Edward Steichen, *TIME* had "one of the 'really meritorious uses' of news photographs in the 1920s." I do not believe this is born out for the 1934 strike wave, Elson, *TIME*, 270. James Baughman argues convincingly, that *TIME's* language was visual, even iconographic, unlike other papers and magazines, Henry R. Luce, 43.

Luce went all out in his planning for *LIFE*. He invested heavily in its start-up. The magazine operated in the red for its first years, but Luce provided a steady infusion of cash. He rearranged staff responsibilities at *TIME* and *Fortune* to give *LIFE* high priority. Luce also hired top European photo editor Kurt Korff as a consultant to get *LIFE* off the ground. Luce obtained rights to all AP photos, giving *LIFE* access to thousands of images from foreign and domestic sources. When AP's wire photos didn't provide the story-lines *LIFE* editors desired, the publishers hired even more staff photographers and stringers.²¹

Luce's goal: to sell America to itself. Luce wanted to mold opinions not just publish the news around him. As America's booster, Luce rarely relinquished an opportunity to push the nation and its character. His most saccharine depiction of the nation may have come in a speech to senior staff at the Waldorf-Astoria fourteen years after *LIFE*'s initial publication. Speaking as the "regular guy" he believed all editors should be, Luce regaled listeners with the story of his youth and his convictions about America, convictions born in the crucible of his childhood as the son of Christian missionaries. He enthused about the strawberries and ice cream, chocolate cake, and

²¹ Wilson Hicks claimed in 1952 that *LIFE* had access to 350,000 images over the course of one year, and used approximately 10,000 of those. In *Words and Pictures: An Introduction to Photojournalism* (New York: Harper, 1952), 58. Korff of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* helped them set up a working picture file, suggested they hire staff photographers who worked exclusively for TIME-LIFE, accessed picture sources for them, promoted a brief, catchy title, and most importantly gave editors "picture sense"—how to see in the photograph more than the content. Elson, *TIME*, 272; Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 15-16, 27, 28. For 1936 arrangements with AP see Wainwright, 34. See John Shaw Billings's thoughts on staff responsibility shifts, along with Luce's demand that Billings have *TIME* reporters "help out with news" in Wainwright, *Ibid.*, 50. Ingersoll felt *LIFE*'s publication affected other TIME, Inc.

fireworks of the Fourth of Julys celebrated in the American community in China where he was raised. In reminiscing about the national characters he encountered there he contrasted the treatment of a “coolie” by a multi-national cast of characters: the German who would beat him, “over the bare back with their sticks;” the Englishman who would stiff him with a cool word, and the American. “The Americans didn’t beat coolies; they didn’t know how to be mean, and they always overpaid. If an American did lose his temper, that was a lucky break for the coolie—because it meant he got twice as big a tip.”²² A better description of *LIFE*’s perception of Americanism could not be written. Luce hitched his sense of American beneficence to foreign policy, as he knew with “every nerve and fiber God himself had intended [America] to be...much more than a great state... it is expected to play a great part in history today.”²³ America’s prowess came from its technological know-how, its business mastery, but above all else America’s national character which was based on a disposition as innocent and sweet as the Fourth of July’s Luce so remembered. Luce thought if American citizens understood their greatness, they could undertake the nation’s rightful role in world affairs.

Luce’s picture magazine was intended to reflect the highest image of America back to itself, even if the magazine took regular excursions down the nation’s seamier

publications, writing that “after the cyclone of *LIFE* had whizzed though the back yard and taken off half the living room and kitchen.” Hoopes, *Ingersoll*, 183.

²² Jessup, *Ideas of Henry Luce*, 378.

²³ *Ibid.*, 382. Here Luce echoed his words published in *LIFE* a decade before, in his much publicized 1941 essay “The American Century,” *LIFE*, 15 February 1941, discussed below. *LIFE* also published essays by Walter Lippmann in *LIFE* which emphasized that America, like Rome and Great Britain, had to “accept that destiny and to make ready in order to be the equal to it.” Walter Lippmann. “The America Destiny” *LIFE*, 5 June 1939, 73; and “America and the World,” 3 June 1940, 103; see Squiers, “Looking at *LIFE*,” 60 on this.

side. Early *LIFE* photographer Carl Mydans described the photographers' work this way: "We had an insatiable drive to search out every fact of American life, photograph it and hold it up proudly, like a mirror, to a pleased and astonished readership... America had an impact on us and each week we made an impact on America."²⁴ Much as Roy Stryker believed that Farm Security Administration photographs could provide an "encyclopedia of American life," Luce believed historians of the future, without "fumbling through dozens of newspapers and magazines" could get an accurate picture of that era by leafing through *LIFE*.²⁵ If Alfred Kazin criticized Americans for their naïve trust in the photographs' fractions of reality, *LIFE* proclaimed this the magazine's strength—it would "make an effective mosaic out of the fragmentary documents which pictures, past and present are." This mosaic would "reveal" to Americans "the nature of the dynamic

²⁴ Stott, *Documentary Expression*, 130. *LIFE* found its stride in the 1940s with its war coverage, but in keeping with Mydans suggestion of *LIFE* as a mirror of America, the magazine retained a strong domestic focus. Editors explicitly tied *LIFE*'s mission to American values, to American history, and to America's prospects. A 1939 issue devoted to "some of the things which are right about America" printed photographs of mythic American events: the first war photographs ever, daguerreotypes of the 1848 Mexican War, photographs of the Brooklyn Bridge under construction, and photographs of Westward pioneers and gold-rush prospectors. *LIFE* linked its modern mission with the photographic record of American history. Editors maintained, "Photography as art in America took a second place to photography as a medium for the recording of history. In no time and in no country has no such history been made under the open sky by free men as during America's last century." *LIFE* enmeshed itself in the nearly hundred year document of the nation. "American Yesterdays: Nearly a Century of National History has been Recorded by the Camera" offered photographs of the 19th century metropolis, *LIFE*, 5 June 1939, 31-39.

²⁵ Simultaneously the magazine offered its "Speaking of Pictures" feature which opened *LIFE* each week. It often showed trick photographs, demystifying photography as a practice. It also offered photographs of celebrities who didn't want their photographs taken, or candid photographs of elites, suggesting the camera eye missed nothing. Doss, *Looking at LIFE*, 2; Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 29; and Elson, *TIME, Inc.*, 278.

social world we live in.”²⁶ *LIFE*’s picture editor, Wilson Hicks, thought *LIFE*’s photographs “entered at once the world-wide battle for men’s minds,” not only for the photograph itself, but because of the “social, political or cultural report and commentary,” that the photo joined.²⁷ Hicks’s quote suggests an important rationale for *LIFE*. Luce believed the picture magazine appropriate for a new mass era. He feared “the great new physical reality in society—crowds” on “American beaches...in the movies...even the crowds advertisers yearn for—mass circulation.” He believed only if they had “a clearer image of itself and a broader sense of common referents” could Americans retain their democratic promise.²⁸

The unquestionable tie between seeing and knowing undergird *LIFE*’s project, and editors sounded this link over and over, perhaps nowhere with more drama than in a 1940 ad with a pair of eyes that stared intently at the reader, drawing them in. Editors placed the eyes so that they spanned two full pages and then cropped the image tight to further emphasize the gaze. [Fig. i-1.]²⁹ *LIFE*’s ad maligned the bias of “editorial vision” afflicting most news organizations. The “afflictions” included “Myopia—the shortsightedness” that “naively envision[s] our land as a self-sufficient, tight little island;” along with “Hyperopia—the farsightedness... that it is scarcely aware of tremendous things astir at home,” because of its involvement in foreign affairs; and

²⁶ Kazin’s quote is in Chapter One. Elson, *TIME, Inc.*, 279. Wainwright quotes from a May 1936 dummy which argued that “thousands of cameras are seeing it [world events], in fragments, all over the world every day,” but that no periodical was “devoted to piecing the world’s picture story together,” *Great American Magazine*, 35.

²⁷ Hicks, *Words and Pictures*, 85.

²⁸ Jessup, *Ideas of Henry Luce*, 28-9, 42. For elite and middle-class fears of mass man see Stuart Ewen, *PR! A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 60-73.

²⁹ *LIFE*, 25 March 1940, 78-79.

“Astigmatism” a “distorted perception” that was “too partisan, too sectional, too romantic.” *LIFE* was “refreshingly free from any faults of such focus” with its “completely new editorial viewpoint” that had its roots in its “penetrating, all-seeing eye with a brain”—the camera.³⁰

The “all-seeing eye with a brain” relied on words as well as images. Editors transmitted meaning not through single images, but through sophisticated layouts of multiple images and text that guided interpretation of the photographs. Ralph Ingersoll who helped get *LIFE* off the ground, Luce, and the art directors worked hard to create this new visual journalism, and it took them several years to feel that they had mastered it. Luce believed by “publishing pictures in groups of 2 to 20” *LIFE* would create synergy, “in all cases the whole will be more interesting and significant than the sum of its parts.”³¹ But like a film montage, the juxtaposition or sequencing of photographs created relationships akin to narratives where the words were implied. Wilson Hicks, who served as AP head picture editor before coming to *LIFE* in March of 1937 called this “the third effect.”³² Actual words: story headlines, captioning, and often a larger story accompanied and gave further meaning to *LIFE* photographs. *Words and Pictures*, title to photojournalism’s “bible,” written by Hicks, suggests that both were equal partners. As Harold Evans, the former picture editor of London’s *Sunday Times* notes, words pin

³⁰ *LIFE*, 25 March 1940, 78-79. *LIFE* stories and advertisements privileged the direct, unmediated truth transmitted by the camera, stories suggested even editors had to submit to the photographs’ truth. Doss, *Looking at LIFE*, 17.

³¹ Ingersoll described not being able to “see” the dummy, the “layouts” were so “confused and bewildered,” that his “eyes wouldn’t focus.” Hoopes, *Ingersoll*, 146; and Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 30.

³² For Hicks’s transfer see Elson, *TIME, Inc.*, 305. For the third effect see Evans, *Pictures on a Page*, 237.

down the “emotional and cognitive values” of a photograph they “identify...explain relationships and elaborate.” For Evans, words “counter our irritating perversity in each drawing different, even contradictory meanings from the same image.”³³ *LIFE* editors called their stories the “significance paragraph,” and *LIFE*’s narratives were known for having a tidy beginning, middle, and end.³⁴

LIFE’s emphasized that readers were getting “the full picture” on almost any subject. Luce promised readers this kaleidoscope in the magazine’s prospectus.

To see life: to see the world; to eyewitness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things—machines, armies, multitudes, shadows in the jungle and on the moon; to see man’s work...; to see things thousands of miles away, things hidden behind walls and within rooms... to see and take pleasure in seeing; to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed... Thus to see, and to be shown, is now the will and new expectancy of half mankind.³⁵

Seeing offered the full panoply of human experience: awe, pleasure, excitement, sadness, pity, and edification. In seeing, all Americans would know—just about everything.

Who and what readers would see also constituted a totality.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people contributed their photographic presence to the pages of this issue. French aristocrats, New York Stock Brokers, Montana barkeeps, gooney golfers, English judges at prayer and English ladies in the rain, babies, farmers, sailors, doctors, crowds, a high school class, a one-

³³ A central tenet of much photographic scholarship is that the photograph is polysemous, many meanings can be attached to it, and the meanings shift over time. Evans, *Pictures on a Page*, 237.

³⁴ Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 30. For narrative coherence see Elson, *TIME, Inc.*, 304, who credits Luce with coining the term “photo-essay,” for he believed “photos, if properly chosen and sequenced properly, with minimal words, could communicate like literature.” *Ibid.*, 306; and Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 44.

³⁵ Luce had the writing help of then employee, but soon-to-be New Dealer, Archibald MacLeish. See Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 33. James Guimond suggests the kaleidoscope created a false sense of totality. *American Photography*, 151-162.

legged man, a strip artist a bearded Russian, The President of the United States and the Late Sarah Bernhardt.³⁶

This long list, intended to be heterogeneous to the extreme—French aristocrats and a strip artist—implied the camera missed nothing.

This mishmash of characters, high and low, eccentric and mundane suggested *LIFE*'s visual democracy. As all subjects came before the camera eye they became a homogeneous product, *LIFE* annulled distinctions based on class, ethnicity, region and education. Hollywood celebrities, corporate heads, New York socialites had something in common with mom and dad in Middletown, USA. *LIFE*'s visual democracy also lay in the capacity for men and women of all social strata to own what the camera captured—if they plunked down a dime for *LIFE*.

These dimes mattered. Luce fancied himself an opinion maker, but his status rested on business savvy—not opinions. *LIFE*'s success depended on circulation numbers and ad sales. Hence *LIFE*'s panorama of America was always a shifting admixture of *LIFE*'s photographs and America's growing consumer culture embodied in advertisements. At times it would be difficult to discern a line between the two. The magazine touted its ads as "illuminating a cross section of modern American living."³⁷

Like *LIFE*'s editorial copy and photographs, the ads straddled mud and stars: with

³⁶ *LIFE*, 23 November 1936.

³⁷ Because of high production costs *LIFE* relied for ad sales to a higher degree than typical for mass-market magazines. George Gallup, who was then at advertising agency Young and Rubicam, thought advertisers should "adapt" *LIFE*'s photojournalistic techniques, and other advertisers taunted that they would so copy *LIFE* techniques that "you can't tell ads from editorial pages." Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 42; Daniel Longwell believed "*LIFE* came right out of the advertising world of the U.S." *Ibid.*, 14. For quote on ads contributing to the magazine's appeal and worth see, *LIFE*, 25 March 1940, 78-79.

promotions for Ex-Lax, "The original chocolated laxative" which "gave a gentle nudge" for "when nature forgets," but also the visionary "City's of Tomorrow" where automobiles would be whisked along expressways "without a stop."³⁸

LIFE was not just a purveyor, but itself a product in America's expanding consumer marketplace. *TIME*, then *Fortune*, then *LIFE*, hired hundreds of researchers, writers, and photographers, whose work was organized and then shaped by editors and picture editors to put out a consistent product. This mass production technique effaced any one, predominant voice, even that of Luce. Dwight McDonald described this insistent standardization in a well-known critique that appeared in the *Nation* in *LIFE*'s first year.

Like all machines it is vastly impersonal, its products bear the name of no individual author, appearing as pronouncements *ex cathedra* with the whole weight of the organization... The mechanism is unparalleled in journalism. A corps of researchers gather the raw material from newspapers, libraries, interviews, phone calls, learned and technical journals, cables and telegrams from special correspondents all over the world. A corps of writers strain this material clear of all editorial bias and fabricate it into articles...[and]...picture captions. A corps of editors headed by Luce in person, revise the finished product word by word, removing any last lingering odor of partisanship.³⁹

³⁸ Both ads came from *LIFE*, 12 July 1937. The magazine failed to operate in the black for its first several years. *LIFE* underestimated how popular the magazine would be, and charged advertisers far less than the production costs involved in producing millions of magazines weekly.

³⁹ McDonald thought Luce's ideas predominated. "*TIME*," 501. Luce personally oversaw each schedule, but he sought an open-ended product. Jessup, *Ideas*, 27. Billings oversaw every layout. Elson, *TIME, Inc.*, 307. According to James Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, "Like the prestige dailies, widely read periodicals not only eschewed advocacy, but very often ideological consistency and analysis as well...*TIME*... would have opinions. Articles would not quote various voices but speak from one. This persuasion would not be narrowly partisan or ideological. It would be omnipresent," 31. For the hierarchical, "group journalism," practiced at *TIME*, *Ibid.*, 41. On the first issue alone Ralph Ingersoll and Archibald MacLeish wrote many of the captions. Hoopes, *Ingersoll*,

In *LIFE* and *TIME*, current events were the resource shaped each week into a consumer good.⁴⁰

LIFE's Managing Editor made sure the news had a dash of "charm." If *TIME*'s personality was that of a smart-alecky insider, *LIFE*'s personality was softer, more "relaxed." For Luce, *TIME*'s "business" was "making enemies," and *LIFE*'s "making friends." Perhaps it should come as no surprise that *LIFE*, published in the same year that Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* became a bestseller, should want to become its readers "friend" by keeping them in the know just like a next-door neighbor.⁴¹ At the magazine's inception Luce combed over each issue to ensure that the magazine kept its "CHARM," and maintained its status as America's "friend." He even wrote memos to staff reminding them that "Charm does not come naturally out of news," and hence staff must "definitely plot and plan" for it. Luce "fussed" for years

151. Wainwright thought about 250 worked at the magazine in the 1950s. *Great American Magazine*, 107.

⁴⁰ Luce definitely saw *LIFE* as a newsmagazine, in the fall of 1938 he wrote a memo where he claimed "the cause of 'effectively informative journalism'...is again proven in *LIFE*. It probably published more solid information to more people than all the other mass magazines in American put together," and he compared *LIFE*'s mission to *TIME*'s. Elson, *TIME, Inc.*, 359. But the news fed into Luce's factory bore only a slight relationship to the end product. Claimed one *TIME* writer, his writing was "turned...into sausage meat... and then stuffed into the magazine." Photographers too complained that editors and art directors used only a small portion of what they brought the magazine. Swanberg, *Luce*, 150; Lonergard, *LIFE Photographers*, 37. Anger at *LIFE*'s economic power, and the control they had over images led to the founding of the Magnum Agency in the late 1940s. In a letter to H.L. Mencken, Edmund Wilson blamed "Hollywood, Henry Luce, *The Reader's Digest* and the government propaganda services" for "eating up all the talent," and causing artists to self-censor. July 23, 1946 in Wilson, *Letters on Literature*, 438-9.

⁴¹ Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 93. For Carnegie see Warren Susman, *Culture as History, The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973); 165-6, 200.

over *LIFE*'s "recipe," but "charm" remained essential to his definition. Daniel Longwell, the Managing Editor in 1946 reminded staff in an internal memo, "*LIFE* can lash out, but *LIFE* does like people." Luce concurred, writing in this memo's margins "Excellent!" and "Swell."⁴²

Recognizing *LIFE* as a consumer product with a voice and an unusually heterogeneous mix of subjects helps explain *LIFE*'s editorial direction. When Americans went to the movies or to a newsstand to pick-up a magazine they wanted something new, something to entice them. Simultaneously, consumers wanted to trust that their money was well spent, the product they bought needed a consistent, recognized voice and predictable content.⁴³ Americans who bought *LIFE* each week got a product where high and low mixed, a product where news was entertainment and where entertainment was news, and a product that reflected their best aspirations. Luce did infuse *LIFE* with his views—in some issues more apparently than others—and he surrounded himself with men and women who shared his elite milieu, his corporate liberal ideals, and his boosteristic approach to America. But TIME-LIFE also employed well-known dissenters to these views. Only such a heterogeneous group of photographers, writers, editors, and researchers could produce a product with broad market appeal.⁴⁴

⁴² Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 28, 74, 161.

⁴³ Film scholars' conception of "regulated difference" among mass-produced studio fare helps explain *LIFE*'s unlikely mix of subjects. Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 37-46.

⁴⁴ Max Lerner described a "gulf" between himself and Ralph Ingersoll as that "of two Americas" of social and class differences. Ingersoll shared Luce's Ivy League, Protestant background. On the other hand, Time, Inc. employed writers that Luce referred to as "Old Bolsheviks." See Hoopes, *Ingersoll*, viii, 166. Magnum photographers remember *LIFE*'s Wilson Hicks looking for an Ivy League photographer to round out his staff! Miller, *Magnum*, 107.

Luce aspired to publish a magazine with “class,” but like the movies and then TV, he wanted a mass medium. When *LIFE* was first getting off the ground in 1936, Luce and Roy Larsen, who became TIME-LIFE’s President, had dinner at the Savoy with John and Gardner Cowles, mid-western publishers who were planning *LOOK*. After examining *LOOK*’s mock-ups Larsen thought *LIFE* would beat its competitors. The Cowles brothers, were going for the “mass crowd,” those who read the *New York Daily News*. Larsen “predicted” that *LIFE* “would be the class *and* the mass.” Luce worried about catering to “the mob,” but he also rejected a strictly high-brow, or even middlebrow production. Internal memos indicate staff understood photos spoke to all classes, “the bank president and the truck driver.” Despite high initial outlays, Luce kept the magazine’s price low—so it could compete with other mass magazines. And *LIFE* touted its appeal. One study they commissioned showed the “D” groups, the “great mass of working people” read *LIFE* at rates almost comparable to their competitors. Other class tiers read *LIFE* more than workers, but *LIFE* told advertisers that the “D” group mattered too.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ For mass mediums see Wilson, “The Rhetoric of Consumption,” 55-59; and Kozol, *LIFE’s America*, 31. A Larsen presentation to the Time, Inc. board claimed that *LOOK* would go for the *Daily News* crowd. To hedge its bets *TIME* bought seventeen percent of *LOOK* stock at its formation. For Larsen quote see Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 60-61. For Luce wanting to address the masses, if not the mob, see Elson, *TIME, Inc.*, 285; Wainwright, 38. For interest in reaching mass and class see, Ralph Ingersoll’s first prospectus “notes on Picture Magazine,” written in May of 1936. It was written one month before Luce and MacLeish’s prospectus. “Through the next decade the movement of pictures into journalism will be so rapid as possibly to revolutionize the journalistic machinery of the world....For the whole world... such pictures are for rich or poor, without regard for race, class, creed or prejudice... you use one vernacular to a truck driver, another to a bank president but truck driver and bank president will stand shoulder to shoulder to watch a parade.... PICTURE’s subject being the world we live in...plutocrat and filling station attendant will alike pay to sit in its rubber-neck wagon

LIFE had lots of middlebrow fare—photo-stories intended to edify readers and give them the imprimatur of being cultured, whether learning about America's regional arts, the latest in modernist architecture, or about the nation's democratic past.⁴⁶ Yet *LIFE* also featured the salacious, the celebrated, the cosmopolitan, and the carnivalesque. *LIFE* reveled in sensationalist stories of gangsters, the feeble-minded and their offspring, country hicks, New York socialites and New England intellectuals. As much a forum for his own high-flown ideas—along with those of Walter Lippman and Winston Churchill—*LIFE* was a kiosk for consumer culture, a county fair for regional trends, and an after-hours club for the insalubrious.⁴⁷ Luce included organized labor in *LIFE*'s imagined national community, a huge shift for magazine publishers. Luce's politics shaped *LIFE*, but so his desire to reach the largest consumer base.

and ride around the world." Hoopes, *Ingersoll*, 143-4; and Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 89. Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 30, 32, on pricing. For advertisement, see "Bigger'n We Thought!" *LIFE*, 15 April 1940.

⁴⁶ Luce always wanted to speak to Main Street readers, but his writers offered a cosmopolitan look at the world that embraced high, low and everything in between. *LIFE* promoted New York modernism, but in the thirties it promoted the regionalists, and offered more incisive arts coverage than the middlebrow *Collier's* or *Post*. Baughman, "Who Read *LIFE*," 41-48; and Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 98, where he quotes a journalism professor who claims *LIFE* was the "greatest disseminator of art that mankind has ever known." For the mid-century emergence of middlebrow culture, see Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), x-xi. See also Janice Radway, "Mail-Order Culture and its Critics: The Book of the Month Club, Commodification and Consumption, and the Problem of Cultural Authority" in *Cultural Studies*, edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge: 1992), 512-531. What *LIFE* shared with other middlebrow cultural efforts like the Book of the Month club, was less its earnest sensibility towards culture, than the sense that the proper packaging and marketing would enhance America's cultural knowledge.

⁴⁷ For Luce's difficulty in pegging the meaning of *LIFE* see, Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 28, who says Luce fussed over the magazine because its definition eluded him.

Luce's own political commitments may have contributed to his seeking out of new audiences. Luce could seem businessmen's best friend, and labor's enemy. In a 1929 speech the publisher claimed "Business is essentially our civilization," and he thought an "aristocracy" of businessmen could best lead the nation. He denounced FDR and his New Deal for stirring up anti-business sentiment.⁴⁸ TIME-LIFE staff criticized this pro-business slant. Dwight McDonald called Luce the "great mouthpiece" of business.⁴⁹ And Ingersoll, who left TIME Inc. to found *PM Magazine*, an innovative, photograph-laden weekly, attacked *TIME*'s labor coverage. Ingersoll wrote Luce in the mid 1930s that the "well-fed, newly rich Yale boys" at *TIME* could see unions only as something "to be laughed at, baited, ignored," a sentiment he believed other opinion leaders did not share. Luce's peers and personal friends, like columnist Dorothy Thompson or promotions writer Laura Hobson, also believed Luce insensitive to labor's difficulties.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Jessup, *Ideas of Henry Luce*, 13, 21, 99. The business quotes are from Hoopes, *Ingersoll*, 84.

⁴⁹ Macdonald called Luce "the great mouthpiece" for business, "*TIME, Fortune, LIFE, The Nation*, 22 May 1937, 586; Hoopes, *Ingersoll*, 156. Luce's publications were also criticized for being uncritical of fascism. Hoopes, 5, 99. Ingersoll's biographer claims Luce swung right in 1937, when he attempted to control *Fortune*'s message more, saying it could either be "a great Communist magazine or a great Capitalist magazine," and that he wanted the latter. Nonetheless, Hoopes says Luce didn't admonish Ingersoll on labor coverage in *TIME* until 1938, when he memoed, "I applaud your insistence on catching up on Labor. But now I think the time had come for a slight change of attitude." Luce insisted that by angering all, he could achieve that chimerical journalistic goal—objectivity. Hoopes, 168, 179; and Elson, *TIME, Inc.*, 347.

⁵⁰ Ingersoll blamed *TIME*'s news set-up, which synthesized news from metropolitan dailies and the news service as also responsible for *TIME*'s "stupid and reactionary" coverage. Elson, *Time, Inc.*, 322 and Hoopes, *Ingersoll*, 157. Elson and Hoopes do not date the memo, but claimed it was written when *LIFE* was first getting off the ground, probably in August of 1936. Thompson was married to novelist Sinclair Lewis. Laura

But Luce's personality, his commitment to a shared abundance, and the broad mix of viewpoints among his staff kept him and his publications from pushing a pro-business absolutism. Luce wanted his publications to be "for Private Capitalism," as he memoed staff in May of 1937, but he claimed his publications' objectivity lie in their ability to offend right and left.⁵¹ And if he despised Roosevelt, Luce still promoted a Keynesian economics with federal responsibility for full employment and adequate shelter. *LIFE* stories criticized the WPA, even as they admired the technological prowess of many New Deal projects.⁵² Even his business magazine, *Fortune*, included labor leaders in their roundtable discussions of pressing economic issues.⁵³ Luce tried to curb the anti-business animus he perceived among staff, but he still wanted "dissenters," "prima

Hobson, a Time, Inc. promotion writer and wife of one of Luce's Yale friends also believed him "against labor." Swanberg, *Luce*, 148.

⁵¹ Jessup, *Ideas of Henry Luce*, 25, 56.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 24, 26, 225-6; and "The Roosevelt Rule: A Pictorial Record," *LIFE*, 4 January 1937, 23-45.

⁵³ Luce was concerned about loss of liberty with a planned economy, and believed business could provide abundance for all. He rarely addressed business's failure to do so. See "Liberals, Conservatives and Liberty," a speech given in April 1934; and "Calculability of Abundance," given to the Ohio Bankers Association in November 1937, in Jessup, *Ideas of Henry Luce*, 224-236. In 1933 *Fortune* published several positive stories on the "Wonder Boy" New Dealers, the Tennessee Valley Authority, (written by James Agee) and the National Industrial Recovery Act, despite Luce's views. Archibald MacLeish pushed Ingersoll who then was Managing Editor of *Fortune* in a leftist direction. Ingersoll claimed that *Fortune* gave labor "a fair hearing" in part because writers doing stories "learned for the first time what a hell of a time the working people of America had had," making writers sympathetic. Ingersoll also claimed "labor leaders made out a much better case for their side." When *Fortune* staff organized its first Round Table, it involved the president of New Jersey Bell Telephone, a Steel Workers Organizing Committee regional director, a Harvard economist known for his labor sympathies, and a national farm advocacy leader. The roundtable sought consensus among such diverse leaders, and this commitment to technocratic consensus, a consensus that included labor's voice, defined the politics of the multi-national liberals. *FORTUNE*, March 1939. In the electoral realm, Luce's publications actively promoted Wilkie and Dewey in 1940 and 1944.

donnas,” or “Old Bolsheviks” on staff. Luce enjoyed a good debate, though he enjoyed winning more. His publications’ market success indicated that including a variety of perspectives made good business sense.⁵⁴

This openness to transformations in America’s economic calculus were reflected in *LIFE*’s pages. Most scholars suggest *LIFE* represented a “classless” world where those lacking privilege, and their pressing, controversial problems were kept out. *LIFE* did shrink from depicting the poverty millions of Americans endured at home, though they often depicted poverty’s ravages abroad.⁵⁵ African-Americans almost never entered

⁵⁴ Jessup, *Ideas of Henry Luce*, 54-58. Luce stuck his head out to advance risky positions, often because of loyalty to staff. In the 1930s *LIFE* managers hired the Central European photographers Otto Hagel and Hansel Mieth, despite their well-known leftist sympathies. In the 1940s, when Margaret Bourke-White was attacked for pro-Soviet tendencies, Luce refused to fire her as conservatives sought. In this same period business men wrote to the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) to complain that Luce’s magazines hired writers who were “on the same side of the street, socialistically speaking,” and printing features about the “discredited Englishman” Bertrand Russell. See correspondence, Roscoe Peacock to H.W. Prentis, Jr. of the Armstrong Cork Company, November 29 and December 4, 1943, and correspondence, H.W. Prentis to Fred Crawford, President NAM, December 1, 1943 in Mr. Weisenburger’s files, 1938-1943, *NAM papers*, SIIIb847, the Hagley Archive, (hereafter *Hagley*.) Time, Inc.’s internal labor practices were also more flexible than other companies. Overwork was a common complaint at TIME-LIFE and there were high wage disparities among staff. Nonetheless most employees thought Luce generous. He offered stock ownership to employees in 1929 to award productivity and provide long-term security. He also accepted his employees’ unionization. It took months to hammer out a contract, but Luce didn’t fight the union as others did. Elson, *Time, Inc.*, 392-401; David Nasaw, *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 200), 518-520.

⁵⁵ Guimond, *American Photography*, 158. Retrospectively *LIFE* touted its depiction of the Great Depression but it published very few articles about the economic difficulties Americans faced in the second Depression of 1937. There were a few exceptions. In “Muncie, Indiana is the Great U.S. Middletown” of twenty-three photos the article showed the home of one southern transplant family, with a “hillbilly drawl” who lived in a home lined with paper cartons; 10 May 1937, 15-24. And Luce’s favored story on wheat production showed migrant families. 3 August 1937, 18. Such images were rare. *LIFE* also printed a few photographs of poverty in self-advertisement. In “The South of Erskine Caldwell is Photographed by Margaret Bourke-White,” *LIFE*, 22 November

the pages of *LIFE* except in stereotyped form.⁵⁶ Immigrants too were hard to find in *LIFE*'s America, though one story we will examine spoke of the barefoot wives of a Pennsylvania steel town who "chose" to live miles from the factory to maintain their quaint gardening practices.⁵⁷

But *LIFE* wasn't classless, as the American workers who joined unions—especially the CIO—appeared again and again in *LIFE*'s pages. In the publication's first year, labor's uprising appeared in almost two-thirds of the issues in at a minimum, a captioned photograph. Organized labor was the subject of seven feature stories in its first full year of publication. Two photo-essays explored the sit-down strike phenomenon; one story looked at how unionization brought prosperity, two stories explored the Wagner Act and the NLRB. Only two of the stories criticized unions: one that explored the "right to work," and a second on the murder of the union president of the sandhogs. Luce commended these lead stories, believing they were a perfect rationale for *LIFE*'s "Big News-Picture Story of the Week." Labor's upheaval also appeared regularly in the

1937, 48-52 editors touted their staff photographer. In "Speaking of Pictures... These by *LIFE* Prove Facts in 'Grapes of Wrath,'" *LIFE*, 19 February 1940, 10-12. *LIFE* touted Harold Bristol's photographs which John Steinbeck used to write his classic novel. But *LIFE* did not print Bristol's "Okie" photos until after the movie came out, years after Bristol took them.

⁵⁶ One photo-story, "Negroes: The U.S. also Has a Minority Problem" in October 1938 explored African-American lives from 1936-1940. It received positive reviews from black respondents in the "Letters to the Editor" section, despite photos of men working with cotton captioned "Tote dat barge. Lift dat bale," Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 100. Additionally one article addressed Jim Crow on the rails. More typically photostories were downright degrading: an image of an African-American with his mouth spread wide by golf balls, 27 February 1939; a cover story on watermelon farming featuring the backside of a black man taking a load of watermelons to market and an inside picture of a "pickaninny" joyfully eating watermelon, 9 August 1937. Lynchings and black-on-black crime were presented as spectacle, 26 April 1937.

⁵⁷ *LIFE*, 15 March 1937, 14.

“*LIFE* on the American Newsfront” feature, where photos drawn from the wire services, “the most newsworthy snaps made anywhere in the U.S.” appeared.⁵⁸ No other news story merited such attention.

LIFE could be criticized for distorting labor’s story, for minimizing workers’ difficulties, and ignoring the rank and file. But the magazine sometimes laughed with, not at labor, only baited labor around specific concerns and never ignored labor as other mass-market publications did. *LIFE*’s openness to unions was evident in its initial acceptance of the sit-down, and it would continue to recognize unions and union leaders as building blocks for a prosperous America.

“The Softest Sit-Down”

When *LIFE* first hit America’s newsstands in November of 1936 the nation faced the first stages of a social revolution—organized labor’s upheaval of 1937. At first *LIFE*’s complex visual and narrative portrait of organized labor simultaneously celebrated and diminished its struggles, then *LIFE* began to censure labor’s activism, often in the same terms used by the rabidly anti-union National Association of Manufacturers or Liberty League. But even then, editors recommended unions led by statesmanlike leaders. Two assumptions undergirded *LIFE*’s coverage: that corporations were beneficent, and that workers—as Americans—should participate fully in the American Dream. These assumptions often proved false—leading to the explosive events *LIFE* covered. Faulty though the assumptions might be, they explain the

⁵⁸ I looked at the magazine’s main stories from November of 1936, when publication commenced through December of 1937. For “Newsfront” see, Wainwright, *Great*

competing narratives, intriguing elisions, and bizarre emphases in the magazine's labor coverage.

LIFE editors argued labor's mobilization justified their mission "to see life, to see the world, to eyewitness great events." In March of 1937 *LIFE* advertised that its labor coverage exhibited the essence of its new photographically based editorial technique. "In *LIFE*'s short life, the most striking example of collaboration between news and pictures was perhaps the Sit- Down Strike. Here was a new phrase in Labor's vocabulary, a new tactic in its battle. What the Michigan Sit-Downers looked like when they sat, how they looked the first day—the twenty-ninth day—how they hung out of factory windows to chat with fiends and family, how they slept, ate, shaved, didn't shave—in most people's mental memory there was nothing to draw on for the answers. *LIFE* thus supplied a whole set of new visual data, which became for all time part and parcel of its reader's personal horde of images."⁵⁹ The *LIFE* ad suggested a "personal horde of images" would establish meaning through multiplicity, which traded on photograph's capacity to convey truth. Missing in this ad and in most of *LIFE*'s photo-essays was any inquiry into the why of strikes: what were workers' job conditions, what were corporations' labor relations, what were workers' salaries and what did their limited family incomes allow them to buy. Instead, *LIFE* gave readers what it touted, a slice-of-life portrait of how workers shaved, sat, what they packed before they struck, and what wives did at home during a strike. Luce who saw labor's story as a critical story for *LIFE* believed this editorial stance the magazine's unique journalistic contribution. "The sit-down strike is

American Magazine, 75. For Luce's appreciation of organized labor see, *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵⁹ *LIFE*, 15 March 1937, 4-5.

not Labor Problems or Big Words between a dozen men you don't really give a damn about. In *LIFE*, the hot news of the sit-down strike is that people sit down! Or don't. So simple. So unlike the *New York Times*. So relaxing."⁶⁰

The first cover story of the sit-downs, "U.S. Labor Uses a Potent New Tactic—The Sit-down Strike," appeared in January of 1937, and displayed *LIFE*'s complicated attitudes towards strikes. The photo-story, intimate and playful, nonetheless asserted corporate power and bounty. On the cover, editors put a photograph of Henry Ford's magnificent River Rouge plant, inspiration for modernist photographers such as Edward Weston and Charles Sheeler. Unlike these artists, who put technology and industry to the fore in austere, un-peopled images, Russell Aikins posed Henry and Edsel Ford gazing calmly at one another. [Fig. 2-2.]⁶¹ Placed in the foreground of the photograph, the tie between father and son and the technological prowess they created was unmistakable. Henry and Edsel's forms echoed the stacks and beams above, and the tight framing of the Dearborn plant and its owners integrated them into the industrial-scape of jutting geometry and monumental architecture. A photo-essay about the sit-downs asserted the corporation's links to American progress with the corporate world's most beloved, homegrown American characters. Nothing inside the article, however, explained why the

⁶⁰ Luce Memo to staff, March, 1937 in Wainwright, *Great American Magazine*, 92.

⁶¹ "U.S. Labor Uses a Potent New Tactic—The Sit-down Strike," *LIFE*, 18 January 1937. All photos about the GM sit-down come from this article. Russell Aikins took the cover photograph. For similar work by Sheeler see Karen Lucic, *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine* (London: Reaktion Press, 1991). Similar industrial photographs by Edward Weston of Armco Steel in Ohio can be found in Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography*, 3rd ed. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1997), 460.

Fords, who employed the world's largest private army—solely to keep unions out—achieved cover status.⁶²

In contrast to the alert, upright, and sober Fords, readers first saw strikers wielding their “potent new tactic,” asleep. The feature photograph showed workers at the Standard Cotton Company in Flint, Michigan “snuggling into wool stuffing.” [Fig. 2-3.]⁶³ Workers nestled into separate corners of the room which resembled nothing so much as the immigrant tenement dwellers of Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* taken some half a century earlier. This treatment allowed readers to see strikers in an “everyday” mode, perhaps speaking to readers' sympathies. Indeed the documentary style aesthetic, not often used in *LIFE*, suggests this. On the other hand it allowed for a voyeurism into working-class struggle that fed its readers' personal “horde of images.” Much as Maren Stange has noted for the subjects of Riis's photo-documentation, this prurient interest in the “other half” allowed many readers to distance themselves from the photographic subjects. *LIFE* rarely represented middle class subjects with this degree of intimacy. And when *LIFE* depicted factory interiors, it did so with the organized corporate-photography style that displayed managerial hierarchy and order.⁶⁴ This photograph from a labor battle did not recognize workers' conscious commitment to struggle. It remade the factory into a cozy, if cluttered and filthy, nook.

⁶² For Ford's extra-legal anti-union activities see, Stephen Norwood, *Strike-Breaking and Intimidation: Mercenaries and Masculinity in Twentieth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 4.

⁶³ “U.S. Labor Uses a Potent New Weapon,” *LIFE*, 18 January 1937, 9.

⁶⁴ David Nye, *Image Worlds: Corporate Identities at General Electric, 1890-1930* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 55, 63-69.

If labor's potency seemed open to question given their sleeping figures, managerial power was never in question. Along with the cover photograph of the Fords, the second and third pages of the photo-essay made corporate power concrete. A striking aerial photograph of the Detroit downtown filled half of the second page. The photograph's tonal contrast—the vertically thrusting skyscrapers glowed white in the sun as they rose out of a darkened morning mist—heightened the photo's drama. [Fig. 2-4.]⁶⁵ Facing the Detroit panorama lie two full body portraits of Chrysler Corporation's Walter P. Chrysler in heavy overcoat and fedora and GM's Alfred P. Sloan in Chesterfield and spats. Their stature paralleled the civic splendor they made of Detroit. Sloan and Chrysler filled the page, looked at viewers, and had been cut out from their context and placed on the page's white background. Their separation from any identifying social context exaggerated their monumentality.

The text cemented the visual message of corporate prowess. "The lords of Detroit are men of strength and pride in their achievement. They organized their business with the greatest efficiency the world has ever known and the thing they made has rolled forth to change the character of every civilized country." The story continued, invalidating workers' demands. "Their rewards have been generous. They could be generous in return. They have granted some of the highest wages and shortest hours in the industrial world." If working men were shown in the midst of a strike, asleep, relaxed, or playing around, the titans of industry posed themselves, sometimes in cameo shots, sometimes in magnificent portraits, sometimes behind their desks exuding authority. *LIFE* put their earthly creations on display and frequent full-page spreads of mills belching productive

⁶⁵ "Detroit Faces It's First Great Strike," *LIFE*, 18 January 1937, 10-11.

smoke for all America accompanied small photographs of strikers. This visual strategy emphasized the corporations' importance to American progress. Workers might be identified with, perhaps even sympathized with, but America's path, indeed all of civilizations, lie with America's generous nobility—its businessmen.⁶⁶

"U.S. Labor Uses a Potent New Tactic" then offered readers two pages of how "twelve hundred strikers eat, sleep, and keep house." Photographs showed men hanging out windows, lounging, cleaning up the Fisher One Body plant and, as advertised—shaving. [Fig. 2-5]⁶⁷ Of course, labor organizers maintained morale by keeping strikers busy, according to Henry Kraus, who edited the UAW's first newspaper. Here *LIFE* documented an important aspect of the strike.⁶⁸ But *LIFE*'s focus on strikers at leisure obscured workers' home lives and their job struggles. In acquainting readers with a horde of images about how workers "slept, ate, shaved—didn't shave," the readers learned little about the workers' concerns, beyond a general statement that the UAW demanded action from GM on wages, hours, working conditions, and sole bargaining authority. The strikers existed in the confines of the factory when directed by their

⁶⁶ For the mantle of authority conferred by portraiture see Gisele Freund, *Photography and Society*, (Boston: David R. Godine Publisher, 1980), 39-68; Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991), 10-11; and Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 21-52.

⁶⁷ "Twelve Hundred Strikers Eat, Sleep and Keep House," *LIFE*, 18 January 1937, 12-13.

⁶⁸ Kraus also authored one of the few first-person accounts of the UAW's rise, *The Many and the Few: A Chronicle of the Dynamic Auto Workers*, in 1947, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 88-97. Strikers also enjoyed themselves. Reminisced one of the famous Women's Emergency Brigade members who supported the sit-downers, "The men had it made. I don't care what anybody said, they had a ball in them shops." Newsreel footage showed men tap dancing, banjo playing and doing calisthenics. The quote and footage come from Lorraine Gray's *With Babies and Banners*

bosses, or as strikers who lounge, gossip and maintain themselves. Even then they were dependent on wives who brought bread and warm breakfasts to the factory.

The photo-stories last pages hinted at workers' political activity but joined workers' activism to an inside look at a worker's home that exposed without elucidating. On one page two photos showed rank and filer Bud Simons speaking to large groups of workers. Simons had led an initial strike against the speed-up back in November of 1936. The headline "Bud Simons Spends the Night Away From Wife and Children" located activism within a narrative that, as *LIFE* historian Wendy Kozol suggests, "represents a threat to the social order" through the absence of the father. [Fig. 2-6.]⁶⁹ For right across the page showing Simons at his meeting lies a page of five photographs of Simons's wife, Hazel, who "must be both mother and father" for their children. Details within the photo-essay offered readers the opportunity to note workers' impoverishment. One photograph of Lotus and Yvonne, two of the Simons's daughters who are tucked into their bed included the caption that "Lotus has a doll but the bed has no sheets." Sympathetic readers might have empathized with the Simons's material difficulties—though judging readers might have seen marks of the Simons's improvidence. *LIFE* did present men and women workers as being deeply concerned with domestic values like cleanliness and tidiness. But its focus on Simon's absence from the home—along with the male neighbor who just happened to be in the Simons's home ironing—suggested unsettling possibilities as well. These photographs offer an

a documentary about the Women's Emergency Brigade and the Sit-down (New York: New Day Films, 1978).

⁶⁹ "Bud Simons Spends the Night Away," *LIFE*, 18 January 1937, 14-15; Kozol, *LIFE's America*, 32.

“inside” look at workers but no substantive understanding of their lives, or the issues which compelled them to strike, beyond perhaps, a lack of bedding.

In this story and many others the strike seems less an economic action than a social occasion. Indeed one would learn more in these stories about gender roles than economic roles. The Americans who put their livelihood, even their lives on the line for unionization got lost. *LIFE* workers invariably appear in the least self-directed poses, as they sleep, hang out, or are cared for by their wives. For generally women maintained the domestic sphere—sometimes inadequately—as men workers are taken care of. As fathers men provided for their families, but they looked uncomfortable within the home itself, as if strangers in women’s domain.⁷⁰ Middle class men, as we will see, sit with purpose at their desks, or stare with directness at the camera from their meetings. Industry’s titans like the Fords, Chryslers and Sloans command respect at every level. Working men, however, barely possess themselves.

Other *LIFE*’s strike stories transformed an economic action into a lot of fun.⁷¹ Perhaps the best embodiment of *LIFE*’s early, lighthearted “Everybody’s Doing It” approach to labor’s activism was found in a March 22, 1937 story of a sit-down at the Detroit Woolworth Five and Dime. The story appeared in the weekly “*LIFE* goes to a Party” column where readers got an inside scoop on high society events such as the coming-out of Philadelphia debutantes or the festivities at Connecticut boarding schools.

⁷⁰ See Helen Damon Moore’s *Magazine’s for the Millions*, 12, 147, 155, 192; and Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 117-205 for the development of the discourse linking women and consumption; men and provision.

One week however, *LIFE* photographer William Vandivert captured a “feminine group” of “campers” engaged in a “sit-down picnic.” The story opened by telling readers, “The newest type of camping excursion is attended not by children of the rich but by members of the working classes, takes place not in the great outdoors but in stores and factories where strikers lock themselves in, picnic among sales counters and assembly lines until some sort of settlement is reached.” [Fig. 2-7.]⁷² For the perky Woolworths’ workers, “sleeping on the counters was all part of the fun,” and photographs showed strike denizens atop cosmetic counters, and a cute threesome with their heads peeking out from the bedding of the mattress they shared. *LIFE* thought the salesgirls’ favorite sport was sliding down the store’s banisters, though girls also embroidered, knit, sang, and danced to stave off boredom.

As Dana Frank describes, when these one hundred and eight women, many of them teenagers went out on strike, they “took on one of the biggest corporate and consumer icons of the century, with two thousand stores in five countries.” Not only did they want union recognition, but they wanted raises, seniority rights, an eight hour day with overtime, hiring from the union alone, and perks like free uniforms and laundering. The happy “campers” would go on to win almost all their demands, setting off union

⁷¹ Kozol argues that the pro-business *LIFE* often depicted strikes as “anarchic and un-American.” *LIFE*’s editorial stance did harden into this, but I do not believe it was so at first, *LIFE*’s *America*, 32.

⁷² “*LIFE* Goes to a Party,” *LIFE*, 22 March 1937, 72-73. The only other visit to a work-site was “*LIFE* goes to a Party in General Electric’s big turnine shop in Schenectady,” *LIFE*, 7 February 1938, 62-65.

drives by sales girls in Akron, New York, East St. Louis, Tacoma, San Francisco, and Duluth.⁷³

As with “U.S. Labor Uses a Potent New Tactic,” *LIFE*’s “sit-down picnic” showed what “fun” strikes were, but also promoted a typical gender binary. In eight of the fifteen photographs traditional women’s activities were put to the fore. Women fed the store’s canaries and themselves, did laundry and swept, and even made themselves up with their delightfully packed “camp equipment” shown in a photo of a girl’s valise with her lingerie and toothpaste for the viewer to inspect. [Fig. 2-8.]⁷⁴ *LIFE* told readers the girls broke dates to sustain their strike, but they kept “an eye on the future” by not forgetting to “prink,” or maintain makeup and hair.

LIFE’s levity towards the Woolworth strike certainly indicated no menace from the women unionists’ collective struggle. Perhaps this was possible because no struggle seemed to exist at all. *LIFE* reported the lone complaints though a class-conscious ditty written for this strike, “Barbara Hutton has the dough, *parlez-vous*. How she gets it, sure we know, *parlez-vous*. We slave at Woolworths’ five and dime, the pay we get sure is a crime.” The jaunty song lyrics became part of the packaged entertainment *LIFE* provided

⁷³ Dana Frank, “Girl Strikers Occupy Chain Store, Win Big: The Detroit Woolworth’s Strike of 1937,” notes that *LIFE* was not alone in its focus on the women’s gender. Their gender may have helped the clerks get extra media coverage. Frank argues the women, aware of the media’s power, organized a “Scrapbook” committee, and called in Pathé Newsreel. Frank also notes that in July of 1938 *LIFE* slapped Barbara Hutton or “Babs” on the wrist by cautioning her to remember the girls who made her fortune. In Howard Zinn, Dana Frank, and Robin D.G. Kelley, *Three Strikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls, and the Fighting Spirit of Labor’s Last Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 61-2, 92-95, 110, 113-115. Dorothy Sue Cobble references this sit-down in a recent article: “Visions of Equality: The Lost Origins of the New Women’s Movement,” *Labor’s Heritage*, 12, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2003).

⁷⁴ “*LIFE* Goes to a Party,” *LIFE*, 22 March 1937, 74-75.

its readers a glimpse into, rather than the enjoyable social critique it was intended as. *LIFE* obscured class strictures by equating workers' activism with a party and by its gender focus: the fun girls could have when they got together for a sleepover, girls who were, nonetheless, ever mindful of keeping up appearance.

LIFE tamed strike activism by allowing readers an "inside" view of it, *LIFE*'s photo-narratives also treated the sit-down as a fad or a cultural happening. Organized labor had a potent new weapon, but using it implied no more risk, than say, roller-skating, pole-standing, or lindy-hopping. The same January issue on the GM sit-down strike in January of 1937 showed a promotional still from Paramount's soon to be released movie, *Champaign Waltz*. Women dressed in evening gowns and men in black tie and soldier's mufti sat on the ball room floor, but the photos headline admonished "This is Not a Sit-Down Strike in the Palace of Emperor Franz Josef." Another set of photographs featured Stanley Sumpkey's "private sit-down strike" on a raft on the East River. Unconcerned with wages or working conditions, Sumpkey offered a "gesture of self expression, an eloquent protest against an insensate world." Button workers struck when their employer, "the Button King," was sued by his wife over a liaison with a blonde New Yorker. The workers, believing their boss had big pockets, took to the streets, and the bitter wife joined them. In another story, workers who threw themselves to the ground to get away from tear gas conducted "lie down strikes." Striking sailors lounged "in deck chairs as they sunned themselves."⁷⁵ And a March photo-essay on a Detroit hotel strike showed the "softest sit-down," that of a waitress who took advantage

of her work environment at the Hotel Book Cadillac to wile away the time on mattresses in the rooms above.⁷⁶

LIFE's light-hearted approach to labor strife muted class hostility by portraying management as sympathetic to labor's needs. A November 1936 photograph showed strikers at Bendix Products, an auto subcontractor in South Bend Indiana. The workers had over "300 games of bridge and poker in progress" after "friends sent in food, two accordions, playing cards." Because wives were concerned about husbands' warmth, "the company amiably agreed to keep the heat on" for workers. A story of a strike at Grace Lines shipping showed workers' quarters with their "homey comfort, beds with 'clean white sheets and attractive covers'" and "heavy Turkish towels for the shower." Seamen could recline on deck whiling their time away reading or sunbathing in the tropical sun. One photograph showed the seaman's work conditions, but it maintained

⁷⁵ "Champaign Waltz," *LIFE*, 18 January 1937, 21; Sumpskey, *LIFE*, 22 November 1937, 72; "Strike against Button King," 26 April 1937, 24; "Lie Down Strikes" *LIFE*, 14 December 1936, 36; Shipping strike, 26 April 1937, 25.

⁷⁶ *LIFE* generally respected national union leadership, but they too could become grist for sit-down jokes. One "Speaking of Pictures" section profiled John Lewis doing nothing but "sitting down." The article told readers this champion sitter, positioned his "massive bulk teetering casually back on the frail legs of a spindly wooden chair," in a manner evocative of the economic battles of his CIO members. *LIFE* said their photographs were so unsympathetic a portrait that Lewis wanted the negative destroyed. Shots from below can monumentalize the subject, as many of the Farm Security Administration shots of working men and women did, yet the angle of the Lewis shots were so extreme, that Lewis's formidable girth was emphasized, as he unattractively straddled a chair. Here *LIFE* offered a visual pun on labor's new tactic while bringing the CIO's leader down a notch. 3 May 1937, 10-12. Former photographer, Martha Holmes reported how "fun" it was to photograph Lewis because of his eyebrows. John Loengard, *LIFE Photographers: What They Saw* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1998), 210. For maid strike see, *LIFE*, 29 March 1937.

managers required “no scrubbing on hands and knees.”⁷⁷ In almost all of these stories the exigencies of work: its conditions, wages, and hours remained opaque.

No story obscured class relations as well as “One Sit-Down Strike is Ended by Another.” The photo-essay told how Walter Fry, owner of an automobile seat cover factory “announced that he was sitting down too,” as Fry found this an “effective” way to terminate a sit-down. Photos showed Fry sitting on his cot as he conducted business, being served coffee by his secretary, and being welcomed back into the domestic fold by his female staff once workers ended their strike. [Fig. 2-9.]⁷⁸ “One Sit-Down Strike is ended by Another” transmuted workers’ job struggles into affection towards a boss-patriarch who mimicked his workers own discontent. The picture story said the powerful are in charge; the boss is really loved by his workers; female workers in particular love to care for the boss.

This erasure of women’s class in favor of women’s “pretty” faces or gorgeous gams was common in *LIFE*. In 1938 *LIFE* showcased a strike of San Francisco department store workers by printing a photo of the workers being carried off in the arms of adoring males in their “Picture of the Week” feature. *LIFE* claimed the “shopgirls, famous for their good looks, good manners, and good clothes, looked less like the popular conception of unionists on strike than college girls.” A year later the magazine applauded striking chorines in their high heels and dancewear who “treated Angelinos to the prettiest picketing pictures of the year.” The “ten beautiful legs” picketed not their

⁷⁷ *LIFE*, 30 November 1936, 15; and *LIFE*, 1 February 1937, 22-23.

⁷⁸ “One Sit-Down is Ended by Another,” *LIFE*, 8 March 1937, 17.

employer, but the union for failing to protect their interests. [Fig. 2-10.]⁷⁹ Like the 1937 Woolworth's strikers, women's "prinking," their attractiveness, made them newsworthy. In positing working women as objects of desire, *LIFE* blurred the boundaries of class. Male workers never received such treatment from *LIFE*.⁸⁰

LIFE's jocular approach excluded socioeconomic tensions, minimized how class shaped workers' lives—on and off the job, and even reversed power relations. Hidden in these stories was managerial opposition to unions, which could be fatal to workers. In the publication's first months, *LIFE* minimized workers' demands and also the dangers workers faced when they struck. Instead workers engaged in a fad so popular that the bosses helped out, or got in on the act themselves. *LIFE*'s coverage, glib as it was, embraced workers, unlike many other mass-market publications.⁸¹ Simultaneously, *LIFE*

⁷⁹ "San Francisco Store Strikers," *LIFE*, 26 September 1938, 22-23.

⁸⁰ For similar photo see *LIFE*, January 2, 1939, 14. Rickie Solinger examines how the "Babe" as she terms it, helped to manages women's complex transitory state in the post-war period. *LIFE*'s covers often showed women, not always "babes" and often apple-cheeked girls next door, and at least once a mannequin for whom it was hard to distinguish if she were real or not. Women seemed to represent for *LIFE*, even when sexual, a kind of innocence that corresponded to the nation's good intentions, "The Smutty Side of *LIFE*: Picturing Babes as Icons of Gender Difference in the Early 1950s," in Doss, *Looking at Life*, 202-206.

⁸¹ Unlike *LIFE*, *Collier's*, the second largest family magazine by circulation, censured labor's activism from the start. It claimed "public opinion" as its standard. *Collier's* editorials maintained the Wagner Act promoted organized labor without requiring labor to shoulder responsibility, the same point made by NAM. And *Collier's* rebuked only the CIO for labor violence. The magazine editorialized that Americans who "dislike disorder and distrust those who condone it" could "turn savagely" against labor, allowing vigilantism in the name of "law and order." By *Collier's* circular logic the violence associated with strikes, much of it a result of privately financed security forces, spies, and "citizens committees" led to public censure which then caused more violence. Even as the details of the corporate war against unionization became part of national public debate *Collier's* ignored this. The family magazine offered little coverage of socioeconomic issues. During the winter of 1937 stories appeared on skiing every single week, but in all of 1937 there was only one story of unionization that examined the failed

wove workers' activism into their gleeful portrait of American life. *LIFE* did not maintain this easy acceptance for long.⁸²

"The Nation's No. 1 Problem"

LIFE joined a growing chorus against the sit-downs, it gave up its lighthearted coverage and focused instead on strike violence. Details in photographs and occasionally in stories suggested that corporate security forces and police were often responsible for

Little Steel Strike and John Lewis's bloated ambitions. Photos were rare in *Collier's*, and it offered few of labor's uprising. *Collier's* reproach was mild in contrast to the *Saturday Evening Post*. Editorials and feature stories in America's leading magazine excoriated organized labor. As with *Collier's* and *LIFE*, the *Post* claimed the sit-down was an illegal seizure of property, but according to the *Saturday Evening Post* the sit-down was leading America down the Hobbesian path of might is right. A *Post* story about Seattle's labor movement described mass pickets as "walls of flesh" that swept away law like a monstrous organic steam-roller. The *Post* had few photos in comparison to *LIFE*. Those they had on labor condemned it, mostly using an evidentiary style photograph. A June article on the sit-downs showed strikers batting an effigy matching the *Post's* rhetoric of organized labor as a lynch mob. Five additional photos ostensibly documented the weaponry, and bullet shots made by strikers in Detroit during their sit-down months before. The *Post* also criticized the New Deal, which sustained labor's lawlessness. Some stories had the New Deal flirting with "Karl Marx" in its guarantees of job programs to citizens, others compared the New Deal to European fascists. The *Post* attacked class tensions, while maintaining America was classless. In line with this notion of classlessness the *Post* ran stories on Henry Ford who discussed "Our Job," boosting production for the benefit of all, and a series on Walter Chrysler, entitled, the "Life of an American Workman." Captain of Industry stories had long been staples in mass market magazines, but the degree to which these corporate heads continued to be represented as "one of the boys" deserves greater study. *LOOK*, *LIFE's* only real competitor as a photo magazine ignored the sit-down strike, with the exception of one visual punning photo that showed Mohatma Gandhi "Father of Sit-Down Strikers." *LOOK*, 11 May 1937.

⁸² *LIFE* could revert to its more playful approach. Even as late as 1941 the sit-downs remained cause for celebratory coverage. In 1941 *LIFE's* "Picture of the Week" feature showed Detroit auto workers recreating a sit-down in their Labor Day parade with broad grins across their faces. The accompanying text to the photo told readers how 20,000 machine guns, a thousand fighter planes, and eight hundred tanks had been lost due to strikes. 15 September 1941, 37.

aggressions. But the thrust of *LIFE*'s photo-essays maintained union activism led to civic turmoil. Because the TIME-LIFE archive is closed to researchers it's impossible to know exactly why *LIFE*'s stance altered, though a few possibilities suggest themselves.

Internally, the Luce publications constantly re-assessed their editorial viewpoint. When *LIFE* began the TIME-LIFE enterprises were in flux and Popular Front figures like Ralph Ingersoll and Archibald MacLeish initially shaped *LIFE*'s editorial content. At some point in this window of time Luce argued that "objectivity" was impossible, and that he intended to support business.⁸³ Events external to *LIFE* may also have bearing. With the "second hundred days" of legislation such as the Wager Act and the Social Security Act, conservative groups like the Liberty League and business groups like the NAM and

⁸³ See Michael Denning's *Culture Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1997), 83-5 for the analysis on Luce. Labor seemed to lose patience with the Luce publications over time, though there is no direct evidence about *LIFE*. Correspondance between *FORTUNE* writers, fact-checkers, and editors indicate that CIO leaders John Brophy and Len DeCaux, and publicist Cedric Fowler discussed articles on SWOC and on the CIO generally. In late August of 1936, Brophy then a Director of the CIO was generally encouraging about a profile of the CIO to editor Russell Davenport, but very unhappy about a John Jessup biographical portrait of John L. Lewis. John Brophy to Russel Davenport, August 27, 1936, b91f6; and response August 30, 1936, b91f5. For Brophy's irritation with Lewis biography see John Brophy to John Jessup, August 22, 1936 in b91f3 and further correspondence, August 28, 1936, b91f7. Less than a year later however, Davenport invited Lewis to respond to a thought piece by Thomas Girdler, who he claimed was falsely inferring that the CIO was anti-democratic. Lewis's secretary, Ralph Hetzel responded with asperity that Lewis might at some point "write an article suitable to the importance of your pages." For Lewis's non-response to Girdler, see Russell Davenport to John Lewis, November 19, 1937, and the reply which came three weeks later. Ralph Hetzel to Russell Davenport, December 10, 1937, b91f9. The focus on violence seemed to annoy CIO staff, one letter wrote in response to *FORTUNE* claim that "peace has not characterized past drives," that "the two largest organizational drives (textile and U.S. Steel) have been free of violence....It is also true that the CIO much prefers to secure collective bargaining rights without strikes, and that when violence does occur it is invariably promoted by the companies." Cedric Fowler, Asst. Publicity Dir. to Miss. Jean Potter, September 28,

the U.S. Chamber of Commerce sharpened their attacks on Roosevelt. FDR's decision to reshape the Supreme Court that blocked much of his New Deal legislation gave their arguments purchase. Further ammunition came from the renewed failure of the economy in the spring of 1937. So did the sit-downs. Business leaders maligned the sit-down from the start, but by the spring their attacks were at a fevered pitch. Resolutions against the tactic appeared in the House and Senate—the same month *LIFE* hardened its criticism of labor. Joining conservatives in late March were national AFL leaders who had their own reasons to subvert the CIO. Luce accepted unions, but he was not immune to these attacks, by this point he had advised Ingersoll to tone down labor coverage in *TIME*.⁸⁴

Strike violence came to dominate *LIFE*'s coverage of union activism by mid-1937. The first major photo-essay to stress disorder, published in February, was "In Auto Strike Some Women Talk While Others Arm with Clubs and Break Windows of Chevrolet Plant." [Fig. 2-11.]⁸⁵ The article introduced readers to women leaders who "talked," a Labor Party MP from England who criticized auto "royalists" evoking FDR's

1937, b91f9. All in CIO Central Office Correspondence, Catholic University of America, hereafter *CUA*.

⁸⁴ See Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 15-32; and William Leuchtenberg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1963), 231-251. Leuchtenberg notes that newspaper chain owner Frank Gannett organized the National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government which claimed FDR wanted dictatorial powers, 261. Even the AFL came out against the sit-downs, see Edward Levinson, *Labor on the March* (1938, with an intro. by Robert Zieger, Ithaca: ILR Press, 1995), 179-186 and Sidney Fine, *Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Strike, 1970), 332-338; and Kraus, *The Many and the Few*, 120-121. Baughman notes that Luce spoke against New Deal inaction against the sit-downs, but only in November of 1937, long after *LIFE* altered its viewpoint, *Henry R. Luce*, 107-108.

⁸⁵ "In Auto Strike Some Women Talk While Others Arm with Clubs," *LIFE*, 15 February 1937, 16-17.

famous class critique and Cornelia Bryce Pinchot who renounced her class privilege by telling Flint workers she abhorred holding stock in a corporation that employed Pinkertons. The English MP cut a lively figure with her outswept arms, but what drew the attention in the photo-spread was the repetitive upthrust lines of the clubs carried by strikers. Additional photos showed the Flint “Women’s Emergency Brigade” who carried clubs in addition to “their standard equipment” of “red arm bands and red berets.” After having broken factory windows, the women paraded, “still swinging” their clubs “defiantly.” These two photographs, on opposing pages, had the women in marching lines that were emphasized compositionally through a strong diagonal line which converged towards the center of the page, giving the entire photo-spread a sense of activity around a core. In that core lie two large photos of men breaking windows at Chrysler. In the first photograph the man’s club lies by his side, the next shot captures the moment he broke the window. The vandalism is simulated in slow-motion shots, further emphasizing violence. Unionists had broken windows, but only after police shot tear gas into the plant. Breaking the windows was the only way for the men to stay inside the plant.⁸⁶ *LIFE* included in this photo-essay a photograph showing a striker carried out of the Fisher Body plant on a stretcher. In a recurring elision, *LIFE* discussed the strikers’ violence, even though the unionist was the victim. *LIFE* returned to the women in the story’s conclusion, claiming that after a day of strike support the women put down their clubs, and “like the knitting women of the French Revolution” returned to innocuous, i.e. feminine pastimes. *LIFE*’s comparison of the Flint women to French

⁸⁶ Kraus, *The Many and the Few*, 129-145; Mary Heaton Vorse, “The Emergency Brigade at Flint” in *Rebel Pen: The Writings of Mary Heaton Vorse*, ed. Dee Garrison,

Revolutionaries also evoked Madame Lafarge, the bloodthirsty knitter of Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*, leaving open the possibility that these Flint women weren't as innocent as they might appear.

At times *LIFE* employed its earlier playful tone towards labor, but mixed it, incongruously, with condemnation of labor's tactics. In "Sit-Down Strikers Proclaim the Spirit of 1937," *LIFE*'s feature photograph showed a pugnacious group of strikers who gave the camera an uncompromising gaze as they beat snare drums, carried picket signs and even an effigy. The essay's title evoked the resonance of the "spirit of '76," making these men twentieth-century revolutionaries and it lauded Lewis's leadership and CIO victories gained with "less bloodshed and bad feelings than have often occurred after one minor strike." The story compared the sit-down wave to a thirteenth-century mania, an incident of mass hysteria where "people danced in the streets until they dropped unconscious," continuing their sit-down as fad comparison. But *LIFE* also told readers that "The sit-down is a forcible seizure of somebody else's property. As such it is clearly illegal under any concept of law." This was the argument of the National Association of Manufacturers and other staunch anti-unionists, who attempted to galvanize public opinion against strikers. It also paralleled the coverage of other mass-market magazines like *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post*.

LIFE editors closed with disquieting images and text and in contradiction to the article's earlier lightness admonished, "the spirit of good fun which prevailed among...strikers... did not obscure the fact that the sit-down was the Nation's No. 1 problem." *LIFE* offered assessments from America's elite, among them a former

(New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985), 182.

Harvard University president, that legislation must be passed against the “armed insurrection, defiance of law, order and duly elected authority” that was “spreading like wildfire.” Photos justified this condemnation: a large photo showed a close-up of “strikers’ weapons,” meat hooks and cleavers from workers who struck against the Newton Packing Company. **[Fig. 2-12.]**⁸⁷ The formidable cleavers were placed in the middle of the photograph and reached to the top of the frame, glinting in the light. The photograph’s style matched a traditional “evidentiary” style photograph. As photo-historian Jon Tagg describes it, evidentiary style photographs must have a sharp and correct focus throughout and a direct perspective at the viewers’ eye level. Such photographs are lit equally throughout: there is no exaggeration, shadow, or high contrast as detail is prized. This style, developed in conjunction with police practice, has come to connote extreme neutrality, as the eye can peruse all.⁸⁸ Photos like these offered concrete proof of labor’s transgressions and objectified business fears.

LIFE depicted strikes as unruly and violence-prone with two narratives: the first narrative contrasted strike violence of strikes with the state’s power to ensure law and order; the second narrative idealized the stability of small, company towns torn by labor’s demands. *LIFE*’s title for a January 1937 photo-story, “Governor Murphy and the National Guard Bring a Truce to the Automobile Strike,” matched the story’s visual argument—that military force sustained peace. Murphy brought in the National Guard to ensure the corporation didn’t try to force the plant open, though the article didn’t tell readers this. Instead, readers could see the forces of disorder, union strikers who

⁸⁷ “Strikers Weapons,” *LIFE*, 5 April 1937, 20, all quotes from 13-21.

overturned automobiles. Order could be seen in the Guard troops, who marched in tight formation through Flint streets and “set up Headquarters” with their tents laid out in repetitive geometric patterns for viewers’ eyes. Murphy prevented the bloodshed often associated with strikes by persuading GM to negotiate with the UAW, but a reader would have had to read with care to learn this.⁸⁹

LIFE’s second narrative contrasted the disorder precipitated by labor activism against the rural hamlets established by corporate paternalists—idealized microcosms of American society. In *LIFE*’s two-page story of an April sit-down by workers at the Hershey Chocolate Company, one page visualized the munificence of a grandfatherly Milton Hershey and those “loyal” employees who refused to strike. Pitted against them, and depicted on the second page, were the ungrateful unionists who brought violence, the focus of the next chapter. [Fig. 3-19.]⁹⁰ Similarly, in 1938, *LIFE* devoted a five-page photo-essay to a strike at Maytag, the washing machine maker. “Troops Close Iowa’s Maytag Plant: Washing Machine Company had CIO Trouble” set Fred Maytag’s Iowa town, established in the late 19th century as the scene for “CIO Trouble.”

The feature story opened with the drama of the strike—photographs of a stern looking Guardsman, with rifle held taut across his chest, whose job according to the caption was to keep “willing workers from working.” Here *LIFE* told readers that labor—with New Deal support—limited American freedoms. *LIFE*’s sub-title, “A Story of the Industrial Expansion That Has Made America Great,” introduced the corporation

⁸⁸ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 97-8.

⁸⁹ “Governor Murphy and the National Guard Bring a Truce to the Automobile Strike,” *LIFE*, 25 January 1937, 18-19.

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⁸⁷ “Strikers Weapons,” *LIFE*, 5 April 1937, 20, all quotes from 13-21.

experiment with industrial progress. Smallish images on the left showed Maytag's first factory, Fred Maytag on one of the trains that transported his goods, an assembly line, and one of the Maytag washers. On the right were panoramic photographs with the huge, fourteen-acre, "cradle of the Maytag plant," the trains that carried the merchandise across the U.S, and workers at the foundry. These photographs lacked the grandeur of Detroit but they still suggested greatness. The photographs' extension past a single page, the strong diagonal lines of two photographs, and the birds-eye vantage of two photos contributed to a sense of dynamism and control evocative of Maytag's personal rise, and America's relentless opportunities.

The next pages emphasized Maytag's patriarchal beneficence. "To Newton's 12,000 citizens the name Maytag has long meant benevolence in the form of a park, swimming pool, YMCA, and fat bonuses to employees." The bulk of the photographs displayed Fred Maytag's gifts to Newton, Iowa: it's hospital, pool, YMCA and outdoor band-shell, leading no Iowan to doubt the former Maytag founder was a "just and considerate employer." The photos had an unmistakable message: capitalists were generous, whether locally-based capitalists, like Frank Maytag and Milton Hershey, or the heads of multi-million dollar corporations like Alfred Sloan and Walter Chrysler. Because workers needs were never acknowledged or represented, organized labor's insistence on collective bargaining to assert its demands was hard to conceptualize. Instead union activism threatened America's concord. The final page, headlined "Bitter

Wage dispute turns a tranquil Iowa town into a Military Encampment,” suggested unions and their demands brought disorder, as did the single image of “rioting” in Iowa.⁹³

LIFE’s coverage of strikes and labor activism began to congeal around this theme of violence. Under headlines such as “Fear and Faction Stir U.S. Labor,” “Many Small Strikes Keep Labor Pot Boiling and the Police Busy,” “Strike Pattern of 1938: Gas and Guns,” and “Bayonets keep Pickets at Bay in Bloody Harlan,” readers could see strikers being lugged off to jail by police, strikers brawling with one another, strikers immersed in teargas thrown by police, and strikers beaten bloody on the ground.⁹⁴ The consistency of this theme and the accompanying photographs implied that disorder and violence inhered in labor activism itself.⁹⁵ *LIFE*’s only attempt at explanation was glancing references associating labor violence with union infighting or ties to the Communist Party. In an era of intense class division that *LIFE* itself documented, only intra-class warfare was discussed.

Embodying this intra-class war was a heroic laborer. [Fig. 2-14.]⁹⁶ This icon of the 1930s typically symbolized workers’ power and solidarity, but in *LIFE*’s pages the

⁹³ *LIFE* focused less upon violence here than in other stories, indeed there was only one photograph of a “picket belaboring a non-striker,” which depicted “rioting” in the small Iowa town, and a photo of the twenty-seven year-old president of the United Electrical Workers, James Carey.

⁹⁴ *LIFE*, 2 May 1938, 13; 4 July 1938; 1 August 1938; 3 January 1938, 15; 29 May 1939, 26; “Storekeeper Queen Bites A Customers Wrist,” 24 May 1937, 27; and “Public Loses Patience,” 14 August 1939, 11.

⁹⁵ Even stories with a retrospective analysis of unions put violence to the fore. A 1939 “Picture History of the Auto Workers Union,” showed “wild rioting” where strikers broke windows in 1937, along with a photo of Ford thugs beating up UAW workers. Here *LIFE* depicted a well-documented case of corporate sponsored violence, but the caption noted nothing more than Ford’s security forces gave the UAW its “first big setback.”

⁹⁶ “The Man With a Hoe Takes Up a Gun,” *LIFE*, 28 June 1937, 28-9.

“man with a gun symbolize[d] the violence which has ruled the steel strike.” In *LIFE*’s narrative of “civil war,” the battle was “not only of Capital against Labor, but of worker against worker.” Titled “The Man with a Hoe Takes Up a Gun,” the photo showed the armed vigilante standing at relaxed attention, his benign smile at odds with his up-thrust rifle, unique full chest tattoo, and articulated muscles. The vantage of the photographer magnified the vigilante’s stature, and the limited depth-of-field heightened the focus on this Michigan steelworker who took up a gun against unions. Consciously or not, *LIFE* editors appropriated a long-held symbol of the union movement—one that entered popular culture in the 1930s—and they inverted its meaning, using it to “symbolize” a civil turmoil they connected to union drives. Vigilantism in the steel industry was longstanding and well-orchestrated, but here “the man with a hoe” a title which hearkened back to agrarian revolutionaries, instead suggested a robust individualism. The story’s thrust was how the Wagner Act’s intent was to limit conflict. The text suggested corporations and unions contributed to disorder, but the story followed the contours of a critique developed by the rabidly anti-union NAM, which maintained the Wagner Act didn’t “compel unions to accept any responsibilities.” The result: a “class struggle which may destroy the American democracy.”⁹⁷

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, for vigilantism in the steel industry and NAM’s pr campaigns, see Bernstein, *Turbulent Years*, 478-497. The following chapter offers a fuller discussion. Intriguingly, *LIFE* presented labor this way sparingly. In each instance the steelworkers were employed by at Weirton and Wheeling Steel, antiunion strongholds. See the Carl Mydans photo of “Bill Benninghof, open hearth slagger,” in “Weir’s Weirton: A West Virginia Steel Town with a Difference,” *LIFE*, 13 September 1937, 36 which complimented Ernest Weir on his workers’ homes. See also “It’s Wheeling Steel’: A New Way to use Radio,” *LIFE*, 21 March 1938, 28-9, on a corporate-sponsored radio program. *LIFE*’s photo was of one of the yardman and it took up the entire page. The shot was taken from below, and from the photographers’ perspective the worker is larger

The style and kinds of photography *LIFE* printed were one-sided—its photos blamed labor, not corporations, for violence. In the Little Steel Strike of 1937 some of the bloodiest attacks by police and corporate security forces occurred at the Bethlehem and Republic Steel plants. Violence was worse at Republic Steel, whose president, Thomas Girdler, led the Little Steel contingent and who would admit with brazen confidence, “Sure, we got guns.” After the Little Steel turmoil which led to eighteen deaths in Illinois and Ohio, *LIFE* readers were treated to four photographs of “Weapons of Industrial Warfare...seen by the U.S. Senate” [Fig. 4-15.]⁹⁸ Ostensibly strikers’ weapons, the photos had been taken for a public relations campaign on Girdler’s part to implicate strikers for violence. By printing these four evidence-style photographs, *LIFE* helped Girdler insinuate to the American public that unions, not corporations, were to blame for violence.

Strikes were violent—historically the U.S. has had the fiercest labor struggles of Western industrial nations.⁹⁹ And *LIFE* never shied away from sensationalist fare—

than the factory, which lies below his legs. Why *LIFE* never used this visual icon of heroic labor with organized steelworkers, electrical workers, or auto-workers can not be ascertained from the current record, but it is a striking and ironic coincidence.

⁹⁸ “Weapons of Industrial Warfare,” *LIFE*, 5 July 1937, 16. For the “Sure we’ve got guns,” see Vorse, “Steel Strike” in *Rebel Pen*, 202-3.

⁹⁹ In the early century unionists believed U.S. corporate espionage to be as repressive as Russia’s secret police. Moreover the U.S. was the only “advanced industrial country where corporations wielded coercive military power,” resulting in more “spontaneous violence.” Norwood, *Strike-Breaking*, 3-4. For narrative accounts of the toll of violence see Irving Bernstein’s *The Lean Years* and *The Turbulent Years*. For contemporary attacks on labor violence see the popular front film, Paul Strand and Leo Hurwitz, *Native Land*, Frontier Films, 1942; reports by Mary Heaton Vorse, found in *Rebel Pen*; and Edward Levinson, *I Break Strikes: The Technique of Pearl L. Berghoff* (New York: R.M. McBride and Company, 1935).

violence sells. Nonetheless, in *LIFE* unions were the harbingers of violence. The magazine ignored how the state and corporations made confrontations violent.

When corporate or state-sponsored violence was clear and in the public record, *LIFE*'s narrative strategies minimized the violence. *LIFE* instead emphasized the camera's capacity to record and document violence. *LIFE* even printed photographs that made police and private security weapons appear innocuous and everyday. One of the best known photographs of corporate violence against workers was of the "Battle of the Overpass" which took place outside Ford's River Rouge plant. Ford had long relied on an internal security force, whose head, Harry Bennet had ties to organized crime and fascist militia.¹⁰⁰ In *LIFE*'s story of the Battle of the Overpass four photographs showed Bennet's men, who according to *LIFE*, gave a "terribly professional beating." *LIFE* showed Bennet's minions who "kicked, pounded and gouged" UAW organizer Richard Frankenstein and others attempting to leaflet the plant, and one image showed a dazed and bloodied Frankenstein holding his head in his hand. *LIFE* printed Ford official's contention that unionists provoked them, along with UAW claims that "Ford deliberately ordered its men to beat them." The step by step photographs of the beating, the photograph of the bloodied Frankenstein, along with the story's notice that the NLRB rejected Ford's objections to the photographic evidence sustained the strikers' story.¹⁰¹ But the photo-essay's thrust could be found in the title, "Pictures testify at Ford hearing." By framing the narrative in this way, *LIFE* minimized the attention on Ford's brutal

¹⁰⁰ Norwood, *Strike-Breaking*, 171-193.

¹⁰¹ *LIFE*, 19 July 1937, 26. As *The Nation* noted, *TIME* told readers how Ford security forces chased the photographers into a police station, trying to break the photographers'

tactics, instead heightening the role of the photographic medium as evidence—the basis of the product they sold.

LIFE's coverage of the Memorial Day Massacre—where ten labor sympathizers and unionists were killed by Chicago Police in the first week of the Little Steel strike—put the camera to the fore to an even greater degree. Photographs were critical to finding Chicago Police and Republic security forces responsible for unnecessary violence. In contrast to the evidence-style photographs of strikers' weaponry in the Ohio valley, which documented violence as sharply as the knives in the photographs, *LIFE* framed the massacre of ten workers within a narrative of the camera's capacity to record truth.

"Senate Conducts an Investigation by Pictures" was the subhead to the story of the LaFollette hearing, which established that police shot at strikers as they fled a mass rally, beat them, and then kept victims from medical attention. [Fig. 4-13.]¹⁰² *LIFE* treated readers to eighteen film stills from a newsreel of the massacre. *LIFE* was one of the few publications to offer readers such extensive coverage. Its images of the events, along with its two photographs of the committee's chairs, Robert LaFollette and Senator Thomas poring over photographs again privileged a story of the camera's power to capture truth. When violence is imputed to strikers, and as we've seen, it is almost always the union that seems responsible for violence, readers were drawn into the scene, readers saw the weapons of war, and they saw the mayhem. The camera "hid itself" and put the

plates. It is intriguing that *LIFE* forwent this anecdote, so germane to its own project. 12 June 1937, 662-663.

¹⁰² "Senate Conducts an Investigation by Pictures," *LIFE*, 12 July 1937, 72-73.

action to the fore. But when corporate wrongdoing was at issue, the photographs' contents were of secondary importance, the camera became the subject.¹⁰³

Photoessays in *LIFE* further naturalized corporate violence. An April 1937 article discussed the "Wagnerization" planned for the textile and automobile industry. In *LIFE*'s story, "well paid and treated" Ford workers incongruously fought for union recognition. Henry Ford however, resisted anyone who would "tell him how his business might be run." *LIFE* told readers John Lewis threatened that Ford would "change his mind" once labor exercised its muscle, suggesting labor's brute force. The story conceded that Southern textile workers, unlike Ford workers, had tougher working and living conditions. [Fig. 2-15.]¹⁰⁴ *LIFE*'s conclusion, "Though protected by the Wagner Act, CIO textile union knows it will find not only strong opposition to organizing but also considerable precaution against strikes, like the machine gun nest shown at the right." *LIFE* suggested the machine guns that could kill workers as nothing more than a "considerable precaution." Employers' extreme violence was a given in the labor relations equation.

The photoessay's photographs not only normalized corporate violence as a labor relations strategy, the photos also domesticated it. In the first page of the photoessay, top management are seen at lunch, while Henry Ford is seen "tinkering" with his watch

¹⁰³ *LIFE* ran a story on another LaFollette investigation of Republic Steel that showed an x-ray image of buckshot lodged near the spine of an "innocent...noncombatant" bystander to a 1935 conflict. "Senate Rattles Bones of 1935 Strike" provided readers with key investigative photographs which showed how a car was hit by tear gas from Republic security forces. *LIFE* printed this photograph and a second one of the photographer showing it to investigators at the hearing. *LIFE*'s comment, that the photograph was "evidence of reckless violence, as people in car were not involved in strike," suggested that strikers were rightful targets. *LIFE*, 1 August 1938, 20.

collection. Says Ford in a caption to the third photo where he greets a black grounds employee at his Georgia estate, "We're all workers together." Across from these tranquil scenes was a page of photos of corporations readying for battle. The top two photographs showed Ford's Harry Bennett. In the first Bennett was bloodied from an earlier battle with unionists at Ford's plant gates in 1934. Mentioned, but not depicted, were the four workers, "Communists" who were killed. The second photograph depicted Bennett sitting back at his desk, talking on the telephone. The caption reads, "Though he sat lazily with his foot on desk a few days ago, he is working hard to keep down workers' discontent, discourage agitators, gird the plant should the struggle turn to violence." The textual assumption was that violence came from the outside, Mr. Bennett represented a force aimed at containing it. Below these photographs sat another photo of "a strange steel structure" at the Bemis Mill in Alabama. The structure was designed to allow guards to "sit in safety" and "poke machine guns out." According to *LIFE*, "if the CIO textile unionization drive becomes serious, violence might break out, machine guns and guards be necessary." The caption asked readers to suspend any sympathy with the workers. Machine guns, guards, and the ensuing violence would be "necessary." More extraordinary than the "strange steel structure," the metal bunker for company guards with their guns, was its depiction. Three little girls in skirts lounged against its base. The story sanctioned violence by asking readers to consider violent repression a given response to unionization, while simultaneously domesticating the vehicles of that violence, taming them for the viewers' eyes so that they need not trouble themselves with

¹⁰⁴ "Ford and Textiles to be Wagnerized," *LIFE*, 21 April 1937, 21.

questions about whether shooting at workers was a “necessary” or appropriate response.¹⁰⁵

Just Like in the Movies

LIFE condemned labor’s tactics, but the publication never repudiated organized labor in totem. Indeed *LIFE*’s editors represented organized labor and its leaders, particularly CIO leaders, as the face of the future, guarantors of stability for America’s economy and society. Like other progressive business leaders, Luce, the child of missionaries, proselytized for America’s capacity to offer its citizenry more: more equity,

¹⁰⁵ The response to *LIFE*’s coverage was never monolithic of course, despite the magazine’s vivid tales. Like most magazines, *LIFE* had a “Letter to the Editors” section—it also had a “Pictures to the Editors” section. Though the magazine gave a lot of attention to labor in its first years, reader response was paltry. Because the company’s archives are closed to outside researchers, it is impossible to know if editors muzzled public response, if readers didn’t care enough to write letters on this subject, or perhaps, if there were too few working-class readers to respond. What did get printed however indicates some readers’ awareness of *LIFE*’s power to shape perception; a perception they did not always share. In 1937, after *LIFE* committed itself to attacking labor activism, a staff photographer from the Knoxville, Tennessee *Journal* sent in a photograph of the “Alcoa Affair.” Without disagreeing with the thrust of *LIFE*’s coverage, the photographer explained that officers and deputies “fired into the picket line” leaving two dead. This was the last “news” photo that *LIFE* printed in this section. Instead it solidified the section as a place for readers to share their joke photos, snap shots, and images of Americana.

Letter writers criticized *LIFE*’s labor coverage. In 1939, a Germantown, Pennsylvania woman complained to *LIFE* editors that her patience had become “practically threadbare” with *LIFE*’s “news” of labor troubles during strikes. She protested, “Do you suppose some time you could tell us how the strikers feel about their own battles instead of how *we* are supposed to feel?” And she pointed out that photos showed nine police ganging up on an unprotected striker. She recognized *LIFE*’s homogenizing voice as one that attempted to speak for all Americans. *LIFE* put her letter under the title “She Speaks for Herself,” which captured her complaint, but isolated her at the same time. These communications with *LIFE* offer only the barest whisper of how *LIFE*’s arguments were understood in their era. “Alcoa Affair,” *LIFE*, 3 August 1937, 79; “She Speaks for Herself,” 4 September 1939, 2.

more freedom, and more affluence. *LIFE* was a platform to sell his faith. *LIFE*'s first editorial "The American Century," a spiffed-up speech Luce gave several times in the year before Pearl Harbor advanced an argument for American hegemony based on the nation's productive capacity and democratic traditions. For Luce, American prowess lie with the nation's productive capacity, "At least two thirds of us are just plain rich compared to all the rest of the human family, rich in food, rich in clothes, rich in entertainment and amusements, rich in leisure, rich." Luce's faith in the nation's vaunted democratic freedoms, "the faith of a huge majority of the people of the world," and the nation's free economic system contributed to his internationalism. Luce joined other businessmen and conservatives who attacked government interference in the economy and a generation "trained to look at the Government as the source of all life," much of which he blamed on Roosevelt. Instead he promoted free global markets and American scientific-technological skill.

Luce's yoking of scientific progress, abundance, global enterprise, and democratic freedoms may not be obvious. But the publisher meshed American's twentieth century quest to reorganize itself socially, to accommodate the nation's colossal productive capacity with its democratic creed, a re-organization that Luce and others sought to globalize.¹⁰⁶ Luce's conviction that labor should enjoy a high standard of living; that it should have some voice in their affairs at work; and that its representatives deserved respect and an important position in the national socio-political equation allowed his

¹⁰⁶ A recent history by Olivier Zunz has a title that emphasized how common Luce's ideology was. Olivier Zunz, *Why the American Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), xi-xii, and "The American Century," *LIFE*, 15 February 1941.

publications to re-imagine a new world of labor relations, and of labors' place in American society.

Certainly mass culture had incorporated workers as the subject, and even as audience, from the mid-19th century onwards. Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* told the story of a lowly shoeshine boy whose initiative and morals propelled him upwards and the book was popular enough to make Alger's name a stand-in for a rags to riches American success. Working-class audiences jump-started the movie industry at the century's beginning, and though movie-goers thrilled to gossamer romances spun through with consumerism, they also responded to scrappy workers who challenged social hierarchies with guns and sex. Advertisers even added workers to their consumer imaginary in the heart of the Depression. These prophets of consumerism, long loath to acknowledge workers or production in their ads, now acknowledged those lower on the socio-economic scale in an "advertising in overalls" style to appear more populist.¹⁰⁷

Like these earlier forms of mass culture, *LIFE* photo-stories helped transition Americans from a consumer society that still eluded many workers, to a culture of

¹⁰⁷ For Horatio Alger's cultural role, see Warren Susman, *Culture as History*, 244, 132. A large body of scholarship takes as its subject working-class culture and film. Classic works include: Stuart Ewen and Liz Ewen, "City Lights: Immigrant Women and the Rise of the Movies," *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 53-73; Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*, Revised (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 16-32. In 1930s working-girl films tough heroines like Barbara Stanwyck moved their way to the top through their most valued commodity, their sexuality, suggesting another route to mobility. For 1930s working girl film see Richard Maltby, "Baby Face or How Joe Breen Made Barbara Stanwyck Atone for Causing the Wall Street Crash." In *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader*, edited by Jackie Stacey and Annette Kuhn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942* (Madison:

affluence that embraced working men and women as never before. But unlike these earlier forms of mass culture, *LIFE* photo-stories translated America's complicated transformations into vital black and white photos that were hard to dispute. *LIFE*'s tales of abundance had workers rising as a class with the help of their unions, not just individually as they did in the movies. *LIFE* repackaged workers' earlier ideal for their right to an "American standard of living" into the idiom of mass consumption. The publication's realist narratives took advantage of the resonance of earlier tales and myths that saturated mass-cultural production: tales of rags to riches, of industriousness, of heterosexual romance, and of paternal, small town relations. These narratives, though contradictory, were nonetheless powerful, in part because *LIFE* represented not imaginary or symbolic workers, but actual workers in "realist" news photographs.

Two long photo-essays devoted to workers and their new unions display *LIFE*'s promotion of unions as new partners in America's equation of power—though multiple stories from 1936 through the advent of WWII show workers as rightful participants in America's promise. *LIFE* narratives often spelled out this promise in private terms, the nineteenth century ideal of hearth and home, or the twentieth century mass-cultural rhetoric of heterosexual play. As in the strike stories, *LIFE*'s average worker lacked autonomy and self-direction unless in the private sphere. If at work, the bosses directed them—though workers rarely labored in *LIFE*. If a union member, the leadership directed them. *LIFE* celebrated these leaders as mediators who ameliorated labor relations by stabilizing the workforce. Their labor leaders had a new presence in the

University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). For 1930s advertisers see Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 300.

configuration of American power relations—and though *LIFE* could be critical, it gave them a positive face rare in mass media at the time. Implicit in *LIFE*'s celebration of labor's newfound place was a critique of workers' earlier social and economic difficulties. Nonetheless the magazine never admitted these difficulties. Instead *LIFE* posited corporate heads, even those who fought unions tooth and nail, as partners who bettered workers' lives.

In "The Common Steel Worker Gets His Pay Raised to \$5 a Day" *LIFE* introduced its readers to Andy Lopata, the "common steel worker," whose world was to be transformed by the new wage and hours standards in the steel industry. *LIFE* sent Alfred Eisenstadt to the heart of Pennsylvania steel country to photograph Lopata and his wife in their home and community. Eisenstadt, one of Germany's most famous photojournalists before the rise of Nazism, was known for his portraits of leaders and celebrities and he brought them back his signature portraiture and photographs that could be woven into a *LIFE*-style story. [Fig. 2-16.]¹⁰⁸ The feature photograph that opened the story was a close-up of Andy Lopata. His sweaty, begrimed face marked him as a worker, though his teeth—perfectly white, perfectly straight—strong jaw, and crinkled eyes made him an exemplar of manliness akin to a Hollywood leading man. Indeed everything about the cheery opening photograph was appropriate to the common steel

¹⁰⁸ Other *LIFE* photographers complained Eisenstadt wasn't much of a photo-essayist, they thought he illustrated, rather than took photographs that could be built into a story with a clear beginning, middle, and end. John Phillips, interview by John Loengard, 19 May 1993, in *LIFE Photographers*, 54-5. Photographs and quotes from "The Common Steel Worker Gets His Pay Raise to \$5 a Day," *LIFE*, 15 March 1937, 13-21. There is some indication that the SWOC worked with *LIFE* editors to produce the story. I. Van Meter, editor's assistant, offered a "Hearty thanks for your valued assistance in the

workers' pay raise. Lopata's grin and his outward-looking gaze announced his better future. The camera's upward tilt towards Lopata paralleled *LIFE*'s story-line about Lopata's upward-looking fortunes. Similarly the cropping of the photograph which showed only Lopata's face, cut him out from his daily context, and universalized Lopata's gain to all workers.¹⁰⁹

In the next two pages editors described a typical worker's day: "After Eight Hours at the Steel Mill the Common Worker Comes Home Dirty, Tired." Editors employed a common *LIFE* layout strategy: Lopata typifies the common worker, and the use of multiple photographs delineated the totality of Lopata's life and hence any workers' life. [Fig. 2-17.]¹¹⁰ The seven photos outlined his day, from leaving in the morning to returning at night. Lopata was sent off to work with his dinner pail by his barefoot wife; he headed off for the three-mile hike as wife and child stood on the porch, his wife bathed him at night outside by the water pump. At day's end he is seen "flopp[ed] down" on the grass to catch his breath after a long day's work. These photographs documented the average day, but they also showed Lopata and his wife heading to church on Sunday, hence the photos encompass the common workers' full week.

preparation of our report on the steel industry" to John Brophy. Letter, March 10, 1937, CIO collection b101f10, *CUA*.

¹⁰⁹ *LIFE* used this strategy in another notable story on the dust bowl. Lawrence Levine "The Historian and the Icon," shows how an "Okie" refugee, whose photo had been taken with two other downcast farmers, was cut out of the photo, and blown up. The tight focus on the one face was used to end a story on the success of technology against land erosion. This was the only Dorothea Lange photo ever printed in *LIFE*. Levine, "The Historian and the Icon," in Carl Fleishhauer and Beverly Brannan, *Documenting America: 1935-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 34-36.

¹¹⁰ "The Common Steel Worker," *LIFE*, 15 March 1937, 14-15.

If *LIFE*'s narrative captured important elements of an average worker's day, it also elided crucial aspects of workers' lives. With the exception of the photo showing Lopata and wife walking to church, the "common steel worker" is cared for by his wife or at leisure. His single act of self-direction comes when he heads off to work. Of seven photos, only one photograph shows Lopata at work.

The story also ignored Andy Lopata's activism. Lopata had joined the union, with serious consequences that *LIFE* obscured. *LIFE* told readers that the common steelworkers' raise was due to "peak production, the CIO, and the far-sighted statesmanship of steel." Nowhere did *LIFE* suggest rank and file activism contributed to workers' accomplishments. While it's true that the SWOC was a more top-down union, with less rank and file involvement than the raucous autoworkers, steelworkers nonetheless flocked to the union. Steelworkers had gained a raise, but only because Jones and Laughlin and Republic Steel gave raises to stave off unionization. Lopata never received one, because Jones and Laughlin fired him for joining the CIO. When *LIFE*'s story appeared, some six months after Eisenstadt took the photographs, Lopata's sole income came from the Works Progress Administration! Such hardball tactics were legion in the steel industry until Myron Taylor's capitulation. In Taylor's purview, Homestead Pennsylvania, where Carnegie-Illinois was located, the U.S. Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins had been kept from speaking to workers in 1934 until she decamped to the federal post office, the only location where her right to speak would be protected. Allequippa, where Lopata lived was Jones and Laughlin's base. A company-controlled town, unionists referred to it as the Little Siberia of America. Jones and Laughlin ran the streetcars, buses and water supply, and two years before they fired

Lopata they succeeded in institutionalizing a union activist in an asylum. Repression was the norm, not the exception in the steel industry, but *LIFE* readers would have had to read closely to learn that the photo-essay's subject, Andy Lopata, had been fired. Even this detail was ensconced in a larger narrative of corporate beneficence that ignored the draconian labor policies of the remaining steel companies who refused to negotiate with hundreds of thousands of workers in their employ.¹¹¹

LIFE maintained America's ruling elite—and their wives—altered the steelworker's fate. This ruling elite, the statesmanlike "steel masters" also included labor's representatives, the CIO's John L. Lewis, "a leading candidate for man of the year." *LIFE* introduced this curious mix in the next two pages. [Fig. 2-18.]¹¹² *LIFE* crystallized the CIO into the presence of one man, Lewis, in seven candid portraits. He posed, looking directive, pensive, and entreating. Luce was attracted to powerful men, and Lewis fit the bill as a photogenic member of a new national elite. *LIFE* never attacked Lewis as a "dictator," as some corporate propaganda did in this period. Nonetheless, by focusing on Lewis photographically *LIFE* personalized labor's strength in one man.¹¹³ Below this septet of photos lie seven close-up studio bust portraits of corporate leaders. *LIFE* contrasted the single leader whose strength lay in his capacity to

¹¹¹ For the Frances Perkins anecdote see Bernstein, *Turbulent Years*, 434. Though more than ninety percent of steelworkers were covered by Employee Representation Plans or company unions at the Depression's outset, steel typically used outright repression to keep unions out. Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 474.

¹¹² "The Common Steel Worker," *LIFE*, 15 March 1937, 18-19.

¹¹³ For Luce's fascination in the powerful, see Swanburg, *Luce*, 81-82. For stories which attacked organized labor through Lewis see "John L. Lewis Wins a Big Labor Victory: But Strife-Torn Labor is Losing the Public's Sympathy" 22 May 1939, 20; and feature story, "Feuds of American Labor Leaders Imperil Both Labor and National Defense," *LIFE*, 2 December 1940, 23-29.

persuade the masses, with the composed corporate heads whose inner stability matched their place in American society. The headline told readers they were the “Steel Masters who made peace” with Lewis and his CIO. But only two of the corporate steel executives, Myron Taylor and Benjamin Fairless who represented the same corporation, U.S. Steel and its affiliate Carnegie-Illinois, “made peace” by cooperating with SWOC.¹¹⁴ The other three corporate heads were anti-union. The President of Jones and Laughlin supported the illegal firing of Lopata for union activities. Ernest Weir fought unions for decades. Tom Girdler would soon be elected as the President of the American Iron and Steel Institute for his pledge to hold the line against unions, and as we saw earlier, bore out that pledge out with bloody consequences for mid-western steel workers. Additionally pictured were Gerard Swope of GE, long time corporate liberal who had signed with the United Electrical Workers and Walter Chrysler, who signed with the UAW after the sit-down at his plant.¹¹⁵ The largest portrait on the page was that of a fur and hat clad Mrs. Myron Taylor, who after seeing “John L. Lewis stalking about the lobby of Washington D.C.’s Mayflower Hotel” urged her husband to “Bring him over here.”

¹¹⁴ Even among corporations grave differences in approach to unions persisted. As late as 1935, William Leuchtenberg reports, “Arthur Young, U.S. Steel vice-president in charge of industrial relations told the American Management Association that rather than obey the Wagner Bill he would ‘go to jail or be convicted as a felon.’ The association then gave Young a medal for ‘outstanding and creative work in the field of labor relations.’” From *Fortune*, July 1935, 140 as quoted in Leuchtenberg *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 177. Young is often referenced as one of the more advanced corporate liberals.

¹¹⁵ Zieger, *CIO*, 59, 79; for Weir see Arthur Schlesinger, *Coming of the New Deal*, 404. For some later anti-communist attacks on the CIO by Weirton Steel see June 18th, 1937 leaflet to Weirton Employees, in CIO National and International Union Series, b19f8 and “The Weir Formula” a counterattack by the CIO, in *Ibid*, b19f17, *CUA*.

This odd assemblage of photographs nonetheless provides clues to *LIFE*'s circuitous logic, a logic that obscured class inequities as much as it imagined society in domestic terms. The masters—of labor and of steel—and of the electrical and auto industries that had already negotiated with UE and the UAW received equal time. The activism of hundreds of thousands of workers behind Lewis was hidden. *LIFE* imagined competing economic interests and labor relations as if they were a social tiff that could be resolved with a dash of feminine charm—or perhaps wiles—as Mrs. Taylor looks imperious. The meeting between Lewis and the Taylors took place, as Irving Bernstein has noted, their “encounter...exploded a bombshell in the Mayflower dining room,” and Lewis appears to have charmed Mrs. Taylor.¹¹⁶ In *LIFE*'s story the negotiations turned on the personal and on the female for Taylor heeded the advice of his wife, and came to terms with Lewis. Taylor's political and economic rationales for negotiating were lost in *LIFE*. Instead *LIFE* suggests a cadre of steel masters who are equally beneficent.

What were unionization's goals? Here *LIFE*'s story turned on higher wages and middlebrow aspirations. On the same pages as Lewis, Mrs. Taylor, and the captains of industry was an incongruous image—a smallish photo of machine lather Bill Blair at home in his “two-story” Homestead “cottage”. The family was seated in the parlor, Blair's daughter played the piano as his wife, son-in-law, and grand-daughter listened. The Blair family could hardly make up for the images of lack visible in Andy Lopata's story, the barefoot wife, the washing off outside, the unpaved road to church.

¹¹⁶ In *LIFE* the rest was history as, “Big Labor and Big Steel Tycoon Taylor...settled differences amicably.” Bernstein *Turbulent Years*, 470. Ironically, Ralph Ingersoll believed *Fortune*'s earlier attack on Taylor made him sit down with Lewis, Hoopes, *Ingersoll*, 98.

Nonetheless the Blair family suggests a goal towards which Lewis and the Steel Masters could move workers towards—one of middle-class, family-oriented leisure and enlightenment.

In the photo-essay's final two pages *LIFE* editors reasserted corporate might. Intoned *LIFE*, the steel master's domain was the base of the American economy as "autos, cans, gadgets keep furnaces boiling." Much as it had in the story of the Auto Lords of Detroit, *LIFE* visually reminded readers of the steel masters' productive power. [n 2-19.]¹¹⁷ Editors placed four large photos of steel production across two pages. Taken from inside the plant, the dramatic photographs contrasted the plant's darkened interior with the rigidly organized windows and the fires of production. Below lie three, somewhat prosaic photographs of the new kinds of products that kept "furnaces burning." The story described a transformation in industrial production: from steel for industry in the first industrial revolution, to steel for consumer goods. In a sense the conclusion reflected its initial thrust and concern with the common steelworker, for he would have to buy autos, cans, and gadgets for any economic upturn. Yet the story effaced worker's contribution at the same time. The dramatic photographs of production showed only one worker. The photograph was a typical corporate photograph of the workplace that hid workers' labor and stressed a bloodless production orchestrated by owners and managers. Much as Frederick Taylor sought to take the intelligence out of the workman's cap and give it to managers, these photos depicted production as a rigid and hierarchical managerial order. *LIFE*'s story about the common steelworker, ended with a common encapsulation of work from the managerial standpoint. Within this narrative of social

and industrial production the “far-sighted statesmanship of the steel owners” and the statesmanlike Lewis contribute to change. Workers were recipients, but not agents of transformation of America’s economy and society.

A 1938 story on the ILGWU affirmed moderate, administrative unionism to *LIFE* readers with all the infectiousness of the smiles of two summer-clad women unionists *LIFE* put on its cover. [Fig. 2-20.]¹¹⁸ One of the “garment workers at play” was Yetta Henner. For this story *LIFE* sent Otto Hagel and Hansel Meith to photograph Henner’s life—the life of “the common garment worker.” Hagel and Meith had left Central Europe in the 1920s due to the repression of radicals. The Works Progress Administration considered their work too “propagandistic,” perhaps because of their photographs of West Coast strikers and unemployed. But *LIFE* hired Meith in 1937, and gave Hagel freelancing commissions. Both photographers hewed to a traditional documentary impetus that by showing “the chasm between rich and poor” that they could promote “better understanding” and thereby social change.¹¹⁹ Hansel and Meith’s photographs of the ILG dramatized this chasm between the working- and middle-class lives. But *LIFE*’s editors wove their pictures into a narrative that transformed workers with a toehold in the American Dream into those who already shared in America’s burgeoning mass culture and therefore in the promise of American life.

¹¹⁷ “The Common Steel Worker,” *LIFE*, 15 March 1937, 20-21.

¹¹⁸ All quotes are from “A Great and Good Union Points the Way for America’s Labor Movement,” *LIFE*, 1 August 1938, 42-53.

¹¹⁹ Alexander Alland, et. al., *Reframing America* (Tucson: Center for Creative Photography, 1995), 30; and Loengard, *LIFE Photographers*, Interview with Peter Stackpole, San Francisco, August 16 1993, 59.

“A Great and Good Union Points the Way for America’s Labor Movement”

suggested *LIFE*’s larger argument with two photographs that filled the upper half of the first two pages. Readers could see “Where ILGWU Works”—dozens of garment workers at a white goods factory who labored in clean, open conditions. Their reward, “Where ILGWU Plays,” a photograph of men and women unionists cavorting at Unity House, the ILG’s “million dollar” recreational facility in the Catskills. [Fig. 2-21.]¹²⁰ Encapsulated in these opening photographs was an economic transformation from labor to leisure, brought to workers in part through their unions. *LIFE* began with its regular chorus: because of activism popular opinion had turned against labor, the sit-down epidemic had “alarmed” even “many a Labor sympathizer,” including factory workers.¹²¹ But *LIFE* reminded readers of unions’ right to exist and that the U.S. had “ceased to be a ‘non-union country,’ it could now be characterized as a “trade union country,” though the magazine advised that Americans did not yet know how to “live with unions.” Even union rank and file itself had yet to learn to “live within the union.” But the ILG, a “well seasoned union” had already learned such “vital lessons.” It was “shiningly free from racketeering and corruption,” had regulated and stabilized its own industry, and most importantly, it learned how to “settle most disputes before they become costly, embittering strikes.”

The next two pages showed how the ILG, “Born of Sweat, Hate and Fire” had become “A Happy Army, 250,000 Strong.” Echoing the last pages’ move from work to

¹²⁰ “A Great and Good Union,” *LIFE*, 1 August, 1938, 42-43.

¹²¹ Zieger, *CIO*, 115-116 reports ambiguity among workers on attitudes towards activism and labor leaders, though workers generally registered more liberal opinions than other class groups in public opinion polls.

play, these two pages stressed a transition from sweatshops to the organized shop—even organized fun. [Fig. 2-22.]¹²² *LIFE* acknowledged employers' abuses in this industry, abuses readers would have been well aware of given the half-century of work by labor and middle-class reformers to better garment workers' lot.¹²³ *LIFE* photographs showed a turn-of-the-century sweatshop; a march from the "uprising of 1909," where over 20,000 women took to New York City streets; and at the bottom, a large photograph of the 1911 Triangle Waist Company fire where 146 women leapt to their deaths to escape a fire in their locked workshop. Until 1933 sweatshops in "dark filthy bedrooms lofts and basements" predominated according to *LIFE*, leading workers to seek safety and security in unionization. But *LIFE* asserted that as of 1933, sweatshops were "a thing of the past." Editors titling to this page suggests that the union was born in the crucible of Sweat, Hate and Fire. Sweat and Fire alluded to actual conditions and events, admitting workers' rational motivations. The word "hate" was harder to place. Was it a reference to the Waistmaker Boss's oppressive labor practices? *LIFE* had superimposed a cartoon of "the Waistmaker Boss" upon photographs of the 1909 march and the 1911 fire. The boss's grotesque maw devoured his workers. Or did workers' desire for change, which *LIFE* appeared to legitimate, qualify as "hate." The story's imprecision marks *LIFE*'s

¹²² "A Great and Good Union," *LIFE* 1 August 1938, 44-45.

¹²³ Two important works on middle-class reform and garment workers include: Katherine Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); and Annaliese Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Jacob Riis's documentation of the New York tenements in *How the Other Half Lives* is perhaps the most critical primary source on sweated labor, middle class reform, and photography.

unwillingness to confront social inequality, as does the caricatured boss, whose exaggerated features substituted for America's economic system.

The next page showed readers those "sodden machine serfs" transformed into the "Happy Army" who rallied at Madison Square Garden and danced in a can-can line on the top portion of the page. The dancers were from the ILG's hit theatre revue, "Pins and Needles" which went to Broadway and even the White House. *LIFE* told readers how this "satire on capitalism...netted a neat capitalistic profit of \$35,000." Workers were organized enough to fill one of New York City's biggest venues, but it was the fun, even entrepreneurial venture that *LIFE* focused on.

In the fifth and sixth pages *LIFE* followed the day of their emblematic garment worker. In one image Yetta held up the panties she trimmed for a living. [Fig. 2-23.]¹²⁴ This was the second and the last photograph of work in a full twelve pages, thirty-three photographs that explored a union and its workers. *LIFE* did document the benefits Yetta received from her union membership. These benefits included a basketball team at her union local which built spirit, much as "a college team builds up college spirit," her union health care center with its "top-notch specialists," and a union dance, where Yetta could bring "Boy Friend Hy Stofsky." *LIFE* also printed Hagel and Meith's photos of Yetta ensconced in her immigrant life: at home with her Orthodox Jewish family where "menfolk wear hats at table;" Rivington Steet—pushcarts still visible—where Yetta lived in a tenement; and a smoke-filled room where garment workers enjoyed their coffee before union classes provided "food for their eager minds." In almost all of these photographs the space collapsed around the subjects, indeed editors outlined Yetta's face

in each of the photographs to help readers locate her within the photo frame. The photographs pressed in on the reader with the details of Yetta's domestic and neighborhood milieu, lovers, teammates, and nurses. The images expressed the tight world of New York City's Lower East Side, but their lack of deep space also corresponded to the old world that workers like Yetta would leave with union support.

In the following four pages *LIFE* represented the new world workers would join in photos of the union's "Summer Resort, Unity House." These photographs showed ILG workers' retreat, and gave *LIFE* readers a visual respite. [Fig. 2-24.]¹²⁵ The setting was so open and pastoral, workers' enjoyment so gleeful and hetero-social, *LIFE* told readers in their headline that the camp made "A Fine Setting for a Movie." *LIFE* actualized this claim by laying out six photographs to look like movie still clips. The photos depicted a couple diverting themselves in that decades long leisure activity—snapping one another's picture—while other photographs showed couples snuggling together. Couples and hetero-social groups sat around on the wide expanse of the camp's lawn and against the broad trunk of a tree, sat on blankets and Adirondacks chairs scattered on the premises, and lounged on beds applying makeup. Most of *LIFE*'s significance paragraph sketched a movie-like melodrama of a panty-stitching girl garment worker who lost her beau because of her union devotion. Distraught, she jabbed her hands with scissors. At Unity House where she headed to mend she immediately met another boy. Both were dazzled by the union's facilities. He too questioned her union involvement, but then joined her in economic—and romantic—solidarity. The faux

¹²⁴ "A Great and Good Union," *LIFE*, 1 August 1938, 46-47.

¹²⁵ "A Great and Good Union," *LIFE*, 1 August 1938, 48-51.

scenario ended with “lovelight creeping into her eyes as the dawn comes up over dining hall, seating capacity 1,100.” Four pages of photos ended with a similarly balmy ending, landscape photographs of three couples in silhouette, dwarfed by the fir trees that surround them, and the “lovely Lake...Center of Camp Life and Romance,” glinting in the sun. This “\$1,000,000 country-club hotel for ILGWU members” epitomized the ideals *LIFE* held dear, indeed the members look like nothing so much as the dozens of portraits of American youth and college co-eds that *LIFE* featured regularly in its stories.

In *LIFE*'s America workers could now lay claim to Shangri-la because of their administratively run unions that negotiated without conflict. With the exception of the 1909 march, *LIFE* again ignored how rank and file activism helps create a union. Workers were instead recipients of the union's strong leadership, much as in other stories workers were recipients of corporate largesse. The father of the new unionism was David Dubinsky, who “nursed the union back to health” after expelling communists in the 1920s. In a full-page portrait, Dubinsky looks out towards, though not quite at the camera, as he sat at his desk, running his union. An inset photo showed Dubinsky riding his bike down a Manhattan street. *LIFE* told readers that in biking, Dubinsky “keeps close to the middle of the street,” and that “it is his middle of the road positions in the Labor movement which makes” him “one of the most important men in America.” Dubinsky's commitment to ending the AFL and CIO feud also drew the magazine's commendation. [Fig. 2-25.]¹²⁶

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 52-53. Dubinsky, long nervous about pulling out of the AFL, sought to patch things up almost from the start. Dubinsky's ILG rejoined the CIO in 1939. See Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell

Photographs showed Dubinsky with his General Executive Board much as photographs of the titans of industry were seen in their boardrooms along with a photograph of the union's arbitration machinery which settled disputes and "whose word is law." Even members seemed to understand that Dubinsky was no man of the people. *LIFE* told readers that when Dubinsky attended Camp Unity he kept to himself. Though workers sometimes cheered him, "no one ever cries out, jovially, "Hi there, Dave." Here *LIFE* distinguished Dubinsky from his membership. He was a leader, a leader responsible for great changes in American society, and even his workers knew this. As an administratively organized power which could speak on behalf of millions of American workers, unions were respected as a voice that now "sat at the table" with industry.¹²⁷ *LIFE* celebrated the new unionism and its bureaucratic machinery that ensured stability in labor relations and in American life, a stability that would be crucial as the nation inched towards war.¹²⁸

University Press, 1991), 341-342, 372, 438-439. *LIFE* also applauded Dubinsky's attempts to bring members into the political sphere as an organized block.

¹²⁷ For three critical accounts of shifting relationships between the state, labor, and business, see Colin Gordon, *New Deals: Business, Labor and Politics in America, 1920-1935*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994); Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Fraser's *Labor Will Rule*.

¹²⁸ Many responded to the ILG cover story—*LIFE* printed more letters than had appeared for all of *LIFE*'s labor coverage. Dubinsky applauded his union's portrait and claimed the union received an enthusiastic "flood of letters and telegrams at national headquarters." Others thought Dubinsky a "tremendous force for peace and advancement," who should lead all U.S. labor. *LIFE*'s attempt to imagine the seamstress's life as a movie came under fire however. One writer criticized the melodramatic scripting of "Shirley the Scissors-Stabbing Seamstress," and another, noted that *LIFE*'s "magnificent saga of a labor union" would never be produced as the Hays Office "turns thumbs down on all scripts having to do with Unions or Labor, in any manner of presentation."

Readers were not always so accepting of *LIFE*'s re-imagining of organized labor in the American mainstream. Some criticism came from labor's camp. One writer

War Power/Manpower

As war became a reality with Pearl Harbor and Hitler's aggressions, *LIFE* moved to representing workers and their unions as crucial to American productivity and war readiness. Before *LIFE* promoted the nation's industrial prowess as the consequence of bold foresight of America's corporate fathers, but now labor—as an important resource, manpower—participated in this might. “Production for victory” was organized labor's shibboleth during the war, and it was *LIFE*'s too. *LIFE*'s labor stories relied on the same conceptual threads that had been used for five years. For *LIFE*, volatile labor relations made the nation internally and externally vulnerable when it should most be asserting its

reminded *LIFE* editors that their own stories supplied details contrary to the thrust of their stories, that the workers featured in their stories lived off relief, dependent as they were on inconstant employers. A SWOC organizer wrote to complain about the anti-labor bias of *LIFE*'s “ivory-tower editors.” He demanded that *LIFE* “do a real job on Labor by sending staff photographers into steel towns like Johnstown, Bethlehem, Sparrows Point, Steelton and Lackawanna where Labor is still fighting for recognition. Let the American people see where and how the workers live. See the utter waste of human life, see the future generation growing up, emaciated, in rags, all but homeless.” The writer encapsulated *LIFE*'s failure to document the deprivation in workers' lives. Workers could be imagined as part of the middle, but *LIFE* never represented their distance from this ideal. Other readers took an opposite tack. One middle-class writer thought that Ford workers enjoyed wages, based on the workers' overstuffed chairs seen in the photo-essay, that was “better than the average college trained man can afford.” The true fault in this readers' eyes was the Ford workers' laziness. Another protest came from a farmer who suggested Ford workers should trade places with them to see back-breaking work. Farmers he wrote, unlike workers, would never stoop to relief. Readers seemed to have no uniform response to *LIFE*'s coverage of the new administrative unionism and its rewards. Though there was no uniform response, it is fair to say that the importance or significance of *LIFE*'s camera-eye was not being questioned. The union supporters suggested *LIFE* should see more, suggesting that the camera eye could capture reality. And the farmer also believed what *LIFE* showed him, but used those visual facts to support his belief in limited government. Important to my argument is not that everyone read *LIFE* the same, but rather that *LIFE* had a coherent argument that readers could recognize. “Garment Workers,” *LIFE*, 23 August 1938, 6; “Ivory Tower Editors,” *LIFE*, 5 June 1939; “Ford Worker,” *LIFE*, 28 June 1937, 6-7.

global position. As a result *LIFE*'s attacks on strikes became shrill in the two years before war. But *LIFE* also argued dialogue with labor was necessary. The magazine endorsed CIO leaders who suspended strikes and cracked down on militancy in exchange for federal support for unionization.

These two threads came together in an August of 1941 story on union infighting. The photo-essay featured John L. Lewis, whose power in the CIO dimmed over his endorsement of Wendell Wilkie in the 1940 elections, and two ascendant CIO leaders, Lewis's once loyal lieutenant—now CIO president—Phil Murray, and Lewis's long-time ally-adversary, Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union.¹²⁹ The photo-essay left no doubt about who *LIFE* supported. *LIFE* told how Lewis advocated a return to AFL-style voluntarism, believing the government's support for labor fickle. Like Samuel Gompers before him, Lewis decided labor was strongest with the threat of economic activism a club at its side. His UMW threatened a strike to gain the closed shop in the captive mines. The magazine reported that communists who adhered to the Hitler-Stalin Pact had allied with Lewis and continued with vociferous demands for rank and file militancy. Arrayed against Lewis were former CIO allies who retained an allegiance to the New Deal. They supported the war effort and thought the government's hand would help unions achieve the organizational stability and the political importance they coveted. Phil Murray advanced conservative corporatist views, seeking cooperative

¹²⁹ For Lewis's relationship with Hillman see Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule*, 276, 432-3. Fraser argues Lewis and Hillman had opposing temperaments and goals. Lewis, happy to exploit government support, remained suspicious of the state. Hillman was committed to working with the state. Fraser dates the difficulties between the two from FDR's lack of support in the 1937 steel strike, and FDR's courting of Hillman. See also Zieger, *CIO*, 107-109.

relationships with management; and Sidney Hillman built his reputation on such cooperative experiments, which led FDR to appoint him to the National Defense Mediation Board (NDMB) and then the Office of Price Management (OPM).¹³⁰

LIFE's sympathies for labor were evident from the opening pages of "CIO Internal Conflict Brings This Great Revolutionary Movement to Crossroad." Sounding like a CIO pamphlet, *LIFE* applauded the federation's "social revolution" which "organized the great unorganized masses of the mass-production industries" to rally for "a controlling voice in the conduct of U.S. business and government." *LIFE* questioned whether Lewis's voluntarism, promised future explosiveness in labor relations. *LIFE* depicted Lewis who "hates Roosevelt, the British ruling class, and Sidney Hillman" in a full-page portrait. Taken and lit from below, darkness shrouded much of Lewis's face. [Fig. 2-26.]¹³¹ The high contrast and harsh lighting intensified the hypnotic quality of his eyes framed as they were with his trademark bushy eyebrows. Lewis appeared as nothing so much as a menace from a low-budget horror movie. Across from him lay a half-page photograph of Lewis's successor at the CIO, Philip Murray. For *LIFE*, Murray was caught in the middle between Lewis and Hillman, and the magazine depicted him as an elite manager in a posed tableau.¹³² Ensnared in the national UMW headquarters, Murray sat behind the wide expanse of his desk as a secretary served him, and unnamed,

¹³⁰ By 1940 Murray was arguing for industrial statesmanship, disciplined unionism, and joint labor-management bodies. Zieger, *CIO*, 143; for Hillman's role see *Ibid.*, 129-190; other positive stories about Hillman and labor-management conciliation can be found on 10 March 1941, and 24 March 1941.

¹³¹ "CIO: Internal Conflict Brings this Great Revolutionary Movement to a Crossroad," *LIFE*, 25 August 1941, 64-71.

pipe-smoking minions buttressed all corners of the desk. An oriental carpet drew *LIFE* readers into this scene of genteel authority.

The story then moved to the CIO's past, whose "History [was] one of violence." *LIFE*'s text acknowledged a "class war" had made "America safe for industrial democracy" but the magazine once again held labor caused the "war." Twenty photographs of labor's past was exactly what *LIFE* pledged, twenty photographs of labor violence. More than half of the photographs documented violence *against* strikers: the Battle of the Overpass, the Memorial Day Massacre, the Little Steel Strike, and the Hershey strike. Photographs showed loyal workers, or police, or corporate financed "security" attacking labor. All these photos were subsumed under the "CIO Movement...the violent phase of the New Deal revolution." [Fig. 2-27.]¹³³ The text did note the "long, sordid history of company spies, police brutality, yellow dog contracts and fired strikebreakers, when Labor was always the underdog" but this acknowledgement came through the frame of Lewis's personal reminisces. By locating corporate- and state-sponsored violence in Lewis's perspective, editors could discount it.¹³⁴ *LIFE* contrasted Lewis's views with Sidney Hillman, the rational labor leader who understood labor's "rough" past but who believed in a newly mature labor movement.

¹³² Murray and Lewis had a tension-laden relationship since Murray took over the SWOC. Murray was a loyalist, who Lewis often paid back poorly, and Murray chafed at this, Zieger, *CIO*, 59, 110, 135-139.

¹³³ "CIO: Internal Conflict," *LIFE*, 25 August 1941, 66-67.

¹³⁴ *LIFE* persisted in painting unions as responsible for violence from the CIO's inception through the war. See: "Bethlehem Steel Strike Poses Tough Problem of Defense Labor Disputes," 10 March, 1941, 34-5; "Public Anger at Labor Leaders Rises as Strikes Delay Defense Production," 7 April 1941, 19-25; "New Strike Battles Bring Threat of Federal Action," 14 April 1941, 30; "President Roosevelt Breaks a Red Strike," 23 June 1941,

Hillman rejected labor's shortsightedness, he put national interest above labor's interest. His "longtime gospel that Labor can only prosper when Industry does too" led him to favor "negotiation and partnership."

The next two pages "This is How CIO Won Greatest 1941 Victory," represented this "mature" unionism by looking at the UAW's fight against Ford. The article contrasted the "big headlines and spectacular photographs" of the UAW's four years of battles against Ford with "the real work of organizing." The article implied that the organizing which took place "quietly, unspectacularly, with little publicity" was new for the UAW. *LIFE*'s photos portrayed Harry Ross, "a typical CIO organizer," sympathetically. Ross worked twelve and eighteen hour days, had a glib tongue, and loyalty to union leaders. The result of his "house canvasses, beer garden chats and endless meetings" was a majority of workers voting for the UAW. The article acknowledged Ford was "the greatest anti-unionist in the land," and one caption claimed thugs beat an organizer's wife at her own front doorstep. The photo-essay's failure to represent this, even as it offered twenty photographs of the CIO's "history of violence" reinforced the story's binary of immature and mature labor organizing. The story suggested Ford workers chose the UAW because of its persistent, safe organizing, but they might have voted the CIO in years before had they been able to. CIO methods changed only because Henry Ford's did. With pressure from his wife and son, he

32-34; and "Lewis Calls Off His Coal-Mine Strike in Response to President's Final Plea," 1 December 1941, 25-27; all in *LIFE*.

admitted that unionism could no longer be fought with “brass knuckles.”¹³⁵ Federal support for unions eased Ford’s decision, of course.

LIFE’s final two pages celebrated the 1941 Buffalo convention, where Hillmanites beat out Lewisites for UAW control. For *LIFE*, Hillman’s success meant that “communists, Nazis, Fascists and fellow travelers” would have no place. The labor movement could settle down for Hillman’s dream: of negotiation, class partnership, and productivity. For *LIFE* this struggle—played out at the convention—would “profoundly affect not only the immediate future of U.S. Labor and the U.S. defense program, but also the long term pattern of American life.”

The CIO’s decision to partner with the government did give industrial workers the security and public authority it’s leaders had so long craved. Right after Pearl Harbor, the CIO, which felt public displeasure over earlier strikes committed itself to the No-Strike pledge. In compensation, over the first half of 1942 the NWLB, established maintenance of membership whereby unions represented all employees at a work-site, and corporations were authorized to take dues out of workers’ paychecks and hand them over to unions. Unions stabilized. They could no longer be held hostage by companies who didn’t want to bargain with them, or by factions of employees who withheld dues.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Norwood, *Strike-Breaking*, 190.

¹³⁶ This “bargain” was in no way assumed. The CIO gave its no-strike pledge in late 1942, but it took six months for the NMWB to establish maintenance of membership. Some scholars agree with Lewis that this was a Faustian bargain, as labor foreswore its strongest leverage. Others maintain this was the only way organized labor could move forward. Those in the latter camp feared the WWI debacle, where labor’s uprising led to defeat without government support. David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays in Twentieth Century Struggle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 136 offers the view that it took the war and government support to take the CIO to full organization. Nelson Lichtenstein’s *Labor’s War at Home: The CIO in World War II*

Cultural producers like *LIFE* made one path more attractive to the general public, and therefore more politically feasible. *LIFE* remained hostile to activism, but welcomed labor in new ways once this bargain was struck. The magazine celebrated production in a manner worthy of any union newspaper. It joined the photographs of the belching smokestacks and twirling gears of American production to photographs of the men and women who worked on the line at their machines. [Fig. 2-28.]¹³⁷ Unlike the early corporate photography *LIFE* had featured, with its managerial viewpoint that erased workers, *LIFE* photographs now acknowledged the individual worker as part of the industrial set-up. Workers, now as consumers, now as the manpower necessary to win the war became part and parcel of the America *LIFE* depicted.

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) makes the argument that the no-strike pledge bound the CIO and narrowed its possibilities. See also Christopher Tomlins, "AFL Unions in the 1930s: Their Performance in Historical Perspective," *Journal of American History*, 65 (March 1979): 1021-1042. For a review of this literature see Joshua Freeman, "Delivering the Goods: Industrial Unionism During WWII," *Labor History*, 19 no. 4 (1978): 570-593 and David Montgomery, "Labor and the Political Leadership of New Deal America," *International Review of Social History*, (1994): 335-360. For the AFL attack on the CIO's governmental dependence see Nelson Lichtenstein, *The State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 64-67.

¹³⁷ "The Workers Show Spirit," *LIFE*, 12 October 1942, 106-107. Other examples include: "The Douglas Aircraft Day Shift," 2 March 1942, 27; and "Manpower," 26 October 1942, 29-35, all in *LIFE*.

Chapter Three: A Wise Chocolate King and His Bitter Kisses: Sit-down Strike at the Hershey Chocolate Corporation, April 1937.

In the midst of the sit-down wave of 1937, Paul Shafer, a U.S. Representative from Michigan, denounced the CIO's "sit-down technique, imported from foreign shores" which "injected...fear, ferment, force, and extortion" into American society. Prime example in his April 19th attack was a sit-down that occurred two weeks earlier in the "workingman's Utopia" of Hershey, Pennsylvania. Shafer had been there; he knew "the facts." The need for better wages or work conditions didn't motivate chocolate workers. After all, the company's founder gave from his "own purse" these basics and a bonanza of cultural, recreational, and educational advantages. Shafer then detailed to other legislators how local farmers and employees, "innocent citizens" with a "vested interest" in Hershey's corporate success assaulted these strikers. He concluded: "Here was a collision between two mobs and the bigger mob won." Unless politicians took steps to curtail the sit-down scourge Shafer predicted "a small series of civil wars" similar to that at Hershey, as American citizens would not indulge the CIO.¹

Shafer made an astute choice in focusing on the Hershey sit-down strike to castigate the CIO. Few corporations had such positive associations as Hershey. By the thirties Hershey Chocolate had long established its market preeminence as *the* American chocolate bar. And the corporation's persona was one of good-citizenship and self-styled Americanism. The company's founder, Milton Snavely Hershey, built an Industrial Mecca in the heart of rural America near his birthplace. He brought the modern

advantages of mass production and consumption right to his rural home. Simultaneously by reconnecting modern factory workers to the land and its inhabitants—mostly industrious, plain-living Mennonite dairy farmers—Hershey claimed to nurture the backbone they so sorely lacked. Hershey was known as an innovative corporate paternalist to his workers and a generous philanthropist—he gave his fortune away to orphan boys.² Hershey's ideals, embodied in his own rise, his company, town, and philanthropies, combined old-fashioned yeoman self-sufficiency and uprightness, with an Algeresque, urban, business know-how. In Hershey's world work inspired virtue and class divisions didn't intrude at all. Souvenir booklets, recipe books, postcards, mass market magazine interviews, newspaper articles, and radio programs—all trilled with the dulcet cadences and seductive image of the Hershey story: how a simple man remade himself, made a million-dollar corporation, and a town and philanthropies from the simple cloth of American values. Shafer could find no better exemplar of corporate rectitude than Hershey with which to suggest that the CIO sit-downs flouted decent Americanism.

Shafer's concentration on Hershey may not have been accidental. Other politicians, business associations, newspapers, and public opinion pollsters used similar anecdotes and photographs from the Hershey strike to make the same point against the CIO. The prominence of this strike in news media and public debate is best understood

¹ Senator Paul Shafer of Michigan, 75th Cong., 1st Sess. *Congressional Record*, April 19, 1937. National Association of Manufacturers papers, s7b140f "strikes," the Hagley Archive, (hereafter *NAM papers, Hagley*).

² Scholarship on corporate welfare is cited in Chapter One. One helpful work is David Brody's, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on Twentieth Century Struggle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 48-81. Hershey was so large that by 1941 the company

as traditional union busting techniques adapted to a mass consumer economy.³ Hershey managers used a variety of tactics to defeat the United Chocolate Workers of the CIO, but they also relied on their long-cultivated public image. Business associations and other antiunionists did one better. Using public relations strategies that took advantage of transformations in twentieth-century news media, including its nationalization, its standardization, and its increasing reliance on photography, antiunionists denounced labor unions.⁴ With the Hershey strike a nationwide audience of Americans read similar stories and saw similar photographs of how a small group of agitators threatened chaos to a small town that embodied the best of America's values. Indeed, news photographs were especially helpful to union's foes, for they could show millions of Americans how generous corporate America could be, and how unions not only spurned such generosity, but tore at the heart of even the most close-knit, ideal community.

claimed to utilize ten percent of the entire world's chocolate crops. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Internal Affairs, 10 no. 1 December 1941, 13.

³ R. Eugene Harper's "Bittersweet Experience: Hershey, Pennsylvania as a Paternalistic, Industrial New Town," *Journal of the West Virginia Historical Association* 10 no. 1 (1986): 34-51 is the lone study of the strike. It relies almost exclusively on published accounts of the event and examines the events from a local perspective.

⁴ Nationalization of the news began in the mid-19th century with the telegraph, but intensified in the twentieth century with syndicated wire services and business consolidation. For standardization of news see, Bonnie Brenner and Hanno Hardt, *Picturing the Past: Media, History and Photography* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 23; Michael Kammen *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999); Daniel Czitrom: *Media and the American Mind from Morse to McLuhan* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 3-29. A fuller discussion is found in Chapter One.

“The Story of a Barefoot Boy and Two Silver Shillings and How they Grew into a Wise Chocolate King and ‘A Million, Billion, Trillion Dollars.’ And of an Almost Fairylike Domain in Pennsylvania, Where this Emperor of Industry is Letting Poor Orphan Boys Spend a Dazzling Fortune.”⁵

The ingredients in Milton Hershey’s saccharine-confected myth were Hershey’s actual accomplishments—a multimillion-dollar corporation, a town informed by cooperative principles and one of most well endowed orphanages in the nation. Hershey epitomized the arc of America’s emergent consumer economy, an economy that linked mass production with consumption, and simultaneously linked national corporations with a global reach to American citizens in their intimate domestic lives.⁶ Milton Hershey had a keen awareness of the import of image to this consumer economy. From the Hershey Chocolate Company’s inception in 1903, Milton Snavely Hershey cultivated his business, but just as assiduously cultivated his model industrial town, his philanthropies and as a result, his personal and corporate reputation. His in-house public relations staff kept files full of statistical information, photographs and illustrations, anecdotes and full-fleshed narratives about Hershey: the man, the industry, and the model town. As this section’s title, taken from a 1924 *Liberty Magazine* article indicates, the “fairy tale” proportions of his story were disseminated by a burgeoning mass media for years before the 1937 strike.

⁵ Title from a *Liberty Magazine* article by Charles Lobdell, 13 September 1924. In Alexander Stoddart Files, b2f53,

Hershey Community Archive, (hereafter *Stoddart, HCA*).

⁶ See Glenn Porter, *The Rise of Big Business, 1860-1920*, 2nd ed. (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 1992); Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 40-46; and Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York: Pantheon Books: 1989).

Because his story so artfully mixed nostalgia for America's past and hope in the nation's future Hershey's appeal endures in tele-documentaries and biographies even today.⁷

⁷ Hershey's corporate public relations officer, Alexander Stoddart, had at his fingertips hundreds of meticulously organized concepts and anecdotes that he mixed together much like the ingredients of a Hershey Chocolate bar. Ephemera such as, "M.S. Hershey jokes" or "Hershey, M.S. -- Likes a glass of beer once in a while," joined common story elements, such as, "Cooperative enterprise," or "Hershey Park" in the Hershey story. Milton Hershey's nephew devoted himself to writing books celebrating his uncle's life. See Joseph Snavely Hershey, *Milton S. Hershey, Builder* (1935); *Meet Mr. Hershey* (1939); *M.S. Hershey Lives On* (1947); and *An Intimate Story of Milton S. Hershey* (1957). Others got in on the act. Charles Schuyler Castner, *One of a Kind: Milton Snavely Hershey, 1857-1945* (Hershey: Derry Literary Guild, 1983). The company produced a booklet *The Story of Hershey, the Chocolate Town*, which they printed dozens of times between 1920 and 1960. They also produced *The Story of Chocolate and Cocoa*, 1926, in author's possession. Speeches about Hershey include: Samuel Hinkle, *Hershey: Farsighted Confectioner, Famous Chocolate, Fine Community* (New York: The Newcomen Society, 1964). Recipe books produced by the corporation include Hershey Chocolate Corporation, "A Cookery Experts New Recipes" and "Recipes" in author's possession. The *Hershey Community Archive* also has an excellent holding of early corporate postcards.

Mass market coverage of the Hershey story was almost unchanging over three decades and includes: "Mr. Hershey gives his Fortune Away," *Fortune*, September, 1933; John Oliver La Gorce, "Penn's Land of Modern Miracles," *National Geographic*, July 1935; Hotel Hershey 'Best in USA for Comfort, Good Taste and Value,' *American Business*, 20 July 1935; "Model Community of Hershey Fruit of a Millionaire Idealist's Dream," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 July 1934; "First Nationally Known U.S. Chocolate Bar," *Cosmopolitan*, 25 February 1950; "A Pennsylvanian's Gift to Orphan Boys," *The Baltimore Sun*, 30 December 1934; and "Candy-Coated Playtown," *Holiday*, September, 1946; and "Barefoot Boy," *Liberty*. Radio broadcasts include "Jack Sterling Pays Tribute to Hershey," WCBS, New York, March 29, 1950; "Interviews with Farm Champions," Firestone Voice of the Farm, n.d. about 1938; and "It Can be Done," Household Finance Program, n.d.; all in *Stoddart*, b2f53. Map write-ups include Socony-Vacuum Tours and Detours, "Chocolate and Happiness go Hand and Hand at Hershey," n.d., *Stoddart*, b2f46; "Esso Tours says Hershey is "One of the World's Most Interesting Industrial Communities," Feb 8, 1936, *Stoddart*, b2f43. Kevin Burns and Lawrence Williams produced an A&E Entertainment video on Hershey, *Milton Hershey: The Chocolate King*, 1995. Multiple biographies have been written for children on Hershey. Most ironic is the new Hershey store in New York's Times Square where one can visit for a "one-of-a-kind interactive experience in sweetness," which could have graced one of the marquees in the old Times Square; www.hersheys.com/discover/timessquare.asp. For an analysis of corporate towns that "sell," see Mark Weiner, "We Are What We Eat: or Democracy, Community, and the Politics of Corporate Food Displays," *American Quarterly* 46 no. 2 (June 1994): 227-250. Wiener points out how "Chocolate World,"

The chocolate company's image, so closely identified with its founder, amalgamated not just past and future but competing visions of America. Hershey's personal rise, a "popular 'rags to riches' story," pictures him as "the barefoot boy running from door to door in Lancaster, PA." This "hero" in a "modern 'pluck and toil' story" democratically reveled in not being a "conventional capitalist." For one *New York Herald* reporter "Mr. Hershey is a simple, democratic man of purely American type, who has not been spoiled by the possession of money and does not think that money gives him omniscience."⁸ Hershey was at once the sagacious businessman, and the simple man raised of Mennonite stock, "bewildered by his millions." After succeeding wildly he selflessly gave all his money away. As a paternalist, Hershey nonetheless despised dependency; he staunchly attacked any "systems of patronage" as "Americans resent it, they love independence and self-reliance." Workers in his village had no vote, however. He was all for cooperation, yet he grumbled that employees misunderstood cooperative endeavors.⁹ Hershey embraced modernity's innovations, and brought Progress with a capital "P" to Hershey, his "country town with a metropolitan air," transforming it into "Pennsylvania's Summer Playground." Simultaneously he extolled Jeffersonian agrarianism, replete with its disdain for the city. An uneducated and in many ways uncurious man, he brought the latest forms of middlebrow, commercial, and even mass-cultural entertainment to his populace, and figured out how to profit from this as well.

which pulls people through an exhibition on chocolate production in moving cars, posits a socially egalitarian world, where visitors' chocolate consumption is equated with that of "seventeenth century aristocrats." Missing, as he suggests, is the relationship between sweet consumption, and imperialism and slavery.

⁸ Hinkle, *Farsighted Confectioner*, 8; and *New York Herald* clipping, nd., Stoddart, b2f51.

Hershey was everything that was good about America, in part because he represented early twentieth-century America's messy contradictions.¹⁰

Perhaps Hershey was so contradictory because his personal history hewed to the volatile history of his time. Richard Hofstadter's claim that America was born in the country, but then moved to the city, finds a parallel in Hershey's life. Another parallel exists in historians' contention that a search for order obsessed the last quarter of the nineteenth century after decades of cutthroat business competition. Hershey's chaotic childhood was woven into the myth. Because his father failed at farming and then at every business venture he tried, Hershey's family moved more than thirty times during his youth. Stuck uprooting themselves the very day that Lee's army fought Mead's in nearby Gettysburg, Hershey, "little shaver" that he was, vowed to himself, as numerous published anecdotes tell us, "I betcha' when I get to be worth a million, billion, trillion dollars, I'll take care of little boys."¹¹

Media stories explained how Hershey achieved both entrepreneurial and philanthropic aims. Hershey, who achieved only a fourth grade education, graduated from the same school of hard knocks that his father had.¹² Following paternal advice, he

⁹ "Barefoot Boy," *Liberty*, Stoddart, b2f53; "Hershey Park," and "How Hershey Park Was Founded," both in Stoddart, b2f58, and "Co-operative Enterprise," Stoddart, b2f55.

¹⁰ "For Frank Finney's Book," n.d. Stoddart writes Hershey is a "country town with a metropolitan air... flower gardens are the rule and squalor does not exist." b1f67; for *House and Garden* in September of 1946 he extols the "model town" that a "million" visit each year which has "not a nightclub within miles... and one policeman is sufficient for the town's needs." Stoddart, b1f72; and Hinkle, *Farsighted Confectioner*, 8-10. Joseph Richard Snively, *Meet Mr Hershey* (Hershey: Snively, 1939), and *America's Recreation Center: Hershey, the Chocolate Town, Souvenir Commemorating 30th Anniversary* (Hershey: Hershey Chocolate Corporation, 1933), 1.

¹¹ Paul Gallico, "\$80,000,000 Worth of Orphans," *The American Weekly*, 23 December 1945, 12-15 in Stoddart, b2f47.

¹² Gallico, "\$80,000,000 Orphans;" and Snively, *Meet Mr. Hershey*, 6.

apprenticed as a printer to the pacifist German paper *The Weaponless Watchman* and failed.¹³ He then tried his hand selling confections in Philadelphia, but profits from candy corn and taffy couldn't keep him afloat. He was doing all right making caramels in a Chicago "State Street basement," when on his father's advice he picked up for Denver where business prospects proved less than rosy. The same transpired in New Orleans. His New York candy factory went bankrupt within three years. Finally, on his fourth attempt Hershey hit it big with Lancaster caramels. He would sell the company for a cool million dollars at the age of forty-three.¹⁴ Hershey returned to the cornfields of Pennsylvania in 1898 with his wife and constructed near his grandfather's farmstead an industrial enterprise and town. His goal was "not to make more money for myself," but doing something "worthwhile." This brief mytho-biography tells much about the man. Even when it departs from the facts its outlines surrender clues to Hershey's ideals and aspirations.

The facts were more complex than the myth allowed. One manager claimed, Hershey was a "hot tempered individualist" who was nonetheless "a simple man who could not and did not deal in complications and who waited, sometimes stubbornly, until simple approaches to his problems suggested themselves."¹⁵ Hershey's persistence is clear from the repeated attempts to get his candy company off the ground, even in the face of ridicule. With the exception of his first failed job, Hershey always did it alone. He bucked the tide of urbanism in his return to his roots, and bucked the tide of major corporations' "scientific" welfare capitalism in developing a model town run on personal

¹³ Hinkle, *Farsighted Confectioner*, 10.

¹⁴ All from "\$80,000 Orphans."

¹⁵ Hinkle, *Farsighted Confectioner*, 9, 22.

relations.¹⁶ In later years Hershey told how businessmen, usually city slickers, laughed at his vision of a model industrial town. He knew it could work.¹⁷

Hershey's early failures in cities of stature in every region of the U.S. may have bred his disregard for the city, a critical aspect in the Hershey myth. From the 1920s Hershey admitted that cities "never seemed natural," he "never learned to like them." In true Jeffersonian spirit he continued, "the very foundation of our national life, the whole prosperity of our country rests on the intelligent work of the farmer." He railed against "city drift" where farm boys are "swallowed up in inconspicuous mediocrity."¹⁸ Hershey could have been referring to his own mediocre past, for his own successes only came once he returned home, and with his relatives financial support finally turned a profit on

¹⁶ America had no dearth of company towns. Some, like the textile mill or mining towns had a paternalistic veneer like Hershey, but were perceived by the workers as deeply exploitative. See Jacqueline Dowd Hall, et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill Town* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 1987), 114-180 and George Stoney's documentary film, *The Uprising of 1934*, for managerial and worker reminiscences of mill towns. For coal mining towns see Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 326-331. Other towns, like Pullman founded on Chicago's South Side in 1880, or Kohler Wisconsin, were expressly organized as experiments in class harmony. See Stanley Buder's *Pullman: An Experiment in Industrial Order and Community Planning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); and Janice Reiff, "Rethinking Pullman: Urban Space and Working-Class Activism," *Social Science History*, 24 no. 1 (Spring 2000): 7-32. Kohler sought the help of Frederick Law Olmstead's sons, and an architect who visited English "garden cities," to build his model town. William Johnson, "The Kohlers of Kohler: Acculturation in a Company Town," *History of Education Quarterly*, 11 no. 3 (Fall 1971): 219-248. Hershey's experiment was far more personalistic, a bizarre amalgam of the socially progressive and the backwards looking, which helped him establish a corporate persona and even turn a profit. For a recent review of town planning monographs see Kathryn Oberdeck, "From Model Town to Edge City: Piety, Paternalism, and the Politics of Urban Planning in the United States," *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 4 (May 2000): 508-518.

¹⁷ Snavely, *Meet Mr. Hershey*, 16.

¹⁸ "Milton Hershey Biography," nd., in Stoddart, b2f53; "Barefoot Boy," *Liberty*; and Snavely, *Meet Mr. Hershey*, 16-17.

caramels. Hershey also descried cities for the “trouble with workers” they bred, again sounding the Jeffersonian clarion. This Jeffersonian cast to the Hershey myth would be used against workers once the strike began.¹⁹

Another feature of the Hershey myth applauded his backwards-looking restraint and selflessness. Hershey advocated the economics of scarcity even as he helped establish the 20th century consumption economy. Many stories told how fashion meant “nothing to him” for his “apparel is the most simple and conservative kind and he wears his clothes until they are worn out” as he believed nothing “should be discarded” until it “has outlived its usefulness.”²⁰ Hershey cared so little for things, as the stories went, he even gave his mansion to the town as a country club, retaining for himself only a few rooms.²¹ For this reason, when Hershey and his wife failed to have children, they founded the Hershey Industrial School for “normal white orphan boys” in 1909, which Hershey endowed with ownership of all the Hershey enterprises. Boys in the Industrial School embodied Hershey’s yeoman ideals, for he had them live in farm homes, where they did chores and learned a trade. Here too Hershey bucked the tide of social welfare principles with an orphanage run on nineteenth century asylum principles.²² In the myth, Hershey’s generosity was anonymous, he endowed the Hershey Industrial School with

¹⁹ It seems as if the publications written for local reading consumption referred to this familial support.

²⁰ “Clothes mean nothing to him. His apparel is the most simple and conservative kind,” in *Stoddart*, b2f55 and b2f53.

²¹ Victor Henderson, “Model Community of Hershey Fruit of a Millionaire Idealist’s Dream,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 July 1934, in *Stoddart*, b2f62; and Hershey Biography written for *Practical Knowledge*, 1944 or 1945, which claimed Hershey lived in a “plainly furnished room...[that] might have been the living room of any farmer’s well-kept home.” *Stoddart*, b1f67.

his corporation without telling anyone—though as the *Liberty* article shows, Hershey's selflessness was touted nationwide from the early 1920s.²³

One manager's description of Hershey as both a "saint" and a "devil"—"like the rest of us human beings, he was probably a little of both at different times" does Hershey more justice than the airbrushed publicity tales. Hershey's persistence and idiosyncratic convictions blended into a single-mindedness that lost touch with the needs of others. In the 1930s Hershey wanted to build one big church "under one banner" in Hershey and "couldn't reconcile himself" to the refusal of five separate denominations to share their spiritual abode.²⁴ Hershey prized and "rewarded loyalty...above education or brains," and as one manager recounted, "It would never do to say 'no' to Mr. Hershey." One employee who worked with Hershey from the century's turn refused a transfer to Cuba and was told by Milton Hershey "All right, go make your own living."²⁵ This harsher side to Hershey never made it to the press. Despite his rigidity, no one believed Hershey ruthless. A hard-nosed pragmatist, grown men were brought to tears when reminded of the good days when Hershey held personal reign over the town.²⁶ Even strikers found

²² Social workers criticized the spartan, backwards-looking mission of the Industrial School. See Neva Deardorff, "The New Pied Pipers," *Survey Graphic* (1924): 31-35; in HERCO.002 b1f78, *HCA*.

²³ Will Rogers who did not know Hershey was told by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Charles Evans Hughes that the chocolate producer was "one of the world's philanthropists who hides his light under a bushel." In "Hershey Bio," *Stoddart*, b1f67.

²⁴ For saint and devil quote see Interview of Samuel Tancredi, July 30, 1990, Oral History 91OH018, 11, *HCA*. When each of the five denominations demurred, he finally gave each church a large donation, but not without fussing. Interview of Samuel Hinkle, June 30, 1976, Oral History 91OH01, 5, *HCA*.

²⁵ Hinkle interview, 5; and interview with A. P. Heilman, February 23, 1954, in Wallace Lenz File, b2f108, *HCA*.

²⁶ Hinkle interview; and Heilman interview.

him “firm but with integrity,” and they trusted his fairness.²⁷ Hershey had an overbearing need to demonstrate his generosity, but this generosity was real. Managers and workers alike felt deep love for the man.

The homespun Hershey myth should not obscure the man’s business savvy: Hershey moved in step with a growing national mass consumer market and its attendant culture. Hershey sold Lancaster caramel but retained rights to the chocolate that covered his caramels to invent a new product for national distribution. Experiments with techniques to mass-produce chocolate bars and cocoa led him to “pioneer...continuous manufacturing” in chocolate, and his production machines became standard throughout the industry.²⁸ Moving to Pennsylvania allowed him to vertically integrate. To be close to his milk source Hershey bought up dairy farms, without letting the community know his intentions. For additional milk needs, he correctly supposed he could rely on local Pennsylvania farmers, many of them Mennonite, for a reasonable price on their milk.²⁹

²⁷ Interview of Rose Gasper, September 22, 1992, Oral History 92OH35, 16; and Interview of Frank Simione, January 19, 1993, Oral History 92OH02, 13, both *HCA*.

²⁸ Continuous flow machinery provided the impetus to the mass marketing Hershey excelled at. Historian Susan Strasser claims the national mass market for consumer goods developed in the forty year period straddling 1900. Hershey fell smack in the middle of this time period. Some companies like Eastman Kodak and the American Tobacco Company had already highly developed production, distribution, and marketing apparatus by 1900. Companies like Montgomery Wards also organized national distribution systems by the 1870s and 80s. See Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, 6, 10, 12; Stoddart, b2f59; Hinkle, *Farsighted Confectioner*, 11; Hershey forewent the selling of chocolate specialty items such as Easter eggs, cigars and Santas to sustain a national market with greater predictability and control. “Mr. Hershey,” *Fortune*, 72; Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, 19.

²⁹ For buying farms under cover see Heilman interview. Over 4,000 farmers sold milk to Hershey in 1934, five thousand in 1948. *William Crouse Papers*, b2, HTC.001, (hereafter *Crouse*); and “Never Felt Need to Advertise, *Advertising Age* (December 1948) HERCO.0002, b2. When the Pennsylvania Railroad refused to come to where he imagined his community should be, Hershey donated land for a station. Snavely, *Mr. Hershey*, 12.

Another key ingredient for his product, sugar, he controlled by establishing a second town named Hershey, near Matanzas, Cuba. This Hershey would go on to become the “largest sugar producing company in the world” with almost twice as many workers as Hershey, Pennsylvania.³⁰ After WWI his sugar holding lost money when prices declined, but in the 1930s its successes financed the town’s expansion. Cacao was the only primary ingredient Hershey did not control, though he did a good job of buying chocolate to his advantage. At the time of the strike in 1937 Hershey had long been not just the nation’s but the world’s largest chocolate producer.³¹

Hershey understood that consumer product sales required brand identification. In the late nineteenth century he complained that caramels went soft, but that with chocolate “you can get your name to stay on,” and he imprinted his chocolate bars with his name. Wrapped in plain brown paper, the bars also had Hershey’s name prominently on the outside. The Hershey Kiss provided immediate brand recognition through its shape. They were so imitated that the company produced a trademark paper plume to emerge from the foil twist after 1921. Kisses were sold in bulk with a photograph of the Hershey factory melded into the rural landscape. In the 1920s and 1930s the Hershey Kiss Kids, two apple-cheeked youngsters, boy and girl, adorned point-of-sale promotional boxes. In one sales poster the girl daintily aimed a kiss at the boy’s

³⁰ *Reading Railroad Magazine*, August 1947, *Stoddart*, b2f48; for development in Hershey Cuba, see P.A. Staples biography, for *Business Week*, courtesy Alexander Stoddart, n.d. approximately 1947, *Stoddart*, b1f42. Modeled after Hershey, Pennsylvania, Cuba’s Hershey had a public school, sports club, hotel, and movie theatre.

³¹ “Mr. Hershey,” *Fortune*, 72, 74.

expectantly pursed lips. [Fig. 3-1.]³² The company also produced point-of-purchase posters and window displays for grocery stores, candy, and soda shops.³³ Hershey's brand identification melded sentimental imagery, often including references to the magical chocolate town with its main avenues of Chocolate and Cocoa to help sell its product. *Advertising Age* in 1948 called Hershey an "outstanding example of successful brand merchandising."³⁴

Hershey touted that he never advertised his product, but there was almost nothing Hershey didn't use to promote his products. The oft-printed Hershey recipe booklet extolled chocolate, especially with sweet almonds, as a convenient, easily digestible and nourishing food, a "meal in itself," with more calories than beef, and "abundant protein of a more nutritious value than the protein of even the best of cereals." [Fig. 3-2.]³⁵

During WWI the U.S. government bought this concept, giving the company a contract to

³² "A Kiss for You," 1991 Hershey Foods Corporation, 1991, in author's possession. From a series of trading cards Hershey markets for its nostalgia value. The trading cards, made by Dart Flipcards Inc., also tout the prices of vintage corporate ephemera.

³³ Some products, like Singer sewing machines, were already branded to a national public by the 1870s. Strasser argues that in 1900 branding was still unusual. Similarly, fully coordinated marketing strategies were rare. Hershey's use of product development, the recipe books and "The Story of Chocolate and Cocoa," and his use of testimonial experts and packaging innovations like the kiss place him in a wave of corporations establishing themselves as national mass market companies from the century's turn, onwards, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, 30-57. Hershey Trading Cards: the Collector's Series, nos. 31, 34, 55 and 50 and postcard from Scenic Arts, Inc. The company's logo was an adorable kewpie-doll that held aloft a cup of cocoa as it emerged from a cacao pod.

³⁴ Strasser points to companies who use a sentimental or nostalgic imagery, and others that represented the modernity of their production processes as part of their selling strategies. Hershey mixed these two in its sales strategy, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, 97-123. See postcards in HCA and HERCO.002 b2. For a national market see article clipping in b2f108. "To the general public 'Hershey Bars' were such an item. They could be brought in any city or town, regardless of its location, and in isolated country stores anywhere in the U.S."

³⁵ Image from Hershey Chocolate Company, "A Cookery Expert's New Recipes," nd., in author's possession.

supply servicemen with chocolate, gaining Hershey further brand recognition.³⁶ The popular Bernarr MacFadden, editor of *Physical Culture* magazine, and two nationally recognized nutrition professionals, Caroline King and Edith Williams endorsed Hershey's chocolate. The best endorsement came from Hershey himself, who "ate half a pound of his own candy every day, and lived for 88 years," until 1945.³⁷

Woven into the company's selling strategy was the tale of how Hershey's simple ideals could transform the countryside, transform workers' lot, and transform American social relations. Just about any article devoted to Hershey, whether produced in-house or not, pulled from the same trove of anecdotes, allusions, and imagery to link the chocolate products with the ideals and the generosity of the founder and his lovely community. As early as the teens the company produced photo-postcards of the town amenities. Visitors to Hershey could advertise the company with postcards for friends and family. Cards showed Hershey's "Old Homestead farm;" cows hitched to the "sanitary milking machines;" the "new factory addition showing natural landscape surroundings," composed of shrubbery spelling Hershey Cocoa; a busy downtown avenue; or scenes of leisure from Hershey Park. This hodgepodge of images made sense as Hersheytown was industrious yet fun, rural yet cultured, diverting yet commercial. [Fig. 3-3.]³⁸

Hershey developed his town out of idealism and necessity, but he embellished it with his unique mix of backwards-looking nostalgia, and forward-thinking planning.

³⁶ The company didn't hire an ad agency until well after WWII. See "Never Felt Need," *Advertising Age*;" "William F. R. Murrie Retires," March 22, 1947, HERCO .0002b1f33. Hershey won the contract for Ration D during WWII, which served as "emergency ration for fighting men," and the bars were given not just "as a pleasant confection, but a real food." HERCO .0002b1f33, and b2f17.

³⁷ "The Story of Chocolate," 1926 in author's possession; for Hershey's personal endorsement, see *Cosmopolitan*, October 1949 in *Stoddart*, b2f43.

Because Hershey had visited cooperative experiments in Britain, he decided to produce the same in the U.S. Like George Pullman before him, Hershey hoped to prove that management and labor could live harmoniously. Hershey promoted this experiment as part of his company's identity. As Alexander Stoddart wrote in an article for *Greyhound Lines* magazine, "In one sentence, Mr. Hershey makes chocolate and men."³⁹ From the very start he wanted a town where workers would be homeowners—the middle-class ideal—and have leisure, educational, recreational, and cultural activities close at hand. Over time he added a host of services for the community including the Hershey Inn, a bakery, laundry, gas stations, a bank, a department store, lumberyards, even an abattoir.⁴⁰

Hershey's ideals proved remunerative. Hershey Park, first organized as a cooperative venture under city-beautiful principles for Hershey workers to rest and relax, soon turned into a profit-turning amusement park. [Fig. 3-4.]⁴¹ At first the Park had a baseball diamond, playground, a zoo, and swimming pool. By the century's second decade, the company added amusement park rides like a merry-go-round, and then a roller coaster and a miniature railway.⁴² Milton Hershey liked to claim that he tried to interest workers in his cooperative vision, but they either "ate" or "smoked the profits" while expecting Hershey to "meet the deficit." This quote, found in the public relations

³⁸ Postcards from top: pc133, t96.33, 1915-1920; pc565, t96.59; and pc572, t96.36, *HCA*.

³⁹ Article for Greyhound Lines, nd., *Stoddart*, b1f66, *HCA*.

⁴⁰ For home ownership see *Stoddart*, HERCO.002 b1f49. The department store was established in 1907. See "Back to Land Plan Evolved for Welfare of Employees," article from *Stoddart*, b2f53.

⁴¹ Image from "Hershey Park Brochure," 1940, b1f63, *HCA*.

⁴² J.B. Sollinger was key in developing the first five amusements and theatre (movies, ballroom, merry-go-round roller-coaster and miniature railway.) By 1928 Sollinger added big band dances; then four golf courses; then sports—the Hershey Bears Eastern Amateur Hockey League. See Curtiss Demmy, Middletown Press, nd. HERCO b1f40.

files of the corporation, and recycled numerous times, suggested workers should be equals but lacked the capacity or interest.⁴³

Hershey amalgamated the town, its services, and its recreations under the corporate name, Hershey Estates, in 1927.⁴⁴ This separation acknowledged the town's moneymaking character. Ten thousand visitors came to the chocolate paradise in 1928, the number doubled one year later, and by 1934 sixty-six thousand people made their way to Pennsylvania's Playground. Certain attractions drew even more visitors. The company claimed two hundred thousand visited the rose garden in the mid-thirties, and a quarter million used the Hershey Arena for sporting events.⁴⁵ The company dropped amusements that failed to turn a profit, such as "the largest zoo in Pennsylvania."⁴⁶

During the Depression Hershey enhanced his empire through massive capital projects—more golf courses, a community theater, an outdoor stadium that seated fifteen thousand, a sports arena designed by Milton Hershey to have unrestricted views, and the Hotel Hershey, a "palace" derived from a pastiche of Hershey's memories of Mediterranean ports and a favored "Cuban hacienda." Radio announcer Lowell Thomas described the hotel as "outpalacing the maharajas," though *Fortune* snickered at its

And "How Hershey Park Was Founded," *Stoddart*, b2f58. The Hershey Community Archives's *Hershey Chronology 1724-1992* is helpful here.

⁴³ "Co-operative Enterprise," *Stoddart*, b2f55.

⁴⁴ "Murrie Retires" *Stoddart*, b1f33.

⁴⁵ "Visitors the World over Come to Hershey to See Chocolate Made," *Stoddart*, b2f16, and b1f51. For Rose Garden attendance see *Lancaster Motorist*, n.d. in *Stoddart*, b1f49.

⁴⁶ Hershey Park made a profit in 1924, schedule B—1924 "Statement of Profit and Loss" b15f4, accession #87006. For profits and losses in 1946 see, Arthur Anderson: "Report on Examination of Various Departments," December 31, 1945, in *Crouse*, Hershey Estates, b3.

“execrable interior decoration.”⁴⁷ Equally idiosyncratic was the windowless office building. Intended to keep the odors of Hershey production from white-collar staff, management had to install a special lighting system to alert staff of outside weather conditions and even landscape paintings to mimic the outdoors. Hershey’s Depression-era additions appeared in the press as examples of the founder’s civic-mindedness, though detractors noted depressed wages let him expand at less cost.⁴⁸

A 1926 version of Hershey’s promotional booklet, “The Story of Chocolate and Cocoa” spelled out Hershey’s experiment in narrative and photo in the same outline that would appear in mass market magazines, radio broadcasts, interviews, and newsreels. [Fig. 3-5.]⁴⁹ “The Story of Chocolate and Cocoa’s” first photograph, one of the most commonly printed photos of the town, was an aerial view that showed the chocolate factory melded into the Pennsylvanian landscape, matching the text’s description of it “nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.” [Fig. 3-6.]⁵⁰ “The Story of Chocolate” described Hershey’s town where “winding streets were mapped through picturesquely undulating ground.” The booklet depicted the town’s groves of trees, its filtered mountain water, and the “pathways and roadways like white ribbons” that “lead to pleasant vistas and quiet retreats.” Equally impressive were the “uniformly large and attractive houses,” with “velvety lawns,” owned by the town’s workers. This was

⁴⁷ “Mr. Hershey,” *Fortune*, 76. For Hershey’s two million dollar expansion plans see *American Business World*, 1 December 1930 in *Crouse*, b4, HTC.001. For Thomas’s conservative politics see Stuart Ewen, *PR!: A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 315.

⁴⁸ For building at lower rates during the depression see S. Tancredi, 11. A January 4, 1934 article claimed that nearly 14,000 visitors came to Hershey for the opening of its “structure of tomorrow.” *Stoddart*, b2f16.

⁴⁹ “The Story of Chocolate and Cocoa” (Hershey, PA: Hershey Chocolate Corporation, 1926), cover, in author’s possession.

Hershey's key promotional point: an ideal industrial experiment where a "community of mutual interests" and "cooperation" reigned.⁵¹

This community-mindedness erased class divisions according to the company's promotional materials. Even the factory partook of Hershey's pastoral vision. The "factory's walls covered with ivy," its "airy rest rooms" with "plenty of space for dancing," and its grassy stretches just outside used during the lunch hour were just part of the consideration devoted to "the comfort and welfare" of Hershey employees. Hershey was such "a story book town, it almost persuaded a visiting socialist to renounce his creed." Hershey had "no wrong side of the tracks."⁵² Photographs of the factory had it, "fronted by parks and surrounded by wide open spaces." In this classless world, it helped that workers were absent. The booklet's photographs of production even erased workers, in keeping with corporate-photography strategies that visualized production as a managerial process.⁵³

By the late 1930s many Americans had encountered Hershey: a simple man who gave up his home for a town country club, gave his fortune away to orphan boys, while modestly refusing to tell a soul. His chauffeur-driven car, his fancy cigars, his bills at Tiffany's, his wintering in warm, Caribbean climes, none of these were common

⁵⁰ "The Story of Chocolate and Cocoa," 2, in author's possession.

⁵¹ This photo appears on the front of the thirty-year Commemorative booklet, *America's Recreation Center*; the second page of the 1926 "The Story of Chocolate and Cocoa," and in many mass media depictions of Hershey.

⁵² Hinkle, *Farsighted Confectioner*, 16. In the post WWII-era the community was described in more explicitly "classless" terms. In 1947, Alexander Stoddart responded to a request for information that most Hershey residents were "middle class," at a time when the majority of the town's inhabitants labored in the factory. See *House and Garden*, 3 September 1946, in Stoddart, b1f72 and Stoddart to John Novack, 1947 in Stoddart, b1f67.

knowledge.⁵⁴ Nothing indicates that Hershey's famed town or philanthropies formed part of a preconceived strategy by Hershey to corner the chocolate market. Yet the Hershey myth indicates an unusual sensitivity to how a corporate persona could help sell a product. Mass cultural venues never showed Hershey with any complications or complexity. They snapped up Hershey's story as an American success story par excellence, in their stories he prospered and then generously gave it all away. A few might question Hershey as an exemplar of "self-made men with narrow egotism," but most of America appeared to consume the Hershey myth as the company had lovingly crafted it, with all its treacly sweetness.⁵⁵

"The Workers Live in But are Not Part of This Utopia"⁵⁶

If asked, workers at Hershey might have told a different tale about the corporation and its founder. Though many workers believed in the Hershey myth just as the corporation laid it out they had to square this idea of Hershey with the inadequacies of their lives: limited wages, overwork, little chance to enjoy Hershey's touted amenities, and little control in their daily lives. Some targeted managers for their ire, some the immigrant workers in their midst, and some, Hershey himself.

Workers had many gripes with the company. Milton Hershey was as frugal with his workers as he was with his wardrobe. A plant superintendent diplomatically called him an "economical" man and perhaps no one knew this better than the workers who

⁵³ David Nye, *Image Worlds: Corporate Identities at General Electric, 1890-1930* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 55, 66-69.

⁵⁴ S. Tancredi, 12; for luxury bills; and HTC.001, b56f11, b56f1, b56f15.

⁵⁵ *Fortune*, 80, claimed that Hershey's control sapped community self-reliance, but such commentary was unusual.

⁵⁶ Harold Fey, "Chocolate Paradise Lost," *Christian Century*, 28 April 1937, 549.

labored long hours for meager pay at his plants. "Hershey was a low-pay place, notoriously so," remembered a supervisor responsible for payroll.⁵⁷ Workers brought home paychecks with far less during seasonal dips in chocolate production and with Depression-era cutbacks in workers' hours.⁵⁸ Until the 1930s overwork was a more common problem. Workers labored ten- and twelve-hour days, six and often seven days a week prior to the New Deal's NRA maximum hours limits. Workers who wanted time off had to contend with the threat of losing their jobs.

You couldn't even buy a day off. I know one individual there went to the foreman and said "I have my relatives coming in from Indiana, the state of Indiana, and they're only going to be here a day. Could I have Sunday off to visit with them?" and (the foreman) said "Well, if you take Sunday off, don't come to work Monday." Now there are the kinds of conditions we worked under.⁵⁹

Workers chafed under arbitrary management, particularly the foremen's. Foremen constantly demanded that workers speed production.⁶⁰ Just weeks before the strike, a "Hershey citizen" who was "not a radical, just a working man who has tried to be

⁵⁷ A.P. Heilman called Hershey "economical" in an interview. Heilman was the plant superintendent during the 1937 strike. February 23, 1954, 4. Samuel Tancredi who was the Supervisor of the Tabulating Department and who had access to "pay information from different communities in the state of Pennsylvania," knew workers' comparative wage scales. S. Tancredi, 18, 20. An electrical engineer for Hershey remembers hourly wages of forty-two cents. With the mandated NRA eight-hour day resulted in less than \$3.50 a day. E Tancredi, 21.

⁵⁸ E. Tancredi, 21. Interview of Theodore Mandes, April 23, 1991, oral history 91OH09, 10, *HCA* notes that employees worked only two or three days a week during the depression.

⁵⁹ Interview with Warren Plebani and Stearl Sponaugle by Alice Hoffman, March 14, 1974, 6, in Penn State University, Historical Collections and Labor Archive, (hereafter *PSU*).

⁶⁰ Complained Ignazio Romanucci, a worker who championed unionization at Hershey as early as the 1920s, "I buy my wife or children a candy bar or M & M's at five cents, but if I want two bars, they want a dime. How come I must produce twice as much and get paid the same?" Romanucci continued, "So you see, you had to get organized to say

faithful” and who believed “things would have been different” if workers could have dealt directly with Hershey wrote anonymously to the founder. He complained of favoritism shown to the managers’ friends, individuals who “walkes around the factory doing nothing, and still drawes a big Salary,” and other pay inequities such as overpaid managers and pay differentials between skilled and unskilled laborers.⁶¹ His letter encapsulated the Hershey workers’ unusual perception of their grievances. Many remained committed to the founder as a man, even as his utopia failed to deliver. Maintained two factory workers, “before unionization, you just were at the discretion of the foreman, you took what he gave you, or else. And the dirty jobs were reserved for people he didn’t like.”⁶² Workers believed foremen abused them, according to one manager, foremen enjoyed playing “lord and master...it seemed almost the lowliest foremen can fire you.”⁶³ One woman described the ignominy of feeling watched by management: “You were watched every minute, like as if you were going to walk away with something, and that’s very hard for a person.”⁶⁴ Even bathroom breaks were monitored. Italian workers found management to be particularly hard on them: they

something. A single worker could get nowhere.” Interview by Peter Smith, n.d. 6-7, *PSU*.

⁶¹ Letter to Milton Hershey from a “Hershey Citizen,” March 14, 1937, HTC.001, *HCA*.

⁶² Plebani and Sponaugle, 5; Wage discrepancies upset workers, who believed they had nowhere to take their complaints. Workers could be asked to “prove” themselves, yet still fail to get pay raises. Interview with Paul Miller, November 25, 1992, 92OH46, 6, *HCA*.

⁶³ See interviews with workers, Miller, 6-7; Gasper, 5; and managers, S. Tancredi, 21 and E. Tancredi, 21-22. Anecdotes circulated among workers of foremen who were fired by upper-level managers for “getting along too well” with the workers, and being “too easy on them.” Plebani and Sponaugle, 5-5A.

⁶⁴ Alda Garosi Walenkiewicz, Interview on November 15, 1989, oral history, 89OH26, np, *HCA*.

were given the lowest wages and the worst jobs.⁶⁵ Chocolate workers contended that conditions at the Hershey factory were not much better than “sweatshops were elsewhere.”⁶⁶

Many workers revered Hershey, but they thought he too was capricious. Ignazio Romanucci remembered Milton Hershey as a gentle overseer during one twelve-hour shift. But the worker stood at attention when Hershey caught him cleaning up a mess on the floor just weeks later, he feared Hershey might think him a loafer and terminate his employment. Hershey was renowned for firing those he perceived to be slackers without stopping to determine the full circumstances behind a worker’s actions. The impact on workers’ lives could be devastating, asserted one former manager, “when you did that to anybody back in the 30s, it was almost a death sentence, because jobs weren’t available.”⁶⁷

More than anything, workers resented the control Hershey exerted in their lives. Claimed one worker who chose not to live in the town of Hershey, “I live in Lebanon. I go home quick. Too much Hershey. I can’t stand!” Some spoke of having to hide their politics from the company, a difficult thing to do in a town organized by the company. Others were vexed by corporate pressure to get workers to live within the town. Still

⁶⁵ If the company touted its classlessness, for example in a 1946 article for *House and Gardens* b1f72, by saying “there is no such thing in Hershey as being born on the wrong side of the tracks,” it is also true that workers remember Italians finding shelter in boxcars in the Northwest corner of town early in Hershey’s history. For occupational and demographic segmentation of Italian employees see, Miller, 10, 13; and “Chocolate Paradise Lost,” *Christian Century*, 549. For anti-Italian actions see: E Tancredi, 21; Plebani, 3. E. Tancredi, 8, remembers anti-Italian sentiment was so strong the KKK burned crosses in nearby fields during his youth.

⁶⁶ For “sweatshops” quote see Romanucci, 2; and Plebani and Spaunagle, 6.

⁶⁷ S. Tancredi, 11, *HCA*; and Romanucci, 17-18.

others believed they had to shop at the Department Store to appease Hershey management.⁶⁸

In many workers' minds, the company controlled them economically—to their detriment and the company's benefit. At one point during the Depression the company introduced a rule that workers living outside a particular radius from Hershey would be laid off. This surplus labor force sowed fear among workers.⁶⁹ The chocolate company warned workers against making money on the side, and fired those who persisted in their moneymaking activities. One man who bought a taproom as an investment in nearby Harrisburg was fired when he refused to shut the place down. The company threatened yet another worker and his family with eviction if he opened a bar. A third worker had done so, and the Hershey Company responded by firing his entire family.⁷⁰ Milton Hershey didn't want women to work once they were married, believing that "women had other duties in the home," which led to many secret marriages in Hershey. By limiting workers outside income the company maintained control at the work site, within the community, even deep within the heart of worker's domestic relations.⁷¹ Some

⁶⁸ Romanucci told interviewers an anecdote that typified workers' belief in Hershey control. "Hershey bought a farm from a guy in Hummelstown that was situated on top of the hill. He went up to the top of the hill and said, 'This is all mine.' You see everything belonged to Hershey in those days—the trolley car, the farm, everything—Hershey, Hershey, Hershey." Romanucci, 17; and Plebani and Sponaugle, 6. See also Harold Fey response to letter in the *Christian Century*, 19 May 1937, 653, where he says most workers buy only a few things from the "company store...to keep in the good graces of the company."

⁶⁹ Plebani and Sponaugle, 4, 7; and Lawrence Pellegrini says that as a "stipulation" of employment workers had to move to Hershey, Interview on December 8, 1992, 92OH49, 18, *HCA*.

⁷⁰ Plebani and Sponaugle, 4; Romanucci, 20.

⁷¹ For the firing of workers who set up grocery stores see Romanucci, 17-20; and Plebani and Sponaugle, 3-4. For "secret marriages" because of lay-offs after marriage see Richard Uhrich on June 8, 1989, 89OH02, 10, *HCA*. For Hershey control also see John

concluded the town was a “benevolent autocracy,” for others the man was nothing more than a “czar.”⁷²

Even Hershey’s amenities generated friction and hostility. Samuel Hinkle, who worked in upper management as a chemical engineer during the strike thought, “Hershey wanted to see people have a good time, [but] he didn’t ever take great pains to provide the leisure hours for them. That was misread by many people as kind of a move against people enjoying themselves”⁷³ Workers’ income also excluded them from town pleasures. Workers complained that goods in the Hershey store cost too much, and were angered that the company further pocketed the profits. Similarly, the town jewel, the Community Club, charged fees most workers felt they couldn’t afford.⁷⁴ Workers with neither time nor money to avail themselves of town advantages, sometimes wistfully, sometimes bitterly, complained of watching visitors motor in from near and far, perhaps enticed by zingy write-ups in the mass-produced Mobil or Esso maps. Alda Garosi remembers going down to the Community Club, and sitting outside, near the window, to

Elting, “Trouble in Paradise: Why Hershey Workers Want a Union,” *Forbes*, 1 May 1937, 14-15. One worker claimed to Elting “He (Hershey) runs the entire works as he wants to, and he tries to run us as he pleases. It don’t make no difference whether we’re working in the plant or are off duty. He wants to run us twenty-four hours of the day.” If Hershey played the patriarchal benefactor, he was also seen as monitoring employees behavior. Workers complained to Elting that they couldn’t let off steam by having too much to drink, and oral histories claimed wives would call managers to complain about husband’s behavior. Plebani and Sponaugle, 6. Correspondence in Hershey’s files indicates that workers sent letters “tattling” to Hershey about employees behavior during the strike, *Ezra Hershey Papers*, b32, HTC001, HCA.

⁷² Hinkle, interview, 20.

⁷³ Hinkle went on to become the chocolate company’s president and chairman of the board, Hinkle, 20.

⁷⁴ For department store costs and club membership see Fey, “Chocolate Paradise,” 549. While the majority of members were workers, according to Fey, some seventy percent, most workers were not members, finding the annual rate of \$12 a year too high. See also

listen to music and watch people dance. She and her neighbors couldn't join in, "they just didn't have that kind of money." As the *Christian Century* suggested, workers lived in a utopia they could only look upon from a distance.⁷⁵

Milton Hershey's vaunted philanthropies also fueled workers' ire. Early in the union drive Milton Hershey caused a showdown when he "charged...right up front," to a "packed house" meeting that was discussing a strike. He regaled workers with the familiar story of how he'd founded Hershey and reminded them that he kept them working during the Depression—they didn't need a union. Remembered one member of the audience "but the big mistake he made was when he said, 'and I have this Industrial School up here for orphans and it costs me \$1,500 a year for each boy I have up there.'" Once finished he continued to interrupt the union organizer, who finally chided Hershey for equal time. "It was unheard of for anyone to talk to M.S. Hershey like that," reminisced an observer, and workers applauded when Hershey charged right back out of the hall. A father of eight who made \$800 a year stood up and told assembled workers he

Romanucci, 22; and Elting, "Trouble in Paradise," 14. Elting found workers complained they couldn't afford local amenities, which they perceived to be organized for outsiders.⁷⁵ One worker summed up grievances of many in his plaint that workers could enjoy only pieces of Hershey's vaunted pleasures. "Now here where they worked all day long, ten, twelve hours a day, and were tired, and they didn't have much money left, you know, the good times, the vacations... You just didn't have it. You just worked, went to work, and on a Sunday, I think that only thing that you had that Mr. Hershey has provided was the park, where you'd go down to the park. They had bands coming in, it was free. Everything was free, except you wanted to take the rides. The rides cost money." Simone, 15. Mandes, 10 also discusses the twelve hour day, with workers working six and even seven days a week; and Romanucci, 7; Plebani and Sponaugle, 6, and Garosi Walenkiewics, np.. Managers concurred, see Hinkle, 20.

couldn't understand how Milton Hershey could allot orphans more money than his own children. Hershey's plea backfired as workers concurred with the father of eight.⁷⁶

Whether the impetus came from the CIO or local workers is unclear, but at some point in 1937 Hershey workers began meeting to unionize the Chocolate Paradise. This was not the first time that workers attempted unionization. At Ignazio Romanucci's request, Luigi Quintilano and Carlo Tresca of the International Workers of the World (IWW) came to Hershey to mobilize workers a few decades earlier. Romanucci reported these IWW leaders were just "too radical for Hershey...agitators in those days scared the people." Romanucci retained his commitment to organization, believing "you had to get organized to say something."⁷⁷ The 1930s seemed like the right time to press their claims. The federal government supported labor unions with the Wagner Act, workers struck across the land and their exploits filled daily newspapers and national magazines. Even some nearby bastions of antiunionism finally bargained with labor. A union seemed possible. Hershey workers met undercover, first in the basements of fellow workers, fearing that participation in a drive might lose them their employment. As the drive built and the need for space increased, workers moved their meetings to surrounding villages. When large meeting spaces couldn't be found workers would

⁷⁶ Plebani and Sponaugle, 15-16; Romanucci, 22. Samuel Tancredi remembers a public relations story in the photo-gravure section of the *Inquirer* that backfired as workers said 'Look at this! We're working our butts off up there and getting next to nothing, and we're expected to keep our families on meager pay while they brag about it costing \$3,000 to keep one boy.' S. Tancredi, 22. Other workers were irked by the orphans' weekly allowance of twenty-five cents which was more than they had access to. E. Tancredi, 16. The Tancredis are interesting. Both worked in white-collar management, but their father was a laborer with Hershey Estates. Hershey may have been a welfare capitalist, but he gave no compensation to the elder Tancredi when he was permanently disabled at work, which forced Samuel to work at fifteen, S. Tancredi, 2.

⁷⁷ Romanucci, 7.

stand “outside listening through the windows.” Within a short time the union signed up over eighty percent of the workforce of 2,100, an unusually high proportion. These workers hadn’t just signed cards, they paid dues, indicating a high degree of commitment. And they were longtime Hershey workers.⁷⁸

Hershey workers saw raises at the beginning of 1937 as Hershey managers responded to the CIO threat. When the local drive won many converts, the company gave twenty percent across-the-board raises, something never seen before. “The hue and cry at the time was that, gee, here Detroit was paying five dollars a day... five dollars was big pay.” Hershey workers imagined this for themselves. They thought the CIO could “open up the company treasury now and give it to them.” As one worker put it, “people were expecting the moon.”⁷⁹ The CIO sent out organizer Miles Sweeney to support the Hershey workers, and speakers from the nearby coal regions also came to share their insights.⁸⁰

Perhaps because the drive was so successful, the company signed with it on March 17, 1937.⁸¹ But dissension reigned among managers, some of whom rejected the union and didn’t think it was too late to do something about it. Sam Hinkle remembered

⁷⁸ About 1700-1800 workers signed up, about eighty-five percent of the factory workforce. For membership in the CIO’s United Chocolate Workers see Plebani and Sponaule, 9; and Romanucci, 13. For the lay-offs see “Sit-Down Strike,” *Stoddart*, b2f100.

⁷⁹ E. Tancredi, 21; S. Tancredi, 32-3; and Simone, 15.

⁸⁰ Plebani and Sponaule, 8.

⁸¹ Fey, “Chocolate Paradise,” 47. It seems that Hershey didn’t believe in unions or in workers self-organization, but neither did he want to fight his workers. “He went along with it,” believing people should make up their own minds, even though he didn’t want union interference, and couldn’t understand that workers were “moving against him like that after he had provided all these facilities.” Hinkle, 21.

that “a nucleus of people” found the closed shop “very revolting.” They blustered that they’d strike themselves if an agreement was signed.⁸²

Trouble began when the company began letting go workers for its slack season. One hundred and fifty men were laid off on March 31st, among them rank and file leaders.⁸³ The next day CIO members, suspecting the company was trying to break the union, met and decided to go out on strike. Workers demanded a union shop, dues checkoff, and reinstatement of the laid-off union leaders. A union supporter, Warren Plebani thought leaders, “weren’t moving as fast as the members thought they should...The membership took it right out of the officers’ hands.”⁸⁴ CIO staff failed to convince workers to slow their pace. “Some of these outside organizers who had had more experience, they tried to convince the people that maybe they should prolong it awhile, wait and see what they could do. But the public was so riled up they couldn’t even get through to them.” Plebani continued, “it was like a spontaneous explosion. Boom! There it goes!”⁸⁵ In retrospect more cautious strategies appear warranted. Contemporaries believed local organizers were too inexperienced. The drive’s two main leaders, John Loy and Russel (Bull) Behman, themselves workers at the Hershey plant,

⁸² The plant superintendent, A.P. Heilman, his assistant, Clarence Speicher, the plant engineer, Bowman Snively and the employment manager, John Zoll all fought the union. Hershey then reversed himself, fired the company’s attorney, who had urged signing with the union. Interview with John Zoll and Clarence Speicher, March 22, 1955, *Zoll, papers HCA* Those lower down remember Krause being fired over the question of wages. Uhrich, 17B. The firing over union stance is impossible to further substantiate, and seems contradicted by other information claiming Hershey fired this same manager for refusing to go to Cuba when asked, a sign of disloyalty to Milton Hershey. It does seem clear, not only through later interviews but the actions of the corporation, that managers did agree to fight the union. See Hinkle, 7.

⁸³ For the lay-offs, see “Sit-Down Strike” *Stoddart*, b2 f100.

⁸⁴ Plebani and Sponaugle, 8.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 9 and 10.

had never led a union campaign before. Workers' naivete led them to assert their demands too precipitously.⁸⁶ Outside CIO organizers didn't draw enough loyalty from workers to stem their discontent. Hershey workers must have been buoyed by CIO successes elsewhere, particularly the rank and file led sit-down strikes. As we saw in Chapter One, national magazines like *LIFE* reported that, "Everybody's Doing It!" and Hershey workers thought the tactic a "novelty" they could try.⁸⁷ They sat down in the plant on April 2nd.

For a strike, the atmosphere was low-key. Workers swept through the plant telling co-workers to lay down their tools once their tasks were finished.⁸⁸ It was warm, and strikers hung out the windows, sometimes razzing those who hadn't joined in, sometimes throwing chocolate bars down to children who came to watch.⁸⁹ Workers took over the plant, but they didn't secure the premises as is typical in strikes, perhaps because they retained a trust in the company's paternalism, perhaps because of organizers' inexperience. Some, particularly women, went home at night, others received "good night kisses" from their husbands before bedding down in the factory.⁹⁰ Neighbors dropped by to show their support, lead songs, and bring sandwiches and liquor to prop up

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-9; and Romanucci, 9.

⁸⁷ A former clerk at the Hershey creamery, Richard Uhrich claimed the sit-downs were a novelty that the strikers wanted to try. Uhrich became a manager of Hershey Foods. Uhrich, 11.

⁸⁸ Edward Tancredi, 20 was a printer at this point, and he reported taking his time before joining in.

⁸⁹ For atmosphere during strike see, Plebani and Sponaugle, 12; Uhrich, 11; and Simione, 18.

⁹⁰ Picture in Harrisburg Paper "Chocolate Strikers Hold 'Candy Fort,'" nd, from Derry Township Historical Society, (hereafter *DTHS*), and Gasper, 15, *HCA*.

sit-downers' spirits.⁹¹ At one point strikers even left the plant to further negotiations with Hershey executives. They cleaned the place behind them, and W.R. Murrie, Hershey's president, praised the strikers for the plant's "spotless" condition.⁹² When these negotiations broke down, workers moved back into the plant the next day.

Despite President Murrie's kind words, workers faced a formidable opponent as managers girded for battle. On the strike's first day managers handed clubs to workers they believed were on their side. Managers also stirred up resentments among workers and between workers and the outside community. They printed up flyers, such as "Sit Down Strike is a Strike Against Orphan Boys" to tarnish strikers' activism. Another pamphlet, "Swat that Fly," characterized as "hate material" by one Hershey manager, blamed Italians for the strike.⁹³

The conflict came to a head with an uprising of "loyal workers" and nearby farmers who tore strikers out of the plant. On Monday, April 5th, the farmers came into town to protest their lost milk sales. Thousands of antiunionists paraded in lines four abreast and two miles long. Their signs proclaimed their American-ness and their

⁹¹ Residents visited to sing "We Shall Not be Moved," and one former employee who'd been Hershey's right hand man, Bert Black, sent a box of 1,200 sandwiches with the sign "Bert Black Sent You These." Local Italian grocers did the same. Warren Plebani, who'd been warned to close his Harrisburg tap or face dismissal from Hershey, brought food and liquor. Jimmy DeAngelis who ran a local grocery store sent food, along with Pronio's and Pasquini's, two other local grocers. Interview with B. Francis Gorman, on March 12, 1990, 90OH03, 17; and Simone, 16; and Sponaugle and Plebani, 12.

⁹² Newsclipping, *Evening News*, nd. *DTHS*.

⁹³ Miller, 7; for the flyers see "Sit Down Strike is a Strike Against Orphan Boys;" S. Tancredi, 23. Letters to Hershey indicate that some townspeople saw the conflict in ethnic terms. A letter addressed to Hershey as "Our Dear Benefactor," maintained that the young Italians who stood on the picket lines "looked as if they did not know what it was all about," indicating an ethnocentric willingness to excuse the Italians from participation. Sent from "one of the thousands of loyal workers, April 5, 1937, HTC.001.

commitment to Hershey and decried the strikers' lack of gratitude to the company's founder.⁹⁴ The next day antiunionists met in the Hershey Community Theater to pledge themselves loyal "to the corporation and opposed to the closed shop plan demanded by the CIO."⁹⁵ Two thousand then went off to parade in the neighboring town of Palmyra. On Wednesday, April 7th, over ten thousand farmers and Hershey Estates workers held a mass meeting in the Hershey Sports Arena. College boys from the nearby Lebanon Valley College joined in, as did members of the Hershey Bears, the town's hockey team.⁹⁶ They gave strikers an ultimatum, "come out or we'll bring you out," and when it wasn't met by noon, the entire contingent led by flag- and rifle-carrying members of Hershey Post No. 368 of the American Legion advanced to throw the strikers out.⁹⁷ Strikers were "parad[ing] snake-dance fashion on the flat roof, singing their songs and shouting, college yell fashion" and when they heard the loyalists were coming, thinking it was a "big joke" they "laughed it off."⁹⁸ Only as the strikebreakers reached the plant did organizer Bull Behman yell for strikers to get out. Women were bundled out of the plant to protect them. Other strikers "jumped out of the windows, jumped off the roofs." Some outran their pursuers, others were beaten on the streets and sidewalks of the chocolate village⁹⁹

The union negotiating committee of eighteen had only six Italian members. See "Big Chocolate Plant is Closed by Sit-Down," in newsclippings, *DTHS*.

⁹⁴ *Harrisburg Patriot*, 8 April 1937, 11; and *Evening News*, nd., *DTHS*.

⁹⁵ *Patriot*, nd., and *Harrisburg Telegraph*, 8 April 1937, 1, *DTHS*.

⁹⁶ *Harrisburg Evening News*, 6 April, 1937; 7 April 1937, 1; *Patriot*, nd.; and *Telegraph*, 7 April 1937, *DTHS*.

⁹⁷ *Harrisburg Evening News*, 7 April 1937, 11.

⁹⁸ *Patriot*, 8 April 1937, 10, *DTHS*. See Uhrich, 11; and Hinkle, 7 for strikers' initial reaction.

⁹⁹ Romanucci, 13; Plebani and Sponaugle, 13; and Uhrich, 11.

Farmers and other loyalists rammed the doors down and broke windows to get into the plant. Once inside, bloody hand-to-hand combat broke out with the many workers still trapped inside. Strikebreakers used their clubs, strikers responded with “used milk bottles and some chairs and anything they had.” One striker pushed an ice pick through the belly of a loyalist. The loyalists won, and in their victory they forced the strikers to run a gauntlet. The strikebreakers, equipped with bullwhips, pitchforks, pipes, pick handles and chains, formed a line two deep. Rose Gasper recalled: “It was a terrible, terrible time. The farmers were lined outside, and as they [the sit-downers] were coming out they were hitting them with clubs.” Another worker recounted, “they marched them through the line, hit them on the head, spit on them, called them names, told them to get out of town, and they were hit on the head, blood running down from their heads, they walked through a line of farmers on either side.”¹⁰⁰ Strikebreakers singled out Italians for special attention. One man, a child at the time of the incident remembers his sister being hit by a woman in the crowd, as a man yelled, “get out of town, you little wop.”¹⁰¹

The corporation appeared as an onlooker in published accounts, but the corporation’s imprint is visible in much that occurred. At a minimum, managers took advantage of high tempers, though they may have sanctioned the violence. Initially the

¹⁰⁰ Romanucci, 13; and Plebani and Sponaule, 13; Interview of Ralph Hoar, 21 on May 24, 1991, 91OH16, *HCA*; Simone, 17-19; Ulrich 11-12; and Gasper, 16. Farmers and other loyalists rammed down doors and broke windows to get into the plant, though they needn’t have, the Hershey management had planted an insider to open the doors to let in the crowd. Miller, 17, *HCA*.

¹⁰¹ According to one contemporary, strike-breakers beat an Italian boy of thirteen, thinking him a striker. “He was sort of a big kid...but he was dark complected, and he was an Italian... He was standing there near the post office area when one of the farmers said, ‘Here’s a striker,’ and hit him on the head.” Simone, 17.

corporation said it would buy the farmers' milk, but it then claimed it could no longer do so, and blamed the strikers.¹⁰² Rumors circulated that newly hired outsiders fomented the strike. "Outsiders" was a code word for anti-American radicals, probably Italians.

Milton Hershey himself spread such rumors. The *New York Times* quoted him saying "a small group of foolish radicals" was responsible for the sit-down and he told the *Harrisburg Evening News* that he would soon "weed out of the organization," the "fifteen individuals" who were provocateurs.¹⁰³ The creamery's supervisor spoke at antiunion rallies and visited farmers and Estates workers at their homes asking them to remain "the way we used to be—all friends." Managers followed the supervisor's sweet appeal with a request to workers to sign loyalty oaths.¹⁰⁴ By allowing "Hershey loyalists," to use the community center, theatre, and sports arena, the corporation gave necessary logistical support. And it signaled its moral support by "review[ing] the marchers," and applauding their efforts.¹⁰⁵

Most press accounts would focus on the farmers, often painting them in broad brushstrokes as upright, American Mennonites, with their "legitimate gripes" of lost milk sales, but many of the antiunionists were not farmers. As one Hershey manager later put

¹⁰² For control over the milk supply see Interview of Elwood Myers, on July 20, 1976, 17, 91OH18, *HCA*; and Romanucci, 5. The *Harrisburg Evening News*, 7 April 1937 reported the CIO saying it would like the milk division to continue operations, 11, *DTHS*.

¹⁰³ For Italians being blamed, see interviews with E. Tancredi, 22 and S. Tancredi, 27; Plebani and Sponaugle, 4. For Hershey's blame of "outsiders" see the *Harrisburg Evening News*, n.d. but most likely the 5th or 6th of April, 1937, 1, clipping, *DTHS*.

¹⁰⁴ *Harrisburg Patriot*, 11; and *Harrisburg Telegraph*, 7 April 1937, 1. For loyalty oaths see leaflet, "Is Hallman a Stooge," Scrapbooks, HECO.0001; Miller, 10; and Romanucci, 5.

¹⁰⁵ When anti-strikers paraded around town on April 5th, they passed the country club where Milton Hershey waved to them, as he "reviewed the marches." And when they passed the Hershey windowless office building the next day, managers came out en-masse to applaud their supporters. *Harrisburg Evening News*, n.d. 1, *DTHS*.

it, “well, they said it was farmers, but whoever it was, I don’t know.” Some unionists believed the company imported paid strikebreakers uniformed in spanking new overalls to look like “farmers.”¹⁰⁶ Certainly many strikebreakers were American-born Hershey Estates workers, those who worked in the commercial enterprises like the hockey club, or the country club.¹⁰⁷

“Loyalists” may have battered down doors, but others walked right in through the factory’s entrance. Strikers had allowed Hershey management and foremen into the plant. Just before strikebreakers broke in the company alerted these inside men to come out, indicating loyalists apprised management of their intentions.¹⁰⁸ The actions of state police also suggest possible manipulation of events on Hershey’s part. Police had milled about on Chocolate Avenue, which was “flooded with people,” prior to the plant’s takeover, but according to local press: “During the entire melee there was not a uniformed policeman in sight.” When police came they drove the crowd from the factory but gave no aid to the strikers.¹⁰⁹ The Hershey Corporation sheltered state police in a nearby barracks. Many workers believed Hershey “controlled the police,” and “told them

¹⁰⁶ E. Tancredi, 21; Romanucci, 5. It’s impossible to tell from local news photographs who was in the crowd, though the men with weapons who did the beating looked like “roughs,” with their caps, fedoras and tight jackets more than they looked like the Mennonite farmers that would be depicted in *Civil War in Hershey* discussed below. The *Daily Worker* charged photographs showed “railway audit finks,” had been imported into Hershey, 10 April 1937, 4.

¹⁰⁷ *Harrisburg Patriot*, 7 April 1937, 10 and 8 April 1938, 1, 10; and *Harrisburg Telegraph*, 7 April 1937, *DTHS*. The Hershey Corporation sheltered state police in a barracks, many workers believed Hershey “controlled the police,” and “told them when to come out and when not to come out.” See Sponaugle and Plebani, 13, *PSU*. For Estates workers’ participation see, Miller, 10; and Gasper, 15.

¹⁰⁸ Managers kept one laboratory worker inside until the moment before the strikers came in, Sam Hinkle, told him “When I feel that it’s time for you to leave...” he’d contact him to get out. Myers, 17; *The Patriot* 8 April 1937, 11, *DTHS*.

when to come out and when not to come out.”¹¹⁰ Pennsylvania’s New Deal Governor, George Earle agreed with strikers and ordered a “sweeping investigation...into the disorder” claiming the “bloodshed was a disgrace to the Commonwealth” that the sheriff should have prevented.¹¹¹

The strike’s failure led to the CIO’s routing from Hershey. Managers believed the conflict devastated Milton Hershey—his town revolted against him. “Hershey couldn’t understand why they were moving against him like that after he had provided all these facilities.... It cut him to the quick.”¹¹² Immediately afterwards company heads sat down with CIO leaders to get production going. Their signed agreement included the addendum that “Mr. M.S. Hershey, who in all things affecting the rights of employees has shown a deep sympathy” wanted to “affix his signature” given his desire for “peace and amity rather than discord.”¹¹³ Workers returned the following Monday, April 12th, many happy to have their jobs back. But Hershey’s angst did not paralyze him or his managers. The company helped antiunionists create a “loyal union” to run against the CIO in an NLRB-monitored election scheduled two weeks later. The loyal union maintained the CIO was a threat to peace and security, that the closed shop was a “base injustice,” and that Milton Hershey would have fixed any problem if he had known of

¹⁰⁹ *Harrisburg Telegram*, 7 April 1937, 1; *The Patriot*, 8 April 1937, 10, *DTHS*; and Simone, 19.

¹¹⁰ Sponaugle and Plebani, 13.

¹¹¹ *Harrisburg Patriot*, 8 April 1937, 1, 10, *DTHS*.

¹¹² Hinkle, 21, *HCA*; John Zoll, interview March 22 1955 John Zoll papers, *HCA*.

¹¹³ On front page letter addended to April 12, 1937 agreement between Hershey Chocolate Company and the United Chocolate Workers of America of the CIO, *Crouse*, b4f5, HTC.0001, *HCA*.

it.¹¹⁴ They convinced other Hershey workers who voted, 1,542 to 781, against the CIO.¹¹⁵

Little explains workers' change of heart. The company charged the results vindicated them: workers had been manipulated by the CIO, but were no longer. The CIO countered that workers who feared losing their jobs responded to "fear psychology" and promises of work under the company union. The CIO sought relief from the NLRB, which invalidated the loyal union as an illegal company union. The company then reached out to the AFL, which stepped into the breach, happy to pick up another shop in their competition against the CIO. At that point, one participant claimed the CIO agent said, "Fellas, now I will suggest you join the AFL...make it work like a legitimate union."¹¹⁶ The CIO agent was correct in one thing. The AFL Hershey local became the largest local in the Bakery and Confectionery Workers' International Union, and ironically, one of the strongest locals in the candy industry. Hershey gave workers pensions before other companies, and vacations too. Within a decade the international had unionized the Estates workers, making the "cooperative" company town a union town.¹¹⁷ Hershey did well by his employees after all.

Hershey mourned his lost utopia, but he was never maudlin. The company fired workers tied to the CIO. Managers remember union leaders "disappearing" but one fired CIO activist went to Harrisburg's employment bureau where hundreds of former Hershey

¹¹⁴ Hinkle, 8; "Dear Fellow Worker," and "To Employees of the Hershey Chocolate Company," in "Scrapbooks," HERCO.001, *HCA*.

¹¹⁵ "The Man Behind the Hershey Bar," Hinkle interview, and Ezra Hershey Strike Papers b20 HTC.001.

¹¹⁶ Romanucci, 5, 3.

¹¹⁷ Plebani and Sponaugle, 26, 17-18, 28-9.

workers came before him.¹¹⁸ Hershey also rewarded his allies. A year after the strike, in May 1938, he made a \$27,000 donation to the American Legion local that led the loyalty parade.¹¹⁹ No records indicate why he awarded the Legion so much—Hershey rarely donated to that which he didn't control. The donation suggests that Hershey may have acknowledged the American Legion's symbolic importance as patriotic leaders of antiunionism.

Hershey's defeat of the CIO left a bitter aftertaste for employees. A few months after the strike the company packed its arena with eight thousand celebrants for a rousing eightieth birthday party for Milton Hershey. Universal sent a newsreel cameraman to show him cutting a giant three-foot tall, four-foot wide cake. Local ministers gave speeches touting the Hershey amenities that would make workers elsewhere "green with envy."¹²⁰ Not all workers celebrated however. Some believed the town's trust broke, never to heal. Fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, men and wives "split up, couldn't talk to each other, because one favored the union the other one didn't."¹²¹ Many believed this division particularly affected Italian workers. As Samuel Tancredi noted, "the aftereffects [of the strike] have endured for decades... you couldn't find an Italian name

¹¹⁸ Hinkle, 8. Romanucci claimed hundreds were fired, as he found out when he visited the Harrisburg employment bureau after being fired himself. He claimed with WWII the war years the company fired Italian and German workers wholesale. The AFL allowed a provision in its contract that only U.S. citizens would be employed, 9-10. See also 1940-1941 Agreement, Bakery and Confectionery Worker International Union of America, Local 464 and Hershey Chocolate Corporation, *Crouse*, b4.

¹¹⁹ Donations for 1938, b145 Ledger II Vol. IV, 107, *HCA*. Hershey almost never made large donations to organizations he didn't control.

¹²⁰ Workers presented him with a "yellow gold ring, with eighteen blue-white diamonds set in platinum, enclosing the trademark of the Hershey Chocolate Corporation." "Employees of M.S. Hershey Celebrate his 80th Birthday Anniversary With Party at Arena," September 18, 1937, *Stoddart*, b2f54 HERCO.002.

¹²¹ Simione, 19-20; and E Tancredi, 22.

among the top union people, but they got the blame for bringing it on...That created sores, bad feelings, suspicion and doubt.”¹²²

The Hershey Company kept out the CIO, even though they couldn't forestall collective bargaining entirely. But the Hershey battle's real significance lies in its resonance in national public discourse. Manager Sam Hinkle asserted, “while we [Hershey] weren't the chief nationally prominent operation” of major industries facing the CIO, the Hershey strike was “the high water mark of the sit-down strike.” Hinkle's statement wasn't mere boasting, he captured the essential relevance of this conflict to shaping opinion about the CIO and its tactics.¹²³

“News is Not an Inanimate Thing”

The Hershey story was a national sensation in the spring of 1937. No evidence indicates that the Hershey company itself promoted the story. Other business allies did however. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), a union foe from the century's beginning, revived a flagging membership in the early 1930s with a commitment to counter the “radicalism and demagoguery” of the New Deal, including its support of unions. NAM fought the NLRA, and helped individual companies keep unions at bay. The peak association adapted its earlier antiunion tactics to a public sphere

¹²² Labor trouble flared again *The Patriot*, April 8, 1937, 10. Sixteen years after the first strike, workers walked out once more, led by the former Hershey loyalists. This rupture resurrected earlier bitterness as former CIO unionists from 1937 remembered how these picket line leaders had sabotaged them in 1937. Despite the AFL's solid record of contracts, the 1953 battle was also rancorous. S. Tancredi, 21; and Gaspar, 20.

¹²³ Hinkle, 7.

altered by a nationalized media apparatus. Public relations strategies was a critical tool in its attack, and events in the chocolate kingdom were a public relations dream.¹²⁴

Public relations isn't shilling a product, or "get[ting] articles into a newspaper or obtain[ing] radio time or arrange[ing] a motion picture newsreel," rather it is a full-scale campaign to put a distilled message before the public so that its truth seems unquestionable. Edward Bernays, a p.r. innovator contended that the essence of public relations was "the engineering of consent." Bernays thought news events could be shaped to increase public receptivity to specific messages. For Bernays, "The engineer of consent must create news. News is not an inanimate thing. It is the overt act that makes news, and news in turn shapes the attitudes and actions of people."¹²⁵ Bernays wrote his description in the late 1940s, but he encapsulated decades of personal experience in the field.

¹²⁴ Ignazio Romanucci claimed Hershey was a NAM member. I have found no independent confirmation of this. Romanucci, 7. The NAM papers, and the National Industrial Information Council papers, an "independent group" spearheaded by NAM and charged with leading the public relations work are archived at the Hagley Library, hereafter *Hagley*). NAM's historic resistance to unions is written about in David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the Twentieth Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 25-27; and Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 123. For NAM resistance to the National Labor Relations Act see Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 134. For the Mohawk Valley Plan and NAM see Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933-1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 432-498.

¹²⁵ "The Engineering of Consent," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 250 (March 1947): 113-120. One year Bernays turned the fashion world upside down to enhance women's desire for the green packaged Lucky Strike cigarette. He induced Parisian fashion houses to design their latest couture in green, convinced silk textile mills in the U.S. to develop new weaves in the appropriate shade of green, and persuaded Fifth Avenue department stores in New York to carry these latest fashion trends. See Edward Bernays, *Biography of an Idea: Memoirs of a Public Relations Counsel* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 377-394.

NAM followed Bernays's advice: it utilized the most up-to-date social science techniques, conducting market research to settle on "free enterprise" as its message, and linking free enterprise with other freedoms in the lexicon of American civil liberties: freedom of speech, of religion, and of the press. As NAM saw it, what benefited business, benefited the nation's citizenry and free-enterprise without union interference defined America's essence. Business needed only to explain this to the average American. Smaller manufacturers like Tasty Baking or Bon Ami, but also major U.S. corporations — Eastman Kodak, E. Nemours DuPont, and the Generals: General Mills, General Electric, and General Motors—embraced NAM's mission of spreading this big business gospel.¹²⁶

NAM understood that news media was a key battleground in its antiunion campaign. James Selvage, NAM's public relations officer argued for the significance of the news to public opinion in an April 1937 memo to member organizations. "Now more than ever strikes are being won or lost in the newspapers and over the radio." Selvage acknowledged government's recent affirmation of unions, claiming, "with the settlement of strikes being thrown more and more into the laps of public officials, the question of

¹²⁶ New leadership convinced corporations of the advantages of working together, and their hobbling organization of 1,500 doubled to include 3,000 member corporations by the mid-1930s. One business historian claimed, the "new NAM sought to sell free enterprise the way Proctor and Gamble sold soap." Richard Tedlow, *Keeping the Corporate Image, Public Relations and Business* (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1979), 60, 62-3; and Stuart Ewen, *PR! A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 301; Senate Committee on Education and Labor, *Investigation on Labor Policies of Employers' Associations*, Part III, Report no. 6, part 6, "The National Association of Manufacturers," 76th Cong., 1st sess., August 14, 1939: 220 (hereafter "NAM Report.") For list of contributors from 1933-1937, see "NAM Report": 247-255.

public opinion becomes of greater importance.”¹²⁷ Under the rubric of free enterprise NAM argued that unions’ calls for “collective bargaining” with a sole bargaining agent were anti-American. NAM wanted to use “factual information” to “stimulate the realization of the need of law enforcement and order.” It also sought to “promote better understanding” by getting papers to publish “stories and pictures of industrial and business men, with the accent on those who have either started at the bottom...or who started their own companies on a shoestring and became big.” NAM used public relations, including news stories to hold up a different ideal of meritocracy, employer and worker harmony, and voluntaristic relations.¹²⁸

¹²⁷“Community Public Information Programs to combat Radical Tendencies and Present the Constructive Story of Industry” See “NAM Report:” 281; and *NAM papers*, James Selvage, sIXb150f “1937 Committee Reports.”

¹²⁸ At the NAM’s January Board meeting the new president told other members “No phase of industrial success is going to be more important in the future than Industrial Relations.” In addition to espousing “outstanding” employment procedures, the NAM president argued “Fixing Labor Responsibility,” was one of “industry’s greatest current problems.” He argued that industry had failed “to take the offensive aggressively” and that industry needed to move past earlier attempts to legislate against blacklisting, boycotts, general strikes, and lockouts. Instead, it should impress on “the public mind,” that “labor responsibility” was a “prime requisite for the protection of society itself against both oppression and disorder.” William Warner’s remarks, Board Meeting, January 22, 1937 in s13b199. By February they were advocating legislation at the state level defining the “right to work,” and “prohibiting intimidation,” Board Minutes, February 17, 1937, s13b199. They also put out press releases arguing for “industrial peace,” which criticized “coercion,” maintaining labor questions “must be viewed from the standpoint of the millions who make up the American public, rather than from that of anyone minority group, for the public’s rights transcend those of all others.” Release, April 22, 1937, s13b199, All *NAM papers*. For quote on businessmen who rose from the lower echelons of American society, see *NAM papers*, Selvage, sIXb150f “1937 Committee Reports.” For the message of class harmony see Ewen, *PR!*, 303, 306-321; and Tedlow, *Keeping*, 65. Only in later internal notes can one find explicit references to news-making. In the “Suggested Public Relations Program for Committee on Labor Management Problems,” the outline says. NAM members must not only supply ‘case history materials; they must, by action, create new material that can be widely publicized. The undated plan (which appears in other war-time material) cautions against management going directly to the public, instead it argues for “public aggression,”

One way NAM members could “animate the news” to unions’ detriment was through the Mohawk Valley Plan, or formula as it was sometimes called. NAM member James Rand, owner-president of the Remington-Rand Corporation, the world’s largest office equipment maker developed this plan in a fight against the Federal Labor Union. Local 19401 of this union struck at his plants in New York’s Mohawk Valley in 1936.¹²⁹ The Remington-Rand Corporation labeled union leaders agitators with a small following. The company armed special police. Violence was employed against strikers, and as long as the company’s hand wasn’t evident, unionism appeared a threat to law and order. Mass citizen meetings showed community support for the employers and became news-making items. The company instigated “citizen’s committees,” composed of locals whose interests aligned with business. It also catalyzed a “back to work” movement by “loyal employees” to demoralize strikers, and further discredit them before the general public. Finally, in a public relations coup de grace the company “opened” the plant, using police force if necessary. The opening “spectacle” had speech making, flag raising, and a rallying of those who upheld the sacrosanct “right to work.” The plan’s intent was

instead of “management aggression.” SIIIb844f “labor problems speech.” Similar material is found in W. B. Weisenburger to Ira Mosher, 8 March 1945, where Weisenburger tells the NAM president that publicity “must be keyed to the public’s welfare-not the manufacturer’s welfare.” He cautions against anonymous campaigns or “stooge” set-ups but states “the grass roots flavor is the taste that Congress relishes,” and as a result “victimized individuals” and the “unprotected worker” should be publicized, s7b125, *NAM papers*.

¹²⁹ Rand was also a member of the National Industrial Information Committee, founded by NAM to strengthen industry’s voice via public relations. “NAM Report”: 243, Marc Steven Kolopsky, “Remington Rand Workers in the Tonowandas of Western New York, 1927-1956: A History of the Mohawk Valley Formula,” (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York, Buffalo, 1986), 138. The Federal Labor Unions were chartered by the AFL in the aftermath of the NIRA. The IAM had represented some workers in the plant prior to this point. Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Violations of Free Speech,

to create the impression that most workers and community members shared corporate America's commitment to free enterprise—without union interference.¹³⁰

Scholars have ignored photography's role in the plan but Rand understood the news's increasing dependence on photographs to "tell" the story.¹³¹ When the NLRB investigated this plan in 1937 the Board focused on how mass media, and particularly an increasingly visual news, could advance an antiunion agenda. As Pearl Bergoff, "King of the Strikebreakers" testimony to the NLRB suggested, Rand had the strikebreakers enter the plant despite the many picketers outside. Bergoff thought this premature and dangerous.¹³² Rand got what he had paid for however—Bergoff misunderstood his sponsor's aims.

Bergoff: He told me that he had the photographs taken... not only moving pictures but still photographs, to be used in the newspapers, showing the strikers throwing stones at the men that were trying to enter the plant. Rand talked about the pictures. He said he had photographs about the assault and my people had done wonderful work and started to congratulate me... on the brilliant work I had done, and I said I didn't see anything brilliant about it, the men had gotten into the plant the best way they could while they were under a shower of bricks, and he was taking

Employers' Associations and 'Citizens' Committees, Part 17, 75th Cong., 3rd sess., March 1938, (hereafter "Employers Associations"), 7950-7951.

¹³⁰ These tactics were codified as "steps" in a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decision against that company. Bernstein's *Turbulent Years*, 478-480 relates the plan using the same framework as the NLRB.

¹³¹ Labor historians like Bernstein have paid particular attention to the Little Steel Strike in May of 1937. Tedlow, Chapters 3, *The National Association of Manufacturers and Public Relations During the New Deal* treats NAM's public relations work against unions, and Ewen, Chapter 14, "Money Talks: The Publicity of Private Enterprise" treats NAM's anti-unionism, and visual imagery, but doesn't look specifically at news photography and labor.

¹³² Called the "King of Strikebreakers," Bergoff had been paid to break strikes for over thirty years. See "Employers Associations," Exhibit 3821: 7960. For additional sources on Bergoff see Edward Levinson, *I Break Strikes! The Technique of Pearl Bergoff* (New York: R.M. McBride and Company, 1935); and Stephen Norwood, *Strike-Breaking and Intimidation: Mercenaries and Masculinity in Twentieth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) 65-69, 230-231.

pictures of it. Naturally he had them showing peaceful pickets (the “back to work” pickets) America, a free land, all that stuff... I didn’t know anything about it until it was over with and then Rand and I had a battle... I was sore as the devil at Rand. In fact I had a hell of an argument with him... and said “If you were going to pull a stunt off like this, why didn’t you let me know. Some of my men might have got killed up there”
 Trial Examiner Wood: Were you accusing Rand of staging this thing?
 Bergoff: I did, to tell you the honest truth.¹³³

Bergoff’s bemusement may have been disingenuous, but there’s no doubt that Rand believed he had a “formula” to strengthen antiunion opinion. After the strike was over Rand congratulated members of the Citizens Committee for helping out. “Two million business men have been looking for a formula like this and business has hoped for, dreamed of and prayed for such as example as you have set” an example that “would go down in history as the Mohawk Valley Formula.” NAM disseminated Rand’s plan in its *Labor Relations Bulletin*. “A Community Organizes!” published in July 1936 told the story of how “Aroused citizens, determined that no group should place itself above law and order by restricting the rights of others, organized to safeguard the ‘right to work.’”¹³⁴

No archival evidence documents that Hershey followed the Mohawk Valley Plan. Yet the contours of the events at Hershey bear an unmistakable resemblance to the plan.

¹³³ From the decision of the NLRB in the Matter of Remington Rand, Inc. and the Remington Rand Joint Protective Board of the District Council Office Equipment Workers Case No. C-145 as quoted in “Employer Associations,” Exhibits 3861 and 2821, 7972. Kolopsky, “Remington Rand Workers,” 217 notes that Rand had six photographs of “graphic violence” printed in the local paper under the caption “This page of pictures shows what agitators do—in contrast with what they say about intimidation.”

¹³⁴ “Employer Associations,” 7966-7968. Though NAM insisted it had not publicized the Mohawk Valley Plan, its own press releases rallied against “all conduct which makes for irritation, resentment and disorder,” which it claimed was the result of “organized mobs” that forced “willing workers to give up their earnings,” “violent mass attacks,” and “coercion of majority groups by small minorities.” See “National Manufacturers Urge

More important for the CIO, was that the national press trumpeted the Hershey story to millions of Americans. It was a story replete with photographs showing the dangers of the CIO.

“Civil War in Hersheytown”

The NAM was so interested in the Hershey conflict that one member wrote a long article, “Civil War in Hersheytown,” about it. Produced by the NAM affiliate *Mill and Factory*, “Civil War in Hersheytown” shows how the Hershey myth could be used to attack the CIO. “Civil War in Hersheytown” appeared as a cover page story in the trade publication for industrial managers in May 1937. The publication’s analyses and editorials on industrial and social policies were slanted against the New Deal, in keeping with the publication’s NAM membership. The article was then reproduced as a sixteen-page, three-color, photograph-laden booklet. Little information about the production or distribution of the article or booklet exists, though it did circulate within Hershey after the strike. Robert M. LaFollette thought it worthy of attention, it is included in his investigative files on corporations’ antilabor practices. “Civil War in Hersheytown” exemplified how public relations used the news, and the power of visual messages to awaken Americans to the “whole black mess” engendered by the CIO.¹³⁵

End of Labor Violence: That Unions Be Made Responsible,” Press Release, June 30, 1937, s13b199, *NAM papers*.

¹³⁵ “Civil War in Hersheytown” is archived at the Hershey Community Archives and at the Derry Township Historical Society. It is also found in the Senator Robert La Follette Committee Files in the Legislative Branch of the National Archives {50.25}. It is a reprint of the article by the same title in *Mill and Factory*, May 1937. References to the booklet can be found in Samel Tancredi’s oral history. He sees it and another leaflet, “swat that fly,” as “hate material,” 23. For *Mill and Factory*’s NAM membership see the monthly title page.

Mill and Factory's editor, Hartley Barclay, wrote "Civil War in Hersheytown" and he approached Hershey as a canvas upon which to paint a tale of inevitable hostilities between American democratic values and the growing threat of the CIO. Barclay described two warring groups. A tiny number of foreigners and outsiders forced a minority of workers to strike through intimidation and misconception. Against them, the loyalists: workers disinterested in unionizing and the "salt of the earth" upright, pious farmers, predominately Mennonite, who fought for their livelihoods and their beloved benefactor. Barclay's tale was a cautionary one. In line with the title the author described the Hershey conflict as the first civil war in the "Divided States of America." For Barclay, "the Hershey Company was innocent of any connection whatsoever with the instigation of the upheaval." The strike was a battle of ideals—not of classes.¹³⁶

With the well-established corporate persona of Hershey, the *Mill and Factory* editor cast doubt on labor's uprising. He described the company and town of Hershey in glowing terms. "At the extreme other end of the scale from the dingy mill towns of the textile industry and the soot and rust bitten towns of the steel industry lies this green-swarded model village nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains." Everything was laid out for workers' pleasure and comfort. "[The plant] is a miniature of perfection in the artistic as well as utilitarian design and construction. Even the terrazzo factory floors are both attractive and easy to clean." In Barclay's account Hershey had labored so that his workers needn't. "Here the well-paid factory workers...have none of the usual worries of factory workers. Instead of working in ordinary dim illumination, workers have 'sunshine' lamps...Ninety percent of the jobs here are soft snaps. Hard back

¹³⁶ "Civil War," 5.

breaking work is unknown.” Wanting workers to share “equal privileges” with himself, Barclay claimed Hershey provided unparalleled services and welfare programs “on a deluxe scale.” According to Barclay, “factory workers even breathe air-conditioned air. In the wealthiest regions of America, there is not a single village which I have seen that compares with the beauties and social advantages of this industrial village.”¹³⁷ Barclay’s depiction of Hershey’s generosity and foresight diminished workers’ labors but also discredited the complaints of all CIO strikers. If Hershey workers grumbled, how could the public determine if any workers’ complaints were justified?

Four pages of photos of “The Most Beautiful Industrial Village in America” sustained Barclay’s claims. [Fig. 3-7.]¹³⁸ These photographs were drawn from the Hershey Corporation and would go on to figure prominently in national media. The photo-essay began with an aerial view of the chocolate factory. Though smoke poured from the chimneys, the photo emphasized the town’s order more than its productive capacity. The essay first treated viewers to the plant’s entryway, with its circular driveways in front, followed by successive levels of the factory. The horizontal lines of the factory were balanced by a vertical that reached into a background of trees and fields. The order was reminiscent of an eighteenth-century neoclassical architectural rendering of a country estate, and the vertical line into the landscape enhanced the text’s message of a “green swarded model village.” Underneath lie two columns of photos with Hershey’s town attractions: the Italianate “club house which is open to all,” the “luxurious swimming pool for employees,” the “miniature railway in the village playground,” and dancers in the “palatial ball-room.” From the images’ sequence viewers might infer that

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

the factory produced a life of play for workers, where they might swim, dance, play hockey or tool around in a miniature railcar, matching once again the textual message of “soft-snap jobs.” Another of the four pages documented Hershey’s “Ideal Housing for Workers,” and captions told readers that “workers homes...exceed in beauty the landscaping of the finest suburban regions of America.” [Fig. 3-8.]¹³⁹ These homes appeared as the suburban ideal with trees by their side, and puffy clouds in the background. Only Hershey residents would have known that these were homes reserved for managers.

Befitting its location in an industrial magazine, “Civil War in Hershey” had one page that headlined “Short Hours and High Wages in a Model Plant” that did show employees working. [Fig. 3-9.]¹⁴⁰ But the booklet presented work antiseptically, far from the everyday labors conducted within the factory’s premises. Two photos show not the factory, but Hershey’s vaunted windowless office building and an unnamed Tudor-style building. This conjunction seamlessly linked modernity and tradition with the Hershey vision and substituted white-collar workers’ office buildings and shops for the factory. The only images of the factory’s interior showed employees standing alongside the conveyor belts. The factory workers kept their eyes downcast towards their work, and their arms reached out much like the levers of a machine. As with much industrial photography, these images are ordered, the order created by the managers. Workers, like the machines themselves, are being moved, the consciousness of the worker who labors is

¹³⁸ “Civil War,” 7.

¹³⁹ “Civil War,” 8. Five of the seven images were taken from below which exaggerated the house’s height.

erased. Such pictures again sustained the notion of “soft-snap” jobs, and the well-lit, clean conditions exemplified the company’s promise of a product “never touched by human hands.”

Laboring could entail consciousness, and unlike the representation of factory workers, images of Hershey Estates workers and Hershey orphans suggested they were co-participants in the Hershey vision, not dependents or automatons within it. One photograph of a Hershey Estates painter who worked outdoors was placed with the assembly-line photographs. He leisurely brushed the wooden slats of a verandah. The painter faced his work, with the implements of labor around him, his body was integral to the composition. As a craftsman, this worker helped order the scene, unlike the factory workers who are ordered. Similarly, “Educating Orphans in the Industrial School,” a full page of photos of the orphan boys at work, at play, and at their studies represented labor and consciousness joined. [Fig. 3-10.]¹⁴¹ An austerity filled these scenes, which was conveyed by the boys’ absorption in their tasks, the geometry of their placement in the composition and the photographer’s vantage, which offered an overview. Unlike workers who enjoyed “soft-snap” jobs, these boys participated in an ordered nineteenth-century vision of control. The images match photographs taken by Frances Johnson at the Hampton Institute at the turn of the century, or earlier “before and after” photos of institutional inmates intended to document social reform’s efficacy.¹⁴² Hershey’s

¹⁴⁰ “Civil War,” 9. One example of the “Never touched by Human hands” quote can be found in Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Internal Affairs, 10 no. 1 (December 1941): 15; and “for *Department Store Selling*,” nd., *Stoddart*, b1f49.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁴² For the Hampton Institute photos by Frances Johnston see James Guimond’s *American Photography and the American Dream*, 21-53. For 19th century English

orphans were at one with their labors, their own self-growth. Unlike the workers who were part of the machinery, but could never control it, the boys participate in a social schema that allows Hershey's notions of producer-citizenry to be enacted. Because the orphans are the final product in this most "beautiful industrial village," the CIO attack on Hershey is an attack on the orphans and their exemplification of America's own ideals.

In contrast to Hershey's ordered town with its paternalistic relations lie the union workers and their unrestrained desires for change. Barclay first introduced unionists as part of a narrative of losing himself on his way to Hershey town. He ended up in the outlying district of Swatara where Italian workers lived. Barclay immediately created an opposition between farmers and strikers by describing the latter's "small village thickly built up of dingy, squalid houses" unlike the nearby "Mennonite villages" he had passed earlier. Barclay described his fear, particularly when he heard "singing in a nearby house on which the blinds had been completely drawn." He translated the Italian song lyrics for his readers—the lyrics to the Communist "Internationale."¹⁴³ Barclay's overhearing of the "Internationale" behind closed doors conformed to his depiction of strikers' subterfuge and radicalism. Barclay reported that these strikers also satirized the nation's patriotic songs by substituting Communistic lyrics in their "red-covered songbook."

Mill and Factory printed many photographs and photostats to support Barclay's linking of strikers with communism, foreign interference, and danger—though candid photographs diminished the strikers as well as building them up. A photostat of the "red-covered songbook," with the lyrics to the "CIO parody on 'My Country 'Tis of Thee'"

"before and after" photographs see Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 352

¹⁴³ "Civil War," 4.

joined a photostat of phonograph records with “songs from the Red Book” to buttress the author’s claims. Similarly, a photo of an affidavit traced the “Big Red Song Book” to local union organizer Russell Behman. **[Fig. 3-11.]**¹⁴⁴ The booklet also printed a copy of a note from the “black hand” showing how the CIO intimidated neutral observers. Of course “black hand” also spoke to the Italian origins of the strikers. These evidence-style photostats supported Barclay’s contention that strikers were foreign and ideologically outside the pale. The editors also printed a photo of union leader Russel Behman sitting in his parlor in pajamas and robe with a revolver ostensibly “within hand’s reach.” **[Fig. 3-12.]**¹⁴⁵ The pistol butt was visible in the photograph but it had clearly been cut and pasted in next to the unionist’s hand. This juxtaposition of the use of the photograph to transmit a definite message about the strikers’ danger, and the editor’s sense that the photo could be tampered with to make its point, suggests editors believed they could trust their audience to support them.

Other photos showed the CIOers as an informal, slightly disreputable, crowd—a bit like high-school hooligans. One photo juxtaposed a photo of two youngish smirking men above a photostat of lyrics to a song ridiculing the Supreme Court to the tune of “Three Blind Mice.” In another photo a bunch of strikers slouched around a table. The largest photo showed the CIOers underneath of banner proclaiming “We Shall Not Be Moved.” **[Fig. 3-13.]**¹⁴⁶ The crowd appeared to be joking about and eating sandwiches, as the women ladled up soup. But pasted on top of this photo is text that told readers the

¹⁴⁴ “Civil War,” 12, 13.

¹⁴⁵ “Civil War,” 16.

¹⁴⁶ “Civil War,” 11.

CIO workers stood with their “big red CIO song books.”¹⁴⁷ If mass-media news photos often showed strikers in menacing, army-like lines, the Hershey strikers appeared relaxed, but text reminded us of their “‘red’ tendencies.” Were editors unable to find images that made workers look like a threat? Did they believe the narrative so convincing that they didn’t need photos? Or were they unwilling to give workers actual agency?

Barclay described the majority in Hershey who united in their love of their employer and of their nation. Loyalists included townspeople; patriotic American Legion members; most Hershey employees, who loved the company and its products so much they paid full retail price for Hershey Kisses just to eat them during working hours; and the proud, thrifty, and industrious Mennonite farmers who shared Hershey’s vision. If Barclay encountered workers in the dim of night, he met loyalists in the light of day, in their homes and farms. Barclay focused primarily on the farmers who stood as a synecdoche for all loyalists. As exemplars of American values they had no equal. These farmers had:

A strong; but simple faith. They believe in God, They are patriotic. They are democratic in all their habits. They live close to the soil. They do not waste food, time, money or property, no matter whether it is their own or belongs to someone else. They are slow to anger... They have no poverty or debt in their communities.¹⁴⁸

Farmers’ love of nation was so great they could toss off not one, but all three verses of the “Star-Spangled Banner” with a “deep and moving sincerity” from memory alone. Barclay recorded them singing the third verse three times to affirm their values and ready

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 11, 16. This photo was taken by a Harrisburg news photographer, J.W. Gossett. Clipping, *DTHS*.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

themselves for the conflict. The photographs also emphasized the farmers, “Civil War in Hershey” had a photo of an antistrike mass rally that showed a group of Mennonites sitting in the front row. Editors further accentuated this point by pasting into the crowd shot a close-up, blow-up photo of three elderly farmers. [Fig. 3-14.]¹⁴⁹ The booklet also printed four photos of the mass of loyal workers and farmers. Women figured prominently in two of the four images, as did the American flag and picket signs that pledged loyalty to Mr. M. S. Hershey. [Fig. 3-15.]¹⁵⁰ The editor may have added the women to domesticate the militarism of the antiunionists. Certainly their broad smiles suggest this. If smiling however, these women marched in rows, as did the “farmers” from another image, all seemed ready for battle.

Barclay’s blow-by-blow account of events between loyalists and unionists at Hershey, sounded much like the Mohawk Valley Plan in operation. In line with the first step, Barclay painted the strikers as a minority of outsiders. The author also reported that the plant was closed by a mere 400 workers of 2,300. In Hershey, the second and third pieces of the strategy were combined. There was no need to arm special police to exacerbate conflict as the Mennonite farmers who lost milk sales joined the majority of workers who lost wages—in Hershey the community became an agent of order. The booklet described the parading by Hershey’s citizenry, and the addition of the American Legion whose patriotism was insulted by strikers who disdained the American flag by

¹⁴⁹ “Civil War,” 2-3, 13.

¹⁵⁰ “Civil War,” 6. This use of the dramatic angling line is a staple of war graphics. It has been used from the Civil War in Currier and Ives prints and in panoramic photographs. It was often used for strikers. For examples of such imagery see William C. Davis, *The Illustrated History of the Civil War* (Philadelphia: Courage Books, 1997) and Richard Ketchum, ed. *American Heritage Pictorial History of the Civil War* (New

raising the CIO banner above it on the Hershey factory flagpole. After the conflict, once blood coated the plant's terrazzo floors and the plant was retaken, the "American flag was [raised] again to the top of the mast," along with two other American flags to a "lustily" sung National Anthem. "Civil War in Hersheytown" showed no photographs of loyalists beating strikers—though they could have, many circulated, even in the nearby local papers. Loyal workers and farmers had a single purpose, "to get back to our jobs," and they clamored at a mass meeting to return united as one. "We can thank the CIO for one thing, that is binding all us loyal workers closer together. This isn't any company union—it is a real union of company workers."¹⁵¹ Barclay closed with a vision of class harmony: righteous workers owning the joys of the workplace and pledging their allegiance to one another and the company owner.

"Civil War in Hershey" added drawn illustrations in line with the saturated drama of Barclay's narrative. Editors embellished the booklet's cover with a roughly drafted image of a pre-battle rally. The image showed a long line of troops, marching three abreast, rifles raised against their shoulders. [Fig. 3-16.]¹⁵² Immediately to the side stood a line of well-dressed men and fur-clad women, picket signs thrust aloft that promised their 100 percent American citizenship. Spectators lined the sidewalk next to the Hershey plant, and the CIO flag sat above the American flag, the affront Barclay most descried. The illustration appeared to have been drawn by crayon, it was roughly drafted, which conveyed a sense of immediacy. Here the *Mill and Factory* editors chose a visual

York: American Heritage Publishing Company, 1960). This composition was common in the WWI war parades of returning armies.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁵² "Civil War," 1. In photographs I've seen of the rallies, no signs about the citizenship of their bearers are visible, despite strong anti-Italian animus.

“language associated with social concern.” Illustrators in *The Masses*, a leftist periodical from the early decades of the twentieth century often used this style as it made the image seemed unfinished, “a visual affront to the commercial market.”¹⁵³ “Civil War in Hersheytown” appropriated a visual language associated with social concern to raise the specter of violence to all U.S. citizens as a result of CIO activism.

Barclay wrote “Civil War in Hersheytown” as reportage, a firsthand account of the Hershey strike so readers could glimpse the conflict through the eyes of a “neutral” visitor. Barclay’s depiction was anything but. Barclay’s portraits of the strikers and the loyalists suggested the stakes of this strike were far greater than a win or loss at Hershey. His attack on the CIO was even less subtle, he went at it with a broadax. The United Chocolate Workers Union, like the CIO generally, was likened to “a military type of labor dictatorship.” The CIO even murdered its competitors. With the CIO stood the Federal government, and many state officials who ignored law itself in their support of the labor behemoth’s gains. The CIO undermined American ideals, substituting “the mockery of a Communist philosophy,” as the CIO was flooded with communists. Barclay warned, the “so-called Wall Street Octopus is only a jelly-fish compared to the CIO. John L. Lewis is the No. 1 Octopus of America today.”¹⁵⁴

The farmers and loyal workers were arrayed on a different side: an “all-American” side, devoted to full disclosure of the truth, one free from poverty and dependency, a patriotic side willing to rally to the flag, and to the company founder who

¹⁵³ This style, derived from earlier work by social critics such as Honoré Daumier and Theophile Steinlen in France. Rebecca Zurier, *Art for the Masses (1911-1917): A Radical Magazine and Its Graphics* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1985), 109-135. For other examples see cover drawings for *The Blast* by Robert Minor, September 1, 1916, October 15, 1916, January, 1917 and March 15, 1917.

had offered them so much. These were the “religious and patriotic ideals of an overwhelming majority of citizens.”¹⁵⁵ However, the American public was “without adequate facts upon which to base his opinion regarding this method of unionizing American workmen.” The battle was thus unequal: of Labor and Government allied against the Average American citizen, as represented by the Hersheyites.¹⁵⁶

The tensions and ambiguities in *Mill and Factory*'s visual depiction of the Hershey strike offers intriguing insights into NAM's imaginary. Strikers were photographed as rowdy adolescents on the one hand and “documented” Communists on the other hand. The publication offered the news-style photographs of their “loyal” opponents as bewhiskered, somewhat aging farmers, and simultaneously as fur clad women, and uniform clad men, bayonets at the ready in bold crayon drawings. “Civil War in Hershey's” dramatic cover with men and women poised to bring down the CIO almost seems to match the editor's hopes: that Americans would recognize the danger of the CIO and stand up against it. The ambiguous depiction of the strikers as thugs and as adolescents suggests the need to raise them as a threat and diminish them at the same time, much as the Mohawk Valley Plan sought to identify strikers as a threat and simultaneously cowards. The editors were less interested in hewing to “documentary” accuracy than in impugning the CIO in any fashion possible.

Mill and Factory's “Civil War in Hersheytown” shows NAM's perfervid fantasies about the CIO and an idealized response limned for an audience of members who might appreciate it. When mass-market magazines described and depicted the

¹⁵⁴ “Civil War,” 16.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4, 16.

“language associated with social concern.” Illustrators in *The Masses*, a leftist periodical from the early decades of the twentieth century often used this style as it made the image seemed unfinished, “a visual affront to the commercial market.”¹⁵³ “Civil War in Hersheytown” appropriated a visual language associated with social concern to raise the specter of violence to all U.S. citizens as a result of CIO activism.

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Business groups tied to NAM circulated the Hershey story in their antiunion campaigns.¹⁵⁸ William Frew Long, General Manager of the Associated Industries of Cleveland, a NAM affiliate, addressed the Cuyahoga County Bar Association on the question “Are Sit-Down Strikes Legal or Ethical?” His denunciation of the CIO was broadcast over Cleveland radio to the general public. Long argued the public demanded “actions against these unlawful seizures,” and that opinion polls showed they would countenance “the use of force to expel sit-down strikers.” Why? Because “it is but a short step, or perhaps I should say ‘an easy slide’ from a sit down in those plants to a sit down on our farms and in our homes.” Any handyman, cook, or gardener—Long addressed an affluent crowd—could sit down in one’s home and claim a property right in it. Farmers in Hershey knew as much. They “were quick to note” how the sit-down was “bringing this form of lawlessness pretty close to home,” and believing “they had some property rights in the market... they threw the sit-downers out.”¹⁵⁹ For Long, Hershey farmers showed America’s citizens that sit-downs should be met forcefully

¹⁵⁸ NAM fought passage of the NLRA, and once it was passed never stopped working to overturn it. Their attacks on the sit-down were frequently framed as attacks on the NLRA. For NAM’s attempts to legislate against the sit-down and “flying squadrons” see letter from the “Law Department to NAM Board of Directors,” May 13, 1937, and letter from “executive vice president of the National Industrial Council,” January 27, 1937, s7B140f “picketing.” For NAM and affiliated attacks on the sit-down see Labor Relations Industrial Association of San Francisco, March 1937 in s7b140 f “picketing.” See also “Minutes of Employee Relations Bureau,” February 12, 1937, s13b199, and Feb 17, 1938, s9B150f “committee notes.” Additional attacks on the NLRA include “press release,” NAM, Nov 19, 1938 in s7B143f “employee relations committee policy statements”; and “Labor Union Responsibility,” in s7b142f “employee relations committee policy statements 1937”; and “NAM Shows all elements of Public Opinion are in opposition to Wagner Labor Law,” March 26, 1939, and “Who Wants the Wagner Act Amended?” Both in s7b137f “employee relations-NLRA 1939,” all *Nam papers*.

¹⁵⁹ William Frew Long, “Are Sit-Downs Strikes Legal or Ethical,” Address before the Cuyahoga County Bar Association, April 14, 1937. In *NAM papers*, s7b140f “strikes,” *Hagley*. Frew Long’s address was part of a series of meetings organized by the National

The Memphis Business Advisory Council and the Memphis Chamber of Commerce made a similar pitch to their members in the publication "Industrial Strife and the Third Party." Memphis business elite argued that events at Hershey and in the industrial centers of Michigan and Ohio "offered a vivid illustration of what the Public will do when confronted with a situation which affects the community as a whole." The "breakdown of Law and Order in many communities" led "the Third Party," to "step...into the picture" to address labor's challenge to property rights. "Industrial Strife and the Third Party" did more than describe public reaction against labor, it was also a manual showing businessmen how citizens committees could fight unions. The booklet reproduced the full-page ads and recruitment cards used by other citizens committees to facilitate drawing the "public...into the picture."¹⁶⁰ If farmers could step up to the bat, why not American citizens anywhere?

The strike at Hershey also figured prominently in elected officials' attacks against the CIO. Right after the April gauntlet, two Pennsylvania State representatives denounced the CIO and also the state's New Deal governor. Robert Woodside and

Industrial Council as "Labor Relations Clinics." NAM Business Report, March 19-April 19, 1937, s13b199. By May NAM had eighteen "clinics" in every region of the nation, reaching some 5,000 business leaders. See William Warner to NAM Board, May 25, 1937, s13b199, all *NAM papers*.

¹⁶⁰ NAM did all that it could to make sure that they were not seen as responsible for spreading the plan, they had a publicist's mindset when they purveyed the plan. For NAM's attempt to disassociate itself from the Mohawk Valley Plan see "press release," March 15, 1937, s7b1937f "NLRB 1937-1939," *NAM papers*. When it was first disseminated, the plan was described as the brainchild of James Rand. But when NAM listed the steps of the plan for their Memphis pamphlet, they used a speech by Philip Murray, president of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee where he listed the steps. The steps were listed to educate NAM members about how the plan worked, as the document also included the full page ads, and promotional materials that Citizens Committees used to sign up workers in the back to work campaigns. The Memphis

William Habbyshaw told of farmers outraged at lost milk sales, and at the disrespect shown to Milton Hershey, who “had given away even the roof over his own head in his unselfish effort to build a model community.” Woodside and Habbyshaw maintained that much like earlier revolutionaries who populated Pennsylvania’s valleys, these farmers fought back even though strikers were rumored to have machine guns. Farmers expressed their “keen sense of justice,” an all-American justice for: “the farmer is the backbone of the American civilization. No laboring man knows more about labor. No man arises earlier, puts in more hours or works harder than the farmer. No brow perspired more profusely. No man is in a position to appreciate the problems of labor more than the farmer.” Simultaneously, the two representatives maintained the farmer “is a business man who must buy, sell and employ. All farmers own property and appreciate that a property right is a human right which must be respected.” For Woodside and Habbyshaw the farmers, a fabled amalgam of America’s yeoman virtue and business perspicacity, deserved support, not condemnation, for their attack on workers. They complained that Governor George Earle, “mimicking Washington, kept a discreet silence” when strikers at the Hershey Chocolate Company sat down in the plant. The two representatives warned Earle “you cannot sow the seeds of anarchy and reap orderly government.” Once again the farmer stood for all Americans who meted out a necessary homegrown justice.¹⁶¹

Just like NAM members and the Pennsylvania State representatives, Michigan Representative Paul Shafer, used the Hershey strike to threaten civil war if the CIO

Chamber of Commerce and the Memphis Business Advisory Council, “Industrial Strife and the Third Party,” in *NAM papers*, s7, b140, f “strikes.”

continued with its sit-down strikes. Like them, he promised the general public would fight back. Shafer swore if the CIO wasn't checked, John Lewis would become "the king maker of this Nation, the irresistible power behind the throne. If his ambitions did not drive him to mount the throne himself." The overheated charge that Lewis threatened a "dictatorship of the communistic kind" rang out in NAM connected publications but also in the national chambers of power.¹⁶²

National media spread a similar story to audiences of millions. Hershey's executive staff—perhaps anxious to know how the corporation fared in the press—kept track of strike coverage, and they counted over three hundred editorials and stories about events in their Pennsylvania hamlet.¹⁶³ Small town papers and big city dailies such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* covered the strike. So did the mass-market news magazines, such as *Time*, *LIFE*, and *Newsweek*—along with the more traditional middle-class periodicals like the *Literary Digest* and the *Christian Century*. The *Christian Science Monitor* listed the "revolt of Pennsylvania farmers against a minority sit-down of Hershey chocolate plants" a "straw...in a gathering gale of public disapproval." It editorialized that "labor has mistakenly reverted to the old method of its oppressors—the use of political power for its selfish ends." The *Monitor* claimed that public revulsion would only retard labor's advances. The *New York Times* inveighed against "reckless leaders of labor" and much like Pennsylvania's representatives, a *Times* editorial sounded the familiar refrain that "violence breeds violence." In almost the same words as NAM they argued "the third party is the general

¹⁶¹ Statement by Robert E. Woodside and William E. Habbyslaw to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, April 1937 in "Scrapbooks," HERCO.0001, HCA.

¹⁶² Shafer, *Congr. Record*, s7b40f "strikes," *NAM papers*.

public, typified at Hershey by the farmers” who would stand up and fight back.¹⁶⁴

Editorial cartoonists had a field day with the Hershey strike. In the *Philadelphia Inquirer* a staunch Mennonite farmer marched with a milk-can full of “Business as Usual” and a paddle under his arm. A frightened laborer identified as “the sit down problem” hightailed it off into the horizon. [Fig. 3-17.]¹⁶⁵ The farmer’s response “Heck, that warn’t no problem!” indicated comically what text threatened, the third party would protect his own. Another cartoonist showed John Lewis biting into a Hershey Chocolate Bar. [Fig. 3-18.]¹⁶⁶ He recoiled with dismayed disgust under the caption “Bitter!”

News stories were more dangerous to the CIO—the news was animated to labor’s detriment under the guise of objective reporting. Lacking the virulent antiunionism of “Civil War in Hershey” news stories nonetheless echoed the stance of NAM and the Hershey public relations staff. With minor differences, Americans nationwide read a similar tale. When the CIO intruded it broke Hershey’s classless idyll, long ordered through the sagacity and magnanimity of its founder, Milton Snavely Hershey. Most of their narratives were mis-en-scène, the setting that Milton Hershey and his company created through their internal public relations staff. The Mennonite farmers, whose heritage, habits, and traditions Hershey shared—if not their religious practices—also appeared. The story contrasted Hershey’s bounteous paternalism, his rural haven, with ungrateful workers whose demands disrupted even the most idyllic experiment. Photographs of the model town—many of them provided by the corporation—and of the strike violence helped drive home the point. Text and image asked if the CIO could

¹⁶³ Letter, Alexander Stoddart to Mr. Majer, May 11, 1937, in Ezra Hershey Files, HTC.001, b32f15.

¹⁶⁴ *New York Times*, 9 April 1937; and *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 June 1937, n.p.

¹⁶⁵ The *Inquirer* cartoon from “Scrapbooks,” HERCO.001.

shatter the harmony of this industrial town, what might it do to the rest of America, for as one writer penned, “Hershey is America in miniature.”¹⁶⁷

The town of Hershey: its agrarian surroundings, its touches of modernity, its small-town democratic relations, all led off stories of the strike. *Newsweek* offered the lengthiest description of the town’s attributes though other media venues found much to commend in Hershey. *Newsweek*’s title for the story, “Hershey, Candyland, City of Dreams,” clued readers to the joys of Hershey.

The air is always sweet in Hershey, PA. A dreamy aroma of hot chocolate and benevolence hangs over the town and its 3,500 dwellers. They pay no local taxes; a candy factory gives them their jobs and their luxurious clubs, schools, churches and shady streets. Nickel candy profits built “the Chocolate Town” in Central Pennsylvania’s countryside and endowed it with superlatives that only millions can buy.

Newsweek continued its recital of “superlatives:” Hershey Park, a thousand acre amusement park; the zoo, “the largest private menagerie in the United States;” the “Hershey National Bank; and the Hershey Community House—a Florentine, six-story structure housing a library, a hospital, gymnasiums, and a theatre as garish as any in New

¹⁶⁶ The Lewis cartoon from Ezra Hershey Strike Papers, b20.

¹⁶⁷ Fey, “Chocolate Paradise,” 547. It is difficult not to conclude that reporters and editors, looking to make their stories by deadline, were only too happy to use Hershey’s promotional materials. Many stories pulled word from word from Stoddart’s prolific, if unvaried output, others use the general narrative arc. Hershey’s success can partially be read in how unvaried the story was, despite its source, hence articles in planning magazines, business magazines, promotional write-ups by gas companies, radio programs, and mass market magazines were all the same. Reporters would not have had to dig much to explain strikers’ side. The two lone critics on the national stage were Harold Fey’s *Christian Century* article, and an article in *Forbes*. John Elting, “Trouble in Paradise: Why Hershey Workers Want a Union,” *Forbes*, 1 May 1937, 14-15.

York.” *Newsweek* described the “cooperative community,” and Hershey’s “industrial paternalism at its best,” replete with its “ivy-clad factory.”¹⁶⁸

Newsweek described the town and its worker-residents just as Milton Hershey promoted it. The town’s attributes were assumed to be accessible to all, making Hershey a town where class mattered not a whit. Workers received Hershey’s largesse passively: they were “given jobs” and access to the town’s many amenities without paying taxes. Indeed *Newsweek* printed the ever popular Hershey quote that said resident workers’ “improvidence and distrustfulness” led him to take over and expand Hershey Park for their benefit. They had neither the business moxie nor the cooperative vision to help themselves, even when it came to their own fun. Milton Hershey’s overarching paternalism served as a foil to the employees’ ungratefulness.

Other magazines relayed a similar tale. *Time Magazine* wrote of the “neat clean grassy model town” with “model schools, stores, theatres, sporting grounds, community centre.” For *Business Week*, Hershey looked more like a “college town... rather than an industrial center. The air is fresh, the grass is green, and people look happy.” In Hershey, “schools, parks, houses, recreation centers, golf courses—all are the finest.” *LIFE*’s story told how Milton Hershey built a factory in the middle of a cornfield and built a model town for workers with not one, but four golf courses. The end result of Hershey’s initiative—a rural town that was not so much the main production site for

¹⁶⁸ All references from “Hershey: Candyland, City of Dreams, Sees Milk Cause Human Unkindness,” *Newsweek*, 17 April 1937, 10-12.

America's favorite chocolate bar—but rather a pleasure valley designed for workers' needs and enjoyment.¹⁶⁹

In all stories Milton Hershey's generosity authored the utopia. For *Time*, "Ever since the big factory had begun to make money, abstemious Founder Hershey poured it out to make his people happy." *LIFE* shared how Hershey had "turned over the whole establishment to the Hershey Industrial School for Orphans," a fact that all stories mentioned. Hershey's business prowess was dedicated not to himself, but America's future. What was his was his workers—making Hershey the ultimate communitarian. As *Newsweek* noted, "his own white-pillared mansion he gave to his employees as a country club. He kept nothing for himself but clothes, furniture—and enough securities to insure a comfortable living." What wouldn't "Founder Hershey" do for his workers?

Workers' depiction in mass-market articles was murkier. Most articles provided readers a limited rationale for the strike. *Time* put forward the idea that workers thought Hershey interfered with organizing by targeting unionists in its seasonal layoffs. *Business Week* seconded that, adding workers' belief that they just weren't paid well enough, though it concluded that the town expansion "backfired when...newcomers led older workers into the union." For *Business Week*, "old-time Hersheyites," all American born, wouldn't have struck, if not for the out-of-towners (many of them foreign born) who Milton Hershey had kindly "given jobs in public works projects during the Depression." This was the corporation's public stance. *LIFE* acknowledged paternalism

¹⁶⁹ "Upheaval in Utopia," *TIME*, 19 April 1937, 15. "In Mr. Hershey's Utopia Farmers and Strikers War," *LIFE*, 19 April 1937, 24-25, called the "model town" "Hershey's utopia." "Behind the Strife in Hershey," *Business Week*, 17 April 1937, 22 recycled the quote that Hershey looks "more like a college town" from *Stoddart*. See Alexander

had its downside, “the only serious criticism of Mr. Hershey is that he treated his workers too much like children.” *Newsweek* saw autonomy as a lure. The CIO was the “serpent in Mr. Hershey’s garden...proffering not knowledge but independence.”

As in “Civil War in Hershey” news stories erased the corporation from the conflict. The principals were union workers, led astray by the outsider CIO against “loyalists;” Hershey employees who didn’t want to strike and Mennonite dairy farmers with lost milk sales. *Newsweek* repeated *Mill and Factory*’s charges, that the CIOers lapse of patriotism—placing their banners higher than the American flag—further enraged these loyalists. These “outraged countryfolk, including many a bearded and bonneted Mennonite...rattled into town in their flivvers,” and “stormed the plant” making CIOers run a “walloping, stone-pelting gauntlet.” *LIFE*’s title, “In Mr. Hershey’s Utopia Farmers and Strikers War,” encapsulated the two sides in this war: loyalists who were represented by farmers with their small town values, and strikers, who represented threatening change. The workers’ dependency, their ingratitude, and the violence arising from their activism were their only defining characteristics, they figured as the “wrong” side. Mr. Hershey stood above reproach, an exemplary planner and munificent donor, clearly the aggrieved party and never a participant in the labor strife. With his arcadia dashed, idealist Milton S. Hershey could do nothing but cry. *Time* began its story “Upheaval in Utopia” with the image of “79-year-old Milton Snavelly Hershey” who “watched the violent vanguard of the times come swirling into his candy utopia” with “tears coursing down his wrinkled cheeks.” *LIFE* and *Newsweek* ended their stories with

Stoddart and J. Horace McFarland, “Pennsylvania’s Chocolate Town,” *Planning and Civic Comment* (April 1937): 9-11.

the weeping Hershey.¹⁷⁰ Only *Business Week* editors foreswore this delectable morsel of an anecdote.

Photographs vivified the message of a corporate paradise torn by CIO activism. National mass-market magazines ran far more photos than was typical for a strike story. As the photojournal of the 1930s, *LIFE* offered the most sophisticated photo-narrative. *LIFE* had a two-page photo-spread: on its first page editors used photographs to illustrate Hershey's ordered utopia, on the photo-spread's second page editors documented the violence resulting from strikes with photographs. Not only the content, but also the distinct styles of photography made an argument about the events at Hershey. As with NAM's "Civil War in Hersheytown" *LIFE*'s photo-essay used Hershey publicity photographs to delineate the town's attributes.¹⁷¹ [Fig. 3-19.]¹⁷² The first shot, the oft-published aerial view of Hershey town spanned the entire top of the page. The caption identified Hershey's factory and auditorium, though the photo was taken from such a distance that each seemed equivalent, erasing the factory as a site of labor. *LIFE* also printed a bird's-eye view of the "largest outdoor swimming pool...in Pennsylvania" to document the multitudes congregating at town attractions. The aerial view affords an overview and is traditionally understood to impart a sense of order.¹⁷³ These aerial shots

¹⁷⁰ In *LIFE*'s final sentence Hershey stood on the steps of his office building, "tears rolling down his cheeks." *Newsweek*'s concluding paragraph began, "Last week he looked upon his town—and wept."

¹⁷¹ Photos can be seen in Hershey Chocolate Company: "A Cookery Expert's New Recipes," and in a town brochure, "Hershey Park: Playground of Pennsylvania," 1940 in *Stoddart*, b1f63.

¹⁷² *LIFE*, 19 April 1937, 24-25.

¹⁷³ For an analysis of the birds-eye view in urban photography, see Peter Hales, *Silver Cities: The Photography of American Urbanization, 1839-1915* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).

integrated work space and leisure, landscape and town-scape into an organic whole defined by the founder's larger vision.

Ostensibly viewers received a closer view of Hershey through photographs of the "fun park in the center of town" and the "pretty little houses on spotless streets." The deep line that moved from the foreground to the background was a visual device that drew the viewer into each photo and hence the town. Both shots nonetheless resisted intimacy. The photos gave a clear view of town attractions, however the contents were displayed so matter-of-factly, that they were "plain speaking" to the point of banality.¹⁷⁴ Unlike industrial photography that often monumentalizes a subject, the town amenities were approachable. But this "chocolate paradise" also avoided advertising's slick allure. If advertising offers hot promise, these photographs were tepid. Neither were they clinically cold evidence-style photographs, for they did not have to convey the idea that what was being seen was absolute truth. Almost like the simple brown and silver wrappers of Hershey bars, the style suggested you could trust the contents. Look if you'd like, but what Hershey provided was not up for debate and therefore the photos did not demand too much of the reader. They operated as visual shorthand to the myth.

In contrast, *LIFE* used news-style action photography to document workers' activism and the reaction against it. The news photographs provided forward momentum

¹⁷⁴ The ride that offered "amusement for Hershey children" pulled one's eye via through the waterway of the chute-the-chute that led up to the ride's drop point and into the image itself. In the photo of the one's eye is grabbed by the curve of the road which leads back into the image, allowing one to examine the houses along each side of the street. Nye's analysis of the "mundane realism" of commercial photography is pertinent here, *Image Worlds*, 49.

to the visual narrative, even as workers and their demands remained opaque.¹⁷⁵ *LIFE* intimated strikers' menace though its first photograph, which spanned the entire page. The caption told readers strikers "brandished clubs" and the photo showed strikers strung along the top of the plant, their arms and their clubs silhouetted against the sky. The factory's blocky modernity jolted in contrast to the quaint homes and faux windmills of Hershey, and the angle and cropping of the photo conveyed a compositional energy that added to the human drama. *LIFE* led readers to the climax with its caption: "by this time the strikers are totally scared." The next two shots showed "loyal workers" and farmers parading past the plant and then "rushing...the factory." Both pictures were taken from an angle that cut into the landscape and events, emphasizing motion but also disjointedness. These photos were so dynamic they appeared as movie stills, orchestrated action shots moving to a specific end.

The climax came in *LIFE*'s next shot, a potent symbol of violence in a war narrative. The photograph showed local CIO leader John Loy, who had just been forced out of the plant into the midst of the gauntlet. Centered in the frame, his bloodied nose a focal point, Loy was propelled out to the foreground of the photo frame and hence the viewer. A second man whose upraised arms suggested self-protection or supplication joined him. The two were surrounded by the bodies and arms of "loyal workers" who pushed the men forward and the arms of yet others who reached out to pummel them.

¹⁷⁵ Arthur Rothstein, Former Farm Security photographer and Technical Director at *LOOK Magazine* claimed the news photographer must capture "The dramatic highlights of a fast-moving event," at the height of the unfolding drama. *Photojournalism* (New York: American Photographic Book Publishing, 1956), 23. One textbook from that era defined "action" as the most critical characteristics of news-photography, "Motion is action, emotion is action...The ideal toward which all sections of the newspaper should

This maelstrom of arms made the photograph chaotic, heightening the sense of violence attached to the strike.

A fitting epilogue could be found in the final image of the grinning, victorious “loyal workers” who held high picket signs with slogans “Do not Bite the HAND that Feeds You,” and “You Can’t Eat C.I.O.” These signs reminded readers of workers’ debt to their employer. In cutting out the loyalists from whatever context the photo was taken in and placing them against the white background of *LIFE*’s pages, the editors delivered a moral for readers outside the confines of time and space. *LIFE* embellished their tale with another visual gesture—editors placed a Milton Hershey cameo amidst the photos of his model town, offering a visual parallel to the story of a lachrymose Hershey watching his utopia be shattered. The modern day capitalist-philanthropist confronted the disordered chaos made by workers from the stable site of his creations. He judged the violence before him, much as viewers of the magazine might have after reading the article.¹⁷⁶

Other magazines spun a similar, if more abbreviated tale through photographs. Nonetheless, national news magazines still offered far more photographs of the Hershey strike than usual. In *Newsweek*, a full-page photo spread of “Chocolate Town” also

strike is that of more interest through more action.” Laura Vitray, et. al. *Pictorial Journalism* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1939), 37-8.

¹⁷⁶ Following literary critic Dagmar Barnouw’s analysis of Holocaust photography, I would argue *LIFE* constructed a “topos of looking.” Barnouw finds a pattern in American army photography of the Holocaust. Photos by the U.S. Army Corps offered images of indescribable horror, for example, piles of corpses, almost always being looked at by an upright figure of an American G.I. She argues that in this way the “moral order” of American justice—in contrast to German brutality—was constructed. Barnouw calls this a “topos of looking.” Dagmar Barnouw “American Photography During the War,” lecture given at the CUNY Graduate Center, December 7, 1996. Based on her *Germany 1945: Views of War and Violence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

contrasted Hershey's order with workers' chaos. [Fig. 3-20.]¹⁷⁷ *Newsweek's* primary photograph was the same that *LIFE* used of a beaten John Loy as he was ejected from the plant. Editors surrounded it with four publicity photographs of Hershey town that spoke to Milton Hershey's munificence. Three of the four images depicting Hershey's model town were aerial shots: of the Hotel Hershey, Hershey Park, and the Hershey [Industrial] School. These three images—like *LIFE's*—rejected any intimacy with the subject. Each subject lost its specificity—the luxurious grandeur of the Hotel; the pastoralism of Hershey Park; and the Industrial School's institutional architecture—all these details were stripped away because of the distance of the shot. This vantage equalized each subject to the viewer as did the subject's centering in the picture frame. As equivalents these photos became interchangeable pieces in Milton Hershey's larger plan. The breadth of Hershey's vision was heightened by the relationship of the town to the surrounding countryside. The photographs wove the built environment into the natural environment. This paralleled the public relations spin on the town, an industrial utopia in an arcadian setting. The viewer was treated to Hershey's valley as a whole that could be visually consumed, each town attribute one more bauble on a chain.¹⁷⁸ *Business Week's* story was also accompanied by the familiar aerial view of the town, cropped just slightly differently.¹⁷⁹ The caption to it, "So this is Hershey" detailed a lengthy list of town highlights that the viewer could identify, adding "travelers... usually stop for a good

¹⁷⁷ *Newsweek*, 7 April 1937, 11.

¹⁷⁸ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, offers a suggestive analysis of the role of goods in the development of oil painting, and the relationship between traditions of oil painting and the display of goods within advertising. (London: The British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972), Chapters 5 and 7.

look” at it. As with the *Newsweek* shots, the aerial view authorized a God’s-eye view of what Hershey hath wrought, and details were added in the caption as the distance precluded “seeing” these highlights.¹⁸⁰

These mass-market magazines broke with more localized communication: they were an avenue for national opinion making. The “message” imparted to this national audience was as standardized as Hershey’s five-cent chocolate bars. Like the course of the strike at Hershey, the national media story also bore the corporation’s imprint. Fancifully put, the vision was of a worker Shangri-la, where town inhabitants imbibed the sensual odor of chocolate while teeing off each morning at one of the town’s four golf courses. The corporation figured in this tale only as the purveyor of workers’ pleasure. The workers’ aims in striking were obscure, matching Hershey’s befuddlement at his broken utopia. The result of their activism however was clear.

¹⁷⁹ *Business Week* attributed the photos to International Pictures, though this same photograph was printed in Hershey’s public relations booklet, “The Story of Chocolate and Cocoa” published in 1926.

¹⁸⁰ A decade earlier the 1926 version of *The Story of Chocolate and Cocoa* produced by the Hershey Corporation showed an image of the executives’ homes which it implied were workers’ homes, with the caption “Hershey is a town of large spaces.” This image was most likely taken from one of the town’s golf courses. Even photos of the workers’ houses managed to aggrandize the founder while minimizing the worker. In the fourth *Newsweek* photo of “Hershey Homes” we see a house-lined street. Because the photo was taken from below the line of the houses their height was emphasized. The angle at which the centered house was shot also magnified the dwellings’ size. The eye hit the corner of the home and then ran back in both directions, along the front and the sides, exaggerating its volume. Most Hershey homes were actually rather compact six room dwellings, often duplexes. Block after block of these homes display nothing more than a cookie-cutter, mass production ethos. Without a doubt these homes improved upon the small urban tenement or mill-town shack. Nonetheless, a far grander vision of these homes were authorized by the photograph than what most workers inhabited. Managers thought that Hershey was concerned that houses not appear like “slave-dealers used to do,” he criticized a manager who built homes too close together and too uniformly. Interview with A.P. Heilman, February 13, 1954, *HCA*.

The Average American and the Sit-Down

George Gallup, who headed the newly established American Institute of Public Opinion joined Representative Shafer, *Mill and Factory*, and NAM-connected business leaders in predicting that Americans, especially rural Americans, were so riled up that “the Hershey riot might be duplicated in many parts of the U.S.” Gallup argued that a congressional resolution against the sit-down as “illegal and contrary to sound public policy” was nothing but a limp slap at the CIO. “The average American” said Gallup, “is not prepared to be tolerant of the sit-down.” The public demanded more. This public knew where it stood when it came to the Hershey strike—and sit-downs generally. Like the farmers at Hershey, the public thought force should be used to remove sit-downers from the plants and businesses they occupied. With the long propagated myth of Hershey the pollster had an authoritative example with which to frame his results against the CIO.¹⁸¹

Of course “the public” was being constructed and standardized during the same era that the news was reconfigured. George Gallup and other opinion meisters established themselves at this time as a force in America’s political and cultural landscape. Keen to nail down where Americans stood, pollsters crafted new notions of Americans and their attitudes that made the public an objective thing, a product—instead of a sphere where issues were worked out and contended with among citizenry. Public opinion polling and photographs were both part of the twentieth century’s move to a politics of imagery. Daniel Boorstin’s discussion of public opinion polls complains “The rising interest in public opinion and public opinion polls illustrates...the rise of images and their

domination over our thinking about ourselves...Now the citizen can see himself in the mirror of the opinion polls...Public opinion, once the public's expression, becomes more and more an image into which the public fits its expression."¹⁸²

When the public looked in the "mirror" in the spring of 1937 two images of America could be seen. One America was suffused with traditional values and embodied the best America had to offer: it was an America where class didn't exist, where the bosses were generous, where the majority of workers were loyal and happy, and where farmers—America's bulwark—upheld revolutionary values and the status quo. Photographs found in mass media venues illustrated this workers' haven, with its suburban homes, its factory-cum-college, its world of fun. Millions of Americans read a story produced by the Hershey Corporation—a corporation they connected with each time they savored a Hershey Kiss—drawing on the myth of corporate beneficence and the workers' paradise long cultivated by the company and depicted through the company's photographs. This myth was well ensconced in the nation's consciousness, in part because mass media outlets had helped to put it there.

News photographs in a growing national mass media allowed Americans to "see" a second nation where a minority of outside CIO agitators with their illegitimate if muddy

¹⁸¹ The Digest: Topic for May, "Congress and the Sit-Down Strikes," *Congressional Digest*, 16 (May 1937): 151-152.

¹⁸² Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America* (New York: Atheneum Press, 1971), 237-8. The poll is not an abstracted, scientific measure of the public's thoughts. Not only do polls rarely offer a representative sample, more importantly, the way in which the question is asked influences the answers given back. There is much room for those who contract with the polling agency to affect the end result. As Stuart Ewen concludes, polls become "statistical applause tracks" where "the measurement of public opinion and its manufacture were becoming less and less distinguishable." It is unclear who contracted with Gallup to "gauge" public opinion

demands menaced American ideals and aspirations. The agitators were amorphous—perhaps foreign, perhaps outsiders, but certainly lazy and always fractious. News photos documented the real discord labor unions sowed in communities and news photos documented how real Americans fought back. News photography realized the “Divided States of America,” predicted by the National Association of Manufacturers in black and white. Is it any wonder that in a Pennsylvania village and in the larger sphere of national public opinion that the Hershey corporation won its strike?

Hundreds of thousands of workers sat-down in late 1936 and early 1937. As we saw in the last chapter, autoworkers and rubber workers, Woolworth’s clerks and even hotel maids struck to attain collective bargaining rights. One month before the Hershey conflict, mass-market magazines like *LIFE*, that had been open, if not sympathetic to labor’s demands, began to negatively portray the sit-downs and the CIO. Other mass-cultural venues with millions of readers, like the *Saturday Evening Post* attacked labor’s activism even sooner. Labor appreciated the power of this assault. Len De Caux, editor of the *CIO News*, who was also charged with CIO publicity believed, “owners could use the mass media like faucets to turn ‘public opinion’ on or off, to keep it under quiet control, or make it a surging torrent for class or imperialist war.” De Caux remembered, “never had I seen so sharp and sudden a switch of ‘public opinion’ as that on the CIO in the late spring and early summer of 1937.”¹⁸³ De Caux may have overstated the extent of corporate control within the media, but there is no doubt that in the Hershey strike, the

about CIO sit-downs, though numerous polls were taken in this period purporting to show Americans disgust with the tactic. Ewen *PR!*, 182-190.

¹⁸³ Len DeCaux *Labor Radical: From the Wobblies to the CIO, a Personal History* (Boston: Beacons Press, 1970), 193. Similarly, *The Nation*, wrote a column against the

story told over and over was a story whose contours had been designed by the National Association of Manufacturers. The sit-down at Hershey attracted only limited CIO resources then and hence little attention by labor historians today. Publicity surrounding this strike suggests that when historians examine unionism's successes and failures, they should gauge public relations' power to animate the news. Hershey joined many stories in the publicity barrage—it would be impossible to know what turned the tide against labor in a public sphere increasingly influenced by the mass media. However, by speaking to a news apparatus that increasingly visualized current events, corporations—by altering events and by framing how they were seen—could curry favor before the general public—indeed they might even create the very public that rejected union tactics.

“Sitdown Hysteria,” which it claimed was “drummed up by the newspapers and their industrial allies,” 3 April 1937, 368-369.

Chapter Four: “Strike Riot Photos are Star Witnesses:” Photographs and Newsreels of the Memorial Day Massacre, May 1937.

The picture stood again in his mind; two lines like two rows of... toy soldiers; move one line up into position, stand the other against it, then the first line goes bang, bang, bang and the second line is all knocked down. That was the simple picture. Out of that he had to find meaning.

Meyer Levin *Citizens*¹

“American Tragedy”

The strike at Hershey Chocolate received much public attention in its time, but little since. In contrast, news images from the Memorial Day Massacre, a central event in the Little Steel Strike of 1937, attained iconic status. Indeed, one can fairly say that for six decades the understanding of the event has largely been drawn from “simple pictures.” News photographers captured the melee, and the Associated Press (AP) and Wide World Photos (WWP) wired their pictures nationwide. Additionally, Paramount News caught much of the conflict on film, and their newsreel became the subject of intense public debate. These news images—which circulated widely in their time—have become symbols of the depression-era decade and of twentieth-century labor struggles.

Not long after the event, Philip Evergood, Eton-educated president of the Artist Union and managing supervisor of the Federal Art Project’s Easel Division painted *American Tragedy*. [Fig. 4-1.]² Evergood based his canvas’s composition on photographs, newsreels, and narrative accounts of police beating and shooting at striking workers on Memorial Day of that year. His painting shows a knot of police firing at the fleeing picketers and lashing out in a maelstrom of raised arms, billy clubs, and pistols.

¹ Meyer Levin, *Citizens* (New York: Viking Press, 1940).

Only two still face police: a pregnant woman who flexes one arm and carries a large branch in the other, and a man who protects her by fending off police. Several—such as the black man who holds a small American flag in his limp hand—lay bloodied on the ground. The steel company that stockpiled guns, clubs, and teargas to keep strikers from its factory gates sits contained on the top of the composition.

Some later art critics treat *American Tragedy* unkindly. John Bauer maintained in his monograph on Evergood that the painting was “essentially a product” of Evergood’s “imagination” that “soared...into a realm of theatrical heroism and villainy.” The critic found particularly troublesome “the defiant worker protecting his pregnant wife, the fragile straw bonnet about to be trodden in the dust, the brutal faces of the police, [and] the pathetic ones of the fallen strikers,” which he believed “push[ed] the picture perilously close to the boundary between art and propaganda.”³ Yet in many essentials the artist’s hand painted what the camera eye had documented for millions of Americans to see. The strikers had snatched two large flags from Sam’s Place, the tavern-cum-union hall, to signal their good intentions to the awaiting police. One flag-bearer hoped by holding “Old Glory” police would keep from “bother[ing]” him.⁴ Women and children were on the field, dressed as if on a picnic frolic, and Evergood’s pregnant woman recognized their presence. The trodden straw bonnet, which the critic thought approached propaganda, could be the black felt fedora that a newsreel camera had

² Evergood’s work is in a private collection. “American Tragedy” is reproduced in Frances Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History of American Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 388.

³ John I. H. Baur, *Philip Evergood* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1975), 35. See also Lucy Lippard, *The Graphic Work of Philip Evergood: Selected Drawings and Complete Prints* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1966), 25.

⁴ *Daily Calumet*, 2 June 1937, 6.

captured lying in the dust after the confrontation.⁵ And though few strikers carried weapons, a branch such as Evergood put in the woman's hand may have been thrown from the crowd, precipitating the police reaction. Evergood erred in one detail. The photographs and newsreel footage showed impassive expressions on police, not brutal ones, which astounded contemporaries.⁶

Organized labor also drew on photographs of the massacre to represent their battles for justice. In 1974, the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary by publishing *Then and Now: The Road Between, the Story of the USWA*. The anniversary volume, which the union president I.W. Abel presented as a "family album," reminded members of the Massacre—"the blackest day of modern labor history." *Then and Now* reprinted two news photos of the Massacre as half-tone

⁵ Historic facts rebut another critic who finds in Evergood's pregnant woman, American flag, and straw hat an "imagined reality" that is more "significant." Patricia Hills, "The Artist's Imagination and the Real World," in *Philip Evergood: A Tribute* (New York: Terry Dintefass Gallery, 1994). Only someone assembled on the field, or someone privileged to see outtakes from the well-known Paramount newsreel discussed below, could know about the fedora. Evergood claimed he "painted more social protest paintings than anyone else. I have devoted nine-tenths of my life in painting social protest paintings such as *American Tragedy*" Interview with Forrest Selvig, December 3, 1968, in the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, www.artarchives.si.edu/oralhist/evergo68.htm.

⁶ Works Progress Administration (WPA) printer, Carl Hoeckner, another socially committed artist from that era, also represented the Massacre. His lithograph, "Steeltown Twilight" had a phantasmagoric industrial environment where the foreboding contours of a Catholic Church and its illuminated cross outlined police poised to attack strikers. Hoeckner believed "organized religion" had "blessed police brutality." Hoeckner's *Steeltown Twilight* appeared in a 2000 exhibition, "After the Crash: Picturing the United States, 1930-1943," at the Art Institute of Chicago. Mark Pascale of the Art Institute was helpful in finding more information on this work. George Patterson maintained the local South Chicago churches, particularly St. Michael's, were beholden to the mills for funding. "Embryo of a Steelworker," Unpublished Memoir, George Patterson Papers, b9f6, Chicago Historical Society, (hereafter *Patterson, CHS*). Leaders of the Republic Steel Lodge wrote to the SWOC national claiming the pastor at the Polish St. Michael's church was being used as "a whip to get the men...to go back to work." October 7, 1938

“screens” which emphasized the image’s authenticity. [Fig. 4-2.]⁷ But the graphic artist magnified the sense of violence by increasing the contrast in the photos and exaggerating the screen effect. The subjects of the photos, victims and police, were black silhouettes against a background of saturated red and yellow. The USWA, like Evergood, visualized the massacre as a story of good against overwhelming evil.

Dissident rank and filers seeking to wrest control from USWA leaders used this same photographic imagery to rally support for their democratization movement. They commissioned a poster “Lest We Forget.” [Fig. 4-3.]⁸ The illustration in the poster copied one of the most reprinted photographs of a policeman whose body is arced back as he readies to hit a striker. Unlike the USWA who rendered massacre victims anonymous, this poster asked viewers to “acquaint” themselves with the facts: the victims’ names and a description of their deaths which the artist scripted upon the backs of the police uniforms. Dissidents called on the resonance of workers’ physical sacrifice in their demands for rank-and-file involvement in union governance.

These Memorial Day images circulated beyond leftist and labor circles—they have become emblems of the class tumult of the 1930s. William Stott’s classic analysis of the 1930s documentary tradition placed the photo of the “tangled crowd” beneath the

letter, CIO National/International, b19f16, at the Catholic University of America, (hereafter *CIO papers, CUA*).

⁷ United Steelworkers of America Education Department, *Then and Now: The Road Between, the Story of the USWA* (Pittsburgh: USWA, 1974), 1, 57-58. The half-tone screen process was perfected at the end of the nineteenth century and was the standard for press photography until the 1960s. Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* 3rd ed. (New York, Abbeville Press, 1997), 453

⁸ CAC, “Memorial Day 1937, Lest We Forget,” Photo Offset in Colors, National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee, Ohio, 1975 in Philip Foner and Reinhard Schultz, *The Other America: Art and the Labor Movement in the U.S.* (Berlin: Journeyman’s Press, 1985), 51. Alice and Staughton Lynd, *Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working-Class Organizers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 96-97.

“policeman’s truncheon” in the company of Dorothea Lange’s and Walker Evans’s sharecroppers and unemployed. American history college textbooks—*A People and a Nation* and *Who Built America* are two examples—have featured photographs of the Memorial Day Massacre, as have general-reader histories of the twentieth century such as Peter Jennings and Todd Brewster’s *The Century* or Harold Evans’s *The American Century*. Newsreel footage of the massacre can be found in documentary films, such as Blackside Production’s series, *The Great Depression*, or in *Wrapped in Steel*, a PBS story on the decline of the mills on Chicago’s South Side.⁹

Despite these images’ ubiquity the events themselves are now shrouded in scholarly inattention. The first historians of the Massacre embedded the event in a narrative of the rise of the CIO. Most saw the incident as “the turning point for the steelworkers’ union” when the Little Steel companies checked the Steel Workers Organizing Committee’s (SWOC) momentum. Barbara Newell showed how the Massacre pushed SWOC to pursue legal strategies instead of mobilizing members. SWOC closed its offices and let its organizers go. “Black crepe draped not only the coffins of the ten who were killed in the conflict, but the entire organizing drive as

⁹ William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 67. For textbooks see Mary Beth Norton, et. al., *A People and A Nation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 2: 774; Bruce Levine, et al., *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation’s Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 416-7. For popular histories see: *Our Glorious Century* (Pleasantville, NY: The Readers Digest Press, 1994); Peter Jennings and Todd Brewster, *The Century* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 197; Harold Evans, *The American Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 278-279. For film use see Henry Hampton, Blackside Films, *The Great Depression*, pt. 5 “Mean Things Happening.” “Wrapped in Steel,” available from the Southeast Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois. The only other photograph that appears to be as frequently reproduced is that of Walter Reuther and Richard Frankensteen being beaten by Ford’s “security” earlier that same week, on May 26, 1937.

well.”¹⁰ Daniel Leab and Donald Solchalk believe the incident increased public hostility towards unions.¹¹ Certainly unionists from as far as New York City complained of the Massacre’s chilling effect upon organizing campaigns.¹² A newer generation of labor historians do include the Massacre in their accounts of the rise of the CIO, but they assume SWOC’s explanation for the events leading up to the Massacre rather than interrogating it. However, for over three decades the Massacre and the steelworkers union has received virtually no sustained scholarly consideration—perhaps because steelworkers lack the fighting rank and file spirit that had been the hallmark focus of the “new labor history.”¹³

¹⁰ Barbara Newell documents a steep decrease in union membership after Memorial Day. Local union rolls dropped by ten thousand in the month after the strike. The 31,000 member high of April 1937 was halved by August of that same year. Faltering steel profits and job cuts also led to the drastic drop though Newell argues that the Little Steel drive failure was critical. Barbara Warne Newell, *Chicago and the Labor Movement: Metropolitan Unionism in the 1930's* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 134-147. See also David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), particularly his fourth chapter, “Reinterpreting the Labor History of the 1930's.”

¹¹ For Donald Solchalk, the AFL used the Massacre as an excuse to push all CIO locals out of the Chicago Federation of Labor and Illinois Central Trades Council. “The Memorial Day Incident: An Episode of Mass Action,” *Labor History* 6 no. 1 (Winter 1965): 29, 10, 19 and 43; quoting the *AFL Weekly News Service*, XXVII no. 25 (June 19, 1937), 1. Daniel Leab argues the Massacre turned public opinion against labor generally. “The Memorial Day Massacre,” *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* 8 no. 2 (Fall 1967): 3-17.

¹² Arthur Osman, *Organizing Wholesale*, in United Automobile, Aircraft and Vehicle Workers of America, *District 65 Papers*, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, Tamiment Library, New York University, (hereafter *D65 papers*), b67f18.

¹³ Ronald Filippelli, “The History is Missing Almost: Philip Murray, the Steelworkers, and the Historians,” in *Forging a Union of Steel: Philip Murray, SWOC and the United Steelworkers*, edited by Paul Clark, Peter Gottlieb, and Donald Kennedy (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1987), 12. They suggest that steelworkers’ lack of radicalism, their cooperative stance towards management, and the peaceful labor relations which characterized the industry since the late 1940s may have “disappointed” the current crop of labor historians. Their contention was made in the only recent book on the subject which was commissioned by the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), a telling proof of such a claim, *Ibid*, v. One exception is Robert Slayton, “Labor and Urban Politics: District 31,

This chapter complicates the “simple picture” about these news images. It challenges the long-held view that photographic imagery, both still photographs and newsreel footage, *ipso facto* proved the brutality of Chicago police. “Cameras Don’t Lie” brazened a contemporary headline from *Current History* about film footage of the Massacre. One party to the events believed “the movies stood for themselves”—they required no explanation.¹⁴ Scholars generally concur. Irving Bernstein argues for a, “fairly complete pictorial history” of the “great event of American labor history.” Bernstein’s account reflects the representative view that “there is no mystery about the Memorial Day Massacre” because of the eyewitnesses, the path of bullet wounds, and significantly, the still photographs and a newsreel that captured all but a few moments of the event. Donald Solfchalk asserts photographic imagery provided “incontrovertible proof” of what transpired.¹⁵

Scholars are right to fasten upon the photograph’s centrality in determining police guilt. But an intense drama took place over the meaning of the news images of the Memorial Day Massacre which new and old scholarship alike ignores. Photographic

Steel Workers Organizing Committee and the Chicago Machine,” *Journal of Urban History*, 23 no. 1 (November 1996): 29-65 which explores the relationship between the union drive and Chicago’s Mayor Kelly. Two exceptions with a post-war focus are Judith Stein, *Running Steel: Running America: Race, Economic Policy and the Decline of Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); and Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000). For the top-down tendencies in the SWOC see Newell, *Chicago and Labor*, 133-134; and Patterson, b10f7.

¹⁴ W. Carrol Munro, “Camera’s Don’t Lie: Suppressed Newsreels of the South Chicago Strike Massacre Pose a Censorship Question,” *Current History*, 46, no. 5 (August 1937): 37-42. George Patterson, interview by Ed Sadlowski, no date, transcript, 120, Patterson, b10f7.

¹⁵ Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933-1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 825-826, n. 8; Solfchalk, 25 and 32. Leab is more circumspect, saying the photos are not conclusive, but that they support witness testimony.

imagery of the Massacre offered crucial “proof,” only after these images were made to speak. Corporations and peak associations like the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) took advantage of public relations to get their story out to America’s citizenry, but labor and its allies could use public relations as well. Unionists and their supporters managed interpretation of the Massacre photographs and reversed the prevailing understanding of events that blamed strikers. Without their intervention—without a scoop story that trumpeted testimony from the Massacre’s victims; without an orchestrated press campaign from the Senate Subcommittee charged with investigating civil rights abuses against labor; and without the ever more nationalized, visual mass media that defined a new public—these photos might have remained documents with limited meaning for labor.¹⁶ Images of the beaten and murdered workers of South Chicago *are* potent symbols of twentieth-century struggles for industrial democracy, only because labor and its allies brought the facts in these images to life.

“Memorial Day—Why?”

One SWOC organizer, George Patterson, pencilled on a folded piece of paper in his personal notes, “Memorial Day—Why?”¹⁷ Patterson, church deacon and former head of the Employee Representative Plan that brought the U.S. Steel drive to fruition, was one of many arrested for the events that May. As an organizer, he knew that the union and the Republic Steel Corporation were at loggerheads; the company would not sign a contract with the CIO. Patterson also knew firsthand that Chicago’s police brass deemed

¹⁶ Jerold Auerbach, *Labor and Liberty: The LaFollette Committee and the New Deal* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966), 121-128 takes up the question of public opinion from the standpoint of civil rights, but is not concerned with the interpretation and dissemination of imagery.

any labor trouble an opportunity to assert, in the words of one patrolman's organization, a "semi-police pogrom against the Communist Party."¹⁸ During the U.S. Steel drive police arrested organizers who passed out leaflets for littering.¹⁹ As the national CIO drive heated up, police were determined to prevent sit-down strikes or flying squadrons in Chicago. They refused to let more than a few picketers stand outside Republic Steel, despite a ruling from the city's corporate counsel that mass pickets were legal. Patterson was himself arrested the first night of the strike. Insider that he was, Patterson's note expressed the bewilderment of many; no one foresaw what happened.

The events surrounding the Memorial Day conflict remain sketchy in some particulars, but are largely uncontested. Steel would be the biggest prize to those organizing the mass production industries, particularly to John L. Lewis. Once an industry of union might, by the turn of the century, with the famous Homestead strike of 1893 and corporate consolidation, steel became the bulwark against mass production unionism.²⁰ Lewis's United Mine Workers (UMW) had a special interest in organizing steel workers because of that industry's control of coal in what was called the "captive mines," mines devoted to extracting coal for steel production. In the spring of 1936 the UMW bankrolled a union drive under the Committee of Industrial Organization (CIO) to

¹⁷ "SWOC Jan-Jun 37 District 31," *Patterson*, b6f4.

¹⁸ Police 13-13, a police association denounced leadership's use of police in labor turbulence. "Clippings," Louis Jacques Papers, (hereafter *Jacques*), b2, *CHS*.

¹⁹ "Embryo of a Steel Worker," *Patterson*, b9f6.

²⁰ David Brody claims the Sons of Vulcan, the Heaters and Rollers Union, and the Roll Hands' Union which joined in 1876 to form the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers (AAISW), represented two-thirds of workers and was a leader in the AFL. *Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era*, 2nd ed. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 50. Bernstein claims the AAISW was the largest AFL union with ten percent of its membership in 1891, *Turbulent Years*, 432.

spark organizing in the mass production industries.²¹ SWOC hired some 500 organizers to comb steel-making regions nationwide to mobilize workers. A natural target was the Calumet region of South Chicago and northwest Indiana, the world's largest steel producing region.²²

After gaining collective bargaining rights with U.S. Steel in March of 1937, which turned SWOC from an "aspiration to a true trade union," SWOC pressed for similar agreements with other companies. By mid-May the union forced Jones and Laughlin, a solidly anti-union firm and the nation's fourth largest steel producer to sign. The other Little Steel companies, Republic Steel, Bethlehem Steel, Inland Steel, Youngstown Sheet and Tube, and National and American Rolling Mill and Company adamantly refused to negotiate however.²³

Little Steel organized itself under the leadership of Republic Steel's CEO and President Thomas Girdler. Girdler made sure that he didn't have to make good on his

²¹ Unless otherwise indicated, my description of the Memorial Day events is taken from several accounts, which do not differ in any substantive way unless noted. It is consonant with the outline in press accounts—if not the slant—in the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Daily News* from May 26th through July of 1937. Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years*; Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935-1941*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 75-122; Auerbach, *Labor and Liberty*; Leab, "The Memorial Day Massacre"; Newell, *Chicago and Labor*; and Foster Rhea Dulles, *Labor in America: A History* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1966), 301-2.

²² Galenson, 84, 86, 110. Newell claims steel was the second largest manufacturer in Chicago. Newell, *Chicago and Labor*, 115. For the significance of this steel-making region, see: David Bensman and Roberta Lynch, *Rusted Dreams: Hard Times in a Steel Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 7. Murray claimed in an internal memo that "it was well nigh impossible to recruit an organizing staff from the ranks of steel workers." Murray, "The Problem Before the SWOC on June 17, 1936," November 8, 1938, b19f7, *CIO papers*.

²³ SWOC took advantage of rank and file discontent that ran high in the mills. U.S. Steel's employee representation plans, meant to take the steam out of workers' discontent, strengthened SWOC's organizing efforts. Jones and Laughlin workers voted

pledge to retire and dig potatoes rather than permit unionization.²⁴ As head of security for Jones and Laughlin, he so circumscribed the liberties of steelworkers who lived in its company towns that labor called him the “Czar” of “Little Siberia of America.” Girdler preferred to be seen as a “benevolent dictator.”²⁵ Republic Steel enjoined its employees from taking outside work, even painting houses on the side, because Girdler wanted greater dependence on the company paycheck. He employed members of the same family, heightening these workers’ economic vulnerability.²⁶ Girdler’s intransigent approach to labor attracted other steel makers. In a slap in the face to U.S. Steel which urged compromise with the CIO, the American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI) elected Girdler their president just before the Little Steel strike. Girdler also had close ties to the anti-union “brass hats” who led NAM.²⁷

Girdler’s Republic Steel aggressively resisted unionization. Girdler relied on traditional union busting techniques, such as firing organizing workers, and he proudly

SWOC in on May 20, 1937. SWOC “Report of the Officers to the Wage and Policy Convention,” 14-16 December 1937, 10 in *Patterson*, b6f5.

²⁴ Girdler made this vow to the American Iron and Steel Institute. Workers remember threats to “sell apples” or closer to their interests, to close the mill. 65 *News* May 1965; 1033 *News*, May 1957; and *Labor Today*, September 1974, 6. Leab reports Girdler argued there was no legal mandate for a written contract. Leab, “Memorial Day,” 4.

²⁵ Joseph Germano scrapbook, Vol 11, Series III Subseries 1, in USWA District 31 papers, (hereafter *D31 papers*), CHS; *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 18 June 1937; Galenson, *CIO Challenge*, 97 shows how Girdler proudly accepted the label of “Little Siberia” for Aliquippa’s hostility to unionists. Thomas Girdler, *Boot Straps: The Autobiography of Tom M. Girdler*, in collaboration with Boyden Sparkes, (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1943), 164-182.

²⁶ Newell, *Chicago and Labor*, 137. Former employees remember showing up each day to work much like the longshoremen’s shake-up. See “This is Your Union” May 23, 1971, Local 1033, 7, in *Patterson*, b11f2.

²⁷ Girdler, Eugene Grace of Bethlehem Steel and E.T. Weir of National Steel got the AISI to pay for full-page advertisements in major metropolitan dailies announcing their intent to fight unionization. Richard Tedlow, *Keeping the Corporate Image* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1979), 62, 99; SWOC, *Proceedings of the First Wage and Policy Convention*, December 1937, 31.

advocated the Mohawk Valley Plan that sought to tarnish organized labor in the public's eyes. If the Hershey Chocolate Corporation could follow some variant of the Mohawk Valley Plan in small-town labor disputes, Girdler acted on the belief that it could be applied to an entire industry.²⁸ Settling with unions was "the easy thing to do" but it didn't make it "the right thing," and he offered protection for his 400,000 employees from the anti-democratic depredations of labor leaders like John Lewis. Girdler wasn't above brandishing brutal force if the velvet glove of public opinion failed. He fired over ninety percent of the workforce at Republic's Canton plant, and he stockpiled Republic plants with almost \$50,000 worth of tear gas and munitions, more than the city of Chicago would use in many years. Girdler believed SWOC's ties to workers were too feeble to withstand a strike and Republic Steel provoked a premature strike at its plants in Ohio and the Chicago area on May 26 1937.²⁹ The strike was soon joined with three others in the Little Steel contingent, and over 78,000 workers came out in seven states.³⁰

²⁸ Girdler had some puff pieces written for him that appeared the month right after the massacre. See "Tom Girdler, the Head of Republic Steel is a Leader in Industrial Planning," *Review of Reviews*, June 1937, 30-31; *The Nation*, 5 June 1937: 683. Republic harassed men who attended meetings, and organizers believed the company would lay off any men who evinced interest in the union. "SWOC Fieldworkers Staff Minutes," *D31 papers*, b124f6.

²⁹ Republic Steel Corporation "The Real Issues," May 27, 1937, American Iron and Steel Institute Papers, (hereafter *AISI*), s7b140f "strikes," *Hagley*. According to Bernstein, "Girdler had picked the moment to trigger the Little Steel Strike," *Turbulent Years*, 483. He refers to the strikes in Canton and Massillon, Ohio, but testimony before the LaFollette Committee bears out these statements for Chicago as well. See testimonies of John Riffe and Gus Yuratovic. Senate Committee on Education and Labor, *The Chicago Memorial Day Incident*, pt. 14, 75th Cong., 1st sess., 1937: 4864, 4874, hereafter cited as *Memorial Incident*, 14.

³⁰ *65 News*, May 1965, 1. Republic was the third largest steel manufacturer, employing 49,000 workers. U.S. Steel employed 222,000 and Bethlehem, the second largest, employed eighty thousand, Galenson, *CIO Challenge*, 87. See also, SWOC, *First Wage and Policy*, 32.

Chicago organizers had worked for months to build their ties with workers; they saw a strike as inevitable.³¹ In earlier steel drives ethnicity and race divided workers, so this time SWOC reached out separately to Hungarians, Croats, Poles, Mexicans, and African-Americans to unite them in the drive.³² At the beginning of May organizer Joe Riffe claimed that cards poured in at a rapid pace and a little less than two weeks before the strike, he reported workers were “ready for the break.” Chicago organizers ended their staff meeting on the night of May 13th proclaiming for the first time “Amen in good faith with the Lord and John L. Lewis.” Their prayers were answered when four days later five hundred Republic workers showed up to a mass rally with a “marvelous enthusiasm” and some three thousand showed up for a mass rally in the days before the strike. SWOC organizers believed their problem not to be building support for the union, but holding workers’ enthusiasm within bounds.³³

³¹ “Fieldworkers Staff Minutes,” *D31 papers*, b124f4 and b124f6. Republic struck unsuccessfully in 1933 and was one of the few plants on Chicago’s Southeast-side to have members in the Amalgamated. See “This is Your Union,” May 23, 1971, Local 1033 in *Patterson*, b11f2.

³² This strategy was particularly important in Chicago, which had a higher proportion of foreign born workers in the steel industry than in other parts of the nation. Newell, *Chicago and the Labor Movement*, 116-7; Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 17, 21.

³³ Scholars discount the strength of the movement at Republic. Newell claimed that the Republic drive was “spotty,” *Ibid.*, 135-7. The union did not have the drive in the bag, but organizers believed they had an increasing level of support. By December of 1936 the Republic Steel plants main organizer, Joe Riffe believed over 1000 cards were circulating in the plant. *D31 papers*, b124f4 and b124 f6. Organizer Nick Pitzele, in the *Daily Calumet*, 25 May 1937 said that over 3,000 men showed up to a South Chicago rally for the impending strike. George Patterson claimed that the Republic drive was from the “bottom up,” that even before the strike the union was unclear exactly how much support it had, and that despite the scabs who stayed in the plant, that it considered its support “overwhelming.” “Embryo,” *Patterson*, b9f6, 150.

Despite this momentum, Girdler's hunch proved partially correct, as many employees, perhaps as many as one-third the workforce, stayed inside the plant.³⁴ Republic kept production going to strengthen the perception that strikers kept loyal workers from exercising their democratic right to work and support their families.³⁵ Girdler's Chicago managers also tricked union men to go out early, so the company would have the upper hand. The first hours of the strike were uncoordinated: men dribbled out of the plant and found no picket. But SWOC soon organized a round-the-clock picket presence. The union relied on the thousands of striking workers, almost 25,000 living in the Calumet region.³⁶

Chicago police hamstrung the union's hopes to establish a mass picket. Republic Steel had a strong ally in the police. Though officers disagreed about how many strikers could picket, those on-site were the most rigorous in enforcing a limited number of picketers, often permitting less than a dozen.³⁷ On the first day of the strike, May 26th, when a contingent of strikers headed for the plant, police stopped and jailed twenty, including four of the union's organizers—George Patterson was one. Things were quiet

³⁴ The exact number of workers inside the plant has never been established. The union claimed only 200 men were in the plant, the company said 1,400. Newspaper reported 1,000 were in the plant, which would have been close to half the workforce. *St Louis Post Dispatch*, 16 June 1937; *Chicago Daily Times*, 2 June 1937.

³⁵ For Girdler's adherence to the Mohawk Valley Plan, *The Nation*, 12 June 1937, 668.

³⁶ Many picketers worked at other local plants. Inland Steel in Indian Harbor, Indiana employed 13,500, *Daily Calumet* 26 May 1937, 1; Youngstown Sheet and Tube in Indiana Harbor had 7,500, and another 650 worked at their South Chicago plant. The *Daily Times* claimed 25,000 were out on strike, 2 June 1937, 16. See "This is Your Union," 23 May 1971, Local 1033, 8-10, in *Patterson*, b11f2; and "Embryo," Book Two, 16-17, b9f6 for the strike's first hours.

³⁷ Organizer Joel Riffe said strikers were given "less privileges than he's ever dealt with," *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4865; Leab, "Memorial Day" 5-6; Solfchalk, "Memorial Incident," 8, 11. Though police claimed picketers could amass up to 100, strikers said often fewer than ten were allowed in front of the plant. Senate Committee on Education

on Thursday, but the next day when a thousand picketers marched on the plant, there was a scuffle and police fired warning shots into the air. Chicago's newspapers carried full-page photo-stories of the "army of strikers" involved in the "vicious clash," and metropolitan dailies across the nation carried a photo of strikers with their torn flag.³⁸ SWOC alleged that company-paid thugs were beating strikers—even women—on the line, and that police harassed workers walking anywhere near the Republic plant. It filed a NLRB suit, telegraphed Roosevelt asking him for a federal investigation, and maintained that Republic Steel had given its security forces an order to "shoot to kill."³⁹ The company countered union complaints: saying strikers threatened the families and property of workers still in the plant.⁴⁰

SWOC organizers believed they had the support of Chicago's mayor, Edward Kelly. They planned a Memorial Day rally to publicize police behavior and to force a showdown on the right to a mass picket. Unionists and their families met at Sam's Place—Dine and Dance, their informal strike headquarters early that warm, May morning. They were joined by sympathizers: including physicians, Hull House social workers, students from University of Chicago, and a local high school, and ministers and lay members of several church social action groups. Some came with their dates, other

and Labor, *Report: The Chicago Memorial Day Incident*, (hereafter *Report*) 75th Cong., 1st sess., July 22, 1937: 6.

³⁸ *Chicago Daily News*, 29 May 1937, "MOB IS BEATEN BACK," *New York Times*, 29 May 1937, 1, 7.

³⁹ Bittner claimed Republic Steel was using police as a "common strike breaking agency." *New York Times*, 30 May 1937, 7; Patterson before LaFollette, *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4880; SWOC asked the Attorney General's office to investigate. SWOC, *First Wage and Policy*, 37 in *Patterson*, b6f5. For the shoot to kill order see the *Chicago Daily News*, 27 May 1937, 3.

⁴⁰ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 16 June 1937 for harassment by police and paid strike breakers and Republic's response.

local residents seeing the commotion showed up, “just to see what was going on.”⁴¹ The crowd who numbered between 1,500 and 2,500 enjoyed the lunches they had carried with them, or grabbed sandwiches prepared by the Women’s Auxiliary.⁴² The throng listened to speakers and sang songs as children “played tag among the crowd.” Despite the earlier frictions, in the words of one, “the crowd was jolly.” Most assembled described the mood as “holiday like,” in part because of the participation of so many women and children garbed in their Sunday best.⁴³

After the speeches a cry went up to establish a mass picket at Republic Steel’s gates. The crowd joined behind two flag-bearers who moved diagonally across a long field to the plant’s entrance. Meeting them, strung out in a long line, as one striker remembered “just like those skirmish lines in movies of old-time battles,” several blocks before the gate, were Chicago police, about 300 strong. They were there, at three times their force, according to one police official, to avert “a massacre.”⁴⁴ Excitement ran high on both sides. The police stood alert, waiting for commands. Strikers entreated with

⁴¹ *The Nation*, 12 June 1937, 670. “The Steel Strike Battle and Death on the Prairie,” *Chicago Tribune*, 28 May 1972, sec. 1A, 3; *Daily Calumet*, 2 July 1937. Patterson says Studs Terkel was present. “Embryo,” Book Two, 22 b9f6, *Patterson*. Terkel claims instead that his Chicago Repertory Theater that did leftist theater in Chicago performed at Sam’s Place the next day to help strikers’ spirits. *Talking to Myself: A Memoir of My Times* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984 ed.), 120.

⁴² Riffe pegged the crowd at 1,500, *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4869. Police claimed anywhere between 2,500-3000. *Washington Evening Star*, 2 July 1937, CHS, Jacques b2, Patterson on the Women’s Auxiliary, “Incident at Republic Steel,” March 9, 1966, *Patterson*, b10f1.

⁴³ Harper testimony to LaFollette Committee, *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4964; Riffe claimed that fifteen to twenty percent of the participants were women, and many were in the front line. *Ibid.*, 4870; and Jacques, b2. For children playing tag, see “Embryo,” Book Two, 20, b9f6, *Patterson*.

⁴⁴ The union foreswore responsibility the march to the plant’s gate. This seems unlikely given the physicians who seemed prepared for conflict. On the “skirmish line,” see “This is Your Union,” 23 May 1971, Local 1033 in *Patterson*, b11f2; Leab, “Memorial Day,” 7; and *Memorial Incident*, 14D: 4665.

police to let them through. Most in the crowd were peaceful, though fearing police reprisals some carried makeshift weapons, sticks and rocks, pipes and branches. When strikers pushed forwards, and perhaps in response to a branch thrown from behind their lines, police “charged like a bunch of demons” with tear gas, billy clubs and bullets. Some recalled strikers “trapped like rats, panic stricken, terrified,” others saw the marchers crying and “holler[ing] like sheep” as they scattered in all directions. One witness described police who beat an old man trying to crawl away as if, “playing with a bug before you step on him.” A labor journalist recounted that police “dragged” the wounded by their feet, as if “dead dogs.”⁴⁵

Four died that day, six more died soon afterwards, and ninety were wounded, thirty-five with gunshot wounds.⁴⁶ Almost all of the gun wounds appeared in the backs or sides of the victims, including the eleven year-old boy who was shot in the heel, and a

⁴⁵ Harry Harper told the LaFollette committee that police “charged” in a later interview. M.B. Schnapper, *American Labor, A Pictorial Social History* (Washington D.C. Public Affairs Press, 1972); *New York Times* 1 June 1937, 9; Series III, Joe Germano Scrapbooks Vol.11, *D31 papers*. Mary Heaton Vorse, “The Steel Strike,” in the *New Republic*, included in *Rebel Pen: The Writings of Mary Heaton Vorse*, edited by Dee Garrison, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1985), 203.

⁴⁶ The ten workers killed by police were Alfred Causey, Joe Rothmund, Hilding Anderson, Lee Tisdale, Leon Francisco, Sam Popovic, Earl Handley, Anthony Tagliore, Otis Jones, and Kenneth Reid. Republic Steel and police charged that protesters were outsiders and communists. That charge was only true for Joe Rothmund. Living in or near the South Chicago neighborhood were Anderson, Francisco and Jones. Handley, Popovic, Reed and Causey lived in Indiana Harbor, right across the border in Indiana. Tisdale and Tagliore lived just north of South Chicago. William Kornblum claims there was an ethnic component to the killings. The police were almost all Irish American, the steelworkers Italian and Slavic, with some Mexican and African-Americans. Tisdale was the sole African-American victim. William Kornblum, *Blue Collar Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) 101-6. Information on the victims is found in *Memorial Incident*, Exhibit 131: 5007, and Exhibits 1441-1449: 5075-5089. See also *Jacques*, b2.

baby who was hit in the arm.⁴⁷ Some claimed police shot when they went to help the wounded. One woman said the police chased her, shooting all the time, and one man died when police grabbed him by a makeshift tourniquet and stuffed him into a paddy wagon. Once at the hospital police refused to let unionists help burdened medical staff, tried to drag the wounded off of gurneys, and kept family members from visiting the dying for weeks. A staff physician at South Chicago Hospital where victims were brought exclaimed that it looked as if a “virtual massacre” transpired.⁴⁸

From the start union leaders named the dead strikers martyrs to a glorious cause and accused police of murdering the innocent in cold blood. Union wives marched on City Hall with banners calling on Chicago’s Mayor Kelly to “wipe the blood off your hands.” John Lewis called it a “planned murder.”⁴⁹ SWOC’s Philip Murray expressed his “shock” and “indescribable horror” at the shooting. Van Bittner, director of SWOC’s Midwest campaign called the “shooting down [of] defenseless men, women and children...one of the most disgraceful affairs that has ever taken place in the annals of our country.”⁵⁰ A local of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Fireman and Enginemen passed a resolution “protesting the inhuman, unchristian, and uncivilized slaughter carried out by the Chicago police,” and the Chicago Church Federation’s resolution “deplored the killing of the steel marchers.” SWOC South Chicago locals wrote to Chicago’s mayor and President Roosevelt, demanding “immediate removal” of responsible police figures

⁴⁷ *Daily Calumet*, 10 June 1937, 2; and *The Nation*, 3 July 1937, 26, and *The Nation*, 7 August 1937, 146.

⁴⁸ Meyer Levin, “Slaughter in Chicago,” *The Nation*, 12 July 1937, 668-9. For police unwillingness to let family members in, see *New York Times*, 1 June 1937, 9, *Washington Post* 31 May 1937, 2; and Germano Scrapbooks, vol. II, *D31 papers*.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, 2 June 1937, 10; the *Chicago Daily News*, 1 June 1937, 1, 3; and *Steel Labor*, 21 June 1937, 7.

⁵⁰ *Daily Calumet*, 5 June 1937, 1 and 9 June 1937, 1.

and a federal investigation into the “degenerate sadism” that brought “everlasting disgrace upon this great land of liberty and our fair city of Chicago.”⁵¹

The next day five thousand union supporters massed in a parade in nearby Indiana for the “Fallen Heroes of the Republic Steel Picket Line.” Bandaged participants of the carnage stood on stage at a union gathering to “eulogize the dead” and galvanize the living.⁵² Leo Krzycki, whose Memorial Day speech union detractors blamed for the Massacre, rallied members at yet another Indiana mass meeting:

We are going to fight on to victory regardless of the cost of lives of our martyrs... We have gone half way to meet the Republic Steel Company... If they are on the square there will be no trouble. If they are not we're ready to spill our blood in large quantities in the middle of the road.⁵³

Three days after the shooting a multiple wake was held at SWOC's organizing office at South Chicago's Eagles Hall. SWOC members controlled traffic at the major commercial thoroughfares; police feared coming near. Paying their respects at the wake, reported the *Chicago Daily News*, more than seven thousand sympathizers in “dusty overalls from the mills, and in clean overalls on their way to the mills, squat Croatians, sallow-skinned Poles, awed Negroes, bustling Nordics and phlegmatic Mexicans. Spacing them were tradesmen in shirt sleeves and housewives in summer prints.”⁵⁴ Nine days after the Massacre, on June 8th, outraged Chicagoans, 5,000 strong, filled the Civic Opera Auditorium to decry the killings and demand greater constraints upon police

⁵¹ Brotherhood Resolution and Chicago Church Federation Resolution, *D31 papers*. Resolution signed by James Stewart, President #65; A. Sweeney, President #1068; Ed Johnson President #1181; and Clement Nowakowski, President #1167 to Mayor Kelly and President Roosevelt. nd, *Patterson*, b6f5.

⁵² Sofchalk, “Memorial Incident,” 19; *New York Times*, 1 June 1937, 9 and *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 June 1937, 1.

⁵³ *New York Times*, 2 June 1937, 10; Krzycki in *New York Times*, 3 June 1937, 16.

⁵⁴ *Chicago Daily News*, 3 June 1937, 7; *New York Times*, 4 June 1937, 15.

action. Future Illinois Senator Paul Douglas, poet Carl Sandburg, and union and civil rights leader A. Phillip Randolph joined professors, publishers, religious, and union leaders in this display of solidarity under the banner of the ad-hoc Chicago Citizens Rights Committee. Seventeen days later a motorcade left Gary, Indiana, wended its way through the Southeast Side to Republic Steel where union members left a wreath honoring the dead with a guard to watch over it. They then made their way to a SWOC rally at Chicago's Stadium, then reputed to be the largest labor gathering in Illinois history. There they heard mention of a newsreel taken by Paramount, that "showed in all its excruciating horror the brutality of the police attack."⁵⁵ This newsreel would become unionists' most important ally.

The flurry of activities had a purpose. Unionists and their sympathizers campaigned to avenge the wrongs done in South Chicago, and to demand workers' basic civil liberties. They worked behind the scenes to mobilize press and Congressional support for the union story.

"War in America!"

Local and national press reported on labor's outpouring of mourning and activism, but their accounts were overwhelmingly hostile to labor. Chicago's police and politicians and Republic Steel blamed strikers for the conflict and their explanations formed the backbone of most news stories. Police said unionists, some five thousand

⁵⁵ *Chicago Daily News*, 17 June 1937, 1, 3 and 18 June 1937, 16; *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 17 June 1937, 1; *Chicago American*, 18 July 1937 in CHS, Jacques, b2. Labor reporter Mary Heaton Vorse also argued in her *New Republic* story that "Pictures confirm this. Pictures give irrefutable testimony that instead of 'fighting for their lives' as Police Chief Horner asserts, the police pursued and clubbed fleeing with their wives and children." Vorse, *Rebel Pen*, 203.

strong, planned on storming the gates to get at employees who remained on the job.

Police shot only to defend themselves and loyal employees.⁵⁶ Chicago officials notified the press that dozens were jailed, that additional suspects were sought, that many strikers were foreigners, and that the State's Attorney would expose the Communist roots to the uprising. Republic Steel scoured the lists of arrested and wounded to corroborate that those on the field were outside agitators.⁵⁷

The *Chicago Tribune's* first headline, "Riots Blamed on Red Chiefs," encapsulated a common thrust in press stories. The *Tribune*, Chicago's premier paper and the nation's largest circulating daily, ran headlines on the injured police—none of whom was hospitalized—and had articles alleging the CIO advocated Soviet-style Bolshevism. *Tribune* readers were told that "half a pint of whiskey had been supplied to each of the marchers," and that a Mexican fired the first shot. Lacking the *Tribune's* rabidity, other dailies advanced a similar rationale.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 24 June 1937, 1.

⁵⁷ *Chicago Tribune*, 31 May and 1 June 1937; *Chicago Daily News*, 31 May and 1 and 2 June 1937; *New York Times*, 31 May and 1 June 1937. Bernstein's *Turbulent Years*, 826, n. 8 claims the public relations firm of Hill and Knowlton promoted Republic Steel's stance. Upton Sinclair's novel, *Little Steel*, (New York: Farrar and Rinehart Inc., 1938) turns on the facility of the new public relations firm's entrance into labor relations. See also Sofchalk, "Memorial Incident," 19-27. George Patterson's unpublished memoir offers an inside look at how he was harassed, and then "outed" as a communist by the Chicago Police, charges he denied. *Patterson*, b9f6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, on newspapers. *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 22 June 1937, 8a, criticized the *Tribune* for coverage like this and the Washington news correspondents rated the paper the least reliable newspaper in the U.S. John Eberhardt and Raymond Bauer, "Analysis of the Influences on Recall of a Controversial Event: The *Chicago Tribune* and the Republic Steel Strike," *Journal of Social Psychology*, *SPSSI Bulletin* (1941): 211. This article pegged the paper as the second largest, but circulation figures given to the American Iron and Steel Institute had the *Tribune* as the largest in 1936. So too did the NAM in 1943-1944, see s3b845f "national media general, *NAM papers*. See also the Hearst paper, the *Chicago Herald American* which claimed that the Massacre was "directed from the Chicago Communist Headquarters" in a 1941 article. Series III, Germano Scrapbooks, Vol. 11, *D31 Papers*.

Because of the standardization and nationalization of news most Americans read a story much like that read in Chicago.⁵⁹ The *New York Times*'s first headline blazoned "4 Killed, 84 Hurt as Strikers Fight Police in Chicago" and "Steel Mob Halted." Stories told of one striker who shot a blue steel automatic from arms-length straight at police, told of razors atop picket signs, and quoted unionists asserting they tried to breach the plant gates.⁶⁰ Later stories reported on the Communist leanings of protesters, and told how the union drilled members to disarm police.⁶¹ When a police officer showed off his .45 caliber bullets to a reporter and crowed "We're ready for them and boy am I eager," readers might have thought his response acceptable.⁶² Other metropolitan dailies purveyed this same rationale for events. A mob of foreigners and radicals, inflamed by listening to speakers at a SWOC rally, crossed the field to get into the Republic Steel plant. Whether they were "a rag-tag army" or a tightly drilled force led by "200 young huskies" they threatened law and order. Police action was regrettable but necessary. National news media such as *TIME*, *LIFE* and *Newsweek* gave readers the same story

⁵⁹ The *New York Times* had its own Chicago correspondent. See 31 May 1937, 1 and *Time*, 7 June 1937, 14-15.

Stories in the *San Francisco Chronicle* came from the United Press (UP) and the AP. New Orleans news came from the AP and Universal Services, *The Washington Post* relied on the AP. Hearst's *New York Herald Tribune* carried an AP story, 1 June 1937. The *New York Daily News* carried their own story on the 31st, but the following days they carried UP and AP stories. I looked at the *New Orleans Times Picayune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Herald Examiner*, and the *New York Daily News*. Donald Solfchalk has argued that the AP was particularly harsh towards the strikers, though their coverage doesn't seem to differ much from the other services, such as Universal Services. Solfchalk, "Memorial Incident," 31.

⁶⁰ *New York Times*, 31 May 1937, 1,7; and 2 June 1937, 10.

⁶¹ *New York Times*, 7 June 1937, 8. The paper also printed whole Girdler's letter to employees rationalizing the decision not to sign a contract with the CIO. Girdler attacked CIO irresponsibility, including its desire to violate workingman's rights by "swiping" workers' paychecks. *New York Times* 16 June 1937, 8.

⁶² *New York Times*, 3 June 1937, 16.

with minor differences in detail: a few slingshots and union leaders spurring on the crowd with the call that “the mill must be closed.”⁶³

Even the *Daily Calumet*, the East Side’s neighborhood press, faulted the union. Communism lay at the heart of their critique. The paper asserted the Wednesday night, May 26th stike parade was led by women garbed in red. It also reported on the “fiery speeches ...by men who hail from great universities”—here referencing University of Chicago professors—and on the presence of the “hustlers of the *Daily Worker*,” both code words, the latter, rightly so, for Communists.⁶⁴ The *Calumet* denounced foreigners for the unrest, and ran columns against Inland Steel strikers who crossed the state border from Indiana, which was just minutes away.⁶⁵ Inside stories told of how strikers intimidated Republic employees, and shared gossipy fare about marital discord and divorce as a result of the strike.⁶⁶ The paper reported without comment Republic’s anti-union statements that they were operating near capacity, that CIO demands would lead to unemployment, and Girdler’s denunciation of John L. Lewis as an imminent “labor” and “military dictator as well.”⁶⁷ The neighborhood paper’s reporting, like the majority of national and metropolitan news, was a classic example of the Mohawk Valley Plan where

⁶³ See *Time Magazine*, 7 June 1937, 14-15, and June 14, 1937, 13; *LIFE Magazine*, 14 June 1937, 30-31; and *Newsweek*, 5 June 1937, 5, and 12 June 1937, 15.

⁶⁴ The paper included disclaimers from several ministers that they were connected to the University of Chicago! *The Daily Calumet*, 2 June 1937, 1; 27 May 1937, 1 and 14 June 1937, 4. For attacks on the University of Chicago for communism see: Milton Mayer, “The Red Room,” *Massachusetts Review* 16 no. 3 (1975); E.W. Kitch, “The Fire of Truth: A Remembrance of Law and Economics at Chicago, 1932-1970,” *Journal of Law and Economics* 26 (April 1983): 178; and Nelson Elmer Hewitt, *How “Red” is the University of Chicago?* (Chicago: Advisory Associates, 1935). I would like to thank Randi Storch, Roger Sandilands, Jesse Lemisch, Arnold Kramish, James Barrett, Mark Lause and John Earl Haynes for helpful leads on this.

⁶⁵ The paper’s circulation base was composed almost entirely of workers. *Daily Calumet*, 13 July 1937, 4; and 5 June 1937, 4.

⁶⁶ *Daily Calumet*, 8 July 1937, 2.

corporations sought to discredit unions as outside, un-American troublemakers with no support from the average worker.⁶⁸

Most metropolitan dailies accompanied their lead stories about the “South Chicago Riots” with vivid photographs. The photos did not at first glance appear to buttress police claims. Some showed a tear-gas filled field with marchers in the distance, others showed police pummeling picketers. But the captions and stories suggested a battle between equals. A *Chicago Daily News* photo made at the “peak” of battle showed the backs of retreating strikers: the “murderous mob” consisted of those foolhardy enough to look back and face the camera. [Fig. 4-4.]⁶⁹ In a *Chicago Tribune* photo that has become one of the most reproduced image of the Massacre, a woman held out her palms to police, beseeching them to stop. [Fig. 4-10.]⁷⁰ Around her lie the fallen strikers and a man’s arm reaching into the air. By following it one sees a police club, just before it moves downward to hit the man. The *Tribune*’s caption: “At the Height of the Battle—Here are policemen using their nightsticks and tear gas to subdue their attackers” evoked a battle with ruthless strikers, but the images show abject strikers trying to stave off further violence. Another photo that same day showed “women in mob subdued by

⁶⁷ *Daily Calumet*, 29 July 1937; 19 August 1937, 1; 4 and June 1937, 1.

⁶⁸ *Daily Calumet* 13 July 1937, 1. George Patterson wrote the paper’s editors on July 22, 1937, complaining that the paper had not spoken to a single local leader to get their take on the “tragic affair.” Letter to Mr. Worden, from George Patterson, July 22, 1937, *Patterson*, b6f4.

⁶⁹ The photo is found in the *Chicago Daily News*, 1 June 1937, 36. “Steel Strike Riots,” is the headline of the *Chicago Tribune*, 1 June 1937, 1, 12; 3 June 1937, 14. The May 31st *Tribune* photo showing strikers far in the distance, shrouded by tear gas explains: “a shower of missiles from those who were hidden deep in the mob of strikers, and the battle was on;” *New York Times*, 1 June 1937, 9.

⁷⁰ See the left hand photograph, which also appeared in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 20 June 1937.

police.” [Fig. 4-5.]⁷¹ Chicago’s *Tribune* even published photographs aiming to show how police helped the victims. Captioned “Police Aid Injured,” one photo showed the man killed when police grabbed and carried him by the tourniquet that was his lone link to life. The following weekend, the *Tribune*’s photogravure section repeated charges of communism. Under the full page headline “Reds Send Workers to Tragic Battle with Police,” the *Tribune* told how strike leaders urged strikers to break into the plant, and how the protesters threw missiles and opened fire on police.⁷²

News editors generally captioned the photographs seen by millions of Americans in line with police accounts, just as they had with their news stories. As we’ve seen, a photograph’s visual language advances arguments, but titles, captions, and other text attempts to anchor an image’s meaning.⁷³ No evidence suggests editors acted with anti-labor bias—with the exception of the anti-union *Chicago Tribune*. However, by reproducing the police rationale in their captions, they helped reinforce it. Indeed Chicago police even believed photographs proved their innocence: “pictures at the start of the fight [are] cited by police as showing they did not begin the hostilities.”⁷⁴

National papers and magazines followed Chicago’s lead once again. In an AP photograph featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, six bodies huddled on the field as

⁷¹ *Chicago Tribune*, 31 May 1937, 30.

⁷² *Chicago Tribune*, 6 June 1937, 10.

⁷³ For theory addressing the problem of caption (text) and image see Roland Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” in *Image, Music, Text*, trans., Stephen Heath (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977), 15-31; and Walter Benjamin’s “A Short History of Photography,” in *Classic Essays in Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete’s Island Books, 1980), 199-216. For concrete historical explorations of this question see Alan Trachtenberg’s *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989); and Maren Stange’s *Symbols Of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), along with sources in Chapter Two on *LIFE*’s new photojournalism.

four policemen stalk the only two protesters who remained upright. [Fig. 4-6.]⁷⁵ One of the officers brought his whole body into belting down the striker, and the dynamism of his action grabs the eye, which may be why it was so reproduced. The *Chronicle's* headline, "War in America!," suggested a civil strife tearing at the nation's very fabric. This same photo appeared in *LIFE Magazine*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune* and the *New York Daily News*. The image indicated a one-sided battle, but most captions evoked an all-out riot or a clash of equals.⁷⁶ Similarly, an AP photo carried by the *New York Times* displayed the backs of running strikers as police chased close behind, with batons at the ready, but it was captioned, "The Start of the Battle Near the Republic Steel Plant." [Fig. 4-7.]⁷⁷ The *Times* caption for a photo where the mass of strikers had moved far to the background read, "Fatal Battle between Chicago Police and Steel Strikers." The photo did not show a battle but rather strikers attempting to keep their distance from police.⁷⁸ National magazines such as *TIME* carried the same

⁷⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, 1 June 1937, 32.

⁷⁵ "War in America!" *San Francisco Chronicle*, 31 May, 1937, 1.

⁷⁶ The AP photo appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 31 May, 1937, 1; *Chicago Tribune*, 1 June 1937, 32; *TIME Magazine* 7 June 1937, 15; the *New York Times*, 1 June 1937, 9; the *New York Herald Tribune*, 1 June 1937, 7; and the *Washington Post*, 31 May 1937, 1. The *New York Daily News* was unusual with its captioned for two photos, one of strikers in the field, obscured by tear gas, and another of Lupe Marshall, her back turned from police with the word, "Charge!" This caption acknowledged police force. The *Washington Post* photo of strikers in the background claimed to show "the Battle of South Chicago" where a "panorama of fighting" between strikers and police took place, though strikers were running away; 31 May 1937.

⁷⁷ "As Striking Steel Workers and Police Clashed in South Chicago," *New York Times*, 1 June, 1937.

⁷⁸ The *Tribune* photograph (distributed by the Times Wide World Wired) was also featured in the *New York Times* the day immediately after the attack. *Chicago Tribune*, 31 May 1937, 30; *New York Times*, 31 May 1937, 5. Major metropolitan dailies in Chicago, Washington and New York carried multiple images of the Massacre, but most newspapers offered only one image, if that. Even by the later 1930's the metropolitan dailies still had very few photographs, many of them were posed images of society

photograph that showed strikers running from police, though *TIME*'s story described the photo as showing police "faltering" just before they drew their guns. *TIME*'s caption, "the Battle of the Republic Barrier."⁷⁹

In Chicago, newspapers even employed sophisticated layouts akin to "story-boards" or cinematic treatments of the Massacre that suggested police action was justified.⁸⁰ In the *Chicago Daily News* a panoramic shot of the field outside Republic Steel included numbers instructing viewers how to read the image. [Fig. 4-8.]⁸¹ The *Daily News* delineated actions within the "story:" a policeman being punched in the face, "the helpless heap of strikers;" police drawing revolvers; and "the striker's army in retreat before the advance of a single policeman with upraised club." Here the *Daily News*, deliberately or not, participated in a favored anti-union attack: condemning strikers as cowards.⁸²

The *Chicago Tribune*'s "picture story" used several photos for greater narrative construction. Each image was numbered, and inset titling provided explanation in a narrative arc. "1 The Inspiration; 2 The Warning; 3 The Battle!" [Fig. 4-9.]⁸³ Inspired by Leo Krzycki's inflammatory words "The crowd became a mob;" warned by police to stay away the armed crowd moved forward; tear gas and clubs were ineffectual so police had to kill strikers to turn the mob back. Plots help develop causal relationships between

women and celebrities. Though the photograph was increasingly salient, it was still novel.

⁷⁹ *TIME Magazine*, 7 June 1937, 15.

⁸⁰ Chicago's papers relegated strike stories to the back pages after only a few days despite the significance of steel to Chicago's economy. The *New York Times* carried front-page stories on the Little Steel Strike well into July.

⁸¹ *Chicago Daily News*, 1 June 1937.

⁸² As detailed in NAM's Mohawk Valley Plan. Bernstein, 478-9, 490; and in *New York Times*, 6 June 1937, 6.

⁸³ *Chicago Tribune*, 31 May 1937, 30.

random events in time and space.⁸⁴ Chicago's papers bridged the gaping holes between police accounts and pictorial documentation by creating credible stories to explain the photograph's contents.

Little indicates what labor thought of this anti-union press, but it must have taken its toll. At a staff meeting for organizers, Henry Johnson, who was responsible for the South Chicago area, told other organizers that members' spirits were good, but that newspaper propaganda was causing misunderstanding. George Patterson, the local union organizer who was one of those arrested for the Massacre recorded his feelings about the photograph's effect years later.

I remember sitting down reading the paper, the *Tribune*, in the restaurant down at Toffenetti's on Randolph Street... right after Memorial Day. I saw pictures of myself, pictures of strikers lying on the ground, and I turned around to watch the reaction of the customers. It was amazing how they'd shake their heads and say, 'These damn workers, they ought all to be shot.' I was horrified.

The mother of one of the victims, the seventeen year old Leo Francisco, was reputed to "shoo off" vendors of the *Tribune* and the Hearst papers.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ See Lawrence Levine, "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and It's Audiences," *The American Historical Review* 97 no. 5 (December 1992): 1381 and the response by T. Jackson Lears, "Making Fun of Popular Culture": 1421-1424. Important here is the idea that though audiences "create" the text, that they are given very strong clues to "appropriate" readings.

⁸⁵ For Johnson's reaction see "SWOC Fieldworkers Staff Minutes, June 28, 1937 *D31 papers*, b124f6; Patterson interview with Ed Sadlowski, December 1970, 114-5, *Patterson*, b10f7. Patterson quotes the date incorrectly and he remembered the response of restaurant patrons differently in his unpublished autobiography. Nonetheless, he still captures the dissonance between his experience of the Massacre, and the power of the photos. "I went into Tofonetti's Restaurant for a bit to eat. I bought a *Tribune*. The headlines were all about the riot at Republic Steel. Pictures of it were all over the pages. I looked at them, read the captions under them, looked around at the 'white collar' folks eating around me, and I in my emotional state, wanted to scream, that the whole story of the riot was slanted to blame the steelworkers. That the police were being shown to be blameless....Lies, all lies, I wanted to say, But there they say, showing an indifference

Historians have long argued that the anti-union press damaged SWOC, but they have ignored how photographs promoted the police story in the first weeks after the Massacre. Similarly, a Paramount News Corporation newsreel long perceived as the most crucial evidence against the police first promoted the police justification for repression. Paramount News derailed its cameraman, Otto Lippert, from his trip to the Indy 500 races and instead sent him to the Memorial Day rally. Newsreel companies tended not to cover the controversial, but Paramount, known as less conservative in its coverage, sent Lippert to the southeastern-most reaches of Chicago.⁸⁶ Lippert captured most of the Memorial Day confrontation on film, in all he gave five and a half minutes of footage to Paramount. When the studio first edited this footage into a story, their newsreel “documented” the Chicago Police Department’s charges of a riotous mob.⁸⁷

Paramount’s titling for the newsreel, *Steel Strike Riots Sharpen CIO Crisis*, hinted at the filmed story’s prejudice against strikers. The word riots suggests an uncontrolled mob. Melodramatic music joined the title shot and its tempo and volume built, indicative of the coming strife. Explanatory text introduced the film: “It is the function of Paramount News to present, not arguments but facts. In this spirit the following graphic picture of the Chicago riots are shown.” A scene of workers smoking, reading papers, and lounging alongside card tables followed, and the announcer informed viewers that “company officials” called them “loyal workers, not strike breakers,” who kept the plant

that shocked me. Book Two, 30, *Patterson*, b9f6; Francisco’s story in *Midwest Daily Record* 28 May 1938, 3 in Series III, Germano scrapbook Vol 11, *D31 papers*.

⁸⁶ For Lippert’s diversion see Fred Friendly, “Justice White and Reporter Caldwell: Finding a Common Ground,” *Columbia Journalism Review* 6 no. 3 (September/October 1972): 32; Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 155, 173, 194-5, 223.

⁸⁷ *Steel Strike Riots Sharpen CIO Crisis* is archived at the Grinberg Film Libraries in Chatsworth, California, PMN 6318, 6319 and 6140.

going “despite the CIO strike.” “Loyal workers” was the name the Mohawk Valley Formula promoted by NAM gave to non-union men. The “loyalists” smiled at the camera in a close-up shot, followed by a deep focus shot of them sitting in an ordered row of cots arranged by the company. These close-up and deep focus camera shots gave free reign to the viewers’ examining eye—suggesting these men had nothing to hide. *Steel Strike Riots* presented the loyal workers as benign, domesticated laborers, no threat to the social order.

In contrast to the “loyal” workers were the strikers who “demonstrated by night and by day.” The newsreel faded-in to a crowd of faces that filled all four corners of the screen. Lippert filmed them at night, and the contrast between the dark sky and the bright lights used to film them enhanced the sense of violence. Their loud calls punctuated the general din as the announcer told newsreel viewers that the CIO had not been formally voted upon at the plant. Here the movie’s narrative questioned the union’s legitimacy. In contrast to the lounging, knowable workers, the newsreel presents the strikers as an agitated and anonymous crowd.

The film then cut to the Memorial Day events. Paramount edited in footage of the police readying themselves that morning: a long shot of the prairie as strikers straggled across it; a pan across the field as strikers and police came face to face; and a close-up of their dispute taken from behind police lines. This context provided a step-by-step build-up for a full-blown confrontation between the forces of law and order and the militant mob. The narrator told viewers that the CIO organizers had attacked, and that the strikers had advanced towards the plant four times in five days. Police were absolved of violence; the narrator told viewers that they “pleaded” for strikers to leave. The narrator

then stated as text flashed on the screen, “But the arguments failed. The riot that followed is herewith described by the most impartial of all reporters—the newsreel camera.” Once again the film promoted itself as a purveyor of unvarnished truth. But Paramount rejected any footage that would have complicated the story. The company cut footage of a policeman who shone a winning grin at another policeman right after the Massacre. Similarly, none of Otto Lippert’s establishing shots of workers and their children on the picket lines were included. Much like a “B” grade Western, Paramount’s cast represented the forces of order against lawlessness.

Steel Strike Riots music intensified the drama of the “the graphic picture of Chicago riots.” A mounting drum roll linked the caption that argued that the police did everything they could to prevent the shooting, to the field where the police were shooting. The drum roll was the expectant sound familiar from Hollywood movies: the drum beats before a cavalry charge, or a firing squad fusillade. The drum roll grew faster and louder to an explosive boom, from which the actual shots on the field could be heard. This music offer clues into the mining of news for entertainment value that was the newsreel’s typical formula. But the music also made a proposition.⁸⁸ The addition of the drum roll originating outside the story-line wove together the argument *Steel Strike Riots* implicitly made—that strikers deserved to be shot.

“Pictures Not Fit To Be Seen.”

Despite the bad press labor persisted in their story—police attacked without provocation—and much like police, they believed photographs could prove their claims.

⁸⁸ David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classic Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). Much of Fielding’s *American Newsreel* is about the entertainment found in the “news,” 44, 48, 225.

A local reverend, Raymond Sandford, who had been on the South Chicago prairie promised “there are stills... of the riot, stored away in a good safe place.”⁸⁹ Meyer Levin questioned how the press interpreted photographs of the Massacre. “Study the newspaper photographs. They show, again and again, police charging with drawn guns after a fleeing crowd, police stumbling over the bodies of fallen citizens. There is not one picture of strikers attacking.”⁹⁰ Levin promoted this view to an ad-hoc coalition organized to protest police action. The coalition included the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee and the Methodist Federation of Social Service, but also the Artists Union, the American Youth Congress, and the Socialist Party. This ad-hoc coalition coordinated the June 8th Opera House gathering where Levin led the crowd through a slide show of the Massacre based on photos he put together. Representative O’Connell (D-MT) read Levin’s charges into the Congressional Record, adding that national press was “false and garbled.” This criticism received limited press however. The *Nation* attacked newspapers for their improper use of photographs that gave “overwhelming evidence that the police attacked and followed up the attack with wanton brutality.”⁹¹ Similarly, labor reporter, Mary Heaton Vorse, wrote for the *New Republic* that “pictures give irrefutable evidence” that police didn’t defend themselves, rather they clubbed the innocent.⁹² No such criticism was found in the mass media.

⁸⁹ *New York Times*, 9 June 1937, 8; *Chicago Herald Examiner*, 8 June 1937, in Jacques, b2. Arnold Gingrich, the editor of *Esquire Magazine* was part of the group that pushed for investigation. *Daily Calumet*, 5 June 1937, 2; and 9 June 1937, 2 on Sanford and Levin.

⁹⁰ *Chicago Daily Times*, 2 June 1937.

⁹¹ The *Nation* may have been the first to argue that the Paramount newsreel supported the strikers, it editorialized that Paramount would have exhibited the footage if it showed “strikers beating up police.” 12 June 1937: 664; *Steel Labor*, 21 June 1937, 3.

⁹² Vorse, “The Steel Strike,” *Rebel Pen*, 203.

Labor and its allies thought Paramount's newsreel footage would validate their innocence and they sought access to it. But Paramount shelved their newsreel, *Steel Strike Riots*, immediately after the Massacre. In suppressing the politically volatile they followed newsreel production and distribution traditions emphasizing the novel and spectacular, the sporting and adventurous, but rarely the controversial. Depictions of class struggle particularly worried Hollywood executives and their Wall Street backers and therefore movies and newsreel footage that touched on class antagonisms bore the brunt of censorship or self-censorship far more than the salacious.⁹³

Nothing in Paramount's corporate papers addresses the company's rationale for keeping *Steel Strike Riots* from the public. However, the company's General Editor, A.J. Richard, wrote to future senator, Paul Douglas, who chaired the ad-hoc Chicago Citizens Rights Committee. Douglas had asked for the film to show at its Opera House event. Paramount snubbed the Chicago activist's request and Richard's explanation indicates a self-censorship consistent with industry policy.

You asked fair questions which entitles you to fair and frank answers. Our pictures of the Chicago steel riots are not being released any place in the country... Whereas newspapers reach individuals in the home we show to a public gathered in groups averaging 1,000 or more and therefore subject to crowd hysteria... Our pictures depict a tense and nerve-wracking episode which in certain sections of the country might very well incite local riot and perhaps riotous demonstrations in theaters leading to further casualties. For these reasons of public policy which we consider more important than any profit to ourselves these pictures are

⁹³ An appended note at the film's ending reads, "Clips and Printing of the material is absolutely forbidden," Grinberg. Fielding's *The American Newsreel* argues newsreels were not to be controversial, 48-51, 223. See Steven Ross's *Working Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) on censorship of class issues. See also Gregory Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics and the Movies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) Chapters 1, 2, and 8. Movie corporations self-censored to limit government regulation, most of which was local.

shelved and...will stay shelved. We act under editorial rights of withholding from the screen pictures not fit to be seen.⁹⁴

Douglas then sought allies to help the Civil Rights Committee get its hands on the filmed evidence. He wired Robert LaFollette Jr. and his staff, sharing his concerns that the “crucial facts” contained in the film should be gotten, “before [the film] is tampered with in any way.” Douglas’s fears proved unfounded, but suggested a sensitivity to the malleability of filmed evidence. The LaFollette Committee had already subpoenaed the film and viewed it.⁹⁵

Had LaFollette’s investigators not gotten their hands on the film first, *Steel Strike Riots*’ condemnation of the union might have remained Paramount’s sole edit. Several investigative bodies sought the footage—none were sympathetic to labor’s cause. The Illinois Assistant State’s Attorney wanted the newsreel to buttress his claims that union speakers inflamed the mob, resulting in the killings. The conservative Senate Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads also pursued the film, hoping to counteract the influence

⁹⁴ Richard compared his action to “the editorial rights exercised by newspapers withholding from publication news not fit to be read. Paul Douglas to Robert LaFollette, June 8, 1937, LaFollette Committee Files, 50.25, (hereafter *LaFollette*), National Archives, (hereafter *NA*); *New York Times*, 8 June 1937, 8.

⁹⁵ John Abt, the LaFollette Committee’s counsel wrote Douglass that arrangements had already been made to secure the film. Another Committee staff, Robert Wohlforth, attempted to acquire a copy from a friend employed at Paramount but was rebuffed. Committee staff had subpoena powers however. Other historians claim Douglas wrote to Robert LaFollette asking him to demand that Paramount share the filmed evidence. Douglass’s letter lies in the files of the LaFollette committee, dated June 8, 1937 and refers to a June 7th wire also imploring LaFollette to locate the film. John Abt to Paul Douglas, 9 June 1937, *LaFollette* b8, 50.25. “The Committee has been in communication with the Paramount Company prior to the receipt of your letters, and arrangements have now been completed for a showing of the film in question before members of the Committee staff. The evidence in the film will be given due consideration by the Committee in determining what further investigation, if any, to make of the incident.” See also interview transcript of Robert Wohlforth by Jerold Auerbach, November 6, 1963, 53-54, in the Oral History Collection of Columbia University, hereafter Wohlforth, *COHC*.

of the pro-labor LaFollette Committee. This committee also thought photographic imagery could support its side. Chicago's judiciary, historically unsympathetic to labor, also finagled to obtain the film.⁹⁶ The LaFollette Committee got it first, and by nailing down detailed narratives that better explained the events in Chicago, and by breaking the story just right, they overturned the widespread view that strikers were to blame.

"Word-Picture"

A LaFollette Committee ally, pro-labor reporter Paul Anderson, broke the story of the newsreel's contents, inaugurating a counter-explanation to earlier coverage. The union had argued from the start that pickets were shot down in cold blood. Most newspapers printed these claims under the norms of neutral reporting, but their description of the events hewed to police accounts. One newspaper saw otherwise. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* sent Anderson to Chicago because editors thought "the stuff coming ... from Chicago just isn't plausible." It seems probable that the LaFollette committee staff gave him access to the film to publicize their upcoming investigation.⁹⁷

Anderson had an exclusive, and like any good reporter he capitalized on his access to the film. For three days his sure-fire writing textured the same essential story of police brutality. Anderson's series began on June 16, two weeks before LaFollette's hearings brought the film to the public. He hooked *Post-Dispatch* readers with promises of a titillating exposé by printing verbatim the company's statement "Why Film is Not

⁹⁶ For the State's Attorney's interest see the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 19 June 1937, 1. *New York Times*, 9 June 1937, 8; and 14 June 1937, 3; *Time*, 28 June 1937, 13; *Chicago Daily News*, 8 July 1937, 3, for Judge Padden and the State's Attorney's interest. See "Look at the Pictures," below, for Post Office Committee interest.

Publicly Shown,” further emphasizing its sensational qualities by reporting on the outrage of U.S. Senators who saw the film.

The first day Anderson’s tale unwound as the newsreel did. Like the camera, he followed the “straggling strikers” walking across a field, though unlike the camera, he focused upon the American flag, which was barely visible but a symbolic foil to the police injustice he would describe. He contrasted the crowd’s earnest mission, their insensibility to what happened around them, with the “appallingly businesslike” dispatch of violence by police; the size and sex of some victims against the brawny masculinity of armed police; the crowd’s excited babble, with their screams once they recognize the shooting for what it was. Anderson eschewed terse journalism and reached for poetry: “Then suddenly without apparent warning there is a terrific roar of pistol shots, and men in the front ranks go down like grass before a scythe.” No detail was too indelicate for his examination, however. Anderson described Sam Popovic’s story, one of the victims whose “brains literally had been beaten out, his skull crushed by blows.” He believed this to be the man who ran the police gauntlet and never came out.

Policemen are as thick as flies, but [Popovic] elects to run the gauntlet. Astonishingly agile for one of his age and build, he runs like a deer, leaping a ditch, dodging as he goes... Will he make it? The suspense is almost intolerable to those who watch. It begins to look as if he will get through. But no!... He is cornered. Quickly the bluecoats close in.

Anderson described the outcome of the Massacre, which is the bulk of the filmed footage. Police gathering up the wounded, final jabs at stragglers, the dead bodies. Anderson presented the first support in a major media outlet for the idea that strikers were shot while running away: one striker appeared to die on film, blood visible on his

⁹⁷ Anderson believed the LaFollette investigation was “made to order” for labor. Auerbach, *Labor and Liberty*, 63; “National Headliners Club Broadcast,” Columbia

back. Anderson wrote of the young man who hopped on one leg into the paddy wagon, and the older man whose bent back carried the burden of all the bloodied bodies on the field. He described one man who paralyzed by a bullet “raises his head like a turtle, and claws the ground.” Anderson heard two words out of the din, the “distinct ejaculation: ‘God Almighty.’” In Anderson’s ending, a “disheveled” policeman scowled, then smiled and dusted his hands off before striding past the camera eye. What more fitting conclusion to his tale of “police attack?”⁹⁸

On the second day Anderson returned to the theme of picket passivity in contrast to police force. He noted the absence of faces in the camera eye: the backs of running strikers filled the screen. The unmitigated fury of Chicago police is set against a singular touch of kindness. “A policeman placed a square of paper [a picket sign?] under the man’s head—and did it gently.” Anderson duly noted two aggressive strikers who fought. Such observations signaled his neutrality. Anderson again tied his story to the Paramount footage by quoting LaFollette committee staff who compared it to the infamous coverage of the crashed Hindenberg.⁹⁹ The *Post-Dispatch* included two AP photos of the strikers running from police, and a man’s body lying inert on the ground, captioned “shot in the back.” Images such as these—just like the ones that had condemned strikers—would in the following weeks demonstrate police culpability.

Anderson’s series culminated with a full-page Sunday spread that complicated yet fortified the earlier stories. He intercut eyewitness accounts with newsreel footage, as

Broadcasting System, July 19, 1937, *LaFollette*, 50.25.

⁹⁸ All quotes are from Paul Anderson, “Senators See Suppressed Movie of Chicago Police Killing Steel Strikers,” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. 16 June 1937, 1-2. “Police attack” is used in a caption of an accompanying photograph.

“their individual stories fit into, and round out, the story told by the film with all the neatness of a jigsaw puzzle.” Anderson’s primary source was Lupe Marshall, a ninety-five-pound Mexican-American social worker. The *Post-Dispatch* printed three photos of her: one, a bust portrait, showed the smiling Hull House employee in sprightly bonnet and polka-dot blouse, an upstanding if tiny citizen. [Fig. 4-10.]¹⁰⁰ Flanking her were two stills from Memorial Day showing Marshall being beaten by police. Marshall described the unexpected cruelty of police who threw strikers into the paddy wagons like sacks of potatoes.

Anderson unearthed other compelling testimony. He found one union flag bearer who fought to keep the American flag off the ground until he too was shot; and the Youngstown employee whose doctor told him: “your head looks like a battlefield and your body like a barber pole.” He dug up stories aired once then never again heard. Six Chicago Theological Seminary students claimed machine-gun fire whizzed past them from behind Republic’s plant gates. In another, bystanders whose homes sat beside the prairie heard a commanding officer call out to his underlings, “All right men, let them have it!” Anderson returned to police efficiency on the field; this time they were “grimly methodical, as if...killing snakes.” Towards the finish of his series, Anderson solicited police comment and relayed their story as they’d given it all along: police shot to preserve order. After three days of Anderson’s story their justification failed to pass muster. A photo of police crossing the field, batons and billy-clubs casually carried over their shoulders or swinging by their sides accompanied the *Post-Dispatch* story. [Fig. 4-

⁹⁹ All quotes from “Suppressed News Reel Shows Police Shooting at Fleeing Strikers,” and “Senator Thomas Says Police Attacked Strikers,” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 17 June 1937, 1 and 3, both by Paul Anderson.

11.]¹⁰¹ Much like photos of strikers that appeared with regularity in this era, the police span the entire frame, and cross it at a diagonal, an angle often used to transmit danger. Captioned “The Return From a Bloody Victory,” these police appear the organized menace they railed against.

Paul Anderson exploited the newsreel’s suppression as a wedge to reopen dialogue about events at Republic Steel. He then constructed a story culled from the newsreel’s visual details: the evil, business-like police and the hapless pickets, the words that captured all: “God Almighty!,” a raised flag and a toppled flag, a policeman who wiped his hands and grinned when it was all over.

The midwestern reporter received almost immediate recognition. John Lewis quoted liberally from Anderson’s account at the June 17th Soldiers Field rally and claimed the film showed that “workers were deliberately murdered in cold blood by the Chicago Police Department as a friendly favor to the Republic Steel Company.” The *New York Times* reprinted his first article almost whole, so did the *Chicago Daily Times* and the *Daily Worker*. *Time Magazine* commended “news hawk” Anderson and printed a condensed version of the “clean copyright scoop.” Chicago’s *Daily News*, which had offered no first-hand account of events in its own backyard had one of their reporters recount “eye-witness” details that were a far cry from their earlier anti-unionism.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Photo and quotes from “Eye Witnesses Tell of Killing of Steel Strikers,” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 20 June 1937, 1, 30.

¹⁰¹ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 20 September 1937.

¹⁰² When John Lewis telegraphed his support to the twenty thousand people who filled Chicago Stadium in Illinois’s largest labor event he borrowed heavily from Paul Anderson’s narrative. *New York Times*, 18 June 1937, 4. See also: *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 18 June 1937, 1, 10; *New York Times*, 20 June 1937, 4; *Chicago Daily Times*, 18 June 1937, 2; *Time*, June 28, 1937: 13; *Chicago Daily News*, 18 June 1937; *Daily Worker*, 19 June 1937; *Current History* condemned the bias in earlier press coverage of the incident, “embarrassing questions would certainly annoy [large sections of the press],

Reporters called Anderson's evocative description of the Massacre's imagery an "extraordinary word-picture," and that term has stuck as shorthand for Anderson's account, which historians rely on to this day.¹⁰³

Paul Anderson's "word-picture" brought the images to life, but in doing so, fiction was at times stronger than fact. Consciously or not, Anderson massaged the truth for a better story.¹⁰⁴ "God Almighty" seemed the fitting response to the Massacre, but also recorded were a smattering of directives to assembled officers, and any number of anomalous expressions. "Boy oh, Boy," and "Oh Jeez" don't add the drama of "God Almighty!" The policeman of Anderson's finale, whose scowl brightened to a grin as he dusted off his hands in a parting gesture was not a figment, but his placement within the film is. His grin matched the "callous indifference" of the police, yet Lippert filmed him in the midst of the clean-up operation. Paul Anderson strained to craft a superb tale.

since their sturdy reporters seemed to have missed the massacre the camera recorded," Munro, "Cameras Don't Lie," 40.

¹⁰³ Jerry Auerbach quotes from Anderson in his analysis of the impact of the Paramount newsreel on the LaFollette Hearings. *Labor and Liberty*, 127. The history textbook, *Who Built America?* also quotes from Anderson's account without attributing it, Cohen, et.al., 416-418. Leab uses Anderson's description to great effect in his article on the Massacre and claims after viewing the film several times found Anderson's account accurate. "The Memorial Day Massacre," 11 and 18, note 23. Sofchak's account also shared Anderson's story which "speaks for itself." "Memorial Incident," 32. The CIO used this same language in 1937 in their convention proceedings, in "The Program of the CIO," 54 archived at *NAM papers*, s7b139f "labor unions 1918-1958." Fred Friendly, a former CBS News President writing on the need for a flexible interpretation of first amendment rights uses the Memorial Day incident as one example of press rights gone amok. He too draws from Anderson's account, "Justice White and Reporter Caldwell." Also *Allied Industrial Worker*, August 1974, 17. Local unions also rely on his word-picture. See *Remember Memorial Day, May 30, 1937, In Commemoration*, United Steel Workers of America, *D31papers*, and Local 1033, 30 May 1979, 16; and "This is Your Union" 23 May 1971, Local 1033 in *Patterson*, b11f2. *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 June 1937.

¹⁰⁴ Two of Anderson's key story elements are typically recounted: the only words he heard on film, "God Almighty!" and the policeman who grins as he dusts off his hands.

The National Headliners Club awarded Anderson a gold medal for his exposé, which they thought transformed public attitudes towards the SWOC strikers. His “torrid” story made “those Harlan County investigation yarns sound like bedtime stories.” The Headliners Club credited Anderson with providing Robert Wohlforth and John Abt, the two LaFollette Committee investigators, with their star witness, the slight Mexican-American social worker, Lupe Marshall and intimated that the investigators would have left town empty-handed without Anderson’s leads. But Wohlforth, an effective publicist, already had the newsreel in hand when in Chicago.¹⁰⁵ He may have used Anderson’s commitments and talent to pump interest in the hearings. Wherever the initiative originated, Anderson’s conjoining of pictorial evidence and compelling witness testimony helped somersault the interpretation of events in South Chicago.

“Stories Exhibited”

The final parry to Republic Steel and Chicago Police’s rationale for necessary force came from the Senate sub-committee investigating civil right abuses against unionizing workers. Labor activists who remembered the corporate anti-unionism of the 1919 strike wave solicited congressional intervention to preempt such tactics. They thought the glare of publicity would be a major deterrent. Robert M. LaFollette of Wisconsin, and Elmer Thomas of Utah co-chaired this Senate committee. Their investigation exposed the spy rackets, the fake “citizens committees” and the pure

¹⁰⁵ Auerbach, *Labor and Liberty*, 123; and “National Headliners Club Broadcast” in *LaFollette*, 50.25. Rumor had Anderson gaining the newsreel scoop by “trading” victims’ affidavits to Abt and Wohlforth for a sneak preview of the film. But LaFollette’s p.r. prowess was renown among contemporaries. John W. Hill, head of the firm Hill and Knowlton that worked for the American Iron and Steel Institute was

violence companies employed to block unionization. Even before the SWOC drive got off the ground, its national president, Philip Murray, touted the support labor could expect from the investigators' watchful eyes, claiming the committee "promise[d] to be instrumental in wielding public opinion more strongly behind us."¹⁰⁶

The LaFollette committee's skillful examination of witnesses, its strategic use of photographic evidence, and its public relations savvy all helped reassign blame for the massacre. Robert Wohlforth, the committee secretary, John Abt, its attorney, and other committee staff used their labor contacts to determine which cases to pursue. Staff did the background work for the hearings: met with witnesses, subpoenaed evidence, and prepared the briefs LaFollette and Thomas used in their questioning.¹⁰⁷ Wohlforth told Jerold Auerbach, whose *Labor and Liberty* is the definitive study of the Committee, that LaFollette "had to [be] drag[ged] ... screaming into some of these things. [LaFollette] didn't want to touch the Chicago Memorial Day Massacre, so I barreled up here and wrote my own subpoena and got the films. He didn't want to do that any more than eat sour apples."¹⁰⁸ LaFollette may have been an unwilling advocate, but after his congressional hearings in late June and early July police explanations for the incident seemed implausible, even laughable. Many times during the hearing Senators LaFollette

especially jealous of LaFollette's successes at Hill's expense. Tedlow, *Keeping the Corporate Image*, 102.

¹⁰⁶ Auerbach, *Labor and Liberty*, 59-63 claims Heber Blankenhorn, a former reporter and staff for the Interchurch Investigation in 1919 was a primary mover in creating the committee. Heber Blankenhorn believed that "What civil right were won depended perhaps more on incessant talking about them in the papers than in arguing in court." For the CIO's commitment to this view, see, CIO, National/International Union files, "Report," September 29, 1936, "Statement by Philip Murray" November 8, 1936; and also "Murray correspondence," all in *Murray*, b19f7.

¹⁰⁷ Wohlforth claimed LaFollette was so busy, he could only be updated in stolen moments found in Capitol Hill washrooms. Auerbach, *Labor and Liberty*, 6, 82.

¹⁰⁸ Wohlforth, *COHC*, 53.

and Thomas assured witnesses that the police were not on trial. When the committee's work was finished however, the police stood condemned.

The first morning of hearings was given over to questioning of Police Commissioner Allman and Police Chief Prendergast. Both justified their officers' actions while divesting themselves of responsibility for what transpired. Next called was Police Supervisor Mooney, the highest commanding officer on the South Chicago field, who argued that the strikers surged forward with a barrage of bolts, stones, automobile parts, and bricks when police asked them to disperse. Mooney hadn't ordered the police to shoot—if he had, 200 would have been shot, not forty. LaFollette took advantage of the witness's obdurate sense of superiority and did not bring out still photographs to contradict him until after Mooney finished testifying about the event's chronology. Under LaFollette's questioning Mooney admitted that the strikers in the photo, taken a few seconds after the "battle," were all "going the other way." Mooney's pride in his officers shone. [Fig. 4-12.]¹⁰⁹ When Senator Thomas asks whether running strikers could have outflanked the police, Mooney demurred. Chicago had "as good a police department as there is in the world... [The strikers] wouldn't get away with anything in Chicago, not a thing." Police "demoralized" the strikers. Returning to questioning, LaFollette asserted medical reports indicated strikers were almost all shot in the back. Prostrated by the assault, strikers only tried to get away. The commanding officer's smugness closed the single option visibly feasible: if running away, but not attempting to outflank police, then police shot retreating strikers.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ *Memorial Incident*, 14: Exhibit 1341, 5132.

¹¹⁰ *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4682-4724, and especially pages 4712-4719.

If Mooney vilified the mob, the next witness, Captain Kilroy, expressed sympathy for the picketers. This too LaFollette used to his advantage. Kilroy alleged that he “pleaded with a woman and a man there to please turn around and go home.” While importuning there was a revolver shot, then the hail of debris from strikers, and “then it seemed that the crowd and police all met force together.” He heard about 50 to 60 shots, all fired by police into the air. According to Kilroy, “everyone was for themselves.” Questioned by Thomas if this meant that police lost control, became a “mob,” Kilroy wiggled, responding “they were part of the mob when the mob was around them.” He didn’t want to retract his testimony of striker guilt and police professionalism. Pushing on, Thomas gained an admission from Kilroy that the men, though “part of the riot” were nonetheless under control. When asked how to explain the bullets in the back he ventured that other pickets who aimed at police instead hit their own. Those assembled in the Senate hearing room laughed, the first laugh, but many followed. LaFollette finally brought out the photographs, suggesting they were taken some time after the shooting began. Here Kilroy slipped, claiming they were taken immediately afterwards. The photographs indicated a crowd doing everything it could to get away from the police. Kilroy’s riot that engulfed police officers never happened.

LaFollette then established police insensitivity. He proffered a picture of Kilroy looked on as two officers beat two downed men. Pressed to explain, he said the victim looked as if he were “posing for a picture.” **[Fig. 4-13.]**¹¹¹ More laughter. Kilroy accepted LaFollette’s suggestion that Chicago’s Police Department should be shamed by such behavior. Thomas, adding his trademark moral outrage, remarked that “police would never slug a man with his back turned to him.” Kilroy again fell back on the riot.

The photograph impeded Kilroy's ability to make a convincing story, it indicated a field with six upright police and two fallen strikers. Kilroy ended the day's testimony with a tale of his tapping a striker coming at him with a 2' by 4." The striker ran towards him, but somehow Kilroy's blow landed on the strikers' back. Once again laughter filled the hearing room.¹¹²

LaFollette's questions allowed Chicago official witnesses to air their stories in the courtroom in full. Only after city officials and police officers sketched their tales did LaFollette draw upon the photographic evidence. Choosing not to bludgeon police with truthful photographic evidence, instead, LaFollette let the particulars of each officers' stories hang them.¹¹³ Mooney's contention that strikers could never outflank police

¹¹¹ The photo of Kilroy looking on, is *Memorial Incident*, 14, Exhibit 1350, 5134.

¹¹² Kilroy's testimony is found in *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4724-4750. The "posing" remark is found on *Ibid.*, 4743.

¹¹³ Auerbach's analysis of LaFollette and Thomas's interrogation style matches my sense of what transpired during the Memorial Day investigation. He draws on the very similar assessments by LaFollette's contemporaries. "Thomas reminded one observer of 'a nice old country lawyer'; his manner, invariably genial, and his questions, always quietly asked, encouraged witnesses to unbend. While Thomas probed witnesses for attitudes rather than for factual details, LaFollette grilled witnesses 'sharply, steadily and coldly, working with the...precision and power of a steel riveter.' Thomas led witnesses into a bog of contradictory statements; LaFollette's sharp thrusts, his tone incisive and his voice commanding, made them walk the plank of factual inaccuracies. LaFollette projected restlessness and shrewdness. Thomas seemed endlessly patient, searching always for meanings, stating and restating the moral dilemmas uncovered by his questions. LaFollette bore the brunt of the cross-examination. He permitted a witness to spin his own web of half-truths and evasions. Then he pounced. Using documents from the witness' own files, LaFollette would force him to renege, to contradict, and ultimately to destroy the plausibility of his own testimony. Thomas, constantly probing for some remnant of human values, set the witness up; LaFollette thoroughly grounded in facts, knocked him down. LaFollette's manner of interrogation, and the witness's resistance to it, generated the suspense of the hearings. He rephrased each question until, as one observer commented, the "eel-like witness could no longer wiggle through it." Auerbach, *Labor and Liberty*, 79-80. Quoting *Washington Post*, 25 April 1937; Dwight McDonald, "Espionage Inc.," *Nation*, 27 February 1937, 238; Meyer Levin, *Citizens* (New York: Viking Press, 1940), 413-4; Clinch Calkins, *Spy Overhead* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1937), 20.

prevented any other explanation for what could be seen in photographs, but that strikers wanted to run away. Kilroy's tale of strikers intermixing with police was never visible, even from the first moments of the shooting. His cajoling of strikers to leave the field was belied by his neglect towards underlings' brutality. Mooney and Kilroy's accounts of the Memorial Day incident were the two most prominent trumpeted by news media. LaFollette unmasked bad cop and good cop for spectators, and in the *Christian Science Monitor's* words, raised "a grim curtain," for what would be revealed in the following days.¹¹⁴

The next day Chicago police chose more slippery means to deal with the "sheaf of photographs" that LaFollette "flashed" at them.¹¹⁵ Sergeant Lyons testified that what appeared to be batons in photographs were creases in their pants; guns in police hands he transformed to photographic smudges or the strikers' missiles; police pulled not guns from holsters, but hankies from pockets. This creative sally made even "the usually poker-faced" LaFollette laugh.¹¹⁶ With braggadocio Lyons begged the committee to show the picture with police "standing with their arms behind their backs." For Lyons, police were victims, not the wounded or dead strikers. When handed a picture of the police line where he was visible, he played to the audience, "I have a copy of that at home." Lyons swore to seeing pickets conducting maneuvers in a military formation. When confronted by photographic evidence that indicates no organization, he hazarded they were an "army of Reds... a Mexican Army." Lyons claimed he saw two to three hundred men with clubs, baseball bats, and crowbars, but when asked to find them in the pictures, he found two. Lyons was the one witness to question the medium of

¹¹⁴ *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 June 1937, 1.

¹¹⁵ *Chicago Herald Examiner*, 2 July 1937, 1, in *Jacques* b2.

photography. Yet his hyperbole fell before LaFollette's sober explanations. The senator was careful with the photos. The drawn guns proved neither that police attempted to intimidate the pickets, nor that they fired at them, just that they could not have shot in self defense, as the line of strikers and police remained distinct.¹¹⁷ The *Christian Science Monitor* reported that evening that "Strike Riot Photos are Star Witnesses," for "senators were aided at every point with photographs" as they interrogated recalcitrant police.¹¹⁸

Officers Woods, Higgins, Igoe, and Kelly were called to the chair. Their testimony conjured sawed-off shotguns and nickel-plated pistols. However no guns were collected off the field nor taken from the dead strikers. Police offered new explanations—that the picketers were high on marijuana.

They developed certain idiosyncrasies that are pronounced. The eyeballs are red, there is a facial grimace; at times they break out in hilarious laughter while they are kind of frenzied like...They had a monotonous chant, CIO, CIO.

Wilder than the crowd that Memorial Day were police stories that fell apart under LaFollette's relentless interrogation.¹¹⁹ Spectators had laughed at Kilroy's testimony, but on the second day they booed and hissed police.¹²⁰ Concluded *TIME*'s reporter, "Chicago Police convicted themselves of boobery, if not butchery."¹²¹

William Daly, Chicago's Assistant Corporate Counsel "came a long way to present [Chicago's] case" but he repeated the same testimony he gave a week earlier to the conservative Post Office Committee. Daly held that "the ordinary everyday American, a man that works for a living" would not attempt to secure his rights in

¹¹⁶ *New York Daily News*, 2 July 1937, 7.

¹¹⁷ *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4751-4789.

¹¹⁸ *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 July 1937, 16.

¹¹⁹ *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4788-4827.

¹²⁰ *Chicago Herald Examiner*, 2 July 1937, 1 in Jacques b2 CHS.

collective action. Those on the field had to be foreigners, or Communist agitators. Daly read to the Senate committee a preponderance of court cases supporting the decision of Chicago's finest to disperse a crowd by killing them, promising that "agitators who led and encouraged the assault...will not go unwhipped of justice."¹²²

Ralph Beck, a *Chicago Daily News* stringer, testified next and no more meticulous renderer of events could be found. The slight Beck could barely make his testimony heard. What it lacked in volume in made up for with ethos. A fellow reporter claimed Beck's words "struck the most sweeping blow at the police case."¹²³ The general mood of the crowd was picnic-like. Speakers exhorted, but were not inflammatory. Unlike police witnesses who had difficulty establishing their location, Beck stood eight inches from Kilroy. He repeated Kilroy's words to the strikers, better than Kilroy had himself. Beck corrected LaFollette when he spoke of pickax handles. Police had hatchet handles, forty to be precise. In place of police with their diffuseness, Beck was a master of particularity. Beck contradicted the strikers who claimed they had no weapons. He saw a small number, a total of thirty-five or forty, with eight pipes. Nonetheless he argued strikers carried no weapons to the front line, and that picketers were packed so tight they had no room to club police.

Beck established a specific chain of events including the definitive moment: "The club had not reached the peak of its arc when the first shot was fired." The police volley of shots came before striker missiles had even reached police. The greatest number clubbed were those already felled, "their only practice seemed to be they would not

¹²¹ *Time Magazine*, 12 July 1937, 17.

¹²² *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4830-4850.

attack the strikers individually; no police would go without another one or two or even three accompanying him to any two strikers lying on the ground.” Anywhere between 1,200 to 2,500 stood on the prairie outside Republic Steel, but the details eluded almost all who left oral or written record, but not Ralph Beck. The seamlessness of his testimony has attracted contemporaries and historians alike. Beck’s narrative presented some inconsistencies with the evidence, but LaFollette did not use them to discount Beck’s testimony. Beck’s precision helped nail down the union narrative.¹²⁴

LaFollette called labor’s sympathizers only after he mangled police stories. Union staff and members, allies and bystanders told stories that resonated in the general but varied in the particular. Most denied Communist ideology or weaponry on the field and they described police brutality experienced or witnessed. LaFollette’s questions pulled out the horror that day. One man, Fleming, whose house abutted the field told how his daughter fainted when she realized police were shooting.¹²⁵ A next-door neighbor who crowded round the window with Fleming’s family was so anxious to get a view that he went outside. He found police combing residents’ gardens. The sticks, refuse, and tomato ties they pulled off the ground police would later maintain were strikers’ weaponry.¹²⁶

Lupe Marshall was the sole woman called to the stand and she received the most press attention. As one of the few participants identified in the newsreel and in

¹²³ Clipping in *Jacques*, b2. The LaFollette Committee *Report* counterpoised Beck’s clarity to the bias of striker or police accounts, though Beck’s testimony substantiated the union story in large part. *Memorial Report*, 12, 16.

¹²⁴ Beck claimed there were no weapons in the front line, but one picture showed a few pickets in the front line with sticks. *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4850-4862.

¹²⁵ The exact order of labor witnesses is not being followed in this description, though I’m not changing the dramatic tenor in any way. *Ibid.*, 4969-4973.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4973-4976; and *Memorial Report*, 12.

photographs, her story brought the events to life. Marshall attended the rally to study Mexican participation in the labor movement as a "volunteer social worker." She joined a "jubilant" group of women moving towards the police line. "They were singing, and some of the fellows were kidding each other and patting themselves on the back as we went along." She told of reaching the police, their batons swinging back and forth, the name-calling. And then the shooting.

The police were closing in, closing their ranks and crowding us, pushing us back all this time, and I said to one of the officers in front of me, I said, "There are enough of you men to march alongside of these people, to see that order is kept." And he answered me "Like hell! Like hell! Like hell! Like hell there are!"...It seems that I was still talking to these officers in front of me, when I heard a dull thud toward the back of the—of my group, and as I turned around there was screaming going on in back, and simultaneously a volley of shots. It sounded more like thunder. I heard that and I couldn't—for a minute I couldn't imagine what was happening. I had seen this man with his revolver out, but I couldn't believe that they were shooting, so I turned around to see what was happening, and the people that were standing in back of me were all lying on the ground face down.

Her simple incomprehension at the shooting touched the spectators. She described further police brutality.

Mrs. Marshall. I noticed that a policeman had just clubbed an individual [who] dragged himself a bit and tried to get up, when the policemen clubbed him again. He did that four times... Every time he tried to get up the policeman's club came down on him. When the man finally fell so he could not move, the policeman took him by the foot and turned him over on his back, and started dragging him...I screamed at the policeman and said "Don't do that. Can't you see he is terribly injured?" And at the moment I said that somebody struck me from the back again and knocked me down. As I went down somebody kicked me on the side here...

Senator LaFollette. How much do you weigh, Mrs. Marshall?

Mrs. Marshall. I weigh 92 pounds now. I weighed 97 when this happened.

Senator LaFollette. And how tall are you?

Mrs. Marshall. 4' feet 11".

Her interlocutor established her size, letting the hearings' spectators think about the burly police she faced. Marshall said police threw her into the paddy wagon with a kick to the backside, and then piled sixteen wounded on top of one another, not a one who could hold his own head up. Marshall described the ride to Bridewell Hospital, and a policeman with "tears rolling down his eyes" when one of the victims died with his last word "Mother" incomplete. When they get to the hospital police dumped the bodies on the concrete floor. Marshall described emergency-room triage, a doctor who poked his fingers through the holes in one man's head before deciding others should be cared for first.¹²⁷

Marshall measured her words to full, indicting effect.¹²⁸ The bafflement at the shots that sounded like thunder, the downed man hit four times, the tight quarters of the paddy wagon turned hearse, the man with five holes in his head and the doctor's probing fingers. What shone through was the unremitting harshness of police every step of the way.

LaFollette then called Harry Harper, who'd lost one eye from a police bullet. Police neglected his wound after the fray, which threatened his other eye. His head was "swathed in bandages," and press reported how Harper was "guided in and out of the hearing room by his wife."¹²⁹ He had joined the marchers to calm his nervous mother. One of her sons was inside the plant; another was out on strike. Harper hoped to find the brother inside Republic Steel when a policeman told him to watch himself, or "I'll fill you

¹²⁷ *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4873-4 and 4959-4961.

¹²⁸ Anderson appeared to have thought so. He gave her story top billing in his article, and she was singled out in the CBS Broadcast when he won his award. "And what a witness I got for you -- oh boy, she'll knock 'em dead on the stand." In "National Headliners Club Broadcast," CBS, July 10, 1937, in *LaFollette*, 50.25.

¹²⁹ *Washington Evening Star*, 2 July 1937, *Jacques*, b2.

full of lead.” Here Harper’s testimony faltered. LaFollette read aloud Harper’s earlier affidavit, and in so doing enacted Harper’s disability to the Washington crowd. Harper finished by telling the court’s spectators that he was “of the same faith of some of these officers” and he invoked the Ten Commandments they shared, wondering if the officers had forgotten the Biblical injunction against killing. Harper made LaFollette’s hearing room a pulpit to condemn police action.¹³⁰

When LaFollette questioned labor he used photographs to help witnesses construct a compelling explanation for the Memorial Day events. SWOC organizer Joel Riffe, testified the union could control the crowd and he claimed picketers had no weapons. LaFollette immediately contradicted Riffe’s assertion with a photo of strikers with several sticks in their hands.¹³¹ LaFollette didn’t let Riffe develop a story as he had police, leaving Riffe’s integrity mostly intact. The next witness, Gus Yuratovic, claimed union men picked up stones and sticks from the field as they passed along, but Yuratovic asked men to drop them. Here testimony gave the union a way to limit the damage of photographic evidence.¹³² LaFollette had union witnesses describe the photos’ contents. They built stories from the visual details that most damned police: the many women in the crowd, and how they fell with men astride them after the shooting; the vacant eyes and inert hands of the victims; roving groups of police who lashed out at the most vulnerable; and a sick-looking, pigeon-toed Lupe, bloodied by police blows.¹³³

LaFollette made the showing of the Paramount newsreel the linchpin of the investigation. He perched the moving picture screen near the front of the hearing room

¹³⁰ *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4959-4964. Leab also noted Harper’s testimony. “Memorial Day Massacre,” 12.

¹³¹ *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4863-4873.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 4873-4878.

for all three days. Press across the nation heralded this “first time in congressional history” that a motion picture was used as evidence. The film was shown in the midst of striker testimony, just before lunch. Wohlforth later reminisced this timing was a common tactic for the committee, who wanted to reach the afternoon extra edition.¹³⁴ LaFollette asked the custodian of the Senate Office Building to clear seats for police commanders so they could sit near the screen. Newspapers reported his dramatic gesture. Somewhere between five hundred and a thousand people crowded the room that day, “not even standing room remained.”¹³⁵ LaFollette had cameraman Orlando Lippert explain the ordering of the shots and Wohlforth announce the additional showing of an altered version he made to elucidate the newsreel.¹³⁶ Wohlforth slowed the action in the film by printing each frame twice. He also selected fourteen frames that were frozen on the screen for longer periods of up to half a minute. The stills recorded police violence, strikers and bystanders throwing rocks were passed by. Wohlforth captured the essence of the scene outside Republic, but he also framed the events by accentuating police violence.¹³⁷

The crowds and the press reacted much as LaFollette and his investigators hoped. “An audience freely sprinkled with Senators, office workers and Capitol attaches” gave a “general groan” to scenes of a policeman whacking a fallen striker. At least one woman

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 4908-4924. James Stewart and Joe Weber’s testimony is striking in this regard.

¹³⁴ Wohlforth, *COHC*, 15; *Washington Evening Star*, 2 July 1937, *Jacques*, b2.

¹³⁵ *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4891; *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 July 1937, 3; *Washington Evening Star*, 2 July 1937, *Jacques*, b2.

¹³⁶ Lippert took the establishing shots of the Republic Steel plant after the Massacre had occurred, but these appeared first in the movie shown at the hearing. *Memorial Incident*, 14: 4887-4890.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4890-1.

fainted and was taken for first aid.¹³⁸ With a final flourish, LaFollette called police officials back to the front to conclude his questioning. He asked each one if they still approved of the officers' conduct. Not one of the four repudiated what they saw, but newspapers reported their public humiliation.¹³⁹

Historians have argued that the Paramount newsreel was the "climax of the hearing [which] demolished virtually every claim made by the police."¹⁴⁰ Certainly LaFollette organized the hearings so that the film and the photographs received top billing. But some dissented and found the Paramount film inconclusive. Moving pictures were "expected to tell their own story," said the *Christian Science Monitor*. Instead, though the film was of "tremendous emotional impact" and "of the greatest historical importance," it failed to "finally reveal who precipitated the fatal clash." In real time the film "is too rapid to grasp details." *Time Magazine* concurred: events in the film happened so quickly it appeared, "furious confusion," the still photographs were "sharper." *Time* claimed the Paramount film was "anticlimax" to the harrowing tales offered by survivors. *Newsweek* believed the film, "less eloquent than the Chicago coroner's report that seven of the dead were shot in the back."¹⁴¹ These dissenting judgements support the notion that the film documents without telling. The film is empowered in conjuncture with previously marginalized stories, the stories that Anderson and LaFollette worked so hard to bring to the center of public consciousness.

¹³⁸ Clipping, Jacques b2, and *Washington Evening Star*, 2 July 1937.

¹³⁹ *Washington Post*, 3 July 1937, Jacques, b2.

¹⁴⁰ The *Washington Post* also saw it as a climax. 3 July 1937, in Jacques, b2; *Time*, 12 July 1937, 18; Auerbach, *Labor and Liberty*, 127; Sofchalk, "Memorial Incident," 36.

¹⁴¹ *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 July 1937, 2; *Time Magazine*, 12 July 1937, 17; *Newsweek*, 17 July 1937, 9.

The Committee condemned police action on Memorial Day, 1937 in a report they issued later that July. It concluded that the police attack was unprovoked, police shot with the crowd in “full retreat,” and that in the aftermath police “treatment of the injured was characterized by the most callous indifference to human life and suffering. Wounded prisoners of war might have expected and received greater solicitude.” The Committee singled out photographic evidence to demonstrate the crowd’s mood prior to the shooting and the immediate retreat of the strikers before the shower of police bullets. Orlando Lippert’s seven seconds during a lens change meant that the “immediate cause” of the shots could not be established. Ralph Beck’s near photographic memory supplied the missing links. The committee tied photographic imagery to other evidence such as medical reports or eyewitness testimony.¹⁴²

LaFollette never treated photographic evidence as absolute truth, but most newspapers were not as subtle. Headlines such as the *New York Times* “Riot Photos Force Police Admission” questioned the police account, and stories now purveyed the union stance that police action was unprovoked. The *Washington Post* went furthest in concluding that “police went beserk,” but a Louisville *Courier-Journalist* columnist called Chicago’s police “frightening, bungling amateurs,” and even the Youngstown *Vindicator*, a staunch critic of the strikers, now editorialized against the “shocking brutality” of Chicago’s police.¹⁴³ Journalists seemed impressed with how the Report

¹⁴² *Report*, 20-21, 32.

¹⁴³ *New York Times*, 1 July 1937, 5; and 2 July 1937, 5; *Washington Post*, 2 July 1937; Herbert Agar was the columnist who called police “bungling amateurs,” *Jacques*, b2; and Friendly for the *Vindicator* reference, “Justice White and Reporter Caldwell,” 34. The SWOC treated the newsreel as proof in and of itself. One resolution on the Massacre at the 1937 convention condemned police, claiming the “unprovoked cruelty recorded beyond possibility of argument in the Paramount Newsreel.”

“was voluminously illustrated with pictures.”¹⁴⁴ Some newspapers printed stills from the “suppressed film” showing police chasing strikers with their upswept billy-clubs. They were much like the still photographs that had been used to condemn strikers. Others printed photos of LaFollette, carefully examining photographs, or just waving them at the audience. Magazines and dailies whose mission was purveying photographs took the most advantage of the movies to tout their own product. *LIFE* claimed LaFollette “conduct[ed] an investigation by pictures,” and they showed LaFollette and Thomas intently examining photographs, along with a full page of sequence shots from the Paramount newsreel. [Fig. 4-14.]¹⁴⁵ The New York *Daily News* also printed Paramount stills under the heading “Film that Told Chicago Riot Story to Senate.” The Paramount sequence printed in the *Daily News* followed one man’s progress from sign-carrying protester to his being “knocked cold.” The *Daily News* concluded, “But the Pictures Tell his Story,” suggesting contrary to their own treatment, that narration was unnecessary.¹⁴⁶ Much as Paramount would, these purveyors of the photograph promoted the notion that there was no greater truth than what met the eye.

One witness at the hearings said that the crowd reversed its path “like the slats of a venetian blind” after the police shots.¹⁴⁷ His analogy also describes the relationship between stories and pictures of the Massacre. Testimony before LaFollette’s committee and Paul Anderson’s superb press coverage in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* reversed the

¹⁴⁴ Steel Labor, 6 August 1937, 8; Chicago American, n.d. but probably 23 July 1937, Jacques, b2. The Memorial Day Incident Report was so popular that the committee’s staff was forced to request extra printing runs, and even so unions clamored for copies that they couldn’t get. Robert Wohlforth to Chairman, Joint Committee on Printing, July 28, 1937, LaFollette, 50.25.

¹⁴⁵ *LIFE*, 12 July 1937, 72-3.

¹⁴⁶ *New York Times*, 3 July 1937; *New York Daily News* 3 July 1937, 14, 28.

¹⁴⁷ *Memorial Incident*, Dr. Lawrence Jacques, 4986.

slant of the photos. If millions nationwide saw a mob of CIO strikers at South Chicago, they could now view the lengths to which corporations and civil authorities might go to stop unionization.

Reel Stories

As a result of Paul Anderson, Robert LaFollette, and the CIO's efforts, Paramount would re-edit their footage, sharing with the American public a more neutral story about the South Chicago events. Historians have always written about the Paramount footage much as Paramount itself would have liked their footage to be seen, "the most impartial of all reporters." They've also written about the film footage as if just one version of it existed. But the filmed story shifted over time. Making different stories from the same footage was a common practice for the newsreel companies. Three distinct versions of the Memorial Day Massacre story exist; *Steel Strike Riots* was only the first. *Steel Strike Riots* condemned union actions on Memorial Day, but Paramount spliced this same footage to tell two radically different stories of what happened on that field.

Paramount's second story about the Memorial Day incident, *Conflict Between Police and Strikers Near the South Chicago Plant of the Republic Steel Company, Memorial Day, 1937* humanized the strikers and offered a balanced view of the organizing drive.¹⁴⁸ As with *Steel Strike Riots*, the title offered clues to the film's story,

¹⁴⁸ Paramount destroyed almost all their corporate newsreel records, so it is impossible to patch together the genesis of these three different versions, or corporate thinking vis-à-vis the films, though it is possible to reconstruct which movies were shown where. *Conflict Between Police and Strikers Near the South Chicago Plant of the Republic Steel Company, Memorial Day, 1937* is found at the Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Branch

in this case an “even-handed” portrayal of conflict between two sides. Police and strikers received proportional coverage with a pan shot of strikers marching in front of the gates, and then a shot of police stationed right outside the entrance. The film switched back and forth between long views of the site of the conflict, and close-up, intimate looks at the picketers’ faces and their signs with messages visible. A young boy on a bike rode past the camera, a sly grin on his face and a “Don’t Scab” sign attached to his handlebars. Another boy with a baseball hat walked in the middle of the street, as a father and a small boy of three or four crossed the road holding hands. If *Steel Strike Riots* showed strikers in menacing mass at night, this story pulled the workers from their anonymity, making them appealing family men.

Conflict Between Police and Strikers also detailed police actions. The film showed police gathered in back of the paddy wagon receiving instructions from their commander. Then the *Steel Strike Riots* footage appeared: the mass of strikers moving across the field. In *Conflict Between Police and Strikers* viewers could see the minor confrontation between strikers and police as the two parties met on the field. The narrator did not rationalize police action by claiming they “pled” for strikers to leave the field. Instead the film showed a youngish man trying to convince police of something. The cries “Listen, listen” and “move” interrupted the general hum between the crowd and the police line. The strikers seemed intent but hardly rabid. The shooting and clean-up operation by police then followed. Union members and sympathizers might have recognized *Conflict between Police and Strikers* as their version of events that day. Records suggest however, that few Americans ever saw *Conflict between Police and*

of the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Record Group 46.3, U.S. Senate. (hereafter, *Mot-NA*).

Strikers.¹⁴⁹ Written accounts about the Paramount newsreel when it was finally exhibited to the public mention neither strikers along the street, nor the boy with the “Don’t Scab” sign on his bike. In all likelihood the story that presented strikers as family men may never have been seen outside the confines of the “darkened, velvet-draped” Senate Committee room.¹⁵⁰

Paramount made a third story, *What Happened at South Chicago, Memorial Day, 1937*. It began with a narrated title, a simple question suggesting straightforward answers to the questions that had circulated since strikers had been shot down.¹⁵¹ The narrator’s exclamation, “Now it Can be Shown,” matched the bolded explanatory text on the screen. The film reminded viewers that Paramount was known for its news scoops when the narrator told them the company “alone covered the clash.” As head shots of Senators Robert LaFollette and Elbert Thomas appeared the narrator introduced them and their

¹⁴⁹ Robert LaFollette gave *Conflict between Police and Strikers* to the National Archives with the restriction that viewing be restricted to “an official agency of the Federal Government.” LaFollette lifted the restriction in 1944, after the committee’s work was over. Sen. LaFollette to Dr. Solon Buck of the Legislative Branch of the National Archives, January 15, 1944. Accession papers No. 1519 for *Republic Steel Strike: Conflict Between Police and Strikers, Mot-NA*. *Conflict* has its own copyright listing in the Library of Congress’s listings of copyrights for *Motion Pictures: 1912-1939*. The entry stands out as most newsreels are untitled and listed only by the copyright code and date of copyright under the producing company’s name. *Catalogue of Copyright Entries: Cumulative Series. Motion Pictures, 1912-1939*, (Washington D.C. The Library of Congress Copyright Office, 1951), 635. It’s code is listed as MU7542. This film was copyrighted on June 29th, 1937, three days before its public screening before the committee. Its code however, MU7542 indicates the possibility that it was never shown. An MU code, unlike an MP code indicates that the work was “unpublished” at the time of copyright, or that it had not been theatrically released. Orlando Lippert’s testimony to the Committee appears to verify this hypothesis, as he claimed some footage taken earlier that week on Avenue O was included in the film. There is no exact way to tell. Things “unpublished” at the time of copyright might be released at a later date. Rosemary Haines at the Library of Congress, Motion Picture Branch was extremely helpful in sorting this out.

¹⁵⁰ See *Motion Picture Herald* for committee room description, 10 July 1937, 27.

investigation into the tragedy. The camera then zoomed-in on LaFollette who thanked Paramount for making the newsreel footage his committee saw available to the general public. But the Committee saw two different versions of footage, *Conflict Between Police and Strikers*, and Wohlforth's version that had slowed shots of visible police violence.

The announcer then declared as the text appeared across the screen: "The following pictures, made before and during the trouble are shown exactly as they came from the camera, WITHOUT EDITING... as presented before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee in Washington." (Emphasis theirs.) *What Happened at South Chicago* then moved to the footage of police shooting, though Paramount cut the initial few seconds of footage, including the lone shot of police firing their guns. There were no establishing shots to the conflict, and the break from LaFollette's official stamp of approval to the shooting jars. After the shooting the film followed the events as the camera recorded them. In *What Happened at South Chicago* Paramount separated the shooting from the events that led up to it. This newsreel put the killing under a microscope, but made no sense of its origin. No strikers' signs were seen, no marching, no police readying themselves—just the victims premised in the LaFollette investigation.

What Happened at South Chicago told a story about Paramount's telling of the story. The newsreel's protagonist was truth itself.¹⁵²

What Happened at South Chicago was probably the newsreel that the general public finally saw after the LaFollette hearings were complete.¹⁵³ Paramount submitted a

¹⁵¹ *What Happened at South Chicago*, Memorial Day, 1937 is also archived at the Grinberg Film Libraries, PMN 6359 and 6559, 95A.

¹⁵² *LIFE Magazine* also presented photographic imagery of the Massacre as a triumph of the camera's neutral objectivity. See Chapter Two, and *LIFE*, 19 July 1937, 26.

copyright to the Library of Congress that featured Robert LaFollette's newsreel speech. Because Paramount prepared a separate release sheet for *What Happened at South Chicago* they appeared to deem that edited version a significant draw. An industry paper, *The Motion Picture Herald*, ran a long story on the film's release. The studios shilled their products in the *Herald* and the paper's description of the film matches *What Happened at South Chicago*'s story-line. This version also coincides with news reports of the newsreel when it opened in New York City theaters.¹⁵⁴

Paramount placed their role in purveying the truth center stage in *What Happened at South Chicago*, eliding their earlier suppression of the movie. Senators LaFollette and Thomas may have lent their imprimatur to this version because they too had something to gain. They may have hoped that the nationwide screening of this film would provoke greater outcry about labor's struggles. As LaFollette told viewers, "This film...merits the attention and study of all citizens of this country."¹⁵⁵ *What Happened at*

¹⁵³ Each year the Motion Picture copyright catalogue lists 104 entries corresponding to the twice weekly release schedule of the newsreel companies. Hidden in this long listing of films copyright each year is No. 95A. Only *What Happened at South Chicago* is coded as MP7695 indicating theatrical release *Motion Pictures, 1912-1939*, 635. It was copyright on July 1, or the day before the public release of the film before the LaFollette Committee. Usually each number corresponds to a grouping of stories released on any one day. See Fielding's *The American Newsreel* for an explanation of this. Library of Congress records of copyright information for newsreels indicate the same. 95A is a special entry despite its concealment in the long listing, it is the only film listed under this number. Paramount provided the Library of Congress a "release sheet" with a film synopsis that also served as advance advertising to theater owners. Unlike other newsreels which were listed together on such broadsides, *What Happened at South Chicago* had its own release sheet, indicating Paramount thought it would draw a significant audience. Library of Congress staff were very helpful with clues here.

¹⁵⁴ *Daily Worker*, July 2, 1937 in LaFollette, 50.25; and *New York Times*, 3 July 1937, 5. The film was exhibited at the Embassy Newsreel Theater and Times Square Paramount Theater. Not an infallible guide to film release, the *Herald* nonetheless is an important clue. "Paramount Releases Steel Strike Films," *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 July 1937, 27.

¹⁵⁵ Paramount Release Sheet, Issue No. 95A, August 11, 1937, Motion Picture Branch, Library of Congress.

South Chicago touted the Committee's findings to a nationwide audience with an immediacy impossible in print.

Steel Strike Riot Sharpens CIO Crisis, which had been edited two days after the conflict and which justified the full scale assault on strikers may never have been exhibited in the U.S.¹⁵⁶ It seems plausible that in the intervening month Paul Anderson's newsreel "word-picture" and the LaFollette Committee's investigation into the events in Chicago altered the permissible story-line. Ironically, Paramount may have been forced to make a more neutral "story" in light of the event's reinterpretation which hinged on their own footage as irrefutable evidence. Film studios liked to create a product to match their audience's desires, even for the "news." If *Steel Strike Riots* corresponded to the condemnation of strikers right after the event, by the time Paramount took its footage off the shelf and released it to the public, on July 2, 1937, the initial story-line was no longer reasonable. Perhaps *Steel Strike Riots* was the version shown to in British theaters "by mistake" two weeks before it was released in the U.S. One audience member reacted, "It made me want to go out and bite a policeman."¹⁵⁷

Paramount released *What Happened at South Chicago* nationally, right after the hearings, claiming that feelings were no longer at a "white heat" given the CIO's failed Little Steel drive. Chicago's crime prevention bureau banned the film however, under

¹⁵⁶ Former CBS News President, Fred Friendly, cites a "pejorative version of the footage" that includes the exact narration of *Steel Strike Riots* in a rare textual reference in 1972. No evidence indicates that this version was ever released however. Friendly, "Justice White and Reporter Caldwell," 34. The titling has a copyright marking, however studios typically added these in post-production editing, and as a result this is not an indication that the film was actually copyright. The Library of Congress has no information recording the legal copyright of this film.

¹⁵⁷ The narrator in *Steel Strike Riots* stated five had died, indicating Paramount completed their editing on this version almost immediately, prior to the death of Anthony Tagliore on June 1st. *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 July 1937, 27; and *Time*, 28 June 1937, 13.

standard practice of “forbidding motion pictures of conflicts between labor and capitol.” St. Louis censored the footage because it was “unfit for women and children.” Labor sympathizers spent the summer seeking to overturn such bans.¹⁵⁸ Complained University of Chicago professor T.V. Smith, “The whole world has seen the pictures, why not we?...Why does the [the city administration] not let us judge facts for ourselves from the pictures? Why do men choose darkness rather than light?”¹⁵⁹

But the images alone failed to enlighten. Orlando Lippert documented actual events: strikers and police milling about before they met on the field, strikers running desperately away from police, and police mercilessly seeking victims. Lippert was an excellent craftsman, his clean focus, in close-up and panoramic shots, imparted the expected news-style clarity. But as a news-cameraman Lippert was telling a story, even as the events unfurled. He changed lenses to better tell his story. The filmed events happened so quickly however—much as they had for those on the field—it was nearly impossible to sort out what transpired. Only by slowing down the film into stills that can be set against the testimony and other forms of evidence, much as LaFollette had, do the images become proof. To impart meaning in real time the film footage required the narrative conferred by editing. Paramount’s “impartial eye” constructed three distinct tales from the same events that give lie to *What Happened at South Chicago*’s claim that the event is pictured, “without editing,” or *Steel Strike Riots* presentation of “not arguments but facts.” These three stories should serve as a cautionary note to scholars who believe, like Professor Smith that images alone can illuminate.

¹⁵⁸ *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 July 1937, 27; *Chicago Herald and Examiner*, 4 July 1937 in *Jacques*, b2. See also the local Women’s Auxiliary newsletter, “Women in Steel,” September 1937, 5, *CHS*, and *Patterson*, “Embryo,” Book Two, 88, b9f6 for suppression of film in nearby steel town, Chicago Heights.

“Look at the Pictures.”

From start to finish discussion public dialogue about the Memorial Day events was permeated with discussion of photographic imagery. LaFollette was never the only one with photographs to prove his case: all sides—labor, the police, and the Republic Steel Corporation—sought to use photographs to their advantage. Despite their reliance on photography, contemporaries preoccupied themselves with whether the medium provided the “full picture.” Photography was ever more salient within the popular imagination, but unionists and their foes argued whether photos arbitrated or obscured truth.

In the aftermath of the South Chicago killings some public officials called for motion picture cameras to be installed in riot wagons for surveillance. The *Daily Calumet* wrote up a neutral report on the demand by a city council alderman for police to carry “moving picture cameras...into labor conflicts or other civil strife.” Alderman Massen who introduced the resolution did not “criticize police action or ask for an investigation” he just wanted cameras for future conflicts. After Paul Anderson and the LaFollette’s successes with photographic evidence, the anti-union paper editorialized in outrage against the Massen resolution: “Are we to discard the lie detector and all else and rely upon the movie camera to prove or disprove certain charges in times of strife?...those who have been to Hollywood will tell you, never believe anything you see in the movies, because they can make black white and bend you to their way by clever camera tricks.”¹⁶⁰ The *Calumet* correctly noted the camera’s dual capacity to document

¹⁵⁹ “Let Chicago See Film of Riot” – Smith. “Clipping,” *Jacques*, b2.

¹⁶⁰ *Daily Calumet*, 9 June 1937, 1; and *Daily Calumet*, 16 July 1937.

and fabricate, but its criticism only arose once the paper's anti-union stance proved less tenable with growing condemnation of police action.

Still photographs also dominated discussion in a congressional inquiry aimed at drumming up negative publicity against CIO strikers. Conservatives on the Senate Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads spearheaded an investigation into CIO interference into the delivery of the mails with the Little Steel conflict. The entire investigation may have been a publicity stunt on the part of Republic Steel. They used the mail to provision workers who stayed in the plants. Republic put so much through the mails that postal officials finally claimed it was "physically impossible to handle Republic's request." The company showed up to the post office with witnesses and photographers and when postal officials balked at the kinds of mail they were asked to carry, the story made front-page news, prompting the inquiry.¹⁶¹

Girdler's testimony before the committee received top billing in national press. He called SWOC's President, Philip Murray who preceded him as a witness an "out and out liar," and reduced any complaint about the troubles in Chicago to a simple equation, of the 100 wounded only 14 were Republic employees, clear proof outside agitators were

¹⁶¹ The Post Office delivered at rates three to four times higher than average, but Republic wanted them to deliver more. As part of the p.r. attack on the union, Virginia's senator Henry Byrd, demanded recompense for Smithfield Ham producers whose pork spoiled when it couldn't be delivered. Hearings Before the Senate Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, *Delivery or Nondelivery of Mail in Industrial Strife Areas*, 75th Cong., 1st sess., June 11 to June 24, 1937, 173, 35, 2-3. (Hereafter *Delivery of Mail*.) See *TIME*, 9 August 1937, 12 for the Smithfield ham anecdote. In February of 1937, the NAM drafted legislation demanding that the President set up an investigation to make sure that labor organization was not "endanger[ing] the public interest of the people of the United States," and it indicated an interest in the "interruption of communication," through the "movement of the mails." Memo attached to "An Act to Provide for the Investigation of Controversies Interrupting or Threatening to Interrupt Interstate or Foreign Commerce," in NAM Board Minutes, February 17, 1937, s13b199, *NAM papers*, Hagley.

to blame.¹⁶² Girdler claimed his plants were surrounded by mobs “armed with everything under the sun” and he brought photographs certified by Youngstown’s chief of police to prove it. [Fig. 4-15.]¹⁶³ His move was effective. As we saw in Chapter Two, *LIFE Magazine* took up a full page with four of the photos, that were certified with the police chief’s signature and a description of the strikers’ “exotic instruments...a machete, a bolo, and a tomahawk.” Wanting to preempt the impact of the Paramount newsreel rumored to show police shooting at peaceful pickets, Girdler also brought newsreels of his own, strikers, “pulling up railroad ties, wrecking switches and forcibly rerouting freight cars.” When one Senator asked Girdler whether there was “bad blood” between himself and the CIO, Girdler replied, “look at the pictures;” photographic evidence justified his animus.¹⁶⁴

The Post Office Committee also called William Daly, Chicago’s Assistant Corporate Counsel. Like Girdler, Daly brought photographs, “no more authentic than these photographs taken by the photographers of these great newspapers of Chicago.”¹⁶⁵ Daly annotated the photographs to guide the Senators through their reading of the images. He pointed to “implements in hands of mob,” police “with their hands behind their back,”

¹⁶² *Delivery of Mail*, 207, 235, 208, 235-6, 254, 255.

¹⁶³ “Weapons of Industrial Warfare Are Seen by the U.S. Senate” *LIFE*, 5 July 1937, 16.

¹⁶⁴ *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 June 1937, 1; and 16 June 1937, 1; 23 June 1937, 1; 24; June 1937, 3 and 25 June 1937, 3. Girdler maintained this stance in a later address to the Illinois Manufacturers Association, a NAM affiliate, in Chicago. He claimed the “CIO moved in on us with literally a military invasion...Every form of violence was experienced from the tearing up of railroad tracks to dynamiting of plant entrances. Communist agitation and Communist methods of terrorism were everywhere in evidence.” “What’s Ahead in Industrial Relations,” 14 December 1937, 11, *AISI*, b122f “speeches by steel men.”

¹⁶⁵ *Delivery of Mail*, 275; and *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 24 June 1937, 2. The Committee’s Chair, Kenneth McKellar of Tennessee, asked Daly why no police affidavit even mentioned that anyone had died as a result of police action: “Is it such an unimportant thing to kill an man in Chicago that they don’t mention his name?”

police permitting “peaceful picketing,” and police ducking from missiles thrown by picketers. Captain Mooney and Captain Kilroy also testified and Mooney used Daly’s photographs to show how police were beaten to the ground, giving them a rationale to shoot.¹⁶⁶ Getting wind that the Paramount newsreel was to be seen by the LaFollette investigators, they asked that the Post Office Committee pay close attention to the still “pictures, which are just as good as any motion picture.” They sought to rebut one form of photographic evidence with another.¹⁶⁷ Senator Josiah Bailey of South Carolina also took potshots at the newsreel that few had yet seen. He believed that Chicago policemen were “entitled to a little show,” and he demanded Paramount edit into the newsreel the still photographs that “proved” strikers were to blame. For extra measure he maligned the medium generally, the film footage like all filmed evidence was no different than a melodrama one plopped down half a dollar to see.¹⁶⁸

Photographs also figured prominently in renewed attempts by Chicago officials to blame strikers for the massacre. Chicago’s coroner didn’t determine responsibility for the deaths in South Chicago until after the LaFollette hearings were over. The Cook County Coroner put off his investigation for several weeks so that State’s Attorney Alexander Napoli, with the support of Make Mills, an undercover police whose specialty was exposing Communists, could have time to establish the ideological roots and menace of the strikers.¹⁶⁹ Though the coroner and the state’s attorney did not have photographs to buttress their claims, the authority of photographic representation still hung over the proceedings.

¹⁶⁶ *Delivery of Mail*, 283, 286, 291.

¹⁶⁷ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 24 June 1937, 2.

¹⁶⁸ *Delivery of Mail*, 49.

¹⁶⁹ *Daily Calumet*, 14 July 1937, 1.

Red-baiting and innuendo filled the official investigation in Chicago. Local press gave a lot of attention to a high school student who went to the SWOC rally at the behest of her teacher. The teacher couldn't be questioned at the inquest, ostensibly he had fled to Russia after the school term ended.¹⁷⁰ A friend of victim Sam Popović was called to testify that Popović had joined the Communist Party. When he demurred, calling Popović a "good churchman," the Assistant State's Attorney bullied him by insinuating the witness himself must be Communist.¹⁷¹ Ben Myers, the union lawyer called Dr. Jacques, who testified at the LaFollette hearings that strikers had been wounded in their backs and sides, to repeat his testimony. After Myers finished, the Assistant State's Attorney, Mel Coghlan, cross-examined Jacques and impugned his Americanism. Unlike other witnesses who were asked directly if they were Communists, Coghlan asked Jacques if that was his real name, if it weren't Jacobsen? When Jacques bridled, the Assistant Attorney persisted in his questioning, "Are you a Jew?" and then "Are you ashamed of being a Jew?"¹⁷² In this Chicago courtroom, to be a Jew courted suspicion.

In Chicago newspapers reports focused heavily on testimony by two press photographers, Carl Linde and John Puslis. Neither man had new photographs to buttress their claims. Nonetheless, their status as photographers gave them a privileged position in the dialogue over who was at fault for the Massacre. Linde testified that "the marchers started throwing bricks, and attacked the police first," and Puslis claimed he heard a shot from behind the strikers' lines. Chicago papers demanded to know why LaFollette had

¹⁷⁰ Two high school students, Clyde James and Wallis Nelson, were called to testify that they heard one striker say "I have my gat and it is loaded," and that police motioned for strikers to turn back. *Daily Calumet*, 20 July 1937.

¹⁷¹ *Daily Calumet*, 14 July 1937, 1; *Daily Times*, 14 July 1937, *Jacques*, b2.

¹⁷² *Chicago Daily News*, 19 July 1937, *Jacques*, b2. Levin's *Citizens*, 521 suggests Jacques fury at this tactic.

ignored this evidence straight from the camera(man)'s eyes.¹⁷³ Much was made of the fact that Lippert missed the first seconds of the shooting. In the words of Chicago's *Daily Times*, the newsreel "obviously did not catch the seconds of action that provoked the shooting by police."¹⁷⁴

The jury saw the Paramount newsreel, though no records indicate which version they saw or what they made of it.¹⁷⁵ Like Mooney had done at the Post Office Hearings, City Counsel Bernard Hodes called on Paramount to include the still A.P. photographs that showed Puslis and Linde's stories to be true "in fairness to the Chicago police." Without photos of mob violence, the film is "an obvious slander to our city." The *Tribune* continued its attack on the CIO by offering readers two photos: one of a Chicago policeman holding tight to the weapons ostensibly carried by strikers that day, the second, appearing in the Sunday photo-gravure pages, of a still photo that Hodes believed justified police action. It showed the crowd running from police, though an arrow in the photo points to a large club that it claimed was thrown from the crowd. Both images were intended to counter pictorial evidence with its equal.¹⁷⁶

The coroner's jury of six unemployed American Legion members took 50 minutes to uphold the "police action as 'justifiable homicide,'" believing the crowd of some 1,500-2,000 had tried to "force their way through a police line," to storm the Republic plant. Local press reported Coroner Frank Walsh's words that the inquest

¹⁷³ A WWAE news-broadcaster supported their testimony, he too heard a shot from behind strikers' lines. *Daily Calumet* 14 July 1937; and "clipping," *Daily Times*, n.d., 10 in *Jacques*, b2. No police were shot, nor guns retrieved.

¹⁷⁴ *Chicago Daily Times*, 22 July 1937, *Jacques*, b2; the *Tribune* called the newsreel an "incomplete picture of what happened," *Chicago Tribune*, 4 July 1937, 4.

¹⁷⁵ *Daily Calumet*, 19 July 1937.

¹⁷⁶ "Demands Start of Memorial Day Steel Riot Be Shown With Newsreel," *Chicago Tribune*, 3 July 1937; and "Weapons Used by Rioters," *Ibid.*, 4 July 1937.

“presented a full and fair picture of the riot,” unlike the LaFollette Committee that “badgered Chicago police witnesses and turned the hearing into a CIO forum.”

Chicago’s mayor announced his support for this conclusion, as the “LaFollette Committee was so far away from the scene they knew nothing of conditions.” As Thurlow Lewis, a United Mine Worker lawyer who represented SWOC workers in the proceedings, observed Chicago “still looked” on the Massacre “with different eyes than the rest of the world.” In Chicago the strikers remained officially condemned, and photographs—or at a minimum the photographer’s eye—helped prove their culpability.¹⁷⁷

“The Deep, Deep Red Will Never Fade.”

Some days after the massacre John L. Lewis predicted “that the butchery of our people will be legally avenged by the resentment of the public when it becomes acquainted with the real facts.”¹⁷⁸ Lewis’s prognostications proved only partially correct, mirroring the equivocal result of the Massacre on its South Chicago victims, on the steel drive, and on its place in history.

LaFollette achieved his intent with the hearing, denouncing police and corporate practices used to subvert unionization. The LaFollette Committee permanently derailed corporate and police attempts to justify violence against workers. “Never again could a

¹⁷⁷ “Clipping,” 23 July 1937, *Jacques*, b2; and *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 July 1937, 6, *Washington Post*, 21 July 1937. These conclusions led the State’s Attorney to bring suit against the strikers, for CIO strikers were led astray by “insane leadership” according to Assistant State Attorney Mel Coghlan. *Daily Calumet*, 21 July 1937.

stockholder stand up in a corporate meeting and ask how much money was being spent on corporate spying.”¹⁷⁹ The committee’s research did not uncover anything new: company spies and harassment were common knowledge. Rather the “detailed record... [that they] publicized,” put a brake on corporate union-busting activities.¹⁸⁰ By its own reckoning the preliminary hearings compiled 1396 pages of investigation, running to 335,040 words; “three days of hearings; 33 witnesses and 110 exhibits.” This explicit, dry breakdown, so common to the bureaucrat and the documentary imaginary of the 1930s should not hide the LaFollette Committee’s feat. The Committee made history: it crafted methodically documented stories that remain the story remembered today of the bloody events of May 30, 1937.¹⁸¹

LaFollette’s successes did not stop Republic Steel from pursuing its antagonistic labor strategies. Within days of the Massacre events heated up in the steel region of eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania, and one Republic plant district manager wanted to know why the police chief of Massillon didn’t “do like the Chicago police had done. They knew how to handle a situation.” Republic set up Citizens’ Committees and back to work movements to muddy the issues, much as the Post Office Committee investigation provided fodder for those seeking to limit unions. This negative publicity left a taint. The same day that the LaFollette hearings began, President Roosevelt impugned both the

¹⁷⁸ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 18 June 1937; and *New York Times*, 18 June 1937, 4.

¹⁷⁹ Wohlforth, *COHC*, 41. I.W. Abel, who became USWA President concurred. Fillipelli, *Forging a Union*, 104-6.

¹⁸⁰ Twenty years later Robert Wohlforth assessed the LaFollette Committee results as follows: “The committee has put together a body of labor history in this country in a period of time which focuses it, which I don’t think has ever been done before.” Wohlforth, *COHC*, 53 and 73; see also John Abt. Interview Transcript of John Abt by Jerold Auerbach, March 22, 1963, *COHC*, 5.

¹⁸¹ H. Weisberg, Senate Civil Liberties Committee, July 31, 1937, in *LaFollette papers*, 50.25.

steel barons and organizing steel workers with his infamous “a plague on both your houses” imprecation that expressed growing frustration at the labor impasse. Without federal support the steel drive faltered.¹⁸²

Republic Steel would ultimately fail in its bid to keep unions out, and it paid a price for its intransigence. In the months after the Massacre, Republic was reputed to have lost four million dollars in production, it also lagged in profits to stockholders.¹⁸³ SWOC fought Republic Steel in court, and their case went all the way to the Supreme Court, which forced the company to pay restitution to workers fired for union activities. The company also had to pay victims of the Massacre who brought wrongful death suits. Even here union gains were not unvarnished. The national SWOC helped jailed strikers in their legal battles, but they advised them to admit guilt and pay the fines because SWOC feared keeping the incident in the public eye.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Unlike the clear political control that some of the Little Steel Companies exerted in some of the steel towns of Pennsylvania and Ohio, no specific ties appear to exist between owners of the mills and the Chicago political structure. Police hostility to workers’ activism did hurt the drive, and Mayor Kelley offered little beyond words to the union. Paul Anderson, “Armed Rebellion on the Right” *The Nation*, 7 August 1937, 146-7. For FDR quote see *New York Times*, 30 June 1937, 1. This led to an irrevocable rift between Roosevelt and Lewis.

¹⁸³ On the cost of the strike see newsclipping, probably, *New York Times*, 1 August, nd, in *Patterson*, b6f5. Wohlforth puts cost to Republic at four million dollars. *Steel Labor*, 19 November 1937, 2. One Republic stockholder sued the Corporation, claiming nearly thirteen million dollars were lost fighting the CIO. *New York Times* and *New York Herald Tribune*, 19 October 1940, both in *AISI*, b31.

¹⁸⁴ SWOC, *First Wage and Policy*, 37-38 in *Patterson* b6f5. Ben Myers letter, nd, Ben Myers papers, *CHS*; and *Steel Labor*, March 1945, 2 which reported a payment of \$350,000 to victims in Ohio and Chicago, including \$20,000 to Harry Harper. *Business Week* claimed Republic Steel had an additional two million dollars in associated costs for the strike. January 6, 1945, 108 in *Jacques*, b2 *CHS*; Solfachalk, “Memorial Incident,” 31, 40-1. Correspondence from Lodge No. 1033 to Lewis, Pressman, Murray and Bittner suggests that local leaders felt the union was “letting them down” by not keeping them up to date with news about their legal cases, making members “disgruntled and discouraged.” Received October 17; 1938, CIO National/International files, *CIO papers*, b19f16.

SWOC also treated the victims ambiguously. At its first national convention in December of 1937, union leaders rallied delegates with the sacrifice of the Memorial Day martyrs. Like Lewis, SWOC director for the Calumet region, Van Bittner, maintained that "this massacre has aroused public opinion in Chicago to a higher pitch than ever before."¹⁸⁵ Yet for all their references to the Massacre, SWOC leaders kept resolutions from the South Chicago locals demanding redress from reaching the floor, finally allowing them in watered-down form. Members complained bitterly before Murray remembered to resurrect them.¹⁸⁶ Ironically, one of the convention's featured speaker was Chicago's Mayor Edward Kelley who sought union votes in his re-election bid. SWOC's national leaders happily accommodated given the union's lagging political support, despite Kelley's vehement condemnation of union activism.¹⁸⁷

Even in public memory interpretation of the events remained malleable. The City of Chicago fought one victim's damages suit by utilizing the union's account of events. By Illinois State law police were liable if they were "quelling a 'riotous mob;'" police were not liable if they were taken by surprise. The city reversed their original position that the crowd was menacing and premeditated. Now the city embraced the union's story that women and children joined in a holiday-like rally. The city called a Good Humor ice cream vendor to testify how much ice cream he sold the crowd.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Lewis explicitly connected unions sacrifice to the "Christian Church...founded on the blood of martyrs," in his speech to the Convention. SWOC, *First Wage and Policy*, 1937 in *Patterson*, b6f5.

¹⁸⁶ Rank and filers sought a collection for a memorial to the victims. SWOC, *First Wage and Policy*, 157; and *Patterson*, b9f6.

¹⁸⁷ See Slayton, "Labor and Urban Politics" 30, who argues Kelley accommodated the union because he had to, but that Chicago's machine worked best with other "authoritarian, hierarchical entities."

¹⁸⁸ "Chicago Massacre turns into a 'Picnic,'" *PM*, 26 September 1940, 13.

Ambiguity about the event reigned even in the memories of South Chicago residents and union members. The Republic Steel USWA Local, No. 1033, and its larger USWA District, No. 31, commemorated the Massacre several decades after the event. In their program they included a song that honored the Memorial Day dead with lyrics that evoked the brutality of “Girdler’s mill” and “Girdler’s cops” and rallied workers to remember the fallen.

That deep, deep red will never fade
From Republic’s bloody ground.
The workers, they will not forget,
They’ll sing this song around.¹⁸⁹

The song lyrics’ appeal went unheard. Local 1033 did name their hall after one of the martyrs, but they did not do so until some thirty years afterwards. Perhaps this was because the martyrs were not thought of so highly in their neighborhood. William Kornblum’s seminal community study, *Blue Collar Community* argued that most outsiders perceived the Massacre “in terms of class conflict.” But in South Chicago the massacre marginalized union leaders and “discredited the local union” as an effective player in community affairs. For years the local community did nothing to remember the dead. Republic Steel paved over the spot where workers were killed for a parking lot.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Earl Robinson, also wrote the “Ballad of Joe Hill” about the famed Wobbly leader. Robinson’s commemoration of the Massacre was being issued in recorded form by “labor’s troubadour,” Joe Glazer, who’d been commissioned by the USWA to create “Songs of Steel and Struggle.” Intriguingly, the union called on the massacre at the moment when the steel industry was closing plants. *In Commemoration United Steel Workers of America, D31 and Local 1033*, May 30, 1979, 17, *Patterson*, b11f2.

¹⁹⁰ Kornblum, *Blue Collar Community*, 101-6. Kornblum argues that outsiders saw the Massacre as a clear instance of class conflict, but that those from the neighborhood saw it in ethno-cultural terms. The strike’s failure, and the heightened tensions it raised in the neighborhood discredited the union. Strike leaders ended up in high-level union positions, but the union had little presence beyond the plant gates. Because of the parochialism of the neighborhood, some accepted charges of the protesters as “outsiders,” even though the outsiders came from a few miles away and were themselves steelworkers

Flesh and blood workers, their “deep, deep red” forgotten, perhaps repressed. Remembered instead in history books and films, painted canvases and mass-produced posters, were the flickering, unstable images in celluloid and silver nitrate. These images have come to stand for the brutal class conflict of the thirties, even as the struggles over the meaning of these images faded away.

seeking a union from their own employer. Inland Steel of Indiana Harbor did capitulate, so it is worth investigating whether part of the anger stems from the burden born by the Eastsiders who worked at Republic Steel. Kornblum also argues the neighborhood became “conservative” as a neighborhood of second settlement for Italians and Slavs. His analysis matches John Bodnar’s description of the conservatism of Slavic steelworkers in Pennsylvania. John Bodnar, *Workers World: Kinship, Community, and Protest in an Industrial Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 1-2, 166. Judith Helfand, George Stoney and Suzane Rostock’s *The Uprising of 1934*, a documentary of the effects of the failed Southern textile strike offers a similar parallel—where brutality on the part of authorities and a failed strike result in townspeople’s repressed memories of the event, and a large degree of anger towards the union and its supporters, (New York: Hard Times Productions, 1995), videocassette. See “This is Your Union” May 23, 1971 Local 1033 and Remember Memorial Day, May 30, 1937 *In Commemoration*, 14 in *Patterson* b11f2. Patterson’s Lodge, for the nearby U.S. Steel, was named the Hilding Anderson Lodge by 1939. *Union and Shop News*, June 1939, *Patterson*, b9f1.

A

Camera Work: News Photography and America's Working Class, 1919-1950

by

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Chapter Five: *Steel Labor*, the United Steelworkers of America and a Union Culture of Constraint, 1936-1950.

No photograph has ever convinced or refuted anyone.
Roland Barthes

Steel Labor is probably the poorest place to go for a history of the union.
former *Steel Labor* Staff¹

A year before steelworkers gave their lives on Chicago's South Side, a year before photographs of this brutal class confrontation met millions of Americans' eyes, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) filled its newspaper, *Steel Labor*, with class-conscious imagery. The paper's first issue appeared on August 1, 1936 and its front-page image had a mill with up-thrust stacks from which smoke issued forth. The smoke metamorphosed into two fists, one labeled steel owner the other steelworker. The caption set the terms of conflict between these two parties: "The picture shows fist against fist, worker against owner...As long as there is oppression of one by the other there will always be bitter strife and test of force." [Fig. 5-1.]² The drawing's broad and dramatic strokes simplified the action and underscored the dire prognosis, but also labor's "raw power."

¹ Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," *Image/Music/Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday Press, 1977), 30; Interview of William Garvey by Helmut Goltz, 20A, March 4, 1975, Tuscon, Arizona, in Oral Histories, Penn State University, Historical Collections and Labor Archives, (hereafter PSU).

² *Steel Labor* (hereafter *SL*), 1 August 1939, 1; See Rebecca Zurier, *Art for the Masses: A Radical Magazine and Its Graphics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 13-119 for a discussion of this illustration's style. *SL* regularly reprinted the cartoons of Daniel Fitzpatrick of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* who was a master of this technique.

Two issues later, *Steel Labor* trumpeted union's idealized role in fostering social change with a prominent, front-page image of the "heroic laborer." This allegorical image held aloft a torch to the bright future workers would create. The image joined a Labor Day manifesto for steelworkers. The laborer's musculature forced his shirt open; the gape further exposed his bulky physique. [Fig. 5-2.]³ He dwarfed two other men who peeked out from the side. One man appeared blinded by the upheld light, but the other reached with all his might for it. The accompanying article rallied workers with the catchwords of class struggle. Steelworkers were "breaking the shackles of economic and political servitude. They are declaring their independence of the steel masters." It continued, "petty political czars and industrial autocrats are trembling! The steel workers are marching—marching towards industrial freedom, democracy and a fuller life." The bolded caption left no doubt as to the glorious road labor would travel. "Organized Labor Sets a New Light and Meaning to the Life of Mankind." The monolithic worker led the way against one of the CIO's most important industrial targets—steel.

Much like the article's language which amalgamated nineteenth-century republicanism with socialism, *Steel Labor's* heroic laborer hearkened backward to an imagery connected to labor ideals of an earlier time. *Steel Labor's* first editor, J.B.S. Hardman, matured in a political era where the "labor question" was *the* social question. For Hardman, workers and their unions were a wedge for social justice in American life;

³ *SL*, 5 September 1936, 1. The Steel Workers made their agreement with the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers on June 4, 1936, and met formally for the first time on June 17. See Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933-1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 441; and Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935-1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 84.

they would shake up the status quo.⁴ When Hardman printed the heroic laborer he drew on a visual tradition that suggested that class struggle emancipated by ensuring all Americans shared in the nation's economic, social, and political promise.

Hardman's tenure at SWOC was brief, as was any vision in *Steel Labor* of unionism as embodying conflict, heroism, or utopianism. Vincent Sweeney followed him in January of 1937, and he rejected visualizations of class struggle or class promise. *Steel Labor*'s new editor promoted a concrete, specific vision. Workers didn't shake up the status quo—with their leaders' help they joined it—incrementally. Sweeney's approach is perhaps best exemplified in a later, 1946 portrait of union president, Philip Murray. **[Fig. 5-3.]**⁵ Murray stands before a radio microphone. He addressed a broadcast audience about corporations' failure to bargain with unions. In photographs such as these—and there were plenty—*Steel Labor* consolidated its representation of union demands and union might in the figure of the union president.

Steel Labor's photographs and drawn imagery re-imagined the unionism that would triumph during the war years and its aftermath. CIO industrial unions continued to demand a more equitable distribution of America's wealth, including a more robust welfare state. But unions accepted large corporations as a given. Even as SWOC and its successor, the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) helped remake industrial relations, they renounced a utopic remaking of American society. The USWA settled for

⁴ As we've seen, not only labor and social reformers, but also business and political elite understood how labor could redefine citizenship and democracy. Nelson Lichtenstein's analysis of industrial democracy and union's pursuit of a greater social wage is helpful to my analysis, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 5-11, 32-35.

a “higher standard of living” which “assure[d] the fulfillment of our national aspirations.”

Steven Fraser has observed that the labor question “receded like some faint echo from the distant past” just as organized labor hit its zenith in members and in political might.

Unions like the USWA remade the nation’s political and economic calculus, but

America’s class structure remained unchallenged. The belief of an earlier generation that society might require a “democratization of industry” where workers participated in the decisions that shaped their lives no longer seemed possible.⁶

This transition in visual imagery, from an idealized, populist icon to a specified, leader-focused embodiment of unionism is one of many important clues about the culture of this new unionism of the 1930s and 1940s. Indeed, *Steel Labor* is a key cultural “text” in the organizing of the CIO. Hardman claimed in a retrospective analysis that labor publications were “an extended, written replica of the local union meeting,” which became more modern and diversified in conjunction with the rise of the CIO.⁷ Labor papers document union life: its elections, its strikes, its social activities, and legislative campaigns. They are also ideological vehicles. In some unions members and leaders alike shaped the message. But at SWOC, leaders alone used the newspaper’s text and image to frame internal debate. In SWOC’s first year the union distributed close to 200,000 copies of the paper, and by 1940, twice as many Americans received it at home.

⁵ “President Murray Charges: Truman Proposal First Step Toward More Savage Laws Against Labor,” *SL*, January 1946, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, and Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 12 quoting Steven Fraser, “American Trade Unions and the ‘Labor Question:’ Past and Present,” in *What’s Next for Organized Labor? The Report of the Century Task Force on the Future of Unions* (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 1999), 59-117.

⁷ J.B.S. Hardman and Maurice Newfeld, *The House of Labor: Internal Operations of American Unions* (New York City: Prentice Hall, 1951), 212.

By 1944 the union claimed over one million members—all potential readers of the union newspaper.⁸ Examining *Steel Labor*'s visual imagery gives us an in-depth understanding of the possibilities and constraints of an important aspect of union culture.

Because steel was integral to organizing the mass-production sector, *Steel Labor* is a touchstone to CIO leaders' thought as well as SWOC leaders. Central to the nation's economy, for one contemporary, steel was the "barometer of a nation's freedom...barometer of a nation's strength." Steel lie at the heart of political and economic transitions in mid-century America. As Judith Stein maintains, "Although the postwar world was not built only of steel, the steel companies, the steelworkers union, and steelworkers were at the center of the New Deal compact between capital and labor."⁹ Because of its economic importance, and because steel had long been a bulwark against industrial unionism, SWOC was the first union organizing drive initiated by the CIO. SWOC national and regional staff, many of whom were tied to John Lewis and the UMW would dominate the CIO. Murray would go on to lead the CIO once Lewis stepped down. These CIO leaders thought *Steel Labor* important. They rejected a member's suggestion to rely on an established newspaper, which would have eased their

⁸ For 1936 circulation numbers see "Philip Murray Report to SWOC, September, 29, 1936," in CIO National/International Union September-November 1936, b19f7, *CIO papers*, Catholic University of America (hereafter *CUA*); 1940 figures found in *Proceedings of the United Steel Workers of America*; for 1948 circulation see "How your Paper is Printed," April 1948, 6-7, which claimed the postal service delivered one million plus copies of *Steel Labor* each year. See also Chapter One, "The Quick Nervousness of Pictures." Judith Stein, *Running Steel, Running America: Race, Economic Policy and the Decline of Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 15.

⁹ Howard Fast in *Asprin Age: 1919-1941*, edited by Isabel Leighton (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949), 389. For mid-century policy makers steel lay at the center of shifting national politics, Stein, *Running Steel*, 3.

administrative burden.¹⁰ Their financial investment also attests to their commitment to the paper.¹¹

Steel Labor presents a complex, even ambiguous portrait of organized labor from the union's inception in 1936 to its solidifying of a place in American politics and society with its post-war strikes. The photos and drawn imagery interacted in complicated ways.

¹⁰ UMW leaders include Murray, David McDonald, John Brophy, and Van Bittner. SWOC leader George Patterson, the U.S. Steel Employee who led the campaign at Chicago's Carnegie-Illinois Plant, hoped the CIO would underwrite costs for the populist *People's Press*. Early in the drive Patterson and allies lobbied SWOC leaders, including CIO President Lewis to get the *People's Press* distributed as the paper of record for steelworkers. Lewis and Murray balked, ultimately refusing. They wanted a house organ that would directly represent their views. "Embryo of a Steelworker," 72-73, in George Patterson Papers, b9f6, (hereafter *Patterson*), and Frank Palmer to George Patterson, 23 June 23 and 26 June 1936, and Philip Murray to George Patterson, 6 July 1936 in *Patterson*, b6f3, both in Chicago Historical Society, (hereafter *CHS*).

¹¹ In SWOC's first annual budget less than 1% of each dollar of dues appeared to go to the paper, at first glance a miniscule proportion. If the maintenance expenditures of the union such as monies returned to the lodges, lodge supplies, salaries, along with field office and strike expenses were added up, about 92% of the SWOC budget is accounted for. Of what remained, *Steel Labor* accounted for somewhere between sixteen and twenty percent of the budget. Monies spent on *Steel Labor*'s production and distribution, not including departmental costs, and staff and administration almost equaled monies spent for the legal work that was so critical to the union's consolidation. Budget figures come from the Secretary-Treasurer's Report to the *Proceedings of the First Wage and Policy Convention*, December 1937, 48. Later budget information makes it impossible to ascertain if this level of commitment remained steady. David McDonald lay out specific expenses, as a proportion of "dues per month per member." The actual dues at this time were quite low, as the organization was still funded by the member organizations of the CIO. The union did not report actual expenses, leaving this a "best guess" extrapolation. *Steel Labor* itself was listed as .0129 of a dollar. There was an additional line item for Publicity, Research and Grievance Departments for .0116, which I arbitrarily divided by three. If one also adds a salary for Sweeney, one could assume a two cents per month per member cost for the newsletter. The 92 cents on a dollar figure comes from adding the following line items together: lodges, .25; salaries, .45; strike expenditures, .12; lodge supplies, .03; and field office expenses, .07. Later budget figures were unavailable, each year the information offered delegates became vaguer as to internal administration, which created a bone of contention. See the discussion over the budget in the SWOC, *Proceedings of the Second Wage and Policy Convention*, May 1940, 23-30 and in the

Unions, vital exponents of social change, might use a mobilizing message like the heroic worker or comradely ideal so associated with the 1930s and 1940s. But unions could also develop a visual culture more akin to Melvyn Dubofsky's description of the 1930s as the "not so turbulent years." *Steel Labor* often ignored volatile subjects or union weaknesses. Only after the union consolidated itself did it depict rank and file mobilization and the economic deprivations that shaped members' lives. In *Steel Labor* member-readers received a modulated message—be a good union member and you shall be rewarded, your leadership and the union shall provide for you. Members became part of an imaged community bound by the conventions of a staid, gender-bound, associational life, with modest demands for inclusion in the promise of American life.¹²

"Breaking the Shackles"

CIO leaders dispatched J.B.S. Hardman from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACWU) to edit *Steel Labor* in the summer of 1936. He had edited the ACWU's paper, *Advance*, from 1920.¹³ Hardman's labor and social activism spanned several continents and linked nineteenth-century revolutionary militance with twentieth-century industrial unionism. He was jailed for his socialism under the Czar, met Vladimir Lenin before he left Russia, and years later sipped beer in New York's Harlem with Leon Trotsky.

USWA, *Proceedings of the First Convention of the United Steel Workers*, May 1942, 107-9.

¹² Melvyn Dubofsky, "'Not so Turbulent Years': Another Look at the American 1930s," *American Studies*, 24 (1979): 5-20.

¹³ Hardman stayed with *Advance* until 1944. He was closely connected to Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated, often serving as his foot soldier. He remained involved in progressive cultural and educational programming for workers through the rise of the

Hardman instilled in *Steel Labor* a socialist flavor that looked backwards to turn of the century with its sweeping economic and social reformism.¹⁴

When Hardman printed images of the iconic 1930s heroic labor he drew from its earlier resonance. Nineteenth-century worker societies used men's bodies in seals and banners to symbolize labor's power and unity.¹⁵ "Manliness" preoccupied American unionists who were responding to an ever more exigent industrial discipline.¹⁶ In the

New Left. Steve Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 344.

¹⁴ Hardman's papers are found at the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, Tamiment Library, New York University. They include correspondence, and an oral history of his early life conducted by Columbia's Oral History Project, b6; and reminisces in an unpublished manuscript, *Odyssey*, b6f49-50. His papers do not address his stint at *Steel Labor*. In addition to offering the heroic labor, or depictions of conflict between labor and capital, Hardman's choice of imagery also questioned the red-baiting of radicals throughout American history. *SL*, 1 August 1936, 5.

¹⁵ Eric Hobsbawm suggests that labor imagery became increasingly masculinized as industrialization intensified the sexual division of labor. Earlier socialist iconography used female figures, as actual participants in pre-industrial crowd actions or as allegorical "inspiration" for moral aid. By the end of the nineteenth century, according to Hobsbawm, there was less basis for this figure. The symbol of the manual laborer became the most inclusive symbol for all laborers, the one most expressive of revolutionary action. Eric Hobsbawm, "Man and Women in Socialist Iconography," *History Workshop Journal* 6 (Autumn, 1978): 121-138. Hobsbawm admits how this figure elides the existence of some kinds of workers. His analysis is overly determined. He interrogates only women's material position in society, not taking up the ways in which social categories, such as gender may affect representation. Additionally, he attacks essentialism, but naturalizes certain social relations, for example, the connection between women and inspiration or material aid.

¹⁶ Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); David Montgomery *The Fall of the House of Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 22-23, 33, 196-203; and Stuart Ewen's *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 214. Labor historians have noted the development of distinctive kinds of masculinity over time among workers. Mary Bluett claims there was an "agrarian" masculinity based on the yeoman ideal but dependant on the self-sufficient household economy; an artisinal masculinity which was also self-sufficient but craft and skill based; a "virile" masculinity among the lesser skilled and immigrant and "emancipatory" masculinity, which sustained a mobile, free labor. See

twentieth century this figure circulated among leftist and radical workers' unions, parties, and states. An icon representing labor's promise, the figure was seen in Wobbly publications and in the illustrations of the *Masses*. Even the government took advantage of the figure's populist resonance. During WWI it printed patriotic posters with a muscled laborer who pushed up his sleeves to boost war production.¹⁷

By the 1930s the heroic laborer retained a radical resonance for some—Diego Rivera and the Soviet socialist-realists offer two examples—but the image circulated in mainstream circles as well. New Deal public art evoked the heroism of the common man to engage Americans in the New Deal and to offer solace during extreme economic stress. Workingmen's strength and solidity stressed their importance to the larger polity. Georgia farmers and New Jersey oil workers, Colorado fruit pickers and Pennsylvania steelworkers all flexed their muscles for America's New Deal—a “contract” involving all kinds of Americans, even those previously ignored.¹⁸ Other scholars have noted how this “universal” symbol for labor, who seemed a “native-born American,” elided gender and ethnic differences which corresponded to real inequalities.¹⁹ By the 1930s when

Mary Bluett, Manhood and the Market in *Work Engendered*: Ava Barron and Mary Bluett “Deference and Defiance: Labor Politics and the Meanings of Masculinity,” *Gender and History* 5 no. 3 (1993): 398-415.

¹⁷ Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 9.

¹⁸ Gerald Markowitz and Marlene Park, *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984). According to Markowitz and Park, murals by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts exemplified such usage. Soviet socialist-realists also employed the heroic male laborer.

¹⁹ Gendering work in images of the overblown body of the manly worker redressed the failure felt by all classes of men during the Depression after several decades of advance. This gendering restricted solidarity by failing to acknowledge women's important role in unionism as Elizabeth Faue points out in her study of Minneapolis unionists, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), and Barbara Melosh,

Hardman edited *Steel Labor*, this figure was a common, albeit ambiguous, image employed to assert labor's power.

Hardman printed cartoons that imagined class conflict in even more extreme, if somewhat comical terms. One cartoon showed the menacing silhouette of a worker whose overblown fist was poised to sock a clownish, bloated figure representing "Five Billion Dollars Worth of Steel." [Fig. 5-4.]²⁰ The caption, steel "is scared," attested to the visual message, as did the fallen cigar, popped top hat, surrendering white-gloved hand, and an "open shop" club which lie ineffectually at the side. The worker, labeled "The Biggest Organizing Drive in American Labor History" would triumph in this battle. Labor's size and threatening fist marked him a bully, even a back-alley lowlife. The jiggling, frightened moneybags was caricatured as a weakling—a foregone loser. Under Hardman, *Steel Labor* embraced a polarizing discourse of class where conflict was evident, even necessary.

Hardman also used drawn imagery to propose unionism's utopic promise. In the cartoon "The Unorganized Millions" a large group of steelworkers massed above a working steel mill and streamed towards and through a monolith composed of the letters CIO. In reaching the metaphoric union "sun," they achieved higher wages, shorter hours,

Engendering Culture, Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater (Washington D.C. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991). Melosh and Faue's assumption that men of all classes understood the male figure in the same way lends itself to the abstract creation of an implicitly unitary male subject as receiver. Neither makes much of an argument for how or why the manly worker would have been understood in a singular fashion. While it may be unclear how this imagery spoke to different kinds of men, both make a strong case that this art must be understood in more complicated ways than purely "democratic."

²⁰ *SL*, 5 September 1936, 3.

and better working conditions. [Fig. 5-5.]²¹ Such utopic imagery was common in the early part of the twentieth century. IWW drawings made use of this “vision of the future,” so did advertisers from the 1920s through the 1940s.²² Historian Roland Marchand calls this a visual narrative of a “better tomorrow,” where the vehicle for getting there and the end goal are the same. Hardman’s visual lexicon pointed to workers’ united class struggle as the key to a new society; the CIO could provide steelworkers a security otherwise impossible unless the “unorganized millions” united.

Photographs in *Steel Labor* could spread a similar message. One 1936 photo-spread documented “Huge Labor Day Demonstrations” that included “Two Views of Labor on the March.” [Fig. 5-6.]²³ The top tier of the photo-spread was filled with two pictures showing crowds marching to the rally. The photographs showed long lines of workers who move from the upper left to the lower right of the photographic frame. The photographer used an angle to animate the shot and therefore stressed the march’s dynamism. The eye moves along the long line of marchers which accentuated their numbers. The bottom photo almost spanned two pages and showed thousands of workers, speaking to union strength. This documentation of collective prowess was diminished somewhat by photos of the events’ three main speakers. Shown in full body shots at the microphone—the UMW District President and two sympathetic public

²¹ *SL*, 5 December 1936, 6. See also *SL*, 9 January 1937, 4. In “How a Steel Worker views the meaning of the CIO” a group of cheering workers hold aloft a CIO banner, with the exclamations “moral ascension,” “active industrial representation,” “humane working hours” and “hobbies and recreation.” 6 March 1937, 6.

²² Joyce Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 33, 198. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 235-284.

figures, Pennsylvania's Governor, George Earle, and that state's Senator, Joseph Guffey, were placed in the center of the white page. The lack of any identifying context and the layout emphasized their presence as did the printed excerpts from their speeches. Labor was on the march, but its strength supported the officials who rallied them. The photograph's caption articulated the importance of mass action, but also the appeal of leaders' messages.

Even under longtime radical Hardman, picture-stories that emphasized activism were scarce.²⁴ Photographs of rank and file mobilization did not re-appear until the 1946 nationwide steel strike. From the start, *Steel Labor* enacted a struggle between organizing workers and corporate power in symbolic cartoons and drawings, but rarely represented actual struggle with photographs. Struggle was proposed as an ideal, but not depicted with the most powerful realist vehicle, the camera.²⁵

²³ "SL Rallies to the Colors at Huge Labor Day Demonstration called by SWOC," *SL*, 25 September 1936, 4-5.

²⁴ A second photo-story about a SWOC "flying squadron" that appeared on 5 December 1936 also pointed to members' importance to the union. Flying squadrons were the scourge of corporations. They sought legislation to criminalize them. The squadrons drew together activists from one community who "flew" in their autos to other towns to bolster support for struggling locals by picketing, leafleting, or tying up traffic. This five-picture photo-spread reported on a leafleting squadron that "invaded Weirton, West Virginia," a company town whose rabidly anti-union CEO was long denounced by SWOC. The tightly framed photos showed union members pouring out of their cars. Editors' captions singled out the members who leafleted Weirton employees. These photographs affirmed the work and the drama of the squadron's activism. Unlike the photo-spread of labor on the march, this picture-story acknowledged and promoted mobilization. It suggested that the rank-and-file helped created the union through a necessary, even enjoyable battle with the corporation. Such photos were hard to find in *Steel Labor*.

²⁵ For example, 660 workers came out at the Hubbard Steel plant, 800 workers struck for two weeks in Baltimore at the Eastern Rolling Mill Company, and 5,500 workers came out at Wheeling Steel Mills in Portsmouth Ohio. None of these struggles merited a photo in *SL*'s first issue. One issue later there was one photo of *SL* distribution at the Baltimore

In place of the idealized images of class struggle, *Steel Labor* proposed leadership was the heart and soul of union life. *Steel Labor* represented the union in the faces of union leaders. The CIO leadership confronted *Steel Labor* readers in issue after issue, page after page. In the publication's first year close to one-third of all the images were straight portraits of leaders, typically studio-style bust shots. In this pose leaders placed in a three-quarter view looked at the viewer, or off to the side in a more visionary stance. Traditionally such portraiture implies mastery, as the subject in dialogue with the photographer composes their image within the photographic frame.²⁶ *Steel Labor* presented union officials in the same stern and uncompromising poses of corporate and political leaders. Even candid shots of leaders speaking at meetings suggested decorum more than inspiration. In many shots the leader stood rigid before the microphone. Tightly framed photographs showed little beyond the podium and the faces of other speakers. Candid shots are intended to impart liveliness, but in *Steel Labor*'s photos, neither the speaker, nor the crowd—when visible—appear animated.

strike location. *SL*, 8 August 1936. Similarly, when workers struck at the Standard Steel Spring Company in Corapolis, Pennsylvania, *SL* printed no photographs. *SL*, 5 September 1936, 3.

²⁶ Graham Clarke, ed. *The Portrait in Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992); Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans*, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1998), 21-70. A decade after the union's inception, once the union was well established with hundreds of thousands of members, photographs of then CIO President Philip Murray, Regional Directors Van Bittner and Clifton Golden, Secretary-Treasurer David McDonald and other union leaders still prevailed. In 1936, 70 images appeared, 27 of which were portrait photographs. About twenty of these images or close to eighty percent were "head-shots" of union leadership. In 1939, head shots of leadership accounted for 7 of 58 photos, or twelve percent of all images. In 1942 they were seventeen percent of all photos offered, and in 1944 close to a fifth of all images were of national leaders. These figures do not include other kinds of pictures of leadership, which were many. In the later 1940s the number of leaders' photographs diminished slightly.

The sheer number of these portraits forces the question of why Hardman and Sweeney relied on such repetitive stock imagery. Certainly these portraits personalized the union. The union had to establish its stature and viability to workers who were unfamiliar with it. Steelworkers were particularly suspicious of unionization given the decimated 1919 strike campaign, their employers' ardent anti-unionism, and their own ethnic conservatism.²⁷ By visualizing leaders as men of authority the union asserted its stability and strength. [Fig. 5-7.]²⁸ These portraits also identified leaders who sought to cultivate personal support by identifying the union with themselves. *Steel Labor* was not unique in paying homage to its leaders with photographs. Later labor communicators have joked at "grab and grin" shots where union presidents are seen not only in decorous portraits but in shots showing the leader making donations to causes, welcoming guests to the union, and making public appearances. At SWOC the "cult of personality" was less necessary given leaders' tight control, though union leaders may still have felt the need to instill loyalty to the organization.²⁹ *Steel Labor's* portraits of union leaders made them,

²⁷ John Bodnar shows how steelworkers were family-conscious, sought security and stability above all else, and as a result were more conservative in their demands, only choosing to protest once unemployment made security a non-issue during the depression. In *Workers World: Kinship, Community, and Protest in an Industrial Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 1-2, 166.

²⁸ "To the People of the U.S.A.," *SL*, February 1946, 1.

²⁹ I'd like to thank Patricia Kenney, staff of *SEIU-1199 News* for the "grab and grin," description. Moe Foner, *Not for Bread Alone. A Memoir* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 128. At every SWOC convention the first resolution thanked Murray; there were Philip Murray picnic celebrations, and some of the locals named their headquarters after him. *Advance*, which Hardman edited for twenty plus years, did not depict leaders in this way, indeed in the same time period photographs of the rank and file outnumbered images of leaders by a ratio of five to one. Moreover, many of the photographs showed members active on the picket lines. See for example the photos which appeared in just one issue of *Advance*, January 1935, 7, 9, 11. See also photo of a Connellsville, Pennsylvania strike, May 1935, 15; "A Group of the Wulf Bros. Strikers," July 1936, 11.

literally, the union's "face." The newspaper embodied a powerful and dignified union in specific individual leaders, not a collectivity of members. It would do this even when the union had hundreds of thousands of members.

Hardman's editorship was brief—only half a year—but it offers insights into a visual culture in transition. *Steel Labor's* imagery was full of tensions: tensions between the idealized drawings of heroic labor and photographs of union leaders' decorous authority; and between the absence of union struggle in photographs and an idealized vision of struggle implicit in the heroic laborer. Vincent Sweeney would lessen such tensions, in large part because he substituted a moderate vision in line with where labor was headed for Hardman's backwards-looking, socialistic iconography.³⁰

"Factual Reporting"

Almost immediately after Sweeney became *Steel Labor's* editor in December of 1936 he pushed the newspaper in this moderate direction. Philip Murray hired "one of this country's outstanding newspapermen" from the *Pittsburgh Press* where Sweeney served as Sunday editor. He had fifteen years experience as a journalist at that point and would remain the Steelworkers' head of publicity until his retirement twenty-five years

³⁰ *Advance* not only showcased members far more than its leaders, but it also presented labor issues in an international context, and examined women's work concerns. See "A Page from a Miner's Life," and "Songs and Ballads of the Anthracite Miners," *Advance*, January 1935, 17; "The Woman Who Works: Her Job, Her Pay, Her Prospects," January 1935, 19; "Workers the World Over Are Brothers. They All Want: Security-Freedom-Justice-Peace," May 1935, 8-9; "The Steelworkers-As Hard as the Metal Itself," July 1936, 4-5; "A.C.W. Women Ask Wage Law," July 1936, 12; "Labor is Big in Big Steel," June 1937, 10-11; cartoons for "The Murder of Steel Workers in Chicago," May 31, 1937, 8; "Fifty Thousands Union Workers Mass in Cleveland; Protest Police Brutality Against Steel Workers," September 1937, 13.

later.³¹ Sweeney's migration from journalism to union public relations matched the careers of many corporate public relations specialists.³² So did his duties. As publicist Sweeney fed over a thousand commercial media outlets daily information on SWOC, dealt with external press requests, ghostwrote speeches, and worked with organizational allies. Sweeney had SWOC's support as evidenced by his long tenure and Murray's vocal praise.³³

Sweeney's tenure in the news dailies may explain his idea of what *Steel Labor* should be. Before SWOC's Second Wage and Policy Convention in 1940 he argued for an editorial policy of "factual reporting" that would be "far more convincing than one devoted to generalizations." For Sweeney this meant, "a factual news story of a new contract, labor Board victories, men reinstated with back pay and the like is of interest to all sections of the steel industry—because that type of story is based upon specific fact." Sweeney's desire to convey "facts" not generalizations was the most expansive explanation of the paper ever found. Sweeney was once lauded at a SWOC convention for his concision, and his convention reports became more condensed over time, rote re-

³¹ Vin Sweeney obituary, *Pittsburgh Press*, 22 May 1967, 28. Sweeney's father was a steelworker in mills in Pittsburgh and Donora. After attending Notre Dame, he worked for a number of local and metropolitan papers, then moved to the International News Service, before he became a reporter for the *Pittsburgh Press*, and then its Sunday editor. Robert R.R. Brooks, *As Steel Goes: Unionism in a Basic Industry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), 187.

³² See Hardman and Neufeld, *The House of Labor*, 188; and Stuart Ewen, *P.R.! A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 82-101.

³³ Sweeney worked with R.R. Brooks, author of *As Steel Goes*, and the Twentieth Century Fund. *First Wage and Police Convention*, 63-4. Correspondence between Sweeney and Murray is especially intimate, for example, on the trip Sweeney took to Europe. Vincent Sweeney to Philip Murray, 25 and 30 September, 1945; and 8 October, 1945, in *Murray papers*, (Publicity Department), CUA.

explanations of the function of the paper, making it difficult to surmise his motives or goals.³⁴

Sweeney's personal politics may have influenced his choice of imagery for *Steel Labor*. Many SWOC leaders were conservative Catholics, and Sweeney, Notre Dame graduate, most fit this description. *CIO News* editor, Len DeCaux, felt the SWOC offices were chilly, influenced by a Catholic cabal. He described Sweeney as an ardent anti-communist and devout Catholic.³⁵ Sweeney's choice of imagery matched his interest in the facts and nothing but. Yet *Steel Labor*'s "factual" photos were also imbued with a moderate, and at times even conservative ideology about the role of members in the union and workers' place in society.

Sweeney's editorial vision meshed well with leaders' aspirations and the union's internal culture. SWOC, which became the United Steelworkers of America (USA), was one of the most top-down unions in the new CIO. One might not go so far as Len De Caux, who believed the union was "as totalitarian as any big business," to recognize leaders' dominance. Murray believed steelworkers lacked union experience, were inherently conservative, and therefore staff should retain control. Leaders institutionalized authority by limiting internal democracy. They let go or transferred

³⁴ By the 1946 and 1948 conventions Sweeney's report was less than a paragraph long, in contrast to other departments which were pages long. While its true that publicity can be seen as more internal to the organization, and less of interest to rank and file delegates, this choice speaks to the ways in which the power of media and representation could be hidden and naturalized, it is deemed not worthy of discussion or analysis. "Report of Publicity Department," *Second Wage and Policy Convention*, 36.

³⁵ Len De Caux, *Labor Radical: From the Wobblies to the CIO* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 281, 286-7.

organizers who won members' loyalty as that might threaten leaders' influence.³⁶ *Steel Labor's* portrayal of how the union functioned focused on leaders and diminished SWOC's rank and file—but it also promoted this way of seeing things to members.

The paper's moderate editorial stance and its moderating imagery corresponded with the union's political and economic strategizing. Murray's personal history as a workingman and his awareness of steel's continued intransigence towards employees led him to distrust corporations. Yet Murray advocated an industrial democracy that promoted negotiation over turmoil, even if he had misgivings about his managerial "partners."³⁷ *Steel Labor* reflected Sweeney's viewpoint and the union president's as well.

Under Vin Sweeney, *Steel Labor* truncated its visual representations of unionism. The heroic laborer disappeared almost entirely. Class-based imagery was halved in Sweeney's first year, and much of what appeared did so right after he assumed editorship, suggesting some institutional lag. After July of 1937, perhaps in response to the failed Little Steel drive, class-based imagery appeared to have been banished. Sweeney did retain the figure of heroic labor in outreach tear-off appeals for members. For example,

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 280, 7; Paul Clark, Peter Gottlieb and Donald Kennedy, *Forging a Union of Steel: Phillip Murray, SWOC and the United Steelworkers* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1987), 5. David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 19, 27; see George Patterson on organizers being transferred when they developed a base in communities, he believed SWOC leaders wanted to maintain direct control. "Embryo," 136, 148, *Patterson*, b9f6.

³⁷ In *Organized Labor and Production*, Murray argued unions could not have power without taking responsibility for productivity. His failure in the 1946 strike to stress corporation's own role in price inflation, unlike Walter Reuther's push for GM to "open the books," was an example of Murray's oft-noted unwillingness to dramatize the class politics of specific conflicts. The best description of Murray can be found in the essays in

in “The Answer Is Yes” three abstracted male figures pull the word “yes” into place. As their straining bodies made clear, it was a chore, but their joint physicality made them well capable of achieving the goal.³⁸ Sweeney’s injunction against “generalization” is brought to mind. He wanted “fact” in *Steel Labor*, not allegory and symbolism. The outreach tear-outs were attempts at persuasion from the union to workers. Here it might be safe to keep the hulking men and their inciting promise of collective achievement. Sweeney also discarded the visual trope of unionism as creating a utopic tomorrow.

With WWII Sweeney resurrected such imagery. *Steel Labor* promoted the patriotism of its steelworker members and the union itself, and it did so with the visual rhetoric that Sweeney had eschewed. SWOC was committed to the war effort. The federal government rewarded it by cementing a still fragile union movement by forcing corporations to accept maintenance of membership contracts in June of 1942 in exchange for the union agreement to enforce a no-strike pledge.³⁹ With the war Sweeney returned manly labor to *Steel Labor*’s pages in depictions of the worker as “the man behind the man behind the gun,” or as member-soldiers. [Fig. 5-8.]⁴⁰ He also brought back the

Forging a Union of Steel. See especially comments by Ruttenberg, 124; Fillipelli, 8-10; and Raskin, 116.

³⁸ *SL*, 9 January 1937, 8. Imagery that still used the heroic labor includes a cartoon, “And they have proved it,” which shows a working man whose pushed up his sleeves and looks ready to fight claiming “We’ve Just Begun to Fight.” *SL*, 21 June 1937, 5.

³⁹ This made a huge difference for many CIO unions, particularly for the USWA. One USWA accountant called the National War Labor Board mandated agreements “manna from heaven” as they increased union membership and hence the USWA’s financial and institutional stability. See Brody, *Worker in Industrial American*, 113-115. Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor’s War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 81; and Zieger, *The CIO*, 145-7.

⁴⁰ For illustration, see *SL*, 30 June 1942, 4. See also “We’ll Do Our Share,” 26 July 1942, 1; “They’re Not Going to Push Me Around,” 31 July 1942, 3; and “Okay Boys; you asked

image of “a better tomorrow” through unionism by emphasizing the tie between the union and a strong America. Sweeney’s willingness to restore visual themes such as manly labor and a “better union tomorrow” suggests that his earlier exclusion of these themes was a choice, conscious or not, on his part. Such imagery implied conflict and a metaphoric recognition of members’ collective strength. Sweeney used such idealized images of union power when they could be strapped onto the engine of America’s war mission. That advertisements by Coca-Cola, Philco, and the United States Rubber Company also embraced the common workingman to suggest corporate patriotism made Sweeney’s decision a safe one.⁴¹

Sweeney retained only one class-based set of images in *Steel Labor* until war broke out—its negative portrayal of corporate power as a corporate moneybags. Accoutered with cigar and top hat, *Steel Labor* often designated the figure as the “anonymous steel baron,” though specific company owners such as Republic Steel’s Thomas Girdler, or Carnegie Illinois’s Benjamin Fairless also appeared with luxury trappings—the pin-striped suit, pince-nez glasses, or cigar. A full history of the portly capitalist is beyond the scope of this analysis. In brief, some time in the late 19th century, the image of one social group fattening off the general public emerged. Satiric art often exaggerates the corporeal to emphasize its point. The capitalists’ distended bodies underscored the inequality of social relations, their girth marked their excess and

for it!” all *Steel Labor*, among others. For utopic unionism during the war years see 17 November 1942, cover page.

⁴¹ In 1941 and 1942 *LIFE Magazine* was full of advertisements that used the heroic laborer. By 1943 this trope diminished significantly, which deserves further study. See *LIFE* ads: for Coca-Cola, 2 November 1942, 35; for Philco, 6 September 1943, 1; an ad

parasitical relationship to the social body.⁴² In the teens and twenties, Art Young and Robert Minor, illustrators for the *Masses*, often used this figure in their cartoons, as did the IWW. By the 1930's this well-established symbol of the capitalist also circulated in the mainstream media. Perhaps one of the most recognizable figures is that of "Rich Uncle Milburn Pennybags" the real estate mogul of Parker Brothers board game "Monopoly," first sold during the Depression's height.⁴³ The sixty-year stereotype of the rotund, tuxedo-clad moneybags was so clichéd by the 1930s however, that it had lost much of its bite.

Steel Labor's capitalist oscillated between two characterizations. As we saw earlier in the cartoon of the heroic, if thuggish worker, the capitalist could be deployed as a pitiable figure, fleshy and incapable of fending for itself in a fight. In other imagery the

for Fairchild Engine and Airplane Corporation, 5 July 1943, 92; and ads for United States Rubber Company, 19 April 1943 18-19 and 17 May 1943, 48-49.

⁴² The famous nineteenth century cartoonist, Thomas Nast, took advantage of the heft of New York City's Boss Tweed to criticize feeding at the public trough. Joseph Keppler, editor of *Puck* may have been the first American cartoonist to use the rotund figure to criticize growing monopolization. In "The Bosses of the Senate" Keppler criticized the lobbying power of the trusts in the towering, bloated moneybag bodies and caricatured faces of monopoly power. Nast and Keppler's work can be found in two compilations of cartoon art: Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968); and Stephen Hess and Sandy Northrop, *Drawn and Quartered: The History of American Political Cartoons*, (Montgomery, AL: River City, 1996). See Mikhail Bakhtin's work on Rabelais for a discussion on the role of body grotesqueries and social parody. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968).

⁴³ This figure was so routine a depiction of the rich that by the twentieth century it had already lost its bite according to one historian of political caricature, Hess and Northrop, *Drawn and Quartered*. Nonetheless, its leftist resonance was retained. Mexican muralist Diego Rivera often included such figures in his critique of oligarchic power. For art in the *Masses* see Zurier, *Art for the Masses*, 13-119. See Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices*, 41, 46, 57. Information of "Rich Uncle Milburn Pennybags" in public relations communication to author, from Parker Brothers, Beverly, Massachusetts.

figure's excessive size indicated its continuing, forbidding power. [Fig. 5-9.]⁴⁴ In both cases corporate power is crystallized as an "other," meant to be reviled, though for different reasons. The varied use of this figure suggested the union's need to acknowledge a formidable opponent *and* diminish him; parallel to leader's need to convince workers they could win collective bargaining rights, but that defeat was always a possibility. The corpulent capitalist, so common in the first years of *Steel Labor*, disappeared during the war years. He reappeared once the USWA began to mobilize for federal support against unemployment and economic insecurity. At a minimum this shift indicated a need to appease corporate and public opinion during the war. The shift also evidences union attention to the ideological nuances of the images it proffered members, even if it never articulated these meanings in words.

Standard Quiescent Workers

As men and women poured into the SWOC, *Steel Labor* represented them in photographs and drawn imagery—yet their representation articulated clear messages about members' circumscribed place in the union. Photographs identified worker-members but in such a standardized way that it was easy to ignore their significance to the union. Images also prescribed members' "right behavior" such as paying dues, or attending a convention or district meeting. Workers' role in collectively creating the union was not acknowledged, much less promoted. Only as the union gained institutional stability did it represent members in their day-to-day attempts to strengthen union locals

⁴⁴ "Steel Baron," *SL*, 1 August 1936, 8; see also "Steel Workers Say, 'No! We're not Puppets,'" *SL*, 3 November 1936, 2.

through membership development and by exercising the basic weapon of the strike.

Steel Labor's imagery did not tell readers they were critical to the union struggle, nor did it inspire them to identify with their peers in solidarity.

Steel Labor's limited attentiveness to its rank and file can be seen in the staid, even rigid compositions and banal visual conventions employed to represent these workers. The newspaper almost always used the least compelling composition and style.

A *PM Magazine* photographer explained:

Photography of groups can be one of the most absorbing of photographic problems. It can also be the most boring...Inevitably the photographer who regards group photography as a test of his imagination and ingenuity produces the most interesting, the most delightfully arranged photos, and the indifferent cameraman produces group pictures which bore one at the first (and only) fleeting glance.⁴⁵

Steel Labor's membership photographs conformed to the formulaic pattern. The men rarely interacted with one another, instead they stood stock still, shoulder to shoulder, whether at a picnic, or at a local meeting—a passive offering to the camera eye. These photographs offered them a mark of recognition to the specific member, but little more.

[Fig. 5-10.]⁴⁶ Photographs further ordered members through their composition. In union elections members lined up in a file, and at conventions workers sat upright in chairs stretching out to the ends of the hall in symmetrical lines. Such photos stressed union strength through numbers but the tightly composed geometry of the shots also

⁴⁵ Dale Rooks, "Group Pictures," *Encyclopedia of Photography*, vol. 5 (New York: Educational Alliance Press, 1949), 1942. The *Encyclopedia*, a wonderful guide to mid-century photographic practices, includes submissions from commercial practitioners as well as art photographers such as Berenice Abbott and Edward Weston.

⁴⁶ "News of SWOC Union in Pictures," *SL*, 30 August 1940. See also: "17,000 Vote Yes," 5 June 1937; "How Gary Did It," 26 May 1939, 6; "Davey Steel in Cleveland

emphasized organization. [Fig. 5-11.]⁴⁷ This compositional rigidity was often re-emphasized in the photograph's tight framing where the static lines of the seated members filled every inch of the photo's frame. Photographs of male steelworkers fit the *PM* photographer's description of group photographs which "bore" with a "fleeting glance" because of their composition, the camera's point of view, and the men's expressions and poses.

Steel Labor's imagery also established what an ideal union "team player" should be. Unlike the idealized heroic laborer, who exuded a strength that was his own, these cartoons and photographs idealized workers as one who followed the dictates of the new, bureaucratic unionism. Imagery delineated activities that good unionists should engage in, as is seen in this photograph of a worker stuffing a ballot in the box to demonstrate the proper procedures for winning collective bargaining rights. [Fig. 5-12.]⁴⁸ Editors often included instructions to this self-evident, didactic imagery. Those rank and file whom union leadership could deem team players—locals that had won elections, those with

Reaches 100 Per Cent," 26 January 1940, 2; and "News of SWOC Union in Pictures," in 23 May 1941, 8; and 22 January 1943, 12; all *SL*.

⁴⁷ "25,000 Represented in Philadelphia District Convention," *SL*, 29 March 1940, 8. See also "They Pay Their Dues a Year in Advance," *SL*, July 1942, 13; "South Chicago Steelworkers Hear Wage Program," *SL*, 19 November 1943, 10; *SL*, Convention shot, 30 September 1937, 5 and "500 delegates," *SL*, March 1945, 8.

⁴⁸ See "Your Duty is to Vote," *SL*, 26 January 1940, 3. See also *SL*, 20 March 1937, 8; "Not Quiet on the Western Front," 15 April 1938, 8; and February 1945, 5. Other editorial cartoons or illustrations which stress members' discipline include: "Another Chapter is Written" which shows a Jones and Laughlin worker putting his vote in the ballot box as he reads from the open book of "Industrial History," 24 May 1937, 4; "17,000 Vote Yes for Signed Pact at J&L," which shows an Uncle Sam figure reading the election results of masses of workers lined up to vote. The workers are decidedly ethnic, not only do some appear Slavic, but at least one man looks like 19th century stereotypical images of Paddy; with a pipe sticking out of an ape-like jaw, 5 June 1937, 6.

large memberships, and those with a high proportion of “paid up” members—made frequent appearances in *Steel Labor*. Typically they were represented in the staid group photos described above.⁴⁹ As the nation entered WWII, *Steel Labor* acknowledged members by printing portraits of USWA soldier-members and snapshots of collective patriotic efforts such as war bond drives, or union sponsored parade floats.⁵⁰

Steel Labor was rarely inventive when representing its male membership. In *Steel Labor* workers engaged in prescribed behaviors, were ordered, but anonymous.⁵¹ The paper’s photographs seem truthful—workers did sit at convention halls in chairs set up in ordered lines. Yet members could be photographed as active participants within meetings, holding their hands up, straining their bodies forward to listen, applauding, or conversely, they could even appear bored. Imagery could attest to the multiplicity of reactions and engagement on the part of union members. Chapter Six shows how one New York City local, a union far smaller than SWOC, broke such formulas. *Steel Labor* broke these formulas itself—its representation of women members was lively and

Photographs which put order to the fore include images of men voting in “J-L Men Fight for Signed Contract—And Win,” 5 June 1937, 3.

⁴⁹ *SL*, 26 January 1940, 3; 27 February 1942, 7; and 26 May 1939, 6 offer three examples.

⁵⁰ Issues from 1942 are full of such images. A few uncharacteristic photographs highlight the rote standardization of most membership photos through the war years. Several group photographs of a Pueblo, Colorado local emphasized individuals’ union involvement in its playful quirkiness. In one photograph two unionists pose, one a slight man of ninety-four pounds, the other, “Tiny” who weighed three times that and stood 6’ 3” tall. This photograph and its caption suggested that across the spectrum, “big and small,” workers’ support was indispensable for union success. A few weeks later *Steel Labor* featured the same union as its members leafleted outside a factory. The photograph appeared as a “slice of life” snapshot of rank and file activism. Portraits of those on the front, or those just returned from overseas, and more candid shots of member-soldiers meeting local lodge leaders, or receiving awards from politicians or union brass were featured in *SL*’s pages. It is unclear if a staff photographer, a local newspaper, or a union member themselves took the photos. *SL*, 25 September 1941, 3; and 28 February 1941, 6.

engaging. By representing SWOC's male members in standardized, humdrum form, *Steel Labor* proposed that these workers were necessary but minor building blocks to the union.

Cartoons that Sweeney printed in *Steel Labor* suggested that this conception of a conforming rank and file was an ideal not yet achieved. Unlike *Steel Labor*'s earlier heroic worker, these cartoon workers—of all sizes and shapes, ages and ethnicities—discussed how the union might change their jobs and their home lives. Cartoons also addressed members' responsibilities to the union. These themes dealt with workers' concerns, though the cartoons also betrayed leaders' fears about its rank and file. In "This Union Must Go On" two sets of men chat about SWOC. A man in one pair confirmed his belief in the union, only because it was "here to stay." Two union delegates who overheard the first pair claimed to know better. After having attended a recent SWOC convention the delegates recognized "what a swell bunch of steelworkers are in the union." Solidarity devolved to the union being "swell" because of who members might meet at a convention. The scene's realism was undercut by the second man's response, he parroted back a Phil Murray convention quote, "the job of making this the strongest union in the world is up to us now." In another cartoon, "Sound Advice," four older, "ethnic types," conferred over a speech one would give as shop delegate at SWOC's first convention. [Fig. 5-13.]⁵² The worker betrayed pride but nervousness about his new leadership role, sustained by his peers' "helpful" comments that he should read "like

⁵¹ *SL*, 27 February 1942, 7.

⁵² *SL*, 13 December 1937, 6. See also, "There's One in Every Steel Mill," 29 October 1937; "Only a Union Can Bring That Feeling," 18 February 1938; and "You Can't Fool the Workingman," 21 January 1938, 4.

those radio announcers,” or a “U.S. Senator.” Two other workers passed by and commented on the first group’s discussion: “He’d better take that chew out before he starts to talk or the guys in th’ front row will get a shower bath.” This cartoon, much like genre painting, which takes ordinary people and their activities as its subject while it types and makes ideological claims about them, sympathized and mocked.⁵³ Both cartoons represented rank and file pride and pleasure from participating in a larger deliberative body. Simultaneously the cartoon suggested the circumscribed boundaries of unionism for the rank and file by showing workers who discussed their issues and concerns, but did not create the conditions of union struggle, and whose discussion lie within a predefined context enforced via mockery.

In the 1940s *Steel Labor* cartoons put a human face on local officials who *were* the union to most members. “There’s Another Side to Those Local Union Officers,” showed the local union president, treasurer, recording and financial secretaries and guides.⁵⁴ All were portrayed as they might be perceived by the rank and file: tough, even unapproachable figures: the “king-pin at local union meetings,” or the “watch-dog of the funds” that demanded strict accounting for monies spent. But “the real boss...the missus,” revealed a more understandable side to these local leaders. When faced with “the little woman,” the local officials lost their stern aspects and instead evidenced outright panic or woebegone expressions of shame. Such imagery relied on dominant gender roles and spread them at the same time. The wife, a common vehicle of humor, made these local leaders just one of the guys, and hence equal to their fellow rank and

⁵³ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), Introduction and Chapter One, “Ordering the Body Politic.”

filers. This cartoon acknowledged member concerns and used the domestic sphere to help humanize top-down relations inside the union.

Gender played an important role in another common subject theme, *Steel Labor*'s cartoons of the unorganized worker as a physical or metaphorical weakling. Elizabeth Faue observes the frequency of visual tropes of impotency in union literature of the 1930s. "Unorganized workers were caricatured as weak, immature, and fearful; they were depicted as younger brothers, children and street brats."⁵⁵ *Steel Labor* fit her description perfectly. One cartoon showed two thin, threadbare, slope shouldered men—a haggard father and his son—being browbeaten by a stout, unsympathetic, wife. "You pay your dues today. If there had been a union in the mill twenty-five years ago, we'd be a lot better off." [Fig. 5-14.]⁵⁶ The cartoon's indignity lay in the title: "And Dad, too, knows that is true." That an unattractive, nagging wife better understood the importance of unions was a sorry state indeed.⁵⁷ Another cartoon depicted the unorganized as a cow with a bovine smile that beseeched the viewer. A boss in top hat and coat tails drew milk from the cow into his pail of profits.⁵⁸ Unorganized, the workers are pliant and

⁵⁴ See *SL*, July 1947, 10.

⁵⁵ Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle*, 75.

⁵⁶ *SL*, 19 November 1937, 6. Elizabeth Cohen's *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 346 claims this cartoon shows SWOC's support of women's decision-making role within the home. Their portrayal of women throughout the rest of the paper works against her interpretation. See the *Labor History* symposia where Joann Argesinger, Patricia Cooper, and Nancy Gabin criticize Cohen's inattention to gender, vol. 32 (1991), 562-598.

⁵⁷ In another, a thin, "non-unionist" stood, scrunched against the wall as he proffered his hat for a handout. The top-hatted, cigar-smoking "employer" passed him by, nose pointed upward in disregard. The caption was a call for unionization "Don't Beg the Boss for a Raise. Join the Union and Get It!" Only in collective action could workers leave the demeaning position of "begging" the boss for a raise. *SL*, 20 October 1936, 3.

⁵⁸ *SL*, 20 August 1937, 6.

domesticated, their udders fed the corporation: only with organization would workers be self-sufficient. Workers were dichotomized as organized and strong or unorganized, puny, and taken advantage of. By relying on tropes like hen-pecked, beggarly, and pliant, Sweeney promoted a winner/loser binary that relied on gender ideologies prominent in the larger society. Faue contends that the masculinization of labor imagery diminished solidarity in the labor movement. Such gendering constructed a vision of union strength as universal and unitary, ignoring women's specific needs. In these cartoons women's role could be acknowledged, but was negatively characterized. Even when the woman pushed for unionism, she lay outside the struggle for economic justice. Her concerns did not extend past the circle of her family. For an "affirmative" masculinized vision—heroic labor—Sweeney substituted a negative fear-based plea that bullied men into unionization through gendered stereotype.

"What's the Union Coming to When it Can Find Such Beautiful Girls"

When the masculinized, heroic laborer returned to *Steel Labor's* pages during the war years so did women—in a variety of feminine guises. Women's increased presence reflected their increased participation in the workforce during WWII. During the war, women, if they were white, brightened *Steel Labor's* pages. Sometimes they appeared as the now familiar icon of Rosie the Riveter; but more commonly they were attractive, bouncy "girls." After the war, *Steel Labor* presented women as stalwart supporters of their husbands and hence the union. The panache of women's depiction emphasized the newspaper's monotonous presentation of its rank and file men. Images of women, whether as girls with big smiles and attractively turned out figures, or as sustainers of

home and hearth, far outnumber their actual participation in the union. Women's portrayal did more than reflect actual demographic changes, they added a visual spark that *Steel Labor* lacked.

Prior to WWII the steel industry employed few women, even in the more traditional administrative job categories. "Steelmaking traditionally has been men's business. Steelmaking is a heavy and dirty business and women workers have been taboo" stated a Women's Bureau's *Bulletin* from the Department of Labor.⁵⁹ WWII broke this tight male work culture when it led to shortages of cheap labor and thus opened doors to women. By 1943, when the *Bulletin* article appeared, women accounted for over ten percent of the employee base: eight percent of the production workforce and over thirty-two percent of the white-collar positions. The percentage of women in white-collar support positions far exceeded employment in production. In sheer numbers however, a woman walking through the mill's gate to work in the morning would likely don heavy work boots and join the men on the shop floor, as approximately three-quarters of women worked in production.⁶⁰ As World War II progressed, women took over jobs performed by men. Because they were restricted to the "lightest and least skilled jobs," women

⁵⁹ Ethel Erickson, "Women's Employment in the Making of Steel, 1943," *Bulletin of the Women's Bureau* nos. 192-5, 1944, 3.

⁶⁰ Erickson, "Women's Employment," 4. Women could be found cleaning grab buckets of raw materials, carting ore, operating "larry shuttles" of materials to the blast furnaces, salvaging ore dust or centering, controlling the doors to steel furnaces, and cleaning flues. Large numbers of women helped produce newly fabricated items for the war effort. The Women's Bureau survey, not a comprehensive survey, was based upon employment records of 41 steel plants across the nation. It did not include steel fabrication works, only major mills. Their study indicated that the rate of female employment could vary from plant to plant. In one mill sixteen percent of the production employees were women, in another only three percent. By December of 1943, SWOC believed there were

competed with men whose seniority rights, so tenuously secured by the union, got them first dibs as a reward for years of hard service in the industry.⁶¹

Steel Labor depicted women as “image accessories” more than rough and ready producers. Before the war most photographs of women appeared with the staid group photographic styles employed for men though *Steel Labor* did from time to time trade on women’s sexuality to promote the union.⁶² As women moved into the industry’s employ with the war, *Steel Labor*’s imagery pointed to their gender more. A May 1944 *Steel Labor* article, “Women in Steel,” addressed the 80,000 women who were new to the industry and hence the steelworkers’ union, and encapsulated the union’s approach to its women members. Two-thirds of the cover-page was taken up with photographs of two women delegates. [Fig. 5-15.]⁶³ The women were slim, well-dressed, and posed in feminine stances, one with her legs crossed, the other in the classic Grecian bend. The photo’s cropping narrowed and broadened with the lines of one of the women’s bodies, setting off her legs and accentuating her pose. The photograph and its cropping “framed” women in a particular way. These women were meant to be consumed by the eye, much as women were presented in mass media publications or in Hollywood’s celluloid fantasies. Rosie the Riveter these women were not. The article spoke of women’s

80,000 women working in the steel industry. See USWA, *Second Constitutional Convention of the United Steel Workers of America*, 1944, 42.

⁶¹ Erickson, “Women’s Employment,” 4-20. Over forty percent of the women in production worked in the rolling mill, typically as laborers, though occasionally operating automated machinery.

⁶² “Virginia Auxiliary of SWOC in the South,” *SL*, 28 October 1938, 8.

⁶³ *SL*, May 1944, 1, 8. Elizabeth and Stuart Ewen’s “Fashion and Democracy” in *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1992 ed.), 95-115, explores women’s postures in advertising,

crucial importance to the war drive, but nothing in the images pointed to the women's work status.

Steel Labor could print photos that were reminiscent of Rosie the Riveter.⁶⁴

Rosie attests to women's capacity to do any job; women's significance to the war effort; and the union's recognition of women's labor. Feminist scholars first saw Rosie as a representation of wartime opportunities for women, and their ultimate reversal in the post-war years. Later scholars stressed how femininity and duty combined in her portrayal—Rosie was never quite as feminist as she first seemed.⁶⁵ Certainly this ambiguity existed in *Steel Labor*. In many of the photos, headscarves add the lone feminine touch to women decked out in overalls and work boots, the uniform of working-class maleness, as in this photo-spread of "Steel Women of District 33." [Fig. 5-16.]⁶⁶ The text told readers that the smiling women "perform[ed] a variety of jobs," and that women "not only learned their jobs but the value of union organization." But the caption then undercut the photo and the text's directness. "Minnesota sunshine lights up the faces of a quartet of ladies." This sprightly caption captured the gleeful mood of the women but it was at odds with their husky figures and the broad expanse of their overalls. It was not that the caption feminized the women, but rather that such a caption was used at all. Captions of male workers tended to designate identity or activity. This caption employed

⁶⁴ Many of the Rosie-style images were provided by the Office of War Information (OWI).

⁶⁵ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda During WWII* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

⁶⁶ *SL*, January 1945, 9. See also "Steelwomen—USA," *SL*, May 1945 which shows women at work "removing shims from a dryer," and installing door-stripping, along with one women local's bowling league. Men are almost never shown at work, and at leisure in such casual, "fun," poses.

the glib text of mass-market magazines about women and their activities to package their relationship to the worksite and the union. Hence, even when represented as producers, women provided a decorative counterpoint to representations of male workers in *Steel Labor's* pages.

As the numbers of women in the industry grew, their photographs became attractive window dressing in the newspaper. The camera followed the lines of the woman's body as she worked, or focused in upon her smiling visage as she posed next to her machine. No similar shots of male workers appeared in *Steel Labor*. A photo-spread, "USA-CIO Locals in Pictures" demonstrated the stark gender demarcation in *Steel Labor*. [Fig. 5-17.]⁶⁷ Groups of men were frontally posed, stock-still, shoulder-to-shoulder, with unions banners, flags and emblems—*Steel Labor's* typical presentation. Women's representation on the other hand emphasized their uniqueness. *Steel Labor* blew-up the top image, a close-up of "Victory Girl," Anna Czech. Editors then cropped the photo, so that her head, which was haloed by the Steelworkers' emblem behind her, stood out even more. On the bottom of the page lay a picture of "four lovely WOW's." This picture, also tightly cropped, captured the four bobbing, smiling faces as they led back through the frame. Both images allowed the women's individuality to be expressed, unlike the standardized shots of rank and file men. Another group photo of girls atop a stage, smiling beguilingly at one another and at the camera crowned a story celebrating the opening of the nation's largest USA-CIO headquarters in Gary, Indiana. [Fig. 5-18.]⁶⁸ The women's interrelationship enlivened the picture. The single column line of the

⁶⁷ "News of USA-CIO Locals in Pictures," *SL*, 28 May 1943, 12. See also *SL*, 22 January 1943, 12.

composition, which posed women chest to back allowed for the greatest photographic exploration of the women's faces. The headline's alliteration, "Gary Girls Give Glamour to New Hall" emphasized their uniqueness through the playful use of language. The photo-spread did offer a photo of the headquarters, but the most powerful image was of the Gary girls: women's bodies and smiles celebrated union strength. One newspaper photographer claimed, "No machine in the world can qualify as an interesting news picture unless it is teamed with a feminine smile on top a pair of well turned gams."⁶⁹ In most photos *Steel Labor* left off the gams, but SWOC, like corporate America used women's bodies to tout its success.

Steel Labor portrayed white women as the objects of desire—but it rarely depicted the African-American women who comprised a significant portion of the unionized female workforce this way. One photo of four African-American women who worked at the Timken Roller Bearing Company had them staring uncompromisingly at the camera eye. They had the weighty decorum of union leaders, matching the photograph's caption, "Count on Women to Show the Way." [Fig. 5-19.]⁷⁰ This representation did not trade on their sexuality. In keeping with the dictates of mass-culture, and a majority white membership that was nervous about racial intermixture, *Steel Labor* represented its black women members with gravity, not playfulness. Ironically, the union's most powerless

⁶⁸ *SL*, 12 December 1936, 3.

⁶⁹ Philadelphia *Record*'s photographer, Martin Hyman, as quoted in "Publicity Photography" in the *Encyclopedia of Photography: A Complete Guide to Amateur and Professional Photography*, vol. VIII (New York: National Education Alliance, 1949), 3020.

⁷⁰ *SL*, 22 January 1943, 4.

social group attained visual status as a result of society's racial and gender ideologies, ideologies that the union promoted.⁷¹

The strict gender binary of *Steel Labor*'s photographs differentiated members' social roles in and outside the union. Using the words of the *PM Magazine* news photographer, if *Steel Labor*'s photographs of rank and file men "bored" after a "fleeting glance," its photos of women were "delightfully arranged" and done with "ingenuity."⁷² This distinction conforms to the mold for gender within Western art. For John Berger, "women appear" as an owned thing before the eye of the "spectator-owner," always male. In her now classic formulation, Laura Mulvey extends a similar analysis to mass cultural products, for Mulvey women "connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*." She explains: "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly...From pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfield to Busby Berkely, she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire." The depiction of women unionists in magazines like *LIFE* corresponds to her assessment, as do photographs of working women in *Steel Labor*. Though Mulvey and Berger ignore women's own creation and recreation of meaning, their work remains relevant here given

⁷¹ Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in Film*, discusses the typecasting of African-Americans in film. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). See also "The 'Indecent' Other," in David Nasaw's *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). Marchand's *Advertising the American Dream*, 200-205, deals with sex, race and class codes in advertising.. See Brooks, *As Steel Goes*, 18; and Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 73-76 for an internal culture of racism in the steelworkers' union.

⁷² The caption's final words underscored women's entertainment role: "They danced, too." *SL*, 28 April 1944, 14.

the strict binary proposed in *Steel Labor*.⁷³ Women members would have had to work much harder to view their male peers as objects. And while they may have enjoyed imagining themselves as attractive, attention grabbing figures, or as the more “workmanlike” Rosie, *Steel Labor* asserted their difference at every opportunity.

Perhaps the union sought cultural means to accommodate itself to these new women members—an altogether ambiguous accommodation. The national union and some locals accepted women. Other local leaders joined corporate management who “did not welcome the advent of women into the mills,” assumed women would “return to their peace-time activities” once the war ended, and hence didn’t think it “worthwhile to encourage activism or develop leadership.” Women had to be wooed to keep the union strong, yet the union did not consider them, nor did it want them, as permanent members. Delegate Anna Kordich’s speech to the 1940 SWOC convention demonstrates how even women who spoke on behalf of equal pay for equal work, which had union leaders’ support, couched their demands with assurances that “Men, we are here to protect you in the future.” Even so, a disdainful male delegate replied with a racial and gender digression that suggests how much white manhood could be threatened: “So far as the

⁷³ As neo-Marxist John Berger puts with succinctness from a materialist standpoint: “Men act, women appear.” *Ways of Seeing* (Harmondsworth, England: Pelican Press, 1972), 45-47, 52, 63-64. The classic feminist formulation comes from a film theorist, Laura Mulvey, who employs a psychoanalytic analysis. She explores the ways that women as constructed representations serve as a locus for male desire. For Mulvey, the Freudian castration complex is played out in the fetishized female body. Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 19. A critique of Mulvey from the same theoretical grounds is found in E. Ann Kaplan, “Is the Gaze Male?” in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 309-327. In *SL* only leaders “act”, i.e. compose and

women are concerned, that's all right. That's the greatest thing in the world. Maybe the Indians will have this country again just like they did, and they will put the squaws to work."⁷⁴ The delegates' discomfort with women members points to the work of *Steel Labor*. Photographs of women embodied the union's conflicted relationship to its women members. On the one hand, *Steel Labor* recognized women's contribution to the war effort. On the other hand, at every step, its representation reminded members that women, if white, were different. By making these women "girls," they could be understood as contingent workers, not a serious permanent threat in the job market. As Angel Kwolk Folland explains, for clerical workers in the insurance industry "girls" offered no fundamental disruption of gender roles.⁷⁵

Cartoons printed in *Steel Labor* show how gender differentiation could shade from "adulation" to negative stereotyping. In one cartoon two soldiers inspect a photo of one of the "gals" at home. The gal is no pinup, as her Peter Pan collar and glasses connote. One soldier said to the other "I know, but how she can turn out planes." Here

present themselves in portraiture, though the binary still persists, with women "appearing."

⁷⁴ Local leaders claimed women were ill adapted for working in the mills, that their entrance into industry put men at a disadvantage, and believed they weren't worth the bother given their limited tenure. Erickson, "Women's Employment," 33-34. Delegate Ann Kordich of Local 1011 argued before the First USWA convention in 1942 "Men we are here to protect you in the future, because we know that some time after this war is over you are coming back to your various jobs," *First Convention United Steel Workers*, 296. For the response, 298.

⁷⁵ Angel Kwollek-Folland, "Gender, Self, and Work in the Life Insurance Industry, 1880-1930," in Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 184, 188-189; Rickie Solinger argues that insisting on a woman's sexuality addresses social discomfort about changes in gender roles. "The Smutty Side of *LIFE*: Picturing Babes as Icons of Gender Difference in the Early 1950's," in Erika Doss, *Looking at LIFE Magazine* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 201-219.

the humor turned on the irrelevance of a woman's attractiveness under the dire circumstances of war. Yet the cartoon still reinforced the male gaze, with women as the object of that gaze. In another war-era cartoon, a woman was seen in her kitchen stomping on cans as her husband admonished: "Just try an' remember dear, flatten 'em after they're empty."⁷⁶ This cartoon played on war imperatives for the home front that required women's labor. Recycling tin was a patriotic act. But women's unswerving and irrational commitment was put to comic relief. Cartoons made "womanly" traits such as attractiveness, passivity, and irrationality the object of hilarity.

With re-conversion the union addressed women not as girls but as mothers, housewives, and partners to their men. *Steel Labor* made little reference to its earlier representations, nor did it represent women as members. Its post-war mothers and wives had all the vibrancy of the "real" found in photojournals like *LIFE* or the documentary photographs of the FSA. In a human-interest story presaging the 1946 strike, "Mrs. Marie Rigot, Wife of a Striker," Rigot tended a pot on the stove as she held her daughter in one arm. [Fig. 5-20.]⁷⁷ Her gingham apron added another layer of domesticity. Rigot believed "my man is fighting for something we should have," increased wages. Her husband's ill health, the result of years "pickling" steel with acids, led her to "back him

⁷⁶ One cartoon envisaged the Bureau of Labor Statistics as a young, comely woman, "The Sweetheart of Industry." Her hand was caressed by the figure representing capitalism, in this case a fawning, elderly, tuxedo clad man. Here women's physical attractions, passivity, and lack of discrimination became tropes to complain about low wages, and the renewed fight against big business. *SL*, May 1944, 5. Another cartoon criticized the Office of Price Administration's (OPA) unwillingness to give women wage parity, at first glance a feminist message. A girl sitting in a "Kisses - \$1" booth was told by her girlfriend to stop offering kisses. The friend suggested a Lysistrata-style strike on the OPA. The punch line of this cartoon depended upon envisioning women's sexuality as a 'favor'. *SL*, 26 March 1943, 10

all the way.” Rigot, like the article’s other women showed solidarity by “walk[ing] an extra block to find food for less,” and limiting the “temptations” of additional household expenses. *Steel Labor* represented the control of family consumption as critical to weathering a strike, as women were required to set aside money from home economies. “The fight had brought the women to the forefront” claimed the caption, and the fight was for the “weekly pay envelope” and the “dignity and self-respect” that came from higher wages. Women and men sought a better standard of living, but photo-stories typically represented women’s concern as explicitly limited to the domestic sphere and deriving from their social roles as wives and homemakers. Men were wage-earners and unionists, women benefited from their husbands involvement.⁷⁸

At the 1940 SWOC Wage and Policy convention in Chicago, that city’s mayor, Edward Kelley, addressed the assembled steel workers and told them of his working-class roots, “where men were real men and women were real mothers.”⁷⁹ After the war, *Steel*

⁷⁷ *SL*, February 1946, 2-3.

⁷⁸ Women could be represented as wage earners as well. “Women’s Stake in the Union: It’s Take Home Pay that Feeds the Kids,” the next page after the Marie Rigot story, tied women’s interest in the union to advantages accrued to their families. The article offered three photos organized on a vertical line. In the first photo a group of children lie in an iris eye above the caption, “The family is the face of the future.” Below that were two photographs of women who smiled directly at the camera. In the bottom shot women who exit their work-site hailed the photographer and the viewer with raised arms. Vertically positioned imagery tends to imply an ideal, towards which the bottom is either a specific example or a means by which to achieve the ideal. Gunther Kess and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 211, 219. In the aftermath of the strikes the union did print a photo of the “changing of the Guard,” where women picketers stopped for refreshment while on the line. The union detailed the many activities women engaged in so that “they can truthfully say, ‘The 1946 strike was our fight too.’” The images undercut this by clarifying that it is a subsidiary fight to the domestic chores.

⁷⁹ The union continued to print photographs of women that sexualized them, but these appeared far less frequently than earlier. See *SL* August 1947, 6; September 1947, 6;

Labor imagined women in these same terms, as “real mothers.” Women ideally fought *from* the private, domestic sphere, and men fought *for* this sphere. An April 1948 story prepared members for their next set of wage negotiations and it lionized the family as the ideal which unionism upheld. This front-page story had three photos. In the top photograph a woman turned away from the stove towards her son, whose devotion seems evident from the upward cant of his head. Below this photo lie a group of children in an iris eye cut out. The photo is a close-up, which emphasized the children’s individuality, but also their sweet expressions and vulnerability. Below the children was a typical group photograph of rank and file men who sat sitting in ordered rows, passively listening at a meeting. In this layout union men literally provided the base for the domestic ideals towards which each member should strive.

Images of women in the post-war period diminished the focus on sexuality, and put women’s maternal, domestic qualities to the fore. Barbara Melosh’s study of women in New Deal public art noticed a similar phenomenon for the 1930s. She argues that public art’s “aesthetic of containment” limited the “insistent physicality” of women found in mass consumer culture. In *Steel Labor*’s photographs women retained an insistent presence—the gendered characteristic of nurturance. Women’s presence asserted itself in the home, not in the public sphere, as workers or members. By consigning women into this limited role as mother-citizen-consumer the union conceived of women as necessary but subsidiary players.⁸⁰

January 1948, 4; February 1949, 9; March 1950, 12; and September 1950, 8. For Mayor Kelley’s speech see *Second Wage and Policy Convention*, 109.

⁸⁰ For the subsidiary role of women within union movements, even when consumption is included as an organizing tactic see Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer*

But *Steel Labor*'s depictions of women as mother-citizen-consumer granted them ever more authority than they had within the union. George Patterson, the local union leader from Chicago whose wife was an auxiliary leader, claimed national SWOC leaders undermined mid-western women's involvement. At the 1944 national convention members debated leaders' failure to encourage women's activism. The USWA entered a resolution to "encourage" the organization of women into auxiliaries for "legislation and political action." Delegates complained this didn't give women adequate scope for their activism, and that women deserved concrete representation. Murray demurred. He thought auxiliaries might "run counter to the function of local unions...take over the work that ordinarily belong to the local unions." He further raised the red flag of "an uncontrollable auxiliary" that could lead to division within the union. Whether Murray feared "unruly" women given his tight grasp on power, or whether he pandered to members' own prejudices is unclear. That leadership didn't want women to step out of place is unmistakable.⁸¹

Steel Labor's visual representation of women as unionists or as family members operated on several levels simultaneously. Imagery indicated what women's place in the union should be, redefined their role from the war years, and pulled on emotional strings

Organizing, Gender and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 248-249; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 40-41; and Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), especially Ch. 5, "Changing Bases of Labor Solidarity, 1936-1939."

⁸¹ For the decommissioning of women's auxiliary and leadership's fear of "unruly" women see Patterson, "Embryo," Book One, 124-125, and Book Two, 88-92 in b9f6; and USWA, *Second Constitutional Convention*, 220.

all at the same time. The approach towards women naturalized certain ways of looking at them: it helped constitute gender norms within the union. The gender division in *Steel Labor*'s representation could limit solidarity between men and women members thereby hurting the labor movement.⁸² Women were represented not as workers or as allies in union struggle, but as desired objects: during the war years, in a sexual sense, and in the war's aftermath, as representatives of domestic security and stability for which union members should strive. Photographs reminded members of women's provisional place in the union, as cute objects in the paper, or as women tied to the home in their support of the movement. Much as Patricia Cooper has written for the UE members at Philco, "Male leaders sought to integrate women into the union, but primarily with respect to social activities and in keeping with a belief in sexual difference." Cooper shows how in UE's newspapers attempts to incorporate the interests of women "separated the sexes and marginalized" them." We can see how *Steel Labor*'s images helped establish a "gender bias" that "was structured into the fabric of unionism," paralleling Lizabeth Cohen's description of re-conversion as a moment when gender roles were circumscribed so as to "delegitimize the civic authority women had gained on the home front during WWII."⁸³

⁸² Griselda Pollock's work on the representation of women is also interesting. She explores how the female body may be encoded with specific resonances to "sell" a particular ideological reality. In one example she examines how the Bayer pharmaceutical company used a "virginal" adolescent whose body unfolds, literally and metaphorically, to suggest that the corporation and the product can resolve tensions around femaleness, "Missing Women: Rethinking Early Thoughts on Images of Women," in *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography*, edited by Carol Squiers (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990), 212.

⁸³ Patricia Cooper, "The Faces of Gender: Sex Segregation and Work Relations at Philco, 1928-1938," and Ava Baron, "Gender and Labor History: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future," both in *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor*, edited by Ava Baron, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 332, 13. See also

Women's representation did something else for *Steel Labor*—their images of women offered a rare note of vitality; brightening the paper, and humanizing the content. As one caption for a photograph of a bevy of women workers *qua* Colorado cowgirls exclaimed: "What's the union coming to when it can find such beautiful girls in one local union?"⁸⁴

Women gave *Steel Labor* life. In *Steel Labor*'s pages, women were set up to be consumed. What the paper lacked in political vibrancy it could substitute with cultural appeal. And the best way to do this was with women. Women's representation depoliticized them as subjects; women in the domestic sphere defined labor's economic and political goals. *Steel Labor* wove its members—male members that is—into a growing mass culture that viewed women as different. *Steel Labor*, like mass culture, gave its male audience the same rewards as mass culture. And, women—as representations only—were a vivacious substitute for the desiccated representations of male workers, union leaders, and their goals.

"Peaceful, Quiet and Efficient"

Union newspapers can showcase—but also motivate activism—and *Steel Labor* did neither in its first decade. It was not until 1949 that the union newspaper regularly documented the activities leading up to a strike, such as signing up members. The newspaper rarely printed photographs that showed workers attending a mass meeting, or leafleting. And photographs of picketers on the line were also uncommon. The sit-down

Cohen, *Consumer's Republic*, 135. Cohen claims the New Deal promoted "loyal male citizens...in productivist ways...and loyal female citizens...in consumerist ways," 75.

“craze” of 1936 and 1937 was a banner moment for militant activism for all CIO unions, including SWOC. Though the steelworkers’ campaign faltered after the Memorial Day Massacre, the Little Steel strike did not play itself out in the Ohio and Pennsylvania river valleys for months afterwards. *Steel Labor* depicted virtually none of this activism despite many articles that maintained union commitment to strikers. And though the union switched to promoting the union legally and administratively after its Little Steel failure, steelworkers still resorted to strikes to gain bargaining rights.⁸⁵ These strikes were often short, and involved hundreds of workers, instead of the tens of thousands that might come from organizing a corporate giant. Some strikes endured for months however, delivering important wins against historic union-busting firms, for example the four month, 1938 strike against Crucible Steel in New Jersey. SWOC remains understudied by labor historians, so it is difficult to determine how crucial these skirmishes were to the larger struggle to unionize steel.⁸⁶ What is unmistakable however is the near moratorium on depicting these strikes in the newspaper. A union’s most

⁸⁴ *SL*, September 1945, 3.

⁸⁵ A notable exception was the success at the Bethlehem Steel Corporation in 1941 where Sweeney printed photographs of long picket lines, and even cropped the photograph to show the line’s extension along a strong diagonal, along with photographs of masses of striking workers. “SWOC Demonstration at Bethlehem, PA” 18 April, 1941, 6-7 and “One Year Later—Bethlehem is Organized,” 31 October 1941, 8. Such photos were not the norm.

⁸⁶ For the gaps in scholarship on the SWOC and the USWA see Ronald Filippelli, “The History is Missing Almost: Philip Murray, the Steelworkers, and the Historians,” in *Forging a Union of Steel: Philip Murray, SWOC and the United Steelworkers*, edited by Paul Clark, Peter Gottlieb and Donald Kennedy (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1987), 12, v.

economic powerful tool, its ability to deprive corporations of employees' labor, remained visually unexplored in the steelworkers' newspaper.⁸⁷

Steel Labor also ignored the violence meted out to steelworkers who put their lives on the line during the initial campaign in steel. This gap in coverage suggests the bounded dialogue SWOC leaders had with members about the sacrifices that might be demanded of them. As we saw in Chapter Four, photographs helped the USWA promote the view that police slay unionists unnecessarily in Chicago during the Republic Steel strike. But *Steel Labor* printed no photographs of the Massacre in Chicago, nor of the Little Steel violence in Ohio. After the LaFollette Committee sustained the union's contention, *Steel Labor* did print editorial cartoons that denounced Chicago's police and showed federal support for the union. *Steel Labor* examined the steelworkers massacred in a dramatic act of anti-union violence only by shrouding them in the federal support given to the union itself.⁸⁸ The newspapers of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, the United Electrical Workers, the United Wholesale and Workers Union, and the

⁸⁷ Coverage of strikes in *SL* that included no photos include among others: a strike in Lorain, Ohio for wage increases *SL*, 15 October 1937, 2; a January 17th strike at Crucible Steel in Harrison and Jersey City, New Jersey that lasted until mid-May, in *SL* 18 February 1938, 2; and 13 May 1938, 1; an eight month strike of four hundred employees at Penn Iron and Steel Company that ended in July of 1938, *SL* 15 July 1938, 6; a five week strike of 700 workers at Roberts and Manders Stove/Hatboro Foundry, 15 April 1938, 8; a two-day strike of 200 workers at Steel Sales Company in Chicago in 1940, *SL*, 23 February 1940, 1; and an twelve day strike of 100 employees at American Welding and Manufacturing Company in the anti-union bastion of Warren, Ohio, *SL*, 25 October 1940.

⁸⁸ SWOC could have used such photographs, their members and local papers took photographs on the field. For Chicago see, "Events, Demonstrations, Strikes, Steel Industry," ICH-i24992-24994, and DN #c-8769, *CHS*. The CIO publicity director who sought photographs from the World Wide Photo agency for CIO pamphlets asked for images of union drives in steel, rubber, textile, auto and mining industries. He wanted

United Packinghouse Workers of America memorialized the steelworkers, but not the SWOC's paper.⁸⁹ Mass-market magazines like *LIFE*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the metropolitan news dailies made violence the predominant theme in their labor coverage. Steelworkers could find no union response to such attacks.

With the 1946 post-war strike wave, Sweeney shifted and began to represent members' involvement in *Steel Labor*. The number of strikes surged before WWII's end, intensifying once GM came out in November of 1945. The 1946 strike was the USWA's first national action. It was crucial, for the USWA feared that workers' gains might be washed away by a business class whose insistence on managerial prerogatives included a willingness to constrain wages despite crippling inflation. Historian Jack Metzgar comments in *Striking Steel* that in this first national test of member discipline: "that 800,000 steel workers would go out and back on cue was by no means to be taken for granted."⁹⁰ Once the steelworkers joined other workers and came out on January 21st, over two million Americans were on strike—the largest number ever at one time. In

images of mass meetings and picket lines, "but no riot scenes." Len De Caux to Wide World Photos, September 29, 1937 in *Murray*, Central Office Correspondence, b112f9.

⁸⁹ Local 65 in New York printed a memorial cartoon image, see "We Will Not Forget," *New Voices*, July 1938, 8; and so did the Amalgamated's *Advance*, July 1937, 8-9. *SL* did print a cartoon, one year later that showed a single dead body before Republic Steel's gate. They didn't print the more evocative illustration that relied on actual photographs. 19 August 1938, 3. The *CIO News* and *The Packinghouse Worker* printed a two page photo-essay against the Ball, Burton and Hatch legislation that showed the Memorial Day Massacre, as spectators watched the film at the LaFollette hearings. 1 October 1945, 4-5. For additional coverage of violence associated with the Little Steel Strike, see "Deputies Burn Steel Strikers' Kitchen," *Daily Worker (DW)*, 12 June 1937, 5; "Guns and Clubs Rule Monroe Under Vigilante Terror," *DW*, 14 June 1937, 2; "With All the Weapons for Murder," *DW*, 15 June 1937, 3; and Monroe Vigilantes Blocking Highway," *DW*, 18 June 1937, 5: along with its June coverage of the Memorial Day Massacre.

⁹⁰ Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 29.

1946 *Steel Labor* printed a generous number of photographs of rank and file members on the picket lines, much like images that had appeared in national magazines, metropolitan dailies and other union newspapers for years. Some photographs used a composition that hit the picket line at an angle, which allowed viewers to see strikers stretched out from one end of the frame to another into the horizon. This composition suggested a limitless number of strikers.⁹¹

Most *Steel Labor*'s photographs still de-emphasized mobilization however. *Steel Labor*'s description of one picket line as "peaceful, quiet and efficient," seems the best encapsulation of these photograph's message. In "USA Pickets Strong Everywhere," a page of seven photographs showed unionists massed in front of company headquarters which stressed the power of numbers. But they lacked dynamism because the strikers were motionless and held their picket signs straight up in repetitive lines and because the shot was taken from straight on. In some photographs workers' gaze compensated by addressing the viewer, but most shots were taken from such a distance that the workers were bodies alone. *Steel Labor* did begin to document activism, but even so it emphasized passivity over engagement and collective strength.⁹²

Steel Labor further muted the activist message by integrating these photographs into a larger narrative about the union's patriotism and its popular support. The newspaper introduced the 1946 strike in its February issue with two portraits of President Truman, and the union president Murray accompanied by the textual message "To the

⁹¹ See for example "Community Leaders Join Steel Workers' Parade and Picket Lines," *SL*, March 1946, 9.

⁹² The "peaceful, quiet, and efficient" quote is found in *SL*, March 1946, 6; "USA Pickets Strong Everywhere," *SL*, March 1946, 4-12.

People of the U.S.A.” Here the union addressed its goals—rightful ones according to both Truman and Murray—to the “people” of the USA, conflating the nation with the union. In the following issue a line of workers paraded through town, their flag, translucent in the sunlight, waved at a taut angle above them. The caption told readers that community leaders and the American Legion led the parade, authenticating USWA patriotism. Included in the same issue was an article by a Catholic priest who “calling upon” his “knowledge of theology, of the encyclicals of the Pope, of the Constitution of the United States” sustained unionists right to strike. A second article with a close-up photograph of five of the “100,000 Ex-GI’s” who were “100% with the union in its fight,” linked patriotic duty with union commitment. Enlisting opinion leaders in the union fight was good internal public relations, yet such depictions far outweighed the number of photos of steelworkers on the line, suggesting a continued discomfort representing rank and file activism.⁹³

For the second major post-war strike, in 1949, the steelworkers’ union regularly printed photographs of rank and filers building their union. The 1949 strike was fought for pension benefits with the slogan, “Men Like Machines Wear Out.” Months before the

⁹³ Cover, “To the People of the U.S.A.,” *SL*, February 1946. In a two page photo-spread entitled “Action Pictures of Steel Strike” the first page showed workers on the line enjoying the support of “the fairer sex” who served them steaming hot coffee. Yet the captions to the photos discussed the “Braddock Borough officials” who joined the line, along with the American Legion members who help out. The second page’s photos showed community supporters of the USWA, who “solidly line up behind the United Steelworkers,” including “businessmen, representatives of the churches, veteran organizations, social and civic groups.” Seen in *SL*’s traditional tightly composed group meeting shots, these photos gave real meaning to the “solid line up.” Also, “Steelworkers are Right, Priest Says,” and “1000,000 Ex-GI’s Back Union in Strike,” *SL*, February 1946, 6-9. See also “Baldwin Locomotive and Roebling’s Sons Among Last to Sign,” *SL*, April 1946, 12.

strike *Steel Labor* used photographs to educate readers about the upcoming battle. In June, the paper's front page offered a photo-montage showing rank and file involvement. [Fig. 5-21.]⁹⁴ The handwritten title, "Let's be Ready!" printed on top of a steel mill tower, anchored the organizing process at the work-site. Included was a quotation from the trade paper *Iron Age*, stating management would put up a "stiff front" against union's "excessive" wage and fringe benefit demands. The bottom corner had Phil Murray calling on unionists to organize those who were "a millstone around our economic necks." "Let's be Ready!" included four shots of members signing up other members—they enacted Murray's charge. The shots were static, but they did suggest members' importance in building the union, something rarely represented in *Steel Labor*.⁹⁵ Two months later in August of 1949, crushes of workers prepared for a strike in a full-page photo-spread titled "On the Verge of a STRIKE!" In September, the paper printed a full page of photos from plant sites around the nation that captured workers leafleting, tabling alongside a railroad track, and even one unionist typing up union cards, a rare document of the humdrum work necessary to build membership.⁹⁶ Despite their groundwork the

⁹⁴ *SL*, June 1949, 1.

⁹⁵ Two months later, a full-page photo-spread titled "On the Verge of a STRIKE!" showed workers readying for a strike. Photos show workers streaming out and into the plant under the caption that workers were "determined to work only one more day before the strike deadline" and further threatened that "the busy smokestack in the background almost cooled." This is one of the rare "threats" of action that ever appeared. The rest of the page shows workers crushed into a union office, workers crowded outside the Gary, Indiana Philip Murray Building and throng of gleeful workers, hands raised high into the air, with their Subdistrict Director held on their shoulders. *SL*, August 1949.

⁹⁶ In the October 1949 *SL*, "'We're Ready for Strike,' Say USA" showed members from Chicago's Calumet region as they met to plan the strike. The majority of the photographs, six of nine, conformed to *SL*'s traditional staid photographic style, with District 31 leader Joe Germano giving members a "first-hand report on the progress in negotiations," and five other photographs of members seated in ordered rows. But even

union still struck in October. *Steel Labor*'s November issue carried photographs of the strikers who were out, "coast to coast." The bulk of these photos were close-ups. The numbers were stressed through the proliferation of signs. And because unionists' faces were visible, and their signs could be read, the photographs had an immediacy lacking in *Steel Labor*'s earlier strike photographs.⁹⁷

Steel Labor's imagery became combative over time, inverting traditional preconceptions of the political and visual cultures of each era. When the CIO mobilized in the 1930s, the union did not show unionists on the line, active and involved in their union but in the post-war era it did so. By 1949, *Steel Labor* even began to depict the organizing steps critical to prevailing in strikes. The steelworkers' visual culture challenges notions of a politicized 1930s and a bureaucratic and quiescent labor movement in the 1950s.

Why *Steel Labor*'s imagery became more daring is unclear. It may be that as the union got off the ground, worker and governmental support was untried; perhaps the union lacked the confidence to use a mobilizing message. By the 1946 strike, given the USWA's no-strike pledge and the union's many steelworker-veterans, its Americanism could not be questioned. Moreover, President Truman and his fact-finding commission sanctioned union demands for higher wages. Three years later the union no longer feared for its institutional life. Members came out in a disciplined way, the risks were far less. Depicting activism may have seemed less of a gamble to USWA leaders.

here several photographs showed workers engaged in the "brisk business" of signing up other local members for the fight for better pensions.

⁹⁷ "Coast to Coast," *SL*, November 1949, 6-7.

Steel Labor also began to acknowledge the violence of strikes—guardedly. By the late 1940s *Steel Labor* finally printed photographs from the Memorial Day Massacre. Even so they joined the photos to an account that “forgot” the activism that led to violence. In one 1946 article and two 1949 articles, *Steel Labor* recounted how “a roar of gunfire and tear gas, shot by police, greeted” the “peaceful parade” of SWOC members. Two months later the paper printed photographs of the massacre, including the photograph of Lupe Marshall running from police. The article claimed that police “charged” a peaceful strike meeting. Both accounts masked how strikers marched across the field towards police to establish a mass picket. This visual and narrative account allowed unionists to be victims, but not agents for change, an approach the USWA maintained through the 1960s.⁹⁸

Steel Labor’s more pugnacious imagery remained moderate in comparison with imagery found in other CIO union newspapers. As the 1949 front page “Let’s Be Ready!” suggested, activism was defensive, predicated on the need for workers to be “ready” for negotiations. *Steel Labor* never celebrated activism, as did other union newspapers like the *United Automobile Worker* and the *UE News*. Those papers promoted their members’ active involvement, and covered the huge 1946 strike-wave by featuring the union’s picket lines in large, front-page photographs. This placement made a statement about the paramount importance of striking to achieving union goals.⁹⁹ The UAW accentuated rank and file involvement in its captioning of strike photographs. For

⁹⁸ “The First Ten Years,” *SL*, September 1946, 10; and “Is this what Mr. White Means by ‘A Helluva Good Way’?” *SL*, September 1949, 5.

⁹⁹ See *United Automobile Worker*, December 1945, 1; and January 1946, 1; and *UE News*, 12 January 1946; 19 January 1946, and 25 January 1946.

example, a two-page photo-spread of a New Jersey GM strike reminded members of their earlier dedication with their own words: “We licked GM in ’37 and we can do it again—that’s what the boys are saying, and believe me they mean it.” *UE News* profiled activism to an even greater degree. The January 19th issue alone filled four full pages with picket lines in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New York. *UE News* also focused on its membership by using a “man in the streets” format, asking members “what they’re fighting for.” *UE* showcased individual members, emphasizing how their commitment made the union.¹⁰⁰ Though the paper mediated how members spoke with one another, it facilitated readers connecting with activists, something *Steel Labor* never did.

Steel Labor’s limited documentation of violence against rank and file contrasted sharply with the approach of other union newspapers. During the 1946 strike-wave *UE News* recounted and depicted such violence to strengthen member solidarity. When Los Angeles police stormed a *UE* picket line to get non-strikers through the photo-wire service carried photographs of this police response nationwide. *LIFE* printed these photographs under a two-page photo-story that headlined the violence and reported that picketers were “violating a court order.” *UE News* reprinted the photographs, accompanied by photos of *UE*’s response: organized mass protests, which led to the resignation of the city’s Deputy Police chief. A later photo story titled “Police Attack on GE Strikers Shocks Country” had additional photos of the violence as well as photographs of the mass protests that followed.¹⁰¹ *UE News* acknowledged violence—

¹⁰⁰ A second man in the street interview offered a worker’s assessment of the contract’s eighteen-cent wage increase. *UE News*, 26 January 1946; and 16 February 1946.

¹⁰¹ “Violence Breaks Out as Nation’s Strikes Spread,” *LIFE*, 28 January 1946; *UE News*, 9 March 1946, 1-3. *UE News* objectified what they were up against, including a “crew of

but showed how the union would counter it with mass mobilizations, pressure for federal investigation, and rank and file perseverance. One close-up of a woman member captioned “Knocked Unconscious” appeared in *UE News*. Editors joined the photo to her vow that “no one is going to push me around and get away with it.” *UE News* told members force would be met by force and it offered its membership a class-conscious reading of their struggle and its representation.¹⁰² The next chapter on Local 65 shows that other unions did the same.

Certainly mass media venues continued their attacks on labor for any violence that accompanied strikes. In 1946, in advance of the nationwide steel strike, *LIFE* admired Philip Murray’s moderation. Once the CIO strikes began however, *LIFE* focused on violence: according to the magazine, as the “Nation’s Strikes Spread” the public “shudder[ed]” at the prospect of “contagious strike violence.” *LIFE* editorialized that business should accept Truman’s recommendations to raise workers’ wages by eighteen plus percent, but it fulminated against unions’ irresponsibility, as contracts were not “one way streets.” *LIFE* editors echoed NAM’s charges against labor that labor “by precipitating a crisis at this juncture has sacrificed some public support and dangerously alienated Congress.” For *LIFE*’s editors, the “delicate work” of balancing the economic needs of the nation must be negotiated. Strikes indicated a failure of union

bruisers” who threatened to “Kill, Hurt and Wound” Westinghouse strikers in Bloomfield, New Jersey. See also “He Didn’t Fight for This,” 26 January 1946, 8.

¹⁰² “Knocked Unconscious,” 16 February 1946, 5. In “A Study in Contrasts” *UE News* printed photographs of Montgomery Ward’s President, Sewall Avery, carried out of his offices by soldiers which had circulated widely in the mass market press. Avery had resisted a court injunction against Ward’s lockout of workers. *UE News* placed the photograph of Avery against union members who got “clubbed” by police when they went on strike. 9 February 1946, 10.

responsibility.¹⁰³ Luce's other publication, *TIME*, presented Murray as the moderate, "every inch the union boss" who nonetheless had the power of a "General." Murray's moderation lie in his "old-fashioned unionism" that sought increased wages versus Walter Reuther's demand for GM to "open the books," with all the support of his "shock troops" and "panzer divisions." Murray even rated a *TIME* cover.¹⁰⁴ Unlike other union newspapers, SWOC offered its members no comments on the battles going on around them, nor on the violence some unionists faced. Perhaps leaders still believed covering violence might scare off potential members. Once again, the newspaper's silence meant steelworkers could not look to their union to resist mass media's censure of unions for violence.

That *Steel Labor* should shy away from documenting the devastation organized anti-unionism had upon the union, its members, and their families suggests a strategic evasion of areas of weakness or difficulty for the union. This evasion created what could be called "organizational realism." Here I again borrow from Michael Schudson who describes "capitalist realism" as mass media's limited exploration of grave social issues. *Steel Labor*'s "organizational realism" ignored issues that deeply affected workers.

¹⁰³ *LIFE*, 4 February 1946, 34-35, 4.

¹⁰⁴ "The Boss's Strategy," *TIME*, 14 January 1946, 16-17; and 21 January 1946, cover. Nonetheless, *TIME*'s strike coverage in 1946 focused on violence in Philadelphia and Los Angeles at UE plants, *TIME*, 28 February 1946, 20; and 11 March 1934, 22. In 1949 photos depicted violence in eastern coal fields, and western loading docks, *TIME*, 10 October 1949, 22-23. *Newsweek* seemed more temperate in its coverage. It showed violence on the UE lines in Kearney New Jersey and Los Angeles, and also Chicago Westinghouse workers behind paddy wagon bars. "Strike Wave Rolling to Crest Threatens Essential U.S. Needs," *Newsweek*, 14 January 1946, 23; 28 January 1946, 20-21; and "The Massed Pickets," *Newsweek*, 11 March 1946, 30-31. But it also put a smiling Westinghouse picketer on the cover, his grin and the snow swirling around him a

These rank and file workers weren't given any alternative explanation for the violence that was represented in the media. Difficult subjects might be addressed in drawn imagery and cartoons which were a step away from the camera eye; and *Steel Labor* printed cartoons that criticized corporate-financed violence, for example Republic Steel's munitions stockpiling, or the Mohawk Valley Formula. Such imagery supported unionization, but it ignored workers' responsibility for the making of the union, and it ignored the risks and the costs born by individual members.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, *Steel Labor's* failure to address the violence that befell steelworkers and other union men and women meant the union did not seek to develop its members' solidarity with other workers, or even educate them about other workers' struggles.

The Union "Jackpot"

Steel Labor's pallid representation of rank and file members and their organizing efforts found a parallel in its depiction of workers' worlds and unionism's rewards. *Steel Labor* ignored the economic strictures of members' lives, and used a limited visual rhetoric when it addressed workers' need. The newspaper delineated union rewards on the other hand as concrete, material gains to individual members. *Steel Labor* translated the end goal of collective struggle into private terms.

joyful counterpoint to the title "Picket: The Line Spreads Across the Nation," 4 February 1946, cover.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Schudson, *Advertising, The Uneasy Profession* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), as quoted in James Guimond, *American Photography and the American Dream* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 153. For cartoons that address violence against steelworkers see the following *Steel Labor* cartoons, "Now See if You Can Cover That," and "A Black Mark on their Records," 6 August, 1937, 4, 8; and "No Wonder They Hate the Wagner Act," 10 September, 1937, 4.

It would not have been difficult to document the exigency of steelworkers' lives. Many workers' take-home pay barely reached above the poverty line. The union's quest for higher wages, a guaranteed annual wage, portal pay, and vacation pay was predicated on workers' economic want. The union rallied workers by reminding them of the union's commitment to bettering their livelihoods and finding them security. And during the war years it lobbied the NWLB for increased wages to address the deteriorated conditions of workers' lives.¹⁰⁶ It relied upon a long held tenet of the union movement, that workers deserved an American standard of living, translated by Murray into the famous pronouncement that all unionists should have "paintings on the wall, carpets on the floor and music in the home."¹⁰⁷ In the postwar period the USWA turned corporation's free enterprise rhetoric against them by claiming that bad wages meant less buying. By "putting money into the hands of consumers—workers who buy—we can have full employment, build greater job security, keep factories going and remove the threat of depression." For *Steel Labor* workers wages kept the economy afloat. Contending that corporations' "sit-down strike" in production prevented workers "from getting radios, washing machines, children's underclothing and often much needed goods," the union

¹⁰⁶ See the 1949 story on the union's genesis, "CIO: What it is and What it does," *SL*, December 1949, 6. See Zieger, *CIO*, for the "voluminous studies" and lobbying efforts of the USWA in this period, 170.

¹⁰⁷ As Lawrence Glickman argues in *A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 84, the American Standard of Living, or demands for a living wage long predate the traditional assumption of the rise of consumerism in the 1920s. Murray's demand for paintings, carpets and music isn't far different from George McNeill's 1870's demand for "A parlor with a carpet in it, a mantelpiece with ornaments on it, pictures on the wall, books on the table, kitchens with facilities," which Glickman sees as tied to republican virtue. For the Murray quote see Foner, *Not For Bread Alone*, 102.

claimed gains in wages added to “national purchasing power.”¹⁰⁸ Towards the 1950s the union dispensed with the apocalyptic rhetoric, but still told members that “guaranteed payrolls make steady customers.” The USWA tied workers’ interests to national economic stability, though it minimized discussion of class-based inequities.¹⁰⁹

Despite its rhetoric, *Steel Labor* rarely depicted the difficulties of workers’ lives—though other photographers working in the documentary tradition had for decades. Lewis Hine’s photographic survey of Homestead steelworkers, done decades earlier, offered a powerful photographic document that union leaders must have known of. Similarly, Walker Evans’s iconic photographs of grimy steel towns with their shacks and tenements circulated widely in the 1930s. Other documentary photographers explored steelworkers’ inadequate shelter as a subject.¹¹⁰ As we saw in Chapter Two, even *LIFE*’s Alfred

¹⁰⁸ See *SL*, February 1946, 3, and January 1946, 3.

¹⁰⁹ *SL*, July 1947, 7.

¹¹⁰ For Hine’s work for the Russel Sage funded Pittsburgh Survey see John Fitch, *The Steel Workers* (New York: Charities Publication Committee, 1910). For analysis on Hine see Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life*, and Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*. Evans’s photographs of the steel towns of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and Birmingham, Alabama can be found in the Library of Congress’s online American Memory Project. See “Steel-mill workers houses, Birmingham Alabama. Owned by Republic Steel,” March 1936, LC-USF342-008014-A and 013-A; and “Bethlehem Graveyard and steel mill, Pennsylvania,” November 1935, LC-USF342-001167-A; and “Bethlehem houses and steel mills,” November 1935, LC-USF342-001165-A. Other FSA photographers in this same period also captured the indignities of steelworkers’ home lives and a sampling is offered on the American Memory Project. See Arthur Rothstein’s tour of Pennsylvania steel towns in July of 1938. In Midland, “Steelworkers’ Family,” LC-USF 34-026526-D; “Steelworker’s Wife Ironing Clothes,” LC-USF 34-051864, “Steelworker in Kitchen of Slum Apartment,” LC-USF34-026518D; “Tarpaper shacks on outskirts of town are a result of overcrowded conditions in existing homes for steelworkers,” LC-USF34-026519-D, through 026523-D; in Clairton, “House on Monongahela River which is used in three shifts as sleeping quarters for steelworkers,” LC-USF34-026551-D; in Aliquippa, “Workers houses with steel plant in background,” LC-USF34-026549-D; and his work in Birmingham Alabama, February 1937, “Steel Mill and workers houses,” LC-USF34-005975-E; and Marion Post Wolcott’s photographs of

Eisenstadt depicted steelworkers' meager shelter and worn clothing. But the closest *Steel Labor* got to the documentary style was its photographs of stalwart, aproned mothers struggling to make ends meet in World War II's aftermath. Members' substandard housing received some visual attention, but only in editorial cartoons.¹¹¹ The union's failure to represent members' economic predicament, and its attendant wants, in housing, clothing, and other basic necessities is noteworthy given the pervasiveness of the documentary aesthetic. *Steel Labor* never recorded the larger sphere of workers' lives with the camera, and never explored how workers' low salaries and limited security might stunt their lives.¹¹²

If *Steel Labor* shied from showing workers' material want, it didn't hesitate to depict unionism's rewards in concrete terms, as a dollars and cents "bonanza," with all the power of the real the photograph invoked. Certainly NLRB enforced back wages for workers who had been fired, and contractual vacation pay benefits were momentous wins.

Birmingham, Alabama in May of 1939, including "Steel Plant and Workers' homes," LC-USF34-051864. John Vachon took a photograph of a Georgia beggar who had been a Pennsylvania mill worker, which commented on the lack of pensions, December 1940, LC-USF34-062113-D. The *Daily Worker* showed the use of housing to repress workers in the 1929 textile strike, SWOC could have done the same. See "Thrown out of House by Mill Deputies," *Daily Worker*, 10 May 1929, 1.

¹¹¹ Union cartoonist Bing did have one cartoon "America Needs More and Better Homes," which condemned the slum homes of workingmen. *SL*, 19 November 1937, 4. For a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* cartoon see "Dear Mr. President," which shows a man writing a letter to Roosevelt at the kitchen table while his wife and children look on. *SL*, 21 January 1938, 3.

¹¹² The *UE News* did use photos in this way. One photo story, "UE Halts Eviction of Family Which Exploded GE High Pay Myth," told of Brother Robert Morrison, whose "high pay" wasn't enough to cover a low rent, subsidized housing project. The photo showed the family of six around the kitchen table. The father looks to the side, holding the baby, thought he wife looks directly at the camera. Its staged quality makes it feel a bit less like a documentary photograph, though it's use is similar to one. 16 February 1946, 12.

Guaranteeing members that participation in a union drive would not lead to their dismissal was also a revolutionary shift, particularly given SWOC's ignominious defeat in the Little Steel strike. NLRB and U.S. Supreme Court decisions acknowledged workers' rights to organize, and also the rightness of SWOC's legalistic course for organizing after the Little Steel debacle.

As editor, Sweeney printed two kinds of photographs to communicate workers' new security. *Steel Labor* photographs showed the back-pay checks themselves. Here the paper used the photograph as pure documents of money workers had won. Viewers could appreciate what the union could do for them by gazing upon the indisputable marks of its success. Captions helped shape such a reading, as in "Here is What the Union Did For One Man."¹¹³ A second visual strategy was to capture workers' glee upon receiving reinstatement and back pay. In "J&L Workers Get \$10,000 in Back Pay" ecstatic workers waved their checks before the camera eye after the NLRB ordered restitution to dismissed workers. The photograph suggested union success at safeguarding workers' jobs and the financial remuneration for activists who had risked their livelihood. [Fig. 5-22.]¹¹⁴ In "These SWOC Men Hit the Jackpot for \$1,000 Each," two SWOC members of the Pittsburgh Engineering Works glowed as they examined their back pay "jackpots."

¹¹³ Roland Barthes speaks of such photographs as "indexical" images in "The Photographic Message." They bring actual proof of the thing itself into the photographic discourse, their "thingness" underscores the veracity of the image. Roland Barthes, *Image/Music/Text* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977). See Stott's *Documentary Expression*, 137-139 for the obsession with documentary detail, an obsession that could substitute documentary details for comprehension. *SL*, 18 March 1938, 6. Similar imagery is found throughout *Steel Labor*. 28 June 1940, "\$5,000 Back Pay at Florence Pipe Foundry," 29 November 1940, "\$900 in Back Pay to Union Men," offer just two examples.

¹¹⁴ "J and L Workers Get \$10,000 in Back Pay," August 6, 1937, 2.

The title and the content of the photo emphasized the benefits won by unionization, a hefty financial gain. Back-pay implied a previous activism to be sure, yet it erased that activism in the documents of happy smiles and financial wins. Workers had won, but photographs promoted the union with its court case as the active agent for change. The workers became passive recipients in this sweepstakes.¹¹⁵

Securing paid vacation time was another union victory that received the same visual treatment. In January of 1941 SWOC won its suit against Republic Steel for vacation back-pay; workers received over half a million dollars. *Steel Labor* proclaimed its victory with a full-page photographic spread where the “jackpot” theme reached rococo proportions. [Fig. 5-23.]¹¹⁶ Seven photographs showed workers enjoying the fruits of the union drive. Five of the shots depicted workers holding their checks aloft with grins. In the two other photographs the workers also smiled at the checks they had received. The entire photo-spread was framed by sixteen checks, literal documents of the workers’ gains. This strategy, of using physical items to “frame” a picture was also used in the new photojournals like *LIFE*. Nonetheless, this extravagant image of munificence offered nothing to workers beyond the money at hand. The vacation paycheck border is a potent symbol for the workers’ bound desires. Victory was not the suggestion of utopic

¹¹⁵ “Jackpot” image in 30 August 1940, 2; “SWOC Members win \$1,400 in Back pay,” 17 June 1938, 8, “SWOC Iron Ore Miners win \$12,500 in Back pay,” 19 August 1938, 6; and “Arbitration Board favors SWOC Member,” 23 September 1936, 6; all in *SL*.

¹¹⁶ “Republic Steel Forced to Pay Half-Million Dollars in Vacation Money to SWOC Men,” *SL*, 31 January 1941, 8. See *LIFE* in their two-page article on Social Security, with two sets of “codgers” framed by government checks. “Old Age: The Old in America Have Become a Political Force and Economic Menace,” 7 November 1938, 56-7. This same strategy was used during the war years, as SWOC persuaded its membership to contribute heavily for defense bonds. In this case, the bonds framed a series of photographs of members who had bought bonds. See *SL*, 19 December 1942, 4-5.

possibilities, the noble, heroic worker creating a new future. Instead it was large numbers of men and women, checks in hand, happy at their fate, one registered in specified monetary amounts. These images ignored workers' collective struggle and they made no call to future action.

Steel Labor visualized unionism as a cornucopia for workers. Perhaps the best exemplification of passive workers accepting their gains was found in a cartoon. In "Christmas Greetings from USA-CIO" union wins like "Better Vacation" and "Dismissal Pay" were packaged as gifts beneath a Christmas tree. These presents were given to workers, rather than being something that union leaders and members alike fought for.¹¹⁷ Such depictions minimized worker activism, solidarity, or even involvement. If the union was embodied through its leadership, members were at their most human, individual selves as recipients. Steelworkers might have understood their role in achieving these gains, but union leadership chose not to imagine workers in more active roles. Importantly, *Steel Labor's* depiction did not tie these wins to any larger agenda for its membership, or for the working class. J.B.S. Hardman's utopic union for a "better tomorrow" was unspecified, yet it did propose that a different world was possible. In *Steel Labor's* photographs of financial bounty, material gain alone united members.

In the postwar period *Steel Labor* turned to visual iconography promoting the "American Dream." Instead of documenting economic inequality marking workers' lives, an aspirational imagery promoted private gain. In a twelve-panel comic strip, "Why an Annual Wage," the paper described workers' financial straits. "Jonathon and the other boys can't even buy food and clothing, let alone indulge in a few 'Luxuries'—like

having a few beers or taking the wife and kids to a movie once in a while.” The next panel identified Jonathon’s modest dreams for an annual wage, “I might even be able to own a car some day.” When union success and a contract secured the wage, “the wife got her new washing machine and furniture,” while “fixing up the house was Jonathon’s number one project.” Not only was Jonathon (and we must assume the wife) happy, but the cartoon said local merchants were also.¹¹⁸ *Steel Labor* like the mass-culture purveyor, *LIFE*, envisioned workers’ “home sweet home” as a “detached single family home in a suburban setting.” A front-page article on national social security legislation told readers that it was “no cure all for the problems facing retired workers and their families,” but it was nonetheless “a step in the right direction.” The illustration showed a couple reclining in Adirondacks chairs on their front lawn under a leafy tree. [Fig. 5-24.]¹¹⁹ Beside them lie their well-groomed dog; behind them their ranch house. In using the visual idiom of mass culture, *Steel Labor* offered a middle class suburban promise that elided the actual conditions of steel workers’ lives. The union advocated for public housing, but their failure to represent it suggested such housing was less attractive or less of a political goal for the union.

Commentators often bemoan the anesthetization of consumer society and its conservative influence on the labor movement—but workers would not have turned their noses up at this financial betterment. As Judith Stein points out, as late as 1942 the

¹¹⁷ *SL*, December 1944, 5.

¹¹⁸ *SL*, March 1947, 8.

¹¹⁹ “The New Social Security Law and You!” *SL*, August 1950, 1. *SL* did report on and photographs showed locals attempts at cooperative house building, a bit akin to a barn raising and also discuss its legislative lobbying on public housing. *SL*, September 1948, 8. For the single-family home ideal see Cohen, *Consumer’s Republic*, 73-75.

average steelworker could afford to buy a coat every six years, a pair of shoes every other year. Close to one third of steel working families didn't have a bathroom in the home; over ten percent lacked running water.¹²⁰ And it wasn't until a decade later, in the 1950's, that the average steelworker even moved out of poverty, according to Mark McColloch who traced steelworker's standard of living. Jack Metzgar concluded that the bureaucratic unionism of the 1950's wrought "an amazing transformation of daily life that fully justifies, depending on where you sit, dividing the American Century into before the union and since." Nelson Lichtenstein's suggestion that New Deal and union consumerism was neither "deradicalizing" nor bourgeois, as mass production and consumption would be "foundational components of a humane capitalism and a reinvigorated democracy" seems a fair assessment of these gains for workers.¹²¹

Yet *Steel Labor* refused to visualize any other hallmarks of the good life, or any other inducements to unionize. The newspaper elided how workers as members, individually and united, were responsible for gains in security, and it elided how necessary conflict was to achieving these gains. In place of unionists, the union as organization and the new legalistic administration of labor relations was the vehicle for change. The focus on union jackpot didn't ask workers to question class relations or economic inequality in the U.S. Nor did it ask workers to imagine producing a different world or a different culture. A union newspaper could imagine the newfound leadership skills gained by workers to enhance members' understanding of the democratic process;

¹²⁰ Stein, *Running Steel*, 8-9.

¹²¹ The changes Metzgar details were not realized until 1960. He examined not only wage increases, but the vacation time and pay, retirement security, health insurance and

they could imagine their union as a vibrant community, or as a collective voice in national policymaking and economic decision-making. *Steel Labor* did none of these. Privatism pervaded *Steel Labor*—its photographs ignored members' collective work and their collective promise, and it ignored success unless it could be translated into individual terms.

“This is Our Newspaper Fellows”

Messages that the USWA leaders sought to inculcate were never beyond dispute. Delegates at the 1942 and 1944 Wage and Policy conventions criticized *Steel Labor's* stories, not its imagery, but their comments applied to the imagery as well. At the 1942 convention Vincent Sweeney offered his ever more attenuated Publicity Department Report and President Murray again lauded *Steel Labor* as “the outstanding labor publication in the United States today.” But an unexpected and contentious disagreement broke out between some delegates and leadership over the report's adoption. A delegate from Lorain, Ohio, one of the towns hit hard by the 1937 Little Steel strike, objected “to the weakness and conservative policy of... *Steel Labor*.” He told other delegates, “you can talk to any steel worker who has read our paper for four years and unless he has other sources of information he knows little or nothing about the labor movement.” He demanded a paper which would “educate our rank and file in the purposes of our

on the job voice workers attained; *Striking Steel*, 40. Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 25-26.

organization.” A California delegate concurred, claiming *Steel Labor* didn’t “reflect the interests and activities of the rank and file” as only a few men edited it.¹²²

Others disagreed, with one delegate asking for the same *Steel Labor*, only “bigger and better.” President Murray then weighed in. He described *Steel Labor*’s assistance to the union’s organizing mission, and reminded members he handpicked Sweeney. Murray then told convention delegates it was not their place to criticize this “exceptionally good paper,” the International Executive Board alone could do so. Delegates would not be put off, and another Lorain member, Delegate Broadfoot, took up where the first left off. His speech was awkward, indicating a certain discomfort speaking in public—or perhaps too much convention imbibing. Nonetheless, he made a ringing critique of the paper’s focus on organizational minutia, and by extension the union hierarchy’s values.

In regard to Brother Sweeney being the editor of *Steel Labor* we are back to Brother Sweeney. I don’t owe him no apology, and we don’t care to...If he would get out a paper to steelworkers which we can absorb, he can give us educational news, things we can really learn something from. We are not dummies in steel...Brother Murray tells you and me and all of us that Brother Sweeney is doing as he is told to do. Yes I will admit that, but whose union is this? Is it Brother Murray’s Union or is it our Union?...This is the idea boys. Let’s all get back of this *Steel Labor*...to be our educational organ, not only to tell us how many delegates and how much of a per capita tax they are getting from such and such a local throughout the country, but we want to know a lot of things...*Steel Labor* should be an educational organ, not just something that tells us we have so many dues paying dollars in 1104, Lorain Ohio...This is our newspaper fellows.

Someone again defended the paper, and the convention hall filled with boos. It is possible that dissenters attacked the union newspaper alone. But tangential discussion often masks arguments over larger issues. *Steel Labor* was a convenient hook to place

¹²² Speeches of Delegates Skolnik and Chown, *First United Steelworkers of America*

criticisms of the union's anti-democratic leanings, its promotion of passivity on the part of rank and filers, and its emphasis on duty over movement building. Murray chided delegates for their ungentlemanly behavior, and another worker suggested that the paper become "the official organ to win this war." The Publicity Department's Report then passed by a unanimous vote.¹²³

At the next convention another fight broke out over *Steel Labor*. One delegate criticized its lack of political leadership and another questioned its content, claiming no one read the articles, they were so long. Murray again defended it—this time with more defensiveness. Though Sweeney had "won his spurs" at the *Pittsburgh Press*, "he is a union man—union minded." Murray then went through the paper, page by page, reciting its contents, and concluded, "The newspaper is open. It is your newspaper. It is *Steel Labor*." But he contradicted this statement when a second later he reminded the assembled that the International Executive Board alone supervised it.¹²⁴

Convention, May 1942, 107.

¹²³ For Delegate Broadfoot, President Murray, and Delegate Cook's response see, *Ibid.*, 107-9. An earlier critique of *Steel Labor* by Chicago's Sub-District 3 staff, argued that the paper conflated communism, nazism, and fascism and that members were angered by such red-baiting. George Patterson and John Dorwalski to Van Bittner and Phil Murray, August 7, 1939. Bittner reprimanded the men, demanding that they retract their letter, which they did. Van Bittner to John Dorwalski, August 9, 1939, in *Patterson*, b7f1. Bittner's humiliating attack on the men, his insistence that they keep their place, along with the Sub-Directors quick response is indicative of leaders' tight control.

¹²⁴ 1944 was the last year that any serious criticism broke out. Perhaps because Sweeney pre-empted them by offering longer reports, and setting up meetings where delegates could discuss their concerns. No minutes of any meetings are now available. It's worth noting that in this 1946 report, he touted photomontages that hung in the convention hallways that had been co-produced with corporations, some of SWOC's former enemies. Sweeney speech in *Proceedings of the Third United Steel Workers of America Convention*, 1946, 73.

The distinctive “patterns of meaning” in *Steel Labor* and its imagery reflected leaders’ thinking while also attempting to shape workers’ attitudes. Though union leaders and Vin Sweeney left no records about their use of visual imagery, their choices over time reflect a clear awareness of the visual resonance and nuances of such imagery. *Steel Labor*’s visual imagery conceived of union workers in limiting ways. Photographs and cartoons sanctioned specified behavior for social change, offered narrow criticism of capitalism, and depicted workers’ aspirations as a celebration of patriotism, and individual gain with a dollop of women’s smiles to brighten the whole. By perpetrating gender division among workers; by promoting a dutiful, passive membership over active involvement; and by ignoring the hard work and sacrifices of rank and filers, *Steel Labor* editors and union leaders naturalized certain ways of understanding union struggle, union workers, and union rights. The persistent visualization of workers and of their political and activist options closed doors to other ways of seeing the worker in society, and it made other forms of opposition and other demands less imaginable.

The debate between the Ohio convention delegates and their union president, Philip Murray, demonstrates that leaders’ project was never complete. Some members wanted a voice in shaping the union’s discourse. “This is our newspaper fellows. Let’s all get back of it, and let’s give us a big organ.” Some scholars claim ideological hegemony is about participation as well as ideas. “The building of hegemonic formations is not only a matter of ideas, of winning hearts and minds, but also an issue of participation, in the sense of involving people.”¹²⁵ *Steel Labor* represented leaders’

¹²⁵ First United Steelworkers of America Convention, 107. Michael Denning, “The End of Mass Culture,” *International Labor and Working Class History* 37 (Spring 1990): 14.

views, views shared by some members and rejected by others. Leaders appeared to welcome comments, even participation, but they forestalled involvement and kept the paper's direction in Sweeney's hands.¹²⁶

Nonetheless, for the paper to engage members' attention at all, *Steel Labor* must have also encapsulated workers' aims.¹²⁷ The desire to participate in the larger American polity was a radical claim, even in the 1940s, one that had eluded many workers, most especially low-level industrial steelworkers. Male workers may have warmed to the imagery shared with them by *Steel Labor* editors, they themselves might have desired the "private" goals of a suburban styled "home sweet home" or a wife happily ensconced in her kitchen. Women workers might have enjoyed being the center of attention or having for the first time the ability to care for their family without stinting.

Like many unions in this 1930s and 1940s, the United Steelworkers borrowed the successful techniques and messages of professional mass media that strengthened their hand. USWA leaders also consolidated their own emergent view of unionism, one that stressed their own efficacy, the pliancy of their membership, and individualist gains for workers. Unions cemented their power during the war, but they gave up their dream for

¹²⁶ At the 1946 convention, one member suggested delegates should quite bellyaching and create their own local papers. A fuller study might examine papers to see if more localized leadership, (for a rank and file paper would be unlikely at the USWA,) addressed different issues and concerns.

¹²⁷ As Denning explains, "If the forms of commercial popular culture are not purely manipulative, then it is because, alongside the false appeals, the forshortenings, the trivialization and short circuits, there are also elements of recognition and identification, something of a recreation of recognizable experiences and attitudes to which people are responding." Denning argues with the British cultural historian Stuart Hall, that mass culture must be conceived of neither as fully "authentic" culture, as an expression of popular desire (as registered in acts of creation or consumption), nor as an "imposed" culture from above. Denning, "The End of Mass Culture," 6.

industrial democracy. Unions re-shaped the contours of American society, helping workers attain more security than they had ever had, but unions failed to achieve the substantial role they desired in economic planning or the far-reaching welfare state they lobbied for. We must look to the cultural sphere as well to understand these transformations and their limits.

Of course, not all union papers were as de-politicizing and individualistic as *Steel Labor*. Moe Foner, who oversaw the editing of several union newsletters from the late 1940s maintains, “if [members] see that instead of stories about officers there are interviews and pictures of workers on the job and in their homes, they understand that the publication—and by implication the union—is about the members.” Two other industrial unions, UE and the United Auto Workers, as we saw above, used photographs to illustrate a positive relationship between rank and file participation and union success. The ILGW paper, *Justice*, did the same, and also showcased members and their activities outside of work, along with the broad swath of recreational, educational and cultural activities members participated in.¹²⁸ And, as we will see in the following chapter, Local 65, a New York City warehouse workers union, showed members as individuals and as part of a collective who created an ever mobilizing, always vibrant union.

¹²⁸ Foner, *Not For Bread Alone*, 128. The ILG played on their ethnic diversity in imagery. See for example, “League of Nations” an informal shot of 4 men in shirt sleeves with arms around one another. Individual workers were showcased, with their work skills and outside interests played up. See shot of Giuseppe Modigliani. Both in *Justice*, 1 January 1935. Entertainment and activism are mixed, for example in “Sing in at Union Headquarters,” *Justice*, 15 March 1935.

Chapter Six: "This Picture Shows What We Are Fighting For:" Rank and File Photography of Local 65 United Warehouse and Wholesaler Employees Union.

In the fall of 1951, distributive workers poured into their union hall, a thirteen story building in Manhattan's Astor Place, to see a photo exhibition about their local—"The Fighting 65."¹ The exhibition was put on by fellow members, whose primary responsibility was taking photographs for Local 65's newspaper, *New Voices*. Exhibitors recorded their reactions to the images. One member described a photo of a striker

¹ The union's name and organizational structure changed multiple times in the two decades under study as the organization grew and changed affiliations. Local 65 began as the Wholesale Drivers Workers Union in 1933. They affiliated with the United Hebrew Trades later that year. In 1934 they joined the AFL as Local 19932 of the Wholesale Drivers Employees Union. In July of 1937, believing the AFL hindered their efforts, they switched once again to the CIO, under the Textile Workers Organizing Committee, where they became Local 65, taking the number of the textile market union. The CIO asked them to affiliate with the United Retail Wholesale and Department Store Employees (URWDE). They changed their name to the Wholesale and Warehouse Employees Union where they stayed for a little over a decade. In November of 1948 Local 65 broke with the CIO, pre-empting a possible ouster over the local's refusal to sign Taft-Hartley anti-communist affidavits. The union claimed they could have signed them, but they refused on principle. Local 65 joined with Local 1199, Local 1S, Local 2; Local 3, 5, and 1250, to form the Distributive Trades Council in New York City. In February of 1950 they reorganized as the Distributive Workers Union (DWU), making their union the second largest local after UAW local 600. In September of 1950 they affiliated with the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers of America (FTA) and the United Office and Professional Workers of America (UOPWA) to form the Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers Union (DPO), a national union. Local 65 played a critical role in this union: one with 80,000 members in fifty cities and twenty-five states. In 1953, fearing the impact of McCarthyism upon their members' lives and organizational health, and desiring the support of civil rights organizations like the NAACP, they re-affiliated with the CIO and the URWDE, and they were renamed District 65. See the United Automobile, Aircraft and Vehicle Workers of America, *District 65 Papers*, Wagner 006, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, Tamiment Library, New York University, b1f1 and b1f2, hereafter *D65 papers*. Arthur Osman, *Organizing Wholesale*, b67f18. *D65 papers*. For a full history of the union, see Lisa Ann Wunderlich Phillips "The Labor Movement and Black Economic Equality in New York City and District 65, 1934-1954," Ph.D. Dissertation, Rutgers University, 2002. For a concise history see David Paskin, "District 65 United Auto Workers," in Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, eds. *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press), 192-194.

who held his toddler as he walked on the picket line and commented, “this picture really shows what we are fighting for.” Another noted that “the exhibit makes me realize the great struggles of our members in building up this union, and it makes me feel proud to be a member.” A third connected job struggles with family commitments: “[The exhibition] highlights graphically how our daily fight for security and better conditions revolves around a better life for our family.”² These members responded to photographs exactly as their president, Arthur Osman had hoped; he wanted members to be constantly organizing and identifying their union community as a “second home.”³ The union involved rank and file in every aspect of union life: from shop meetings and conventions, to political support for the Scottsboro Boys, to work at the union’s health and welfare department, to selling goods in the union’s cooperative consumer’s shop, to union hikes, union ping-pong, and union dances.

Leaders’ strategy succeeded. Local 65 began as a handful of workers at H. Eckstein’s, a hosiery and white goods wholesaler on Orchard Street in Manhattan’s Lower East Side. In September of 1933, these workers had met in the Brooklyn home of their future president to celebrate the birth of his first son and “conspired” to form a union.⁴ Twenty years later their union constituted one of the largest locals in the New York area.⁵

² “Photo Exhibit Stars ‘The Fighting 65,’” *New Voices*, (hereafter *NV*), 7 October 1951, M2.

³ One reference to “second home,” can be found in “65 Looks to Future With Confidence,” *NV*, 15 March 1940, 5. Phillips shows how the union used the “second home” idea in the South to organize Southern black peanut processing workers in Suffolk, Virginia. “The Labor Movement,” 76, 217, 224-5.

⁴ “Conspired” is the term Local 65’s President, Arthur Osman used with irony before a Congressional hearing on Communism. House Committee on Education and Labor, “Investigation of Communism in New York City Distributive Trades,” 80th Cong., 2nd sess., 1948, 430. Arthur Osman, interview by Herbert Hill, July 12, 1968, Walter Reuther

Local 65's photo exhibition was just one example of the broad array of political, educational, social, and cultural, and activities leaders set up to secure member loyalty and enrich workers' lives within the union. Cultural programming where rank and filers "secured an understanding of what the Unions is" drew Local 65 leaders' attention, particularly activities where unionists represented the union itself.⁶ They pushed members to work—and play—to celebrate the union's story in song, skit, and pageantry. Leaders founded the union's member-run newspaper, *New Voices*, so rank and filers could document and shape their organizations' growth. Early on leaders even organized a rare union activity—a camera club and then a volunteer *New Voices* "Photo Staff" for workers to vivify union ideals with photographs.⁷

Library, Wayne State University, (hereafter Osman interview, and *WSU*). Phillips suggests this founding myth obscures the CP's spearheading of Local 65, but the union's precise origins are not critical to my argument, "Labor Movement," 37-40.

⁵ Jay Tabb suggests that with 18,000 members in the early 1950s, the union was "probably the largest local union of white-collar workers in the country." "A Study of White Collar Unionism: Tactics and Policies Pursued in Building the Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Union of New York," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1952, 1-2. Phillips, "Labor Movement" claimed 65 was New York City's third largest local after the ILG and the ACWU, 197.

⁶ Union leaders argued that social activities should be confined to "what we are able to undertake successfully," and "those activities which will make the greatest contribution to solidifying the membership." They thought the unions socials, and activities like Drama, Film, Chorus and Writers Group should be kept, but sports discontinued. Recreation Report, December 23, 1942, b6f26, *D65 papers*. There is no indication they ever did so.

⁷ A former photo-staff chair believed their efforts unique. He claimed other New York unions came to Local 65 for photographs. Interview with Edward Roth by Mary Allison Farley and Erika Gottfried, May 24, 1990, Tamiment Library and Wagner Labor Archives, 1 in United Automobile, Aircraft, and Vehicle Workers of America, District 65, Oral Histories, hereafter *D65 orals*, New York University. Other unions took advantage of film and photography, but I've found no union that had as sustained a rank and file commitment to photographing union life. Sid Grossman, a Photo League member took pictures for the Southern Tenant Farmers Union and the Farmers Union Local 576, but there is no indication that union members did the same. Lili Corbus Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal into the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999), 80. Michael Denning claims that New York's

The Photo Staff packed *New Voices* with their images, making it one of the liveliest union newspapers around. Local 65 photographers followed members into their work places and out into the streets for their picket lines, but also to their theatre performances, to their nightclub, to their boat trips and picnics, in keeping with an organizing strategy that melded shop floor, community, and cultural activism. The photos they took adorned the union headquarters, spruced up the union's May Day floats, and could be seen at exhibitions like the one held in 1951.⁸ But *New Voices* was always the most important venue for these photographs. Many *New Voices* pages had more than one photo; stories on important union events had more. The union's conventions, key organizing drives, such as the 1942 New York Merchandise Company drive or the 1943 Whelan's Bush Terminal drive; mass investitures, war-time blood drives, and major cultural events, all merited a page or two full of photographs.⁹

New Voices had a sophisticated visual appeal. From 1938 though 1941 it printed more pictures, the layouts became increasingly complex, and editors devoted the last

Transit Workers Union offered classes in photography, but no evidence of a larger commitment to rank and file visual expression exists. Denning, *The Culture Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso Press, 1997), 62, 68. Other examples of those using film are the Workers Educational Association in Canada, see Jeffery Taylor, *Union Learning: Canadian Labour Education in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 2001), and the United Auto Workers, who produced "United Action," a film of their 1939 strike against General Motors, which Local 65's camera club showed in "four star evening of cinema fare," as a union social. *NV*, 1 May 1940.

⁸ Bezner, *Photography and Politics*, 90-1 and Denning, *Culture Front*, 53-55 noted that the New York Photo League and other leftist artists found May Day parades a sympathetic subject.

⁹ The 13 September 1942 issue of *New Voices* devoted its last page to the NYMCO drive; and 13 March 1943, leafleting at Whelan's Bush Terminal. The 24 May 1942 issue of *New Voices* included a full page of photographs of the socials, the 26 March 1944, 8-9 offered two full pages of birthday celebration; the 14 May 1944, 16 back-page "Introducing Club 65!" and the 10 October 1943 issue covered the blood drive. "Mike

page to photographs. Through the war years, despite high turnover in the photo-staff, editors could rely on a consistent base of photos to maintain the paper's interest. War mobilization stories illustrated the contributions of 65 shops with even greater narrative coherence. Like *LIFE Magazine*, these stories were pre-scripted, and had a fuller, less time-sensitive appeal. In the immediate post-war period, the number of *New Voices* photo stories increased: members might read about and view anti-communist attacks on the union, members traipsing to Coney Island, or the union's own nightclub.

New Voices photographs were not mere "documents": photos had an "organizing eye."¹⁰ Local 65's photographs did the work that a union organizer might do. Like an organizer, photographs enticed workers into struggle, educated them about collective action, and modeled activities necessary for campaign success. *New Voices* photographs promoted ideals for the union, both as a collective and for its individual members. Photographers represented the union as a haven of racial, ethnic and gender diversity, suggesting in their visual depictions that the fight for workers included men and women, black and white, and a "United Nations of nationalities." Union cameramen and women even used photographs to advance the argument that workers had a right to a full, expressive life. *New Voices* images helped solidify union spirit during the photographers' heyday: from the inception of the *New Voices* Photo Staff in 1937 until

Quill Proposes to Make City Council Work for You and Me," *NV*, 21 November 1943, 11.

¹⁰ Leah Ollman developed the term "class eye" in her discussion of the German Worker Photography movement. German photographers used the term "proletarian eye." Leah Ollman, *Camera as Weapon: Worker Photography between the Wars* (San Diego: Museum of Photographic Arts, 1991). She relied on Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations, Essays and Reflection of Walter Benjamin*, edited by Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), 234 for the notion of the camera as a "weapon."

the early 1950s when the quality of the photographs diminished, corresponding with internal changes in the union and transformations in American political and cultural ideology.¹¹ Local 65 photographers documented the union's aspirations for New York working men and women, and helped fulfill them.

“You’re a Witness for God Knows How Many People.”

Local 65's photography experiments got off the ground at members' suggestion. Taking advantage of the craze in popular photography, Local 65's Education and Recreation Program designed its first photography class in 1937.¹² Students from this class—almost all men—formed an amateur camera club whose size varied from ten to twenty members. [Fig. 6-1.]¹³ Club members “clamored” for paid instructors, but the cost-conscious union invited in professionals, many of them politically sympathetic

¹¹ The Wagner Archives has some 30,000 negatives from District 65, many of them taken by the union's photo staff and camera club. The Archives organized them in the following categories: Shop, Social, Union, Cultural, Recreation, Individuals, Demonstrations, World War II, Political, Publicity, Worksite, Education, Out-of-Town and Domestic. The collection was culled from 60,000 negatives. The photographs are cross-indexed, and photographs are listed in multiple categories. This paper relies on an analysis of *New Voices*, where photos began appearing in 1937. The published photos are read against archival categories. Photos in the social, cultural and recreational categories, examined from 1937-1953, do not differ to any great degree from what the paper printed. The strike photos, which were printed followed a number of distinct “patterns,” and few photos were printed that didn't conform. The full roster of photo staff and camera club participants is unavailable, and there was overlap between the groups, so it is impossible to know which photographs were taken by photo staff, and which ones by camera club members, though the collection does attribute some photographs. The photo collection is available as the United Automobile, Aircraft and Vehicle Workers of America, District 65 Non-Print Records, Wagner NP23, Robert F. Wagner Archives, Tamiment Library, New York University, hereafter as *D65 photos*.

¹² Education Committee Notes June 24, 1937 b1f1; and Nov 17, 1938, b1f2.

¹³ In this posed photograph, camera club members crowd around the enlarger, intent on their lesson, *NV*, November 1939, 6. By April of that year photos appeared on camera club members who volunteered to support *NV*, April 1939, 6. Neg. # 2, 1939, *D65 photos*.

speakers to “cover the fundamentals of photography” instead.¹⁴ Lectures on such topics as “Your Camera is No Mystery” or “Action Photography” attracted dozens. The club set up a borrowing library with publications about photography, and ran regular outings and nature hikes for picture-taking opportunities. It also constructed its own darkroom in union headquarters, “the most modern dark room of any trade union in New York City” and it was so popular that club leaders arranged a waiting list to use it. Camera Club members organized snapshot contests to show off their skills and spark interest in their club. They also decorated union hall with photographs, and planned the wartime shop documentaries, where they photographed members at work throughout New York City neighborhoods.¹⁵ In its early years the Camera Club envisioned a metropolitan “Trade Union Camera Council for the benefit of all organizations involved” and in the 1950’s the union considered establishing union camera clubs nationwide. Their ambitious goals never came to pass but 65ers were unusually enthusiastic about members’ visual self-expression.¹⁶

At some point in 1938, with the Camera Club in full swing, *New Voices* editor, Jack Paley, became inspired to fill the newspaper with lively, motivating images. He

¹⁴ Report of the Camera Group, May 2, 1940; August 12, 1940; July 18, 1940; September 12, 1940; b6f3, *D65 papers*. Mainstream photographers like those from New York City’s Camera Club, A.P. Photo, and Agfa Ansco and radical photographers from the left wing photo magazine *Friday*, and Mac Selmor trained Local 65 camera club members. Selmor was an American Newspaper Guild freelancer who provided labor photos to the New York City metro dailies. *Ibid.* and *NV*, February 1939, 7; and *Union Voices*, (hereafter *UV*), 22 April 1951, 2.

¹⁵ The camera club tracked attendance at lectures from fifteen to thirty attendees. Camera Club notes, September 12, 1940; May 2, 1940; b6f3, *D65 papers*. Each night one camera club member supervised the darkroom, and most nights at least five members took advantage of the free space. See *NV*, February 1939, 7 for quote on the darkroom.

¹⁶ For the metropolitan camera council see: Camera Club notes, May 2, 1940, b6f3, *D65 papers*; for national club, see *UVs*, 25 March 1951, 9; 20 May 1951 3; 1 July 1951, 6; 20

bought a camera and convinced a dozen some camera-club members to take pictures for the paper. They became known as the *New Voices* Photo Staff. Though the Camera Club and *New Voices* Photo Staff were technically independent, the groups' leaders were virtually synonymous and some of their projects overlapped.¹⁷ Even so, the groups jostled for time and space in the darkroom.¹⁸ The union clarified the differences between the two groups in a 1941 Recreation Council report. The Camera Club would "unite members interested in photography" who might "depict the life of the union." The Photo Staff, on the other hand, must "stimulate and guide the membership behind the Local 65 program for a fuller and richer life."¹⁹ The Photo Staff's mission was always more

April 1952. Ed Roth indicates that additional camera clubs were never formed despite the union's interest. Interview, *D65 orals*.

¹⁷ Nothing suggests Paley had a master plan for the camera club and the photo staff, though his position as recreation director gave him influence over both groups. The *New Voices* photo staff enjoyed a regular infusion of talent because of its links to the amateur camera club. Jack Paley, interview by David Paskin, tape recording, Kopek, New York, July 15, 1982, Tamiment Institute, New York University, New York, *D65 orals*. For the cross pollination see Camera Club Notes which indicates that of seven nights of darkroom management, photo-staff members covered five of those nights. May 2, 1940, b6f3. There was also overlap in tasks. If the Camera Club made photographs for the headquarters, the Photo Staff took photographs for union educational pamphlets. The Photo Staff also took decorative photographs and worked on the documentaries. Photo Staff Meeting Notes, September 27, 1941, b6f3, *D65 papers*. No listing of membership for each group appears in the archive, so it is impossible to know how many members were involved in each group. The Photo Staff seems to have had about twelve members, though there was constant turnover. Nothing indicates the number of camera club members, but the union recruited for both throughout the 1950s. The committee notes and *New Voices* are at times unclear about the distinction. "Local 65 all set for May Day Parade: Colorful contingents to dramatize union program," 15 April 1941, *NV*, 5, said the Camera Club would create huge photo panels with "pictures of union life," for the parade. See *New Voices* recruitment stories: "Camera Club expands as Warm Weather is Nearing," *NV*, April 1939; "Quick as a Flash," *NV*, 15 October 1940, 7; "New Voices Distribution," *NV*, 1 December 1941, 8; "The Story of *New Voices*: How it was Born 9 Years Ago and How You Can Keep it Growing," *NV*, 29 August 1943, 6.

¹⁸ For internal conflict between *New Voices* photo staff and Camera Club members see Joint Meeting Notes, January 17, 1941, b6f3, *D65 papers*.

¹⁹ The Camera Club would continue on into the 1950s with its snapshot contests and outings. Recreational Council Meeting, February 2, 1941, b6f4, *D65 papers* and Frank

explicitly tied to achieving the union's organizational goals and moving the union's ideological vision forward through photographs. The editor's oversight ensured that this happened.

Paley coordinated the *New Voices* Photo Staff—they received assignments to cover the everyday tasks of union departments and special events. Once finished, photographers registered their film and recorded any information identifying the shots. The union set aside the darkroom for *New Voices* printing one day a week. *New Voices* photographers also captioned the prints once the enlarging was complete. Photographers saw their job as covering events fully, they left the print selection, photographic layout, including photo cropping to *New Voices*'s editor.²⁰

Camera Club members shot nostalgic landscapes, and men tossing babies over their heads, but the *New Voices* Photo Staff rejected such expression. Photo Staff had no patience for what they perceived as the Camera Club's "endless critiques of the 450th time you've seen a print." They disparaged the aesthetic concerns of club members who took "Central Park shots" and even scoffed when club members experimented with "Ash Can School" iconography. Neither did these photographers seem interested in avant-garde experiments in composition or photo-montage advocated by radical photographers

Kerness, neg. #13221, titled "Snap-shot Contest Model" which shows a woman being used as a prop. July 12, 1954, *D65 photos*.

²⁰ Photo Staff scheduled darkroom printing so that large quantities of prints were produced each week in advance of publication. *New Voices* Photographic Staff Meeting, November 13, 1940; January 4, 1941; March 22, 1941; all in b6f3, and Nov 18, 1940, b6f6, *D65 papers*, Roth interview, 22, *D65 orals*. Roth's interview indicates that members took enough photos so that editors could choose what they liked, though at least one member complained that it could be difficult to "synchronize" with the editor, see "Behind the Camera," *UV*, 28 April 1946, 11.

abroad.²¹ The Photo Staff believed their distinctive mission “objectively” documenting the union as photojournalists, though this documentation was less for posterity’s sake

²¹ This iconography, long associated with the difficulties of urban working-class life, is named for the painters who clustered around New York painter Robert Henri just after the twentieth century began. Henri painted the downtrodden in their urban surroundings. For experimentation with vantage and composition by the Russian political avant-garde and then German left-wing photographers, see Abigail Solomon Goudeau “The Armed Vision Disarmed: Radical Formalism from Weapon to Style,” in *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions and Practices* (Minneapolis: Media and Society, 1991), 52-84. She argues Alexander Rodchenko’s work from the 1920s on is “notable for its refusal of “naturalized...conventional viewpoints, the insistence that it was a camera lens and not a window pane that yielded the image. Worm’s-eye, bird’s-eye, oblique, or vertiginous perspectives relate not only to the strategy of de-familiarization, but to an affirmation of the apparatus itself as the agent of this vision.” She continues, “what is being stressed is the manifest presence of the means of production, and concomitantly, an implicit rejection of the popular perception of a photograph as either transparent or self generated.” *Ibid.*, 58. Russians continued to use these “de-familiarizing” techniques into the 1930s, despite governmental repression of artists who did not create with a “realist” or Socialist realist language. For early experimentation by Russian photographers with the use of photo-montage, see Margarita Tupisyn, “Lenin’s Death and the Birth of Political Photomontage,” *The Soviet Photograph* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 12-23; By the 1930s, the Nazis, Italian fascists, and American advertisers all used the photomontage technique. See Benjamin Buchloh, “From Faktura to Factography” in Richard Bolton, *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 50-51.

In contrast, U.S. photographers’ work tends towards the “transparent,” realist, and psychological. Lewis Hine created very basic photomontages for the *Survey Graphic*, for example his “Making Human Junk,” which suggested industrialism stunted children’s lives. James Guimond, *American Photography and the American Dream* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 82. See Leah Bendavid-Val’s *Propaganda and Dreams: Photographing the 1930s in the USSR and the US* (Zurich, New York: Edition Stemmler, 1999). A full analysis of photomontage can be found in Matthew Teitelbaum, ed, *Montage and Modern Life: 1919-1942*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992). Particularly pertinent is Sally Stein’s essay, “Good Fences Make Good Neighbors: American Resistance to Photomontage Between the Wars,” 129-189. She argues that in the inter-war period, the technique was considered suspect despite advertisers use of photomontage from before WWI. She notes how leftists at the *New Masses*, and the Photo League eschewed these techniques. The lone exception was the use of photomontage for the war efforts, consonant with *Steel Labor*’s use of photomontage in this period. Local 65’s ignoring of this technique fits within her description. Though many of the Photo-League members embraced the label “Ash Can” photographers, the photo staff did not. For the Photo-League’s acceptance of documentary “ash-can” shots see Walter Rosenblum’s description in Bezner, *Photography and Politics*, 31. The Photo Staff’s pictures appeared in large-scale photo-montages in the headquarters. These

than for moving the union forward. *New Voices* photographers felt a deep sense of responsibility to the union and to all those interested in workers' struggles. In 1946, photographer Moe Weinstein told Dora Shaw, a reporter for *Union Voices*, which succeeded *New Voices*, "We have to see for 25,000 people and it's no cinch." Ed Roth, a former Photo Staff chair said the same, "You're a witness for God knows how many people."²²

Though *New Voices* photographers rejected "aestheticism," they still sought to pack a punch with their images. Members met and pored over one another's photographs to find more effective visual strategies, brainstorming new lighting, composition, and points of view. When member Paul Choplin found a handy trick for capturing the drama of mass meetings by catching the back of a speaker in profile with the audience in the background other Photo Staffers applauded. The photographers foreswore the posed groups shots of rank and file or the endless portraits of union presidents found in union newspapers like *Steel Labor*. And they met with *New Voices* reporters so their photos better reflected news articles.²³ In late 1940 the Photo Staff convinced the union to

montages were innovative, and akin to Soviet photography. Nonetheless, by the war years such montages appeared in the "Road to Victory" and "Power in the Pacific" exhibitions put on by Edward Steichen at MOMA. By the 1950's his "Family of Man" exhibition would appear to canonize this aesthetic for middlebrow consumption. For 65's montages at headquarters see "9 Year Offensive Built 65's Home," *NV*, 27 September 1942, 6. *Steel Labor* also used this technique as well, but sparingly, and the only pattern that I could ascertain was that the montage was used when stressing the USWA's patriotism. See "Steel Fights for the Nation," *SL*, June 1944, 1; and "The People's President," *SL*, August 1944, 1. For Steichen's work see Christopher Phillips, "The Judgement Seat of Photography," in Bolton, *Contest of Meaning*, 15-47.

²² *Union Voice* was the title given to *New Voices* on 7 January 1945, when the union began publishing for local department store unions. It would keep this name until the union re-entered the CIO in June of 1954. Dora Shaw, "Behind the Camera on U.V. Photo Staff," *UV*, 28 April 1946, 11; Roth interview, *D65 orals*.

²³ Photo Staff Notes, January 1, 1941, b6f6, and April 12, 1941 on Choplin's vantage, b6f3. See May 10, 1941 for concern with contrast in prints b6f3. All in *D65 papers*..

purchase a professional Speed Graphic press camera to better their work, and they made sure that only Photo Staff members with a “real interest” in *New Voices* could use it. The Photo Staff gave itself special badges to differentiate themselves from other cameramen. Over time they pressed the union for equipment upgrades, including better enlargers and a camera with a 4x5 lens for more detailed images.²⁴

New Voices photographers enjoyed their avocation and the recognition they got for it. “They started taking pictures for the paper because that’s all amateur’s... their life’s ambition... [to] have your pictures printed in the newspaper,” said Ed Roth, an early chairman of the Photo Staff.²⁵ The photographers’ excitement with the medium spilled outside the Local 65 community. One Photo Staff member wrote letters home his mother “full of news about the Union and about his work on the *Union Voice* Photo Staff.” Bob Franklin had snapped photos “ever since he was a little boy,” and he would go on to supplement his income with freelance jobs.²⁶ The *New Voices* cameramen also freelanced for New York unions that requested their services. Paley thought one early

²⁴ New Voices Photographic Staff Meeting Notes, April 12, 1941; May 10, 1941 and September 13 1941; April 12, 1941; December 21, 1940; January 4, 1941; and June 7, 1941, all in b6f3, *D65 papers*; and Ed Roth’s interview, *D65 orals*. For upgrades see n.d. notes, probably after September 27, 1941, b3f3, *D65 papers*. Fearing police brutality, they insured their equipment. Photo Staff Notes, March 1941, b6f6, *D65 papers*. And when the Photo Staff decided that they were “getting kicked around by their brothers who do not know the staff and impede us in our work” they began wearing badges so they could get the best vantage for taking pictures at meetings and picket lines. Photo Staff Notes, April 12, 1941, b6f6, *D65 papers*, and also Roth interview, *D65 orals*.

²⁵ Roth interview, 1, *D65 orals*. Meeting of the New Voices Photo Staff in March 8, 1941 and March 22, 1941 bear out Roth’s claim. Photographers wrangled to get their photographs credited within the newsletter, b6f3, *D65 papers*. Early on *New Voices* printed individual bylines and if the editor forgot, the Photo Staff zealously reminded him to include it next time. Nonetheless, many photos and spreads appeared without attribution. *New Voices* began crediting the Photo Staff in March 1938, and a year later the paper printed individual bylines. Photo Staff Notes, March 1941, b6f6, *D65 papers*.

²⁶ Franklin polished his skills “to the degree where he could even earn extra money as a freelance photographer.” *UV*, 14 January 1951, M7.

member sold photographs to *LIFE Magazine*. One member became a photographer for the National Maritime Union, and yet another opened up his own camera shop. The OWI even used Photo Staff pictures for the anti-Mussolini propaganda it distributed in Italy. With World War II, Local 65 lost twenty staff photographers to the army which snapped up several of them as photographers. Replacing them were the “Girls” who “Click[ed]:” for the first time the all-male bastion was broken by an infusion of female talent.²⁷

“You’re Making News Tonight”

Paley’s decision to enhance *New Voices* with photographs made sense as it was Arthur Osman’s pet project. Osman committed his own labors and pocketbook to founding it in 1934—other board members couldn’t see the point. It took him two years to convince the board to take financial responsibility for the paper.²⁸ In Osman’s mind,

²⁷ New Voices Photographic Staff Meeting Notes, December 7, 1940; June 7, 1941; December 21, 1940; b6f3, *D65 papers*, Roth interview, *D65 orals*. Nothing substantiates his recollection, but the union was proud of launching unionists in outside careers. Paley interview, *D65 orals*. Roth interview, on the NMU and camera shop. Photo Staff Sam Engler took photos of an Italian 65 member whose three children were in the Army, and who volunteered at home, see *UV*, 28 April 1946, 11. For photographers lost to the war effort see “Warman goes to War,” *NV*, 10 October 1943, 3; “New Voices Photographers Serving with Uncle Sam,” *NV*, n.d. probably 1942, 12; “New Voices Photographers Keep Shooting,” *NV*, 16 April 1944, B-19; and “Girls ‘Click’ as N.V. Photogs,” *NV*, 28 February 1943. *New Voices* “invited” women to “take up where the men left off” 10 May 1942 issue, 13.

²⁸ In May of 1935 the board tabled discussion about making the paper the “official organ of the union.” *NV*, 30 August 1942, 6; Executive Comm. Notes, May 5, 1934 and May 13, 1935, b1f2, *D65 papers*. Through 1936 leaders complained that rank and file cared little about the paper. At times *New Voices* wasn’t even printed, “due to the lack of material.” When members didn’t subscribe and failed to sell ads to local merchants the union published the paper at a loss. General Meeting Minutes, May 13, 1937 and November 12, 1936, b1f1. However, ads sales covered almost one-third of the operating costs of publishing the paper in 1941. The editor then mentioned each issue cost about \$400 to publish, and that ads brought in about \$150. Member subscription fees covered the rest. “New Voices Report” to Executive Board, October 23, 1941, b1f6, *D65 papers*. Years later the birth of the “lusty but lonely” *New Voices* would become part of the

New Voices was “by far, the most important instrument of education in our union.” He believed the newspaper should keep members “posted on organizational activities” but also be a source of information for “the problems confronting them.” If Osman relied on the paper as “the means by which the messages of great labor leaders and other progressives could be brought into their homes,” he also saw the paper as “an avenue for self-expression.”²⁹ Unlike United Steel Worker leaders, Osman wanted *New Voices* to be a forum for workers as well as leaders.

Paley helped realize Osman’s aims after Osman handed him the editorship in September of 1937. The paper thrived under Paley’s attention. Paley later joked that “[*New Voices*] was a good paper for a bunch of amateurs.” He saw his role less as a traditional editor, than as a coordinator. “I wasn’t much of an editor, leave alone being a writer, but I think all these years I was a pretty good organizer. I got a lot of people in the shops to write for the paper. You’d be surprised the tremendous talent that existed.”

³⁰ Paley set up committees to edit and administer the paper.³¹ Under Paley the paper expanded its coverage, and was printed twice a month, beginning in January of 1940.

union’s myth, and the initial disinterest in the paper forgotten. The 1942 celebration of *New Voices* read: “It was shortly before dawn, one day in August 1934. Six people were huddled around a kitchen table watching closely under the yellow light while one of them turned the handle of an old mimeo machine. The fever of excitement was in the air, and all of them felt the thrill of taking part in a great event. *New Voices*, their Union newspaper, was being born... To their amazement and delight, the dilapidated mimeo machine worked, and there it was clicking away. The first edition was rolling off the ‘press.’ The job of editing the paper had to be done in the milk-man’s serenade hours, because the work day lasted till 8 P.M. and after that there was organizing to be done and meetings to be attended.” Quotes from *NV*, 30 August 1942, 6 and 1 September 1940, 4. Similar references can be found in *NV*, September 1938, 7; July 1939, 4; and 1 September 1941, 5.

²⁹ Osman, *Organizing Wholesale*, b67f8, D65 papers.

³⁰ *NV*, 30 August 1942, 6 on Paley’s editorship; Paley, D65 orals.

³¹ Calls for members to build an advertising base are sprinkled throughout *New Voices*, and also throughout membership meeting notes. *NV*, 15 April 1941, 7; Paley, D65 orals.

The paper's circulation went from several hundred in its first year, to 10,000 in 1940, to twice that right after the war.³² Irving Baldinger took over from Paley in May of 1944 and continued Paley's committee structure, believing it kept the paper going full throttle, despite a "seemingly endless turnover in full time personnel" due to the war.³³

One poster in union headquarters bubbled "You're Making News Tonight." The poster also asked unionists to share happenings at their local meetings, conveying two ideas simultaneously: that unionists were doing something newsworthy, and that they should author their own stories.³⁴ *New Voices* editorials and columns importuned members to write, send in letters, and get their advertising quotas in. Workers took the injunctions seriously, they went to classes so they could write for the paper, joined the "movie critics club," and joined mailing parties to get the paper out. *New Voices* "Letters

³² See *NV*, July 1939, 4; and 16 April 1944, B-19 on semi-monthly coverage. Additional information on circulation in *NV*, 30 August 1942, 6 and September 1940, 4. Similar references can be found in *NV*, September 1938, 7; July 1939, 4; and 1 September 1941, 5. 1946 circulation numbers in "Report on Union Voice" b67f21, *D65 papers*. In January of 1942 the paper expanded once more to sixteen pages.

³³ See "New Editor," *NV*, 28 May 1944, 3. Baldinger may have taken over some duties as managing editor before becoming the full editor, see, Recreation Council Minutes, July 29, 1940 b6f4, and Tom Mooney Hall Association Board Minutes, 1946 b67f21, *D65 papers*. Of course members didn't always respond to leaders' targets for the paper. Despite their best efforts to publish a weekly *New Voices* in the early 1940s, rank and filers refused to bring in enough advertising dollars to cover costs. Education Committee notes, May 13, 1937, 4th Regular Steward Council Meeting April 12, 1943, b6f1; November 14, 1937, and November 3, 1941 b1f2; Recreation Board Minutes September 8, 1941, b6f4 and July 29, 1940 Rec. Committee, *D65 papers*.

³⁴ This title came from a poster in the union's hall asking members to write up their meetings right after they happened to share with other members their lessons. In the far right corner is a sign for *New Voices* which says "You're Making News Tonight!" written with an angling upwards script. It continues, "Your actions at this meeting are an important part of the swift moving events at Local 65. Your ideas can help other members, so pass them on. Your decisions affect the entire membership. Let them IN on the news and they'll support you 100%. Tell it to *New Voices*." The right hand corner text states: "Write your release immediately after this meeting and bring it over to *New Voices*, room 408." This shot shows how the union engaged member involvement. Neg. # 01617, February 18, 1944, *D65 photos*.

to the Editor” section filled one, and sometimes two or three pages, issue after issue.

Often editors could not print all the letters they received.³⁵ During World War II editors set up “Soldiers on the Front.” Member-soldiers wrote from the South Seas to South Carolina, from Tunisia to Texas about their affinity to the union. One writer claimed, “without *New Voices* I was like a soldier without his rifle.” Another shared his *New Voices* with Southern GI’s who enjoyed the paper despite their “cuss[ing] organized labor for all they were worth.” Many wrote how popular *New Voices* was among the GI’s.³⁶

Readers’ involvement and suggestions resulted in many of the papers’ innovations. In 1942 members asked for information on crew and section leaders and editors added a “Meet the Members” page. Readers’ request for a tabloid-style “man in the streets” section resulted in writer/photographers Irving Silverstein and Lynn Botnick’s “Inquiring Photographer” column. In it members expounded on subjects as varied as Dior’s androgynous fashions—men and women alike preferred Marilyn

³⁵ Stewards Council Meeting, April 12, 1943 b6f1, *D65 papers*.

³⁶ As with most union papers, printed letters mostly lauded union policies but letters criticizing union practices were not uncommon. Members balked in print at the length of meetings, the union’s about-face on entry into WWII, its involvement in May Day parades, and the lack of Spanish language articles in *New Voices*. Complaints about meeting length and response are found in 30 January, and 13 February 1944, 12; complaints about fines, 15 April 1941, 4; discussion of women 25 April 1941, 4; critique of lack of Spanish articles is on December 1941, 4; complaints about the dropping of Osman’s column, 1 December 1941, all *New Voices*. Paley criticized the unionists for not coming up with enough ad money to print weekly in 1943, claiming twenty letters couldn’t be printed because there was inadequate space. General Stewards Meeting Stewards Council Meeting Monday April 12, 1943, b6f1, *D65 Papers*. *New Voices* even shamed members who didn’t meet quota. A 27 September 1942, 11 story reprinted a photo of organizer Frank Brown who sought member support to build the *New Voices* budget, and told members section U-5 had raised no money in ads, and asked them “What are you waiting for U-5?” Members complained about Local 65’s “community programs” which they believed had failed once before. *NV*, 5 December 1943, 14. Letters from soldiers, 14 March 1943, 15; 14 February 1943, 13 and 16 August 1942, 13.

Monroe's more "womanly couture"—to their ideas on the need to vote and social security for workers.³⁷

A 1942 photo-essay "*New Voices Goes to Press*" offers a flavor of the paper's contents, and also indicates members active involvement in their paper.

Yes the ideas and energy of hundreds of 65ers make up an issue of *New Voices*. Take the last issue, for example. 18 members wrote in letters giving ideas and telling of their experience, and 20 shops and crews sent in resolutions on such public issues as the Western Front and the anti-poll tax bill. 15 members in the army sent in letters from camps from all over the world. The NYMCO and Woolworth Warehouse took over a page apiece to write about what's doing in these unorganized plants. 27 shop stewards and organizers sent in news stories on contracts, arbitration and other organizational problems and advances. 15 stewards of Section B-3 submitted sketches about themselves and their crews to make up the "Meet the Members" page.

Additional features came from the pens of ten members who together made up a page of songs and poems; the Recreation Department committees contributed two articles on their activities, and the Soldiers Welfare committee wrote up its current campaign. President Arthur Osman contributed his regular column on "Our Problems" and Lilian White wrote on one phase of Negro problems. Besides the 28 pictures taken by the photo staff, there were 33 ads included in this issue. All in all about 200 members had a hand in making that issue.³⁸

At general meetings, the stewards' meetings, and even at executive board meetings leaders and members discussed the content, circulation, and member interest in *New Voices*. Indeed *New Voices* became an emblem of Local 65. Members lugged copies of *New Voices* to the first CIO convention they attended, where they were astounded that

³⁷ The "Inquiring Photographer" began in the 6 August 1944 issue, 2, after editors received "accumulating" requests from readers, and ran until the paper was bundled into the *RWDSU Record* in 1954. For "Why Vote?" see 15 October 1944. See also *NV*, September 1938, 7; 18 April 1954, M2, and *UV*, 12 September and 26 September 1954, 5A. See also "If Money were no object, what would you consider the Ideal Mean?" 16 May 1954, 9; and "What do you think of the 3-D movie," *UV*, 9 August 1953, 7.

³⁸ Helen Stall Zelman, "*NV goes to Press*," *NV*, 8 November 1942, 8-9.

other unionists hadn't done the same.³⁹ *New Voices* began as Osman's project, but Paley got hundreds of rank and file to adopt it as their own.

"I Had Never Seen a Union Like That"

Local 65's interest in representing its struggles, including its commitment to photographing them—an unusual commitment for a labor union—can't be disentangled from the union's desire for an active and engaged membership. A former staff member who would go on to become one of the nation's best known labor and cultural publicists, Moe Foner, described Local 65's savvy leadership, and its unusually active rank and file.

65 was a big eye-opener. I had never seen a union like that, of that size, capable of doing so many different things, and whose leaders were very, very sharp and able people... If you attended staff meetings led by Arthur Osman, you could not help if your pores were open, you would learn a great deal... how to work at a union and how to involve workers in activities.⁴⁰

Foner believed the union's president, Osman, an "organizational genius."⁴¹

³⁹ Members who were visual artists even employed *New Voices* as a central motif in their canvases. For example, Eugene Gordon, in his "Temporary Still-Life" hung a copy of *New Voices* at a sprightly angle from the pocket of a deflated uniform that dangled forlorn from a chair. The uniform suggests the weight of incessant labor on the human body and metaphorically the weight of social struggle on the human soul. But the rolled *New Voices* galvanized the composition, suggesting an implicit possibility in the union, paralleling the painting's title. Neg. # 8025, *D65 photos* and *NV*, 21 October 1951, M11. This is not to say that *New Voices* did all the union thought it did. At the height of the Security Drive *New Voices* editors complained that the paper wasn't keeping up with union growth, and that members didn't understand how important the paper was. "New Voices Report" to Executive Board, October 23, 1941, b1f6, *D65 papers*

⁴⁰ Foner moved to Local 1199, the pharmacists and hospital workers union, and then founded Bread and Roses, one of the nation's few union-based cultural organizations. Moe Foner interviewed by Robert Master, New York City, 1986, at the Columbia Oral History Center, (hereafter *COHC*), 194 ; and Dorothy Fennell, "The Union's Inspiration: Making Trade Unionists Among New York City Wholesale Workers, 1933-1937," (Paper presented at the Conference on David Montgomery's Work and Teaching, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, June 1993), 1.

⁴¹ Foner, *COHC*, 192

Never just a union, Local 65 was “a business establishment, a political institution, an educational and recreational society, a cooperative movement and a social service center.” Welfare, recreational and cultural activities formed the organizational backbone of the union, and contributed to the union’s distinct soul or “community of interests.”⁴² “Making 65ers feel like 65ers” consumed union leadership and the scope of the activities they developed was unequalled by most unions.⁴³ In the union’s first year it founded *New Voices*, planned baseball games and boat trips up the Hudson, in addition to organizing an Education Committee that offered classes in public speaking, labor history, and current events. As membership diversified, classes in English, typing, and knitting addressed new unionists’ desires. The union sponsored a lending library and a bevy of athletic teams.⁴⁴ They went on to develop cooperatively run welfare programs for sick benefits and health care, to establish a buyers’ cooperative that sold inexpensive clothing and home goods, and to create a hiring hall that they forced employers to hire from. An early chronicler of the union claimed: “They were not sure whether they wanted to call themselves a union, a club, or some other name...They rented so-called headquarters

⁴² Tabb, “White-Collar Union,” 196, 218. By “knit[ting] the members together in their common recreational aspirations” the union “could become a common source of pride and joy to our members’ entire families.” Recreation Reports, August 25, 1941; September 1941 and February 8, 1940, b1f6, *D65 papers*.

⁴³ Other unions had recreational and cultural activities, Local 65 was distinguished by the sheer quantity and scale of activities. For description of the union as members “Second home” see: Executive Board Meeting Minutes, Oct 23, 1941, b1f6, *D65 papers*; Paley interview, *D65 orals*, Tabb, “White-Collar Union,” 159. Tabb claimed Local 65 had “the most extensive recreation program conducted by an American trade union.” “White-Collar Union,” 158.

⁴⁴ Executive Committee Notes, November 27, 1934; June 11, 1936; January 14, 1937, b1f1, *D65 papers*.

which they called 'club rooms.' ... The first expenditures were on a Ping-Pong table and a radio."⁴⁵

Headquarters was the locus of these activities. As Foner recollected: "there was something rocking in that building all day long—choruses, classes, entertainment, you name it. So that the union was the center of people's lives—not for everybody, but for a large number of people, a very, very large number of people."⁴⁶ Staff estimated in 1942 that there were upwards of thirty-seven meetings a night, drawing in hundreds of unionists; by 1945, *Union Voice* touted the 22,000 people who came to Club 65 each month. Such estimates are necessarily imprecise but because Local 65's staff constantly assessed whether activities were worth the effort we have more information than typical about rank and file participation. Staff thought one in ten union members organized the recreational activities that the general membership participated in.⁴⁷ At the union's Saturday night "socials" members were often turned away for lack of room.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Tabb, "White-Collar Union," 150, 256. For an early description of the Welfare Department' goals see Kenneth Sherbell, "Fighting for our Welfare Needs," *NV*, 15 September 1941, 5-6. One of the most evocative ads for the Consumer Service appeared in 1954, and showed a woman's arms round a paper bag filled with goods. *UV*, 16 May 1954, 6.

⁴⁶ Foner, *COHC*, 172. The union moved five times from 1933, when their first headquarters was located on Allen Street, to Forsyth Street in 1935, to Allen Street once more in 1936, to the "Bible House" on Fourth Avenue, near Union Square in 1937. In September of 1942 they bought the building at 13 Astor Place. At their final headquarters, christened Thomas Mooney Hall, members found not only Club 65, but an eleven story air-conditioned building with an open terrace, a darkroom, a library, drama group space, smaller meeting rooms, the Welfare Offices, and the Hiring Hall. "General Stewards Meeting Notes" October 2, 1941 b1f6, *D65 papers*. See story, "Executive Board Approves Recommendation to Buy Headquarters Building," *NV*, 15 February 1942, 9.

⁴⁷ For Club 65 see "Workingman's Nite Club," *UV*, 10 June 1945, 12-13. In 1938 they estimated participation rates in overall activities at ten percent. Osman, *Organizing Wholesale*, 18 b67f18, *D65 papers*. In 1939-1940, they estimated that 700 members of a total membership of approximately five thousand members were active in recreational programs. February 8, 1940, b1f6, *D65 papers*. A year later they lowered their estimates,

In *New Voices* first decade a common photograph vaunted the bustle at headquarters by depicting the schedule board or the receptionists who dispatched members to their meetings. [Fig. 6-2.]⁴⁹ The schedule board listed the dozens of social or political activities that members could choose from. This iconic photo can be read as a literal reminder to union rank and file of how to make their way within the union headquarters, and also a figurative testament to the import of rank and file participation to Local 65's larger mission. These didactic photos showed members how to navigate their union hall and symbolically educated them about union aspirations.

believing only eight percent of membership was active in the recreation program. They blamed the increasing geographic dispersal of members. Recreation Report, September 4, 1941, b1f6, *D65 papers*. Tabb estimates that "one half of the membership attends at one time or another the various social and recreational functions." "White-Collar Union," 145. There were constant complaints about the numbers of unionists turning out for meetings, the tenor of meetings, the "sadly lacking 65 spirit," the percentage of members vs. friends at the union socials, the failure of members to take up public speaking, and the failure of enough rank and filers to turn stories in to *New Voices*. These complaints were heard at all levels of union governance, from the Executive Board meetings down through to Recreation Committee meetings. One could conclude that the union was under constant threat of failing. This would be a mistake. The union's culture was one where unionists were constantly being whipped into shape. The positive aspect of this culture was that unionists were engaged. The negative aspect may have been a constant atmosphere of crisis that kept members from thinking about other things. Osman, though visionary in his sense of what a union could be, was such a taskmaster with staff and leaders, that at times his hectoring encouragement moved into abuse. It should also be remembered that many unions invested far less concern on rank and file participation and their lack of concern shows in their inattention to turnout at meetings. Foner, COHC, 163-164, 194-198 and 206; and on lack of solidarity see "General Meeting Minutes" November 23, 1936; and Education Committee, October 22, 1936b1f1; *D65 papers*.

⁴⁸ From the fall of 1940 to the spring of 1941 over 11,000 people attended such socials—this when Local 65's membership had not yet reached 10,000. The drama troupes *Wholesale Mikado* which won awards at the 1939 World's Fair Leaders attracted half the union's membership to performances. May 27, 1941, b1f2, *D65 papers*; and Tabb, "White Collar Union," 149, 146; *NV*, 15 March 1942 describes members being turned away from an Anniversary Dance.

⁴⁹ *NV*, 1 May 1940, 5; and "Alert Receptionists Keep Meetings Running on Time-Table Schedule," *NV*, 1 October 1940, 12; *NV*, 16 April 1944, B24. See neg. # 63, Union Headquarters, and also negs. # 1704-1708, and 3221, all April 5, 1944, *D65 photos*.

Not all unions sought or achieved such participation. Some union headquarters felt like “tombs” where rank and file activity was rarely found. Other union halls welcomed members, but their “club-like” atmosphere made women or black members feel excluded.⁵⁰ Local 65’s inclusiveness and its push for programming that met all of its members needs: be they for leisure, for self-expression, for inexpensive goods, or health services mitigated against such alienation.

Osman’s passion for an expansive, culturally driven unionism and the distributive workers’ avid response have several explanations. The “65 fraternity” met institutional needs.⁵¹ The hiring hall and the in-house welfare programs tied members’ economic security to the health of their union. Social activities brought in needed funds for organizing work. The annual boat trips up the Hudson provided a healthy chunk of the budget in the union’s early history: some social events, like dances, remained sizeable moneymakers.⁵² Social and cultural activities also limited factionalism among a membership that was geographically scattered, white and blue-collar workers, men and women, and a “United Nations” of ethnicities.⁵³ *New Voices* regularly printed stories of rank and filers who’d moved from suspicion to acceptance of the union once they’d

⁵⁰ See below section, “65 Unites Us—Americans All.”

⁵¹ Leaders believed members “bragged” of being part of a “65 fraternity,” and betrayed their instrumental interest in social and cultural events by referring to the Recreation Department as the “morale division.” Tabb, “White-Collar Union,” 144, 149.

⁵² Executive Committee Notes November 9, 1933 and December 14, 1933, b1f1, *D65 papers*. The Weekly Finance Reports indicate that in the months when the boat rides were organized, that ticket income was equal to twenty percent of the monies coming into the organization in dues. This did however appear to be the biggest moneymaker for the union. January 4, 1941–May 31 1941, b57f1, *D65 papers*. Dances brought in ten percent of the membership dues. March 15, 1941, b58f1, *D65 papers*.

⁵³ The “United Nations” quote appeared often in *New Voices*, see 9 December 1943, 9 and 16 April 1944, B-5. According to one former organizer, social and cultural activities “prevented the formation of dissatisfied elements into factions in opposition to union administration.” Tabb, “White-Collar Union,” 220, 159.

played basketball, picked up a camera, or played in a pageant.⁵⁴ “Sing While You Fight” the union’s emblem song, articulated the reciprocal relationship between culture and organizing for the union.⁵⁵ Activities that did not strengthen the union were “looked upon as worthless” wrote one former organizer, and though 65’s leaders believed in workers’ self-expression, their assessment of the concrete benefits of cultural involvement was paramount.⁵⁶ Most importantly, having an active union and a place workers could identify as theirs attracted new members into the warehouse union. One organizing tactic consisted of “leading large numbers of workers into the union by the process of escorting [them] to the union headquarters en masse.”⁵⁷ Once there, they encountered “photography exhibits organized by the Camera Club” and “streamers of various types” where member prospects learned about “union progress.” Argued one member, union headquarters “shows what 65ers can build for themselves; it shows our strength, it shows that no man can break us.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Cleve Robinson Interview by David Paskin, June 4, 1982, in *D65 Orals* as quoted in Phillips, “Labor Movement,” 166; Tabb, “White Collar Union,” 217-218.

⁵⁵ Foner, *COHC*, 172.

⁵⁶ One *News Voices* article claimed “If all workers became Patrick Henry orators and writers who vied with Shakespeare, all this would mean little unless we had learned to achieve and maintain unity.” From “The Principle of Unity” *NV*, May 1937, 3-4. According to a former staff, “every welfare and recreational activity [was] expected to be a lesson in the value of unity and cooperative endeavor.” Tabb, “White-Collar Union,” 150-151. The Recreation Department Notes from December 23, 1942 indicate that cultural activities should be confined to “those activities which will make the greatest contribution to solidifying the membership.” b6f26, *D65 papers*. Department leaders complained that the Local “65 spirit is sadly lacking” at some socials, they had become nothing more than “public affairs.” The Recreation Director alerted committee members that activities such as dance or sports should be discontinued, whereas activities that offered entertainment at socials or educated unionists should be strengthened. All b6f26, *D65 papers*. During WWII, when the union struggled to maintain membership because of a loss of members to the war, Moe Foner remembered that 65 staff learned “that things had to pay for themselves,” so he learned how to be penurious, *COHC*, 188.

⁵⁷ Report to General Executive Board, February 8, 1940, b1f6, *D65 papers*.

⁵⁸ Recreation Report to Executive Board, October 23, 1941, b1f6, *D65 papers*.

Members' youth and their status as "singles" led them to see the union as a natural haven for socializing and romantic opportunity. According to Osman, they lived in "hot and stuffy tenement homes" where "there was nothing for them." During the Depression even a movie ticket might be too pricey for these low-wage workers. At union headquarters they could "sit, play cards, play checkers, listen to the radio....come up, congregate, have a beer, and snooze."⁵⁹ For the white-collar segment of the membership, cultural activities minimized the suspicions or discomfort that they may have had with unionism, offering an apparent "upward mobility."⁶⁰ Once economic times bettered, even as members matured and the union's ethnic base broadened, members still maintained their allegiance to the union's social activities.⁶¹

Ethnic traditions and geographic location certainly sparked the union leaders' interest in full workers involvement including cultural participation. Early leaders and members were acquainted with mutual aid associations and Socialist organizations such as the Workman's Circle that assumed working people should strive for a rich cultural life. And 1930s New York brimmed with cultural activity that involved working people. Cultural workers organized their own unions—the Writers Union, the Artists Union, and the Newspapers Guild. Independent cultural production, such as the Group Theater and

⁵⁹ Paley and Roth Interviews, *D65 orals* and Osman interview.

⁶⁰ Tabb, "White-Collar Union," 241, 247, 159, and 148.

⁶¹ Claimed one former organizer: "as the members became older... the habit of looking to the union for the fulfillment of their social needs remained... It only had to change its 'Saturday night Social' into a 'Saturday Night Club,' replace the wooden benches with comfortable chairs, and provide facilities for serving drinks, food, etc." Tabb, "White-Collar Union," 148. Union leaders self-consciously diversified their social activities to include events like "Spanish Fiesta," or "St. Patrick's Night." And they carefully diversified their staff, trying to make it more "typically American" by bringing in native-born Americans and new ethnicities. In the Executive Board Meeting Notes, July 18, 1941, b1 f6, *D65 papers*. Leaders complained that they hadn't kept pace with the union's demographic changes.

the Workers Laboratory Theater, radio programming, Café Society which featured leftist and interracial entertainment, and art galleries which promoted socially conscious artists such as Philip Evergood and Ben Shahn were common. New York City was also home to the garment unions that pioneered educational and cultural activities for union members. Some of these activities would be channeled into the populist, federally funded arts programs such as the Federal Writers Project, the Federal Theater Project, and the Works Progress Administration's Federal Arts Project which were particularly strong in New York.⁶²

Ideological commitments also spurred the union's cultural engagement. Many members and leaders also had Communist Party (CP) ties. Union leaders rarely acknowledged their connection to the Party, beyond Osman's claims that many of the early unionists were "Jewish immigrants" with "revolutionary backgrounds."⁶³ But as one student of the union reckons, "From A to Z there's not a piece of the communist agenda missing from the work of the education committee."⁶⁴ Her assessment could be

⁶² See Arthur Liebman, *Jews and the Left: Genesis to Exodus* (New York: Wiley, 1979); David Leviatin, *Followers on the Trail: Jewish Working Class Radicals in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Irving Howe, *World of our Fathers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976); and Denning, *Culture Front*, 74-77. Moe Foner compared the Local's expansive union vision with "the tradition of old labor centers of the 1920's that grew up in various sections of the city," *COHC*, 172.

⁶³ For the revolutionary backgrounds of early members see Osman interview. The union's first two organizers were CP members, Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," 5-6. Because these early leaders never admitted being members, it is impossible to know their ties with the party. Jack Paley indicated in an interview with David Paskin that leaders could have signed the anti-communist affidavits in 1948, indicating they'd already broken with the party, *D65 orals*. However, the break seems clear in May of 1952 when David Livingston attacked the *Daily Worker* and the union sought to limit any influence by the UOPWA. They reorganized the union, and demoted party members so they would have little influence. See Phillips, "The Labor Movement," 248-257 and Foner interview, *COHC*, 197-205.

⁶⁴ Fennell's in-depth interviews with former members and staff led her to believe that in the union's first years "communists and their sympathizers held nearly every key

extended to the union's organizing strategies, political commitments and cultural experiments. The union supported the Scottsboro Boys and the Spanish loyalists, and it sounded the dangers of German fascism. May Days became the occasion for the union to parade with eleven piece bands, floats and banners.⁶⁵

Local 65, was "a bastion of the left" not only in its politics, but in its enthusiastic embrace of culture. In this period Communists allied with liberal groups to fight fascism in what was called the Popular Front. As Irving Howe notes, "The Popular Front was not merely a political tactic...it was...a kind of culture."⁶⁶ More sympathetic historians argue the Popular Front was driven in New York City by those, like Local 65er's, who were familiar with earlier forms of labor education and socialist traditions that melded culture and politics into demands for a "people's century." He maintains the Popular

executive office and full-time paid staff position the union. They were also the majority among shop chairmen and committee members," Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," 23, 13. She claims that a higher percentage of members than was typical were also communist, *Ibid.*, 28. Phillips links *New Voices* positions to those of the *Daily Worker* and finds them synonymous, "The Labor Movement," 40-1. Moe Foner claimed 65 was "one of the strongest industrial sections in the Communist Party." *COHC*, 178. See Foner on the break of the union with the Communist Party in the early 1950's, and the internal divide resulting from this break. Osman maintained there was a difference between the "crack pot communists," the "agents of some foreign troublemakers" and those who might be communists in Local 65 who were "decent, intelligent, thinking theoreticians with whom you and I might disagree, but they are sincere people," Osman interview, 30.

⁶⁵ Leaders' communist orientation explains many of the union's positions, for example, its fervent advocacy of racial and gender equality, or its strict no-strike pledge during WWII. Osman, always the savvy strategist, put organizational health before party loyalty and rejoined the CIO before other communist identified unions. Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," 23; Joshua Freeman, *Working Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 89; Education Committee, April 22, 1937, b1f1, *D65 papers*. Foner, *COHC*, 157; Paskin takes a more positive stance in his description of the union, claiming it worked to develop rank and file support more than most other left led unions, "District 65 United Auto Workers," 192-194.

⁶⁶ Lewis Coser and Irving Howe, *The American Communist Party: A Critical History* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1974), 383. Howe and other CP critics, saw this culture as window dressing that "took advantage" of the Depression era "mood of unfocused fraternity mixed with fretful alarm" to broaden the party's base. *Ibid.*, 332.

Front emphasized workers' participation in cultural production, including workers' use of mass cultural tools for political liberation.⁶⁷ Popular Front proponents found New York City a fertile ground, with its communities of writers, playwrights, musicians, and visual artists along with its cultural apparatus in radio broadcasting, Broadway, and publishing.

As we saw in Chapter Two, magazine publishers used photographs in innovative ways in the mid-1930s—these journalistic experiments enticed leftists. As the nation's publishing capital, New York City became an important locus for radical photographic activity. As Moe Foner explained it years later, "At that time there were a lot of publishing ventures that came up... This is the period of *LIFE Magazine*. And so obviously the left had sources of funds, and people went to rich people and got money and tried to make a go of it."⁶⁸ Popular Front journalistic experiments of the 1940s such as *Friday* and *PM* published there, and the New York Photo League committed to "chang[ing] the nature of the world we live in" also met in Manhattan.⁶⁹ The League

⁶⁷ More sympathetic historians, most notably Michael Denning, see the Popular Front as a social movement, whose momentum came from labor's coalescence. Denning's analysis is far more complex than can be summarized here. Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 73, 77. See also Michael E. Brown et. al., eds., *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993). Unlike earlier socialist models that emphasized bringing high culture to workers, or workers education limited to bare bones tenets of unionism, 65 wanted an expansive culture that also embraced mass culture. For earlier "high-brow" models of culture for unionists see Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 225-6.

⁶⁸ Foner, *COHC*, 92.

⁶⁹ The League had links to the same communist parent body that sparked the worker camera clubs in Germany, the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (IAH) or Workers International Relief. See the special issue of *History of Photography*, 18 no. 2 (Summer 1994) which is devoted to this topic. The quote is from Walter Rosenblum in Anne Tucker's "A History of the Photo League: The Members Speak" in this issue, 176. See Also Beverly Bethune's "A Case of Overkill: The FBI and the New York City Photo League" in *Journalism History*, 7 nos. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter 1980): 87-108; and member Louis Stettner's well illustrated reminisces in "Cezanne's Apples and the Photo League," *Aperture*, no. 112 (Fall 1988).

promoted social documentary photography and ran its own school, where working-class adults could learn from some of America's top commercial, artistic, and documentary photographers, such as Dorothea Lange, Paul Strand and Margaret Bourke-White. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, League members documented neighborhoods such as Harlem and Chelsea in the hopes of bringing change.⁷⁰

Local 65's Camera Club and Photo Staff joined other engaged photographers who experimented with the camera as a political weapon. League members gave hands-on training to Local 65 students and *Friday* staff photographers lectured members.⁷¹ Sid Grossman, and Robert and Cornell Capa, three influential League members spent time at Local's 65's darkroom, as did photographers from the *Daily News*, the *Journal*, *Friday*, and *PM*. These professionals also developed their prints and shared expertise. The darkroom was a fixture in New York's photographic world and the Office of War Information came knocking for space during World War II.⁷² Camaraderie was such that Local 65 photographers and their visitors sometimes swapped prints to help each another meet a deadline.⁷³ Never insular, Local 65 photographers joined a larger, New Deal era movement identifying culture as a fulcrum for social change.

⁷⁰ The most famous documentation is Aaron Siskind's *Harlem Document*, edited by Ann Banks (Providence, Rhode Island: Matrix, 1981). Sid Grossman also worked with Sol Libsohn and the Chelsea Tenants League to document that neighborhood under the League's auspices. Bezner, *Photography and Politics*, 73-5.

⁷¹ Camera Club Minutes, September 12, 1940 b6f3, *D65 papers*. Ed Roth indicated that League members and Local 65 members "were friends" and "brothers," who might see each other at Abraham Lincoln Brigade dances and other Popular Front events, Interview, *D65 orals*.

⁷² Cornell Capa founded New York City's International Center of Photography and his brother Robert took the famous *LIFE* photograph of a Spanish loyalist who falls backwards just after being shot. Camera Club Minutes, September 1939, 6, b6f3, and May 23 1940, b6f6, *D65 papers*; Roth interview, 27, *D65 orals*.

“We Had to Have 100% Organization”

Local 65 had instrumental reasons for its cultural commitments as well, for if there was to be any union at all distributive workers had to identify strongly with their union. The challenges to such identification were many. When Local 65 first began many workers were observant Jews with strong “religious scruples” and ethnic or familial ties to their bosses which made them suspicious of the union. Moreover, distributive workers had, in Osman’s words, “the ‘Dead End’ jobs, the jobs which kids took when they got out of school.”⁷⁴ Young, upwardly mobile Jews whose career hopes had been dashed by the Depression took positions as stock-boys, shipping and receiving clerks, sweepers and messengers—work that had all the skill and prestige, according to one member, of “flipping hamburgers.” Such workers couldn’t see devoting themselves to bettering a job that they had no intention of keeping. To build the broadest base, the union also decided to include salesmen and other white-collar workers. These workers had an Algeresque belief in their individual capacity to surmount economic limitations and a limited interest in collective solidarity.⁷⁵

The industry’s structure set up further barriers to organization. Distributive workers toiled in an atomized industry of many different kinds of shops: white goods, dry goods, glassware, and novelties were only a few of the goods they worked with. And the organizational gains from signing these workers were so small that major unions ignored them. Unlike mass-production factories with thousands, maybe tens of thousands of workers, a large warehouse might have only one hundred workers, two or three workers in a shop were not uncommon. Distributive workers therefore had no common work

⁷³ Roth interview, 18-19, 3, 6, *65 orals*.

⁷⁴ Paley interview, *D65 orals*; Osman interview, 1, 6.

experience to build solidarity on.⁷⁶ Owners hired seasonally, and workers took this employment by default so turnover was high. The industry was also volatile—hard won battles at a shop might push an owner to go out of business and set up under a different name.⁷⁷ Contracts had to be established on a shop by shop basis—slow, arduous work.

Over time the workforce's increasing heterogeneity posed new challenges. The union branched out to other wholesalers in 1935, expanding into more ethnically diverse shops.⁷⁸ According to a former organizer "the ethnic composition of [the union's] membership was almost a prototype of New York City."⁷⁹ By the war years a quarter of the members were African-American. Growing numbers of women also joined Local 65. By 1937 women made up one-quarter of membership, and with World War II they comprised half of it. The union's expansion meant it increasingly encompassed members whose homes and work-sites were scattered across the five boroughs—making it harder to do outreach.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Roth interview, *D65 orals*; Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," 9; Osman interview, 13.

⁷⁶ Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," 2. Jack Paley worked at BIB, and claimed his shop of 150 members was large (BIB made up one third of the union's membership in the mid 1930s.) The union's largest shops in 1941 were Lerner's, with 550 members, and National Container, with 350 members. See Phillips, *Labor Movement*, 123. New York City, unlike other major manufacturing centers, was dominated by such small firms in textiles, printing, and umbrellas. As Joshua Freeman puts it "New York was a non-Fordist city in during the age of Ford." He claims in 1948 there were 315,000 distributive workers at thirty-five thousands sites, responsible for twenty percent of the nation's distribution. *Working-Class New York*, 9-20. See Phillips for work experience, *Ibid.*, 74

⁷⁷ Paley interview, *D65 orals*.

⁷⁸ Osman interview, 5-6.

⁷⁹ Fennell "Union's Inspiration," 11, n. 52; 17, n. 80; David Paskin, "Local 65: A Union for All," *Distributive Worker*, March 1984, 9; Tabb, "White Collar Union," 2.

⁸⁰ In 1941, close to half the membership lived in Brooklyn, over a quarter lived in the Bronx. Less than a quarter resided in Manhattan with the rest coming from Staten Island, Long Island, and New Jersey. Recreation Report, September 4, 1941, b1f6, *D65 papers*.

In a 1968 interview Arthur Osman reminisced “[Local 65] could not survive unless it involved the total membership in struggle. We had to have 100% participation.”⁸¹ Because each shop was so small Osman knew Local 65 had to mobilize more than one shop to achieve and enforce collective bargaining agreements. Leaders might call thousands of members to the streets in solidarity with a shop of ten strikers. Member Lilian White Upshur remembered one strike where 2,500 some members—all sporting the green Local 65 button—amassed when police arrested her shop organizer at the start of one strike.⁸² To increase the possibility of victory, Local 65 members also organized informal boycotts to draw community members into the struggle. Osman explained: “We chased the boss to where he lived and caused him trouble in his synagogue or in his church... We discovered for us to win with our limited power we had to involve the whole community, many communities.” He believed “narrow” trade unionism would “guarantee...defeat.”⁸³

“Organize the House Next Door” was never an empty slogan at Local 65—rank and file distributive workers did just that as they snaked through the dry goods establishments of New York City seeking “wall to wall organization.”⁸⁴ From their

⁸¹ Osman interview, 17. David Livingston, who became District 65’s President in 1953 with the re-affiliation with the URWDEA concurred, saying Local 65 was different because, “we had to be” given “the nature of our industry.” Phillips, “The Labor Movement,” 1, quoting interview of Livingston by Herbert Hill, April 1, 1969, 14, *WSU*.

⁸² Osman decided to organize by geographic area instead of industry to enhance members’ ties with one another. Osman interview, 4-5; Paskin, “A Union For All,” 9.

⁸³ Tabb, “White Collar Union,” 111, 212, 220, 249; and Recreation Department Reports, December 18, 1941; and August 25, 1940, b1f6. *D65 papers*. Arthur Osman claimed in his interview with Hill “We were not working in a manufacturing plant. When we walk out on a strike we do not automatically cripple our employer... We had to find out where the employer was getting his goods and try to cause him trouble at the source of his merchandise,” 8-9.

⁸⁴ “Organize the House Next Door,” can be seen throughout Local 65’s literature, for one example see, *NV*, 15 March 1940, 5. See also Phillips, “The Labor Movement,” 164.

beginnings on Orchard Street, Local 65 moved next to a variety of small manufacturing wholesalers in buttons, novelties, and white goods; made inroads into New York's major department stores: Lerner's, Macy's, Bloomingdales and Hearn's; and by the mid 1940's campaigned in warehouses that transported goods globally. The Security Drive to attain ten thousand members by mid-1941, and the "7 in 7" Defense Drive, for another seven thousand members in seven months by December of 1941 tripled the union's size. In 1940 the union had 5,000 members, and by December of 1941, three times as many.⁸⁵

Cultural projects like *New Voices*, the Camera Club and the Photo-Staff were just several tactics Osman employed to achieve the necessary "100% participation" and "wall-to-wall organization." Osman stressed rank and file democracy and the involvement of members in all union activities. Local 65's constitution required members to come to bi-weekly meetings to ratify union business plans.⁸⁶ Thousands of unionists attended these mass meetings, at times so many, that they couldn't fit in the hall. Though some complained about long and pointless meetings, participation ran

⁸⁵ The union grew steadily from its beginning in 1933. They went to the 1937 CIO convention as the United Wholesale Employees of New York, and returned with a national charter, a new name, and some new members. The union grew from 3,400 members in July of 1937, to six thousand members in June of 1940, to ten thousand members a year. July 22, 1937; and Welfare Department Report of Executive Board, July 21, 1941, b1f2, and b6f2 "General Executive Board Minutes," July 22, 1937; September 23, 1937 b1f2. June 24, 1941, b6f2, *65 papers*. For member loss during the war see Osman's Report to the General Stewards Meeting, June 14, 1943, b6f1 *D65 papers*. When the union re-affiliated with the CIO in 1954 with the Retail Wholesale and Distributive Workers Union it had 18,000 members. Tabb, "White Collar Union," 18 for the 1954 membership numbers.

⁸⁶ Unionists were fined if they failed to attend meetings or take their turn on the picket line. Executive Committee Notes, October 2, 1936, b1f1 *D65 papers*. As the union grew, meetings happened within crews, organized on the basis of the shop's geographic location. See also Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," 7; Collette Hyman, *Staging Strikes: Workers' Theatre and the American Labor Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 92; and "Investigation of Communism," 403.

about 50 to 65 percent in the union's first decades. Other unions were lucky to have turnouts of ten or twenty percent.⁸⁷

The high levels of rank and file involvement should not suggest that the rank and file ran the union, as Local 65 leaders exerted tight control. The union's crew system kept leaders connected to membership, but also let them keep tabs on members' grievances. One student of the union suggests the organization's structure was a model of "democratic centralism," with Local 65 leadership being uniquely "persistent" in its "efforts" to invest members in union work and decision-making.⁸⁸ Even given all its efforts leaders never got members to share all union positions, indeed, the union's Communist orientation and its insistence on racial equity repelled some members.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Tabb, "White Collar Union," 203-205. High fines to non-compliant members must have served as a stick to keep members attendance high. But punitive measures alone don't explain the union's success. "Investigation into Communism," 439. Paley interview, *D65 orals*. For complaints about boring meetings that indicated a lack of democracy see *NV*, May 1937. For busy meetings that precluded real discussion see *NV*, 15 November 1940, 4.

⁸⁸ As Fennell put it: "What is unique... is not their commitment to democracy, but their persistent efforts to involve the rank-and-file in every aspect of the union's work, and to get them to accept the views of the leadership on various issues that extended beyond the traditional business of unions." "Union's Inspiration," 14. In an early criticism Alice Cook argued the union's democracy was a mix of "voluntarism and compulsion," and "myth and ideology," where the rank and file had much room to offer discussion on limited topics. See Alice Cook, *Union Democracy: Practice and Ideal* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 45 as quoted in Phillips, "Labor Movement," 79. At one steward meeting a rank and filer complained that staff was taking up all the speaking time, leaving little room for rank and file participation. General Stewards Meeting, June 14 1943, b6f1, *D65 papers*. John Lewis's support of Wilkie in 1940, and 65's refusal to repudiate Lewis's decision created dissent within the union, that led to a larger discussion of union democracy. Members charged union structure failed to accommodate dissent, making the union meeting a "mockery of rank and file union democracy." See "Letters to the Editor," *NV*, November 15, 1940" n.p. Moe Foner suggested that Osman believed that "if the union does not organize, it is going to start contemplating itself, and you're going to start ending up with people fighting each other inside the union. *COHC*, 206. Keeping members busy inhibited questioning of leaders' agenda.

⁸⁹ But we shouldn't dismiss too easily the time expended dialoguing with membership over planning and decision making. It is true that a small cadre probably made many

Nonetheless Local 65 retained distributive workers' active support for decades, despite repression by the federal government and aggressive raiding by other unions. The union could not have prospered as it did, even maintaining membership after leaving the CIO in 1948, without solid member support.⁹⁰

After attending the first CIO convention in 1937, Osman boasted, "we were pointed out as the only local with a written constitution, who practiced genuine democracy with our rank and file." Osman added CIO delegates thought Local 65's contracts were "among the best in the country," and that Local 65 was seen as "leaders of the progressive forces." The union's opponents concurred. A decade later a women's clothing store manager maintained that Local 65ers were "the ideological leaders...the guiders...the mentors...their union is without a doubt the most militant and most aggressive of all of the distributive unions in New York City...from my own knowledge the most aggressive union in New York."⁹¹ Local 65's commitment to organizing and

decisions that were then ratified by the rank and file. If these decisions didn't express the unionists' will at some level, it would have been difficult for the union to maintain its high level of participation over time. See Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 72-95. For members' fears of anti-racism efforts and communism see, Organizing Committee Notes, November 14, 1942, b57f2, *D65 papers*.

⁹⁰ This was Herbert Hill's point in his 1968 interview with Arthur Osman. In his mind the union fought off the AFL and the federal and state governments and still prospered, unthinkable without member acceptance. Osman interview, 28-9 and Tabb, "White Collar Union," 159, 205. In an unusual move, leaders also rejected the dues check-off whereby contracts specified that dues money was taken out of employee paychecks. Instead the union required members to pay at the union hall, so that they could keep a closer connection to members, and be made aware of whether workers resisted the union. Most other CIO unions only stabilized when the Federal government guaranteed union membership through the automatic check-off dues system, see David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). Most communist unions faltered significantly once they left the CIO, Local 65 held its own. Phillips, "The Labor Movement," 80, 200.

⁹¹ Executive Committee Notes, December 16, 1937 b1f2, *D65 papers*; and "Investigation of Communism," Testimony of Mr. Dale, 141; Osman was believed to be the "intellectual guide" to New York CP unions, see Phillips, "The Labor Movement," 14,

mobilizing—and its innovative cultural and social programming sustained the solidarity needed to solidify the union and make it a progressive leader.

“The Fighting Army of Local 65”

New Voices photographs helped realize the union’s organizing mission.

Remarked a friend of one member who had been sent *New Voices* all the way in Dallas, Texas, the paper was a “ray of sunshine in a cloudy world.” He continued, “I’ll bet *New Voices* has more pictures than *PM*.” Animating *New Voices* had been editor Paley’s goal when he gave members a camera to experiment with. Paley wanted to “liven up the paper, to make it a more effective instrument in mobilizing the membership to organize the unorganized.”⁹² The result, according to Barney Cole, a freelancer for *Popular Photography*, was a most unusual union newspaper.

The happy fusion of his [Jack Paley’s] energy and intelligent journalism with the camera club members’ enthusiasm was a combination impossible to beat. The net result is today’s *New Voices*, One of the best union papers in the country, excelling particularly in its photographic layouts. Most labor papers follow a monotonous routine form and rarely use pictures to any advantage. They usually consist of a picture of one of the union leaders, a cheesecake shot of some bathing beauty from Florida (lifting from the tabloids the least dynamic of its values) and a shot or two of a meeting. The result is deadly, one issue hardly distinguishable from another. That isn’t the case with *New Voices*.⁹³

Paley never articulated precisely how photographs would help the union in its constant task of “organizing the unorganized”—but there is no question that *New Voices*’

190 quoting from Louis Broido president of Gimbels who blamed 65 and Osman for the “intellectual guidance and leadership” to left-wing unions. “Investigation of Communism,” 87-92.

⁹² Letter to *NV* from Sam Potash, 1 March 1942, 4; Paley interview, *D65 orals*; *NV*, 30 August 1942, 6; and Barney Cole, “Union Camera Club” *Popular Photography* (September 1945): 54-5, 120.

⁹³ Cole, “Union Camera Club.”

photographers and editors used the camera to convince distributive workers of the significance of organizing.

Leaders and organizers used *New Voices* to attract prospects to the union.

Organizers showed up to shops with *New Voices* during recruitment drives. Organizers believed the paper put a friendly face on the union for those who might fear it. “*New Voices* is helping to organize ‘although the men aren’t talking, they’re thinking.’” By making Local 65 a “lively topic for discussion” instead of a “secret dangerous operation” *New Voices* normalized the union.⁹⁴ To enhance commitment in organizing campaigns or negotiations staff solicited articles for *New Voices* from prospects and members. And in hard-to-win campaigns, workers might even be assigned their own pages to tighten ties to the union.⁹⁵ Photographs figured prominently in campaign stories, indeed the paper printed many stories and photographs of union members planning and distributing *New Voices*.⁹⁶

Photos published in *New Voices* demonstrate distinctive patterns in the content, iconography, composition, and layout that can be read as an “organizing eye” intended to draw members in. At the most basic level the photographs’ content educated members about the traditional elements of a campaign: they showed the outreach to build

⁹⁴ For discussion of distribution see Oct 1-7 1942 and Oct 19-24, n.y., b57f2, *D65 papers*. Not all organizers were as optimistic about the effect of *Union Voice* distribution, nonetheless paper distribution remained an organizing strategy. “Woolworth Report,” 5 December 1942, b57f2, *D65 papers* and *NV*, September 1938.

⁹⁵ At a General Stewards Meeting on October 30, 1941 stewards asked for a weekly *New Voices* as “an aid to organization.” b1f6, Woolworth Report Oct 10, 1942, b57f2, *D65 papers*. Cleve Robinson remembered being asked to write for *New Voices* when he first joined, as a way to draw him in. Phillips, “Labor Movement,” 166 quoting Paskin Interview of Robinson, June 4, 1982, NS 19 #12 side B, *D65 orals*.

⁹⁶ *NV*, 20 August 1944, 3 shows women from the Hardware, China and Novelty Division planning, then distributing the paper. See also, “*NV* Distribution,” *NV*, 1 December 1941,

membership and also the strikes often needed to attain collective bargaining. *New Voices* photographers also portrayed aspects of organizing ignored by other labor papers: possible attack from the police or corporate thugs, outreach to the general public, boycotting, the contract vote, and union investiture. Photographers employed composition as well as content to transmit their organizing message. And the sequencing and text editors employed further pushed this message.

The two major membership drives on WWII's eve, the Security Drive and the Seven in Seven Drive provide the best examples of the "organizing eye." To more aggressively spread its message, the union increased the frequency of *New Voices*' publication, from monthly to bi-weekly. And, corresponding to membership growth, *New Voices* doubled its circulation base to nearly twenty thousand.⁹⁷ By 1940 the *New Voices* Photo Staff could contribute to the union's phenomenal growth: the staff met regularly, and their photos embellished nearly every page.

Unlike *Steel Labor* which downplayed strikes, *New Voices* put photographs of picket lines on the front page where they greeted the eyes of unionists and potential members alike. Editors printed photographs of Local 65's trademark mass-pickets, along with pictures of small numbers of picketers in virtually every issue of the paper. Indeed strike photographs that stressed the union's dynamic communal strength and

8; "Planning to Use *NV*," *NV*, 20 August 1944, 3; and "Next Stop is Interstate," *NV*, 12 November 1944, 8.

⁹⁷ *New Voices* began in 1934 as a mimeograph sheet, became a printed newspaper in 1935, became an eight-pager in 1937. In October of 1941 at the height of its seven in seven campaign the union mailed out 17,000 copies of the paper. *New Voices* Report to Executive Committee October 23, 1941 b1f6. *New Voices* increased circulation over 20,000 in 1946 when it included Locals 830 and 144 in its subscription base. Thomas Mooney Hall Association Notes, b67f21, 1946, *D65 papers*.

simultaneously individual members' commitment filled *New Voices* pages until the CIO no-strike pledge in 1941, and returned to *New Voices* pages as soon as WWII was won.⁹⁸

New Voices photographers used several visual strategies to make strikers' activism look dynamic. Photographers often captured workers "on the line," with upheld signs and bent legs that literally showed workers in motion. And much like the Farm Security Administration photographs of rural poor, cameramen magnified their subjects by photographing from below. *New Voices* photographers also shot from a vantage slightly to the side of the group of strikers. The resulting angle of the picket line from the foreground to the background energized the photo's composition. [Fig. 6-3.]⁹⁹

"Picketing for Pact," represented a strike during the Security Drive and it exemplifies common characteristics of *New Voices* photographs. Warehouse workers at Golding Brothers, a textile house, went out because the owners would not sign with the Local. The photo appeared, as was usual, on *New Voices*'s front page. In it several unionists

⁹⁸ Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 61-66 suggests that the no-strike pledge became enforced with the failed North American Aviation strike in June of 1941, when CIO President Murray upheld the right of the National Defense Mediation Board to regulate labor relations. After that point, though still giving lip service to the right to strike, the CIO "denounced those strikes that continued in defiance of NDMB authority." With the June 22, 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, most communist unions moved to stabilize labor relations and therefore refrained from striking. After Pearl Harbor, labor leaders publicly gave their support for the war effort. See also Steve Fraser, *Labor Will Rule*, 466-469; and Art Preis, *Labor's Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1964), 131. Local 65 continued to strike up until Pearl Harbor. Even before the war was over the union began to print strike photos with the old formula, though it was when the company locked them out. "Belding Breaks Its Word: Lockout by Textile Firm Becomes Labor, Civic Issue," *NV*, 22 July 1945, 12-13; and "Sidewalks of New York," *NV*, 14 October 1945, 1.

⁹⁹ Neg. #312, listed as June 1940, but must be May, 1940. *D65 photos*. "Picketing for Pact" *NV*, 15 May 1940, 1. See also during these two years, "This Strong Picket Line Won Strike at Davids," *NV*, December 1937; "Unemployed on Picket Line," December 1939, 2; 15 June 1940, 2; August 1940, 1; 15 September 1940, 3; 15 January 1941, n.p.;

held aloft picket signs announcing that “The Employees of Golding Brothers are on Strike.” Their white placards pulled the viewers’ eyes across the image. “Picketing for Pact” offered other common stylistic formulas as well. Two strikers looked at the camera eye, but the third at the left edge of the frame turned away as he follows the picket line. In these close-up strike photos, pickets offered a smile or met the photographer’s gaze. Typically, however, at least one of the strikers ignored the photographer and followed the picket in front of them—literally with their bodies or symbolically with their eyes. This formula invited the viewer into the photograph and into the process of walking the line. In “Picketing for Pact” the editors cropped the left side of the image tight to the twosome carrying a sign just before they turned away from the camera. This made the line look more energetic as viewers only saw strikers approach and turn, picketers’ faces were almost always visible.

Many *New Voices* photographs also set union struggles within the larger context of urban relationships. In “Picketing for Pact” we see street lamps, tall buildings, and a patch of sky between the buildings just behind the three pickets. By working activism into the everyday life of New York, photographers helped ease tensions raised by the dynamic quality of the images: striking became normalized.¹⁰⁰ Cameramen shot close

“In the Bag,” 15 March 1941, 1, all *NV*. This was a common visual strategy in the *Daily Worker* as well, see “Guild Pickets L.I. Press,” 7 April 1937, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Sometimes photos of the mass pickets stressed the defining details of a specific struggle. In “People vs. Profits” and “Talking with Their Feet,” the photographer stood just below an entryway at a 45 degree angle which showed Lane Bryant’s corporate logo twice: as it ran along the front and along the side of the entryway awning. A circling line of men and women pickets spread from the lower-left of the frame to the right side, paralleling the line of the awning. The white lettering of the corporate logo against the black awning drew the viewers’ eyes, and the white placards of the pickets connect the logo on the awning to the pickets marching just below. Such photos educated warehouse workers about specific struggles, which was particularly pertinent with consumer industries where the union sought solidarity through formal and informal boycotts.

enough to make individuals' clothing and expressions visible. Strikers' picket signs could be read, identifying to *New Voices*' readers the name of the company that fellow workers fought against. Pedestrians could be seen sharing the same sidewalk with strikers. A *New Voices* reader would learn from "Pickets for Pact" about a specific strike undertaken by their union, and the important role individuals played in supporting that struggle. The engaging gaze of some picketers asked the reader to join the activism.

The most common photos in *New Voices* were of Local 65's signature mass actions. As we've seen, the union required mass pickets to, in the words of the union's president, "compel by the very power of their numbers... employers to bargain collectively in good faith." *New Voices*' "organizing eye" encouraged members' sense of solidarity with distributive workers across the city and signaled the union's commitment to strength in numbers. As Ed Roth explained it, photographing the "line of march" in such strikes was the biggest responsibility for the Photo Staff who considered it a plum assignment.¹⁰¹

New Voices editors were apt to choose photos that emphasized the sheer number of picketers—instead of the individuals involved. The tightly framed photographs edited out the specifics of a struggle. Editors also had a liberal hand when they cropped photographs. In "Before Working Hours" a line of workers picketing in New York's film district in Long Island City, Queens, stretch from one end of the photo's frame to the other. Editors cropped the photo so that only the line of workers is visible.¹⁰² The reader

"People vs. Profits," *NV*, 1 November 1941, 3; and "Mass Picket Lines," *NV*, 15 February 1941.

¹⁰¹ Osman interview, and Roth interview, *D65 orals*.

¹⁰² "Before Working Hours," *NV*, 1 July 1941, 1; "Members Rally to Defend Right to Picket," *NV*, 1 October 1940, 1.

is forced to confront this line, which extends in either direction past the photographic frame, suggesting a limitless number of pickets.

Two vantages predominated in mass picket photographs—the birds-eye view and a street level shot—and both made distinct arguments about the importance of mass pickets. In the aerial shots photographers stood on cars or hung out windows of nearby buildings to get their photos. Once again, because the pickets appear to continue past the frame their numbers appear endless. The photographer's distance from the struggle transformed the pickets into stylized lines made by their bodies. The rounds of strikers' hats and heads and their square placards that reach above the picket line engage the viewer by visually breaking from the lines of pickets' bodies. This birds-eye view communicated a choreographed order. The line of pickets is always distinct from other nearby pedestrians, or objects on the streets. This vantage unified individuals into a whole that worked together towards one end.¹⁰³ In "Telling New York" a line of pickets, a "broad river flowing with hats" streamed from the upper-right of the photo to the lower-left corner. [Fig. 6-4.]¹⁰⁴ Strikers so crowded together that only the hats allow one to guess at the numbers. The word "Strike" could be read over and over as the picket signs reached towards the photographer, and hence the viewers' eyes. If the marchers were

¹⁰³ For birds-eye view see Peter Hales, *Silver Cities: The Photography of American Urbanization, 1839-1915* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984). See also his "American Views and the Romance of Modernization," in *Photography in Nineteenth Century America*, edited by Martha Sandweiss, 208-209, 220; and Rudolph Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 269.

¹⁰⁴ "Telling New York," *NV*, 15 April 1940, 1; and neg. # 309, *D65 photos*. In "The Death of the Hat," Billy Collins writes "In the ashen newsreels/the avenues of cities/are broad rivers flowing with hats." See also "This is our Fight," *NV*, 1 June 1940, 3; "Members Rally to Defend the Right to Picket," *NV*, 1 October 1940, 1; "1,000 Members Picket Marvlo Mills Warehouse," *NV*, 1 February 1940, 1. The *Daily Worker* also used

“Telling New York,” many listened, as bystanders interacted with strikers, or turned their heads to watch the spectacle.

New Voices also printed many shots taken at street level, where the photographer typically faced the picket line as it spread towards the background, allowing viewers to see the expressions and gestures of those picketers closest to the photographer. This vantage individualized strikers. Additionally, photographs taken at street level took advantage of the rules of linear perspective. The pickets in the front of the line filled the frame and their bodies reached from top to bottom, which monumentalized the union struggle. Those strikers who stretched out in a line behind the first pickets got smaller as they receded into space, again, visually suggesting infinite support. [Fig. 6-5.]¹⁰⁵ In “Union-Wide Mobilization” a noonday demonstration of pickets marched in a diagonal line leading from the lower-right of the frame to the center left. One striker near the front gazed out at the photographer, inviting the viewer into the struggle but the majority focused on one another within the demonstration. Their faces and their signs pulled the viewer into the struggle itself.

When editors Paley and Baldinger layed-out and cropped mass action photographs they made them even more dynamic. They often cut a series of steps from the photo and placed the captions within the traditional photographic square. Because editors only used this strategy with photographs of mass pickets, it suggests they were not just doing this to gain space for added text or visuals. In “We Will Make Sterling Sign” the striking pickets, massed along the sidewalk stretched from the photograph’s lower

this visual strategy, see “You Can’t Pass Our Line,” on the Cadillac strike, 31 January 1937, and “50,000 Marchers Back Akron Rubber Strike,” 7 April 1937.

¹⁰⁵ “Union Wide Mobilization,” *NV*, 1 June 1941, 1; see also “Out with the Scabs,” *NV*, 1 September 1941, 1.

right to its upper left-hand corner, emphasizing their numbers. [Fig. 6-6.]¹⁰⁶ As with “Telling New York,” the editors added the caption and explanatory text by cutting a series of steps that reached into the photograph. The points of these cuts touched a series of columns on the building that the picketers were pressed against. The editor’s cropping announced an augmenting number of pickets with each cut step. This photograph’s composition and its peculiar cropping emphasized the point the union sought to drive home. With numbers assembled like this, District 65 “Will Make Sterling Sign.”

Corporations sometimes dealt with Local 65’s strength in numbers with violence, and Local 65 offered up members wounded during strikes as valiant exemplars of union spirit.¹⁰⁷ *New Voices* had many close-ups of unionists exposing their wounds or telltale

¹⁰⁶ “We Will Make Sterling Sign” was taken from a higher vantage, perhaps from a second floor window. The diagonal line of the street runs from the lower right hand corner of the photo frame to the upper left-hand frame. Their picket signs transverse the space between their bodies and the photographer who is above them. *NV*, 15 October 1940, 1; and neg. # 309, *D65 photos*. Ed Roth, the photo staff’s chair in 1941, maintained the photographers took many pictures, some which even showed less turnout, however, the printed photograph would be the cropped photo that showed the crowd to advantage. Roth interview, *D65 orals*.

¹⁰⁷ Labor scholars debate the role of aggressive activism and of physical violence in achieving unionization. Wildcat strikes, and spontaneous action by workers could result in a company response, but a union’s management of worker militancy is critical to its strategic success. The Committee of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the American Federation of Labor secured a new place in the American polity in the 1930s and 1940s, in part by mass actions such as sit-down strikes. Both federations curbed worker militancy when taking their place at the tables of national leadership, by WWII. Early scholarship on rank and file activism saw labor leaders’ willingness to compromise or thwart militancy as largely responsible for blunting labor’s promise. More recent scholarship sees acceding to the rule of law, along with other factors such as government involvement in collective bargaining negotiations, as responsible for labor’s stall in the post-war era. The first school of thought is best captured in Alice and Staughton Lynd’s work, *Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working-Class Organizers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973). The second school of thought is encompassed in the works of David Brody’s *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the Twentieth Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) and Gary Gerstle and Steve Fraser’s edited collection of essays *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

bandages. Many shots were straight and “evidence-like.” The victims gazed away from the viewer, offering their wounds and bruises for perusal by readers.¹⁰⁸ For example, in “Slugged” a unionist’s smashed, broken nose is shown off to members. Company-paid gangsters beat the striker, Sol Feder. The text challenged other members to sacrifice themselves by reminding them that “the picket line is maintained with increased vigor as members rally behind the Sterling strikers.”¹⁰⁹ In other shots, such as “Stabbed by Strikebreaker,” wounded unionists stared directly into the camera. In this shot a worker with torso bared and a jaunty smile seems to deny the violence suggested by the caption.

The message of necessary sacrifice is strongest in “National Container Mass Demonstration” which shows not a crowd of people, as its description might indicate, but a lone figure. [Fig. 6-7.]¹¹⁰ A bandage round his head indicated not the mass demonstration but the end result, a casualty. The subject’s expression was enigmatic: he appeared intense, while mournful or accepting of the action that had befallen him. His eyes looked forward yet away from the camera eye. This attitude was heightened by the rueful expression created by his misshapen lips and a lump that pulled the right side of his face downward. He sat mildly hunched, his beautifully formed hands limply lying between his legs, fingers casually interlaced. But the passivity of his pose is contradicted by the power of his legs that were spread as if poised to stand. All these elements were set off by the kerchief tied around his head. Its sprightly bow, somewhat like what a Forties starlet might don seemed incongruous against his masculine attire. It wrapped his face, almost setting it off from the rest of his body, offering the poignancy of his

¹⁰⁸ *NV*, November 1939, 1 and *NV*, 1 February 1941, 5.

¹⁰⁹ “Slugged,” *NV*, 15 February 1940, 2; “Stabbed by Strikebreaker,” *NV*, November 1939, 1.

¹¹⁰ “National Container Mass Demonstration,” neg. # 600, February 1941, *D65 photos*.

expression as a gift to the viewer. The National Container Corporation marked this man—his image was meant to indict the company for the violence wreaked upon workers. But the subject was ennobled too. The photo is reminiscent of one of Paul Strand's early street portraits of the 1920s. Strand humanized his subjects by allowing viewers to see the oppressed but not feel pity for them. His subjects have a degree of self-possession, even nobility that resists any simple relation to them.¹¹¹ The beseeching expression of the injured National Container striker entreated the viewer to consider not only the injury and its perpetrators, but the choices that brought the striker to this place. Indeed the photo on the wall, a blur of children, was a reminder of the families strikers fight for. The beaten worker became an allegorical symbol of labor and its struggle.

New Voices documented the violence that befell its membership, and insisted on workers' self-conscious choice to sacrifice for the union and their future. We saw that *Steel Labor* printed few images of violence and the same was true for the *CIO News*, the national CIO's monthly paper. Even in unions where rank and file activism built the union, like the United Auto Workers (UAW), it was still rare to see violence represented as boldly as in *New Voices*. The communist-led United Electrical workers (UE), did recognize members' courage in facing off teargas and mounted police. It tended to reprint news photos that had circulated in metropolitan and national press, and offer new explanations for visual evidence. *The Packinghouse Worker* documented violence, but its

¹¹¹ For an analysis of Strand's "straight" approach to photography see Bezner, *Photography and Politics*, 22-3; and for his own articulation, see Paul Strand, "The Art Motive in Photography," Milton Brown, "Interview with Paul Strand," and Alan Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," both in Vicki Goldberg, *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), 276-294, 452-473.

photos didn't connect workers' sacrifice with their desire for a union.¹¹² National press such as *LIFE*, on the other hand, played up such violence, and as we saw, typically held unionists responsible for what befell them.¹¹³ Local 65 offered a direct rejoinder to such imagery by confronting the violence against mass activism head on. It named the culprits

¹¹² This assessment is based on an examination of every *Steel Labor* from 1936 to 1950. I also looked at every issue of the *AFL Auto Worker* from September 9, 1939 through June of 1943 to examine a union fighting a rear-guard action against the CIO. I examined the *United Auto Worker* of the UAW from January of 1945 through June of 1946; and at the *UE News* of the United Electrical Workers from January through June of 1946; and the ILG's paper *Justice*: every issue from January through February of 1938; the bi-weekly issue from January through March of 1945; at which point I examined every third issue through the end of 1945. I wanted to look at unions where rank and file participation was limited: *Steel Labor* and the *AFL Auto Worker*. I also reviewed publications from unions with a strong rank and file; with a leftist-communist politics; and with a focus on culture, hence the papers of the AFL, UE and ILG respectively. Because I was interested in activism, I looked at moments when the union's strike activity was high. This is not a systematic analysis of these papers, but it did allow for adequate comparison. The UE paper was especially strong on the violence of the 1946 strike. See "Thousands Walk in Picket's Funeral," and "Pickets Scars Prove Kansas Police Violence," *The Packinghouse Worker*, 30 April 1948, 1 and 14 May 1948, 4-5. Of twenty-two photographs in the January 1938 issue of *Justice*, over half were shots that showed individuals' heads, or individuals within a group. These portraits showed off the individual, rather than the community. Three of the twenty-two shots addressed strikes, but one of these was a head-shot of a girl who'd been jailed for striking. In sheer numbers these photos matter less, and they speak to the activism to a lesser degree. Also, importantly, they let us know that the union didn't prioritize the strikes enough to get people out on the line to take photos of the strikes.

¹¹³ The polarizing visual rhetoric and the exposure of violence was most clearly paralleled in the communist newspaper, the *Daily Worker*, (*DW*). For early uses of labor violence victims as heroes see "The Seaman's Institute," *DW*, 5 August 1929, 3; "Victim of Attack by Amalgamated Thugs," *DW*, 13 August 1929, 1; "Slug Cafateria Striker," *DW*, 15 April 1929, 1; and in 1937, "Ready to Tell of Ford Thug Attack," *DW*, 4 June 1937, 5; "Jailed After Police Attack," *DW*, 7 June 1937, 1; "Shot in Leg and Then Clubbed," *DW*, 11 June 1937, 3; "Steel Vs. USA," *DW*, 17 June 1937, 1. For coverage that documented violence see: "Mill Strikers Demonstrate Solidarity; Defy Troops," *DW*, 8 April 1929; "Police Brutalities in Germany and the United States," *DW*, 11 May 1929, 1; "Rayon Bosses' Thugs Bomb Home of Tennessee Mill Striker," *DW*, 14 May 1929, 1; "Boss Police Slug Striker," *DW*, 17 May 1929, 1. In 1937 see "Deputies Burn Steel Strikers' Kitchen," *DW*, 12 June 1937, 5; "Guns and Clubs Rule Monroe Under Vigilante Terror," *DW*, 14 June 1937, 2; "With All the Weapons for Murder," *DW*, 15 June 1937, 3; and Monroe Vigilantes Blocking Highway," *DW*, 18 June 1937, 5: along with its June 1937 coverage of the Memorial Day Massacre.

from the union standpoint. And it called on members to consider a similar sacrifice.

Local 65ers who surmounted police “administer[ing] a vicious beating” or “widespread terror” were advised to respond with “whirlwind organizing drives in the field,” as the caption for one photo, “Wielding Clubs,” enjoined.¹¹⁴

With WWII and the union’s no-strike pledge *New Voices* stopped printing strike photos. When Local 65 struck against companies that refused to abide by NWLB standards the paper did print photos, but they lacked the earlier vitality.¹¹⁵ In “1,500 Union Pickets Tell Deutch Off” a line of pickets in front of the Deutch corporation stood in picket formation. But this photo included many bystanders who were just hanging out, which detracted from the dynamism of the shot. Similarly, in “Whelan Lockout Ended,” the photo showed a massive warehouse, with a mere three pickets whose signs advertised they were locked out. These “pickets on patrol” do not offer the show of force once seen in *New Voices* pages—but weren’t intended to.¹¹⁶ Local 65 no longer sought to mobilize membership. With the war’s end, strikes again became an important organizing tool, and *New Voices*, then *Union Voice* reverted to its earlier formulas.¹¹⁷ As we’ll see in the

¹¹⁴ “Wielding Clubs,” *NV*, 1 February 1941, 5.

¹¹⁵ For the limits in activism and organizing as a result of WWII see Phillips, “Labor Movement,” 155. “Locked Out,” *NV*, 10 October 1943, 5 offers a rare example of the use of the formula when the aggression wasn’t initiated by the union.

¹¹⁶ *NV*, 12 September 1943, 1, “Pickets on Patrol,” *NV*, 25 April 1943, 1. In “They Stand Together” a photo of Dorset Food strikers, who sit in front of headquarters, there is no line, *NV*, 15 March 1942. In “Hitting the Streets” workers mass around the Eagle Dry Goods. Men mill around, there’s no coherence to their activism. Similarly, the front-page photo “Organizing Army” about leafleting at Endicott-Johnson shows a clump of men before the headquarters. *New Voices*, 3 September 1944, 1.

¹¹⁷ The union did not commit itself to the no-strike pledge until Pearl Harbor, even though members called for U.S. support of the Soviet Union after Hitler invaded in June of 1941. Prior to this most letters demanded “peace,” see “One Union Member to Another,” *NV*, 1 June 1941, 8 and 1 July 1941, 4; “Union Mobilizes to Defend U.S. Against Axis Attacks,” *NV*, 15 December 1941, 1. *NV* continued with strike photographs for corporations who refused to arbitrate strikes, in the weeks immediately after the

conclusion, only in the early 1950s when the union sought to re-affiliate with the CIO did the union cameramen and the *Union Voice* develop new visual strategies to build solidarity.¹¹⁸

pledge, however, within a few months they stopped printing such photos. For photos where the company owner refused to negotiate or arbitrate see "Striking on Two Fronts," *NV*, 1 October 1941, 1; "Boss Wouldn't Sit Down," *NV*, 1 December 1941, 2; "Christmas Touch," *NV*, 1 January 1942, 1; For the resumption of strike photos in the aftermath of WWII see: "Be Wise! Organize!" *UV*, 8 July 1945, 3; "We're Fighting Hirohito, but Belding Fights Us," *UV*, 22 July 1945, 12-13; "On Patrol," *UV*, 30 September 1945, 3; "Sidewalks of New York," and "Solid Support," *UV*, 14 October 1945, 1, 13; "3,000 We're on the Line," *UV*, 11 November 1945, 1; the collage of strike photographs on 20 January 1946, 3; "2-Way Picket-Line Stretch," *UV*, 9 June 1946, 24; "On the Strike Front," *UV*, 13 October 1946, 12-13; "All Out," *UV*, 1 August 1948; and "Coast to Coast and Cuba Too," *UV*, 15 August 1948, 12-13; "Typical 65ers" taken by Hy Yellin, *UV*, 22 February 1953, 2; "Burlington Pulls the Switch," *UV*, 8 March 1953, 5.

¹¹⁸ Examining the photos taken by photographers but not included by *New Voices* editors highlights their formulaic choices, supporting my argument that the union employed an "organizing eye." Some photographs were probably tossed for visual reasons: the photograph was overexposed, or there are too many distracting elements in the photo so that it fails to cohere. But other photographs were visually powerful. In photographs of the Si-He-Go strikers (Simon, Healey, and Golding) members filled two city blocks in their mobilization against the company. As with other mass mobilizations described above, the photographer stood above the pickets in a nearby window, managing to capture both sides of the street and an ample number of strikers. The street became the most prominent visual element, and the strikers themselves became peripheral. The strikers are marked, but the photo muted their activism. Similarly, when the photographer used the same composition, but took the photo from behind, it was impossible to empathize with individual strikers, to feel invited in by the strikers' gaze. Such photos were not printed. Other photographs which capture a single line of strikers do so in a manner that fails to capture the numbers, the vitality of the commitment of workers in numbers as a unique fighting machine. In several shots the photographer stands quite a distance from the line and therefore the faces of the individuals at the front of the line is lost. In others only a few on the line are visible, as the backs of police or bystanders obstruct the view. In yet others the long line tapers out towards the end of the line so that there is no sense of limitless numbers. In these photographs the clarity of the message is gone. They don't offer readers the experience of being on the line, nor do they offer the invitation. The sense of movement that appears so critical to the *New Voices* formula is also lacking. In one shot a couple of pickets, a man and woman, look out engagingly at the viewers from the sidewalk just outside the company. Unlike other shots that were printed in the paper, the man and woman are clearly posed and static. To do this comparison I examined negatives from a number of critical strikes for which many photographs were taken. I looked at the April-May 1940 strike at Si-He-Go, negs. # 316-318, 354-367; the November-December strike at Blechman, negs. # 324-331; the 1940

Despite the Photo Staff's professed commitment to objective documentation, photos, which detailed the everyday, humdrum moments of strikes were never printed in *New Voices*—they lacked the punch that photographers and editors wanted to impart. For example, “National Container Demonstration,” taken in 1945, documented “the everyday” of a strike in all its lack of cohesion. [Fig. 6-8.]¹¹⁹ Viewers could see the minutes wasted on a picket line, the stalling and bluffing required to get the boss to respond or negotiate. Picketers walked the warehouse's length. Some marched, while others milled about, casually conversing with associates. The line had many gaps. Picket signs were held at a variety of angles. Some strikers carried papers and handbags; they even lit cigarettes. The attention of many police and picketers appeared drawn to something outside the photo frame, to the viewer's left, though a few bystanders looked at the camera and the marchers. Others appear taken up with their conversation. Viewers could apprehend a strike's drama, read in the scowl of the policeman, the sharp march forward of some picketers, or the intent gaze of participants. But the photo equally documented the tedium of such events, such as the socializing, the waiting, the broken line of strikers. There is no center, no special narrative, no “decisive moment.”

Prior and after the war, *New Voices* strike photographs promoted the number of strikers, their vital commitment, and the unity that made them a unique fighting machine. *New Voices* strike photos formulas stand out when compared to photos from other union papers. In the *CIO News* strikers almost always appeared standing in an ordered, even rigid fashion against a factory gate or company entrance. [Fig. 6-9.]¹²⁰ If carrying picket

strike at Golding, negs. # 308-314; the protests at Lane Bryant in August and December of 1939 and January of 1940, negs. # 296-302.

¹¹⁹ Neg. # 2191, 1945, *D65 photos*.

¹²⁰ *CIO News*.

signs, they were held upright, parallel to their bodies. As we saw earlier, *Steel Labor* offered even less activism. Steelworkers had been murdered outright by police in the Little Steel Strike, but *Steel Labor* ignored them, despite the prominence of news photos in public debate over the Massacre. Instead of strikes, conventions, lodge meetings, and dues-paying workers dominated visual coverage in *Steel Labor*. Of course *New Voices* was not the only paper to emphasize rank and file activism. The *United Automobile Worker* of the UAW, *UE News*, and the ILG's *Justice* had powerful strike photographs. But even these papers rarely printed as many photographs, nor as prominently on the front page as did *New Voices*.

The strike had a prominent place in *New Voices* iconography but photographers didn't ignore the range of organizing activities. Local 65ers inaugurated organizing drives by leafleting work-sites. Once joined in a strike, members extended their leafleting to the general public, asking consumers to boycott a store or a certain product. To maintain picket lines auxiliary members set up soup kitchens to feed strikers. Members also distributed groceries to the families of strikers. *New Voices* photographs of these activities modeled the behavior that the union sought to inculcate. Unlike strike photographs, shots of workers handing out leaflets and copies of *New Voices*, or even signing "membership cards right in front of the warehouse[s]" were sometimes posed and typically static.¹²¹ In "Solidarity with Si-He-Go Strikers" David Livingston, then head of Organizing distributed food to a woman who seemed to smile with gratitude as other members watched her reaction. This shot was unusual in its focus on a union leader, and

¹²¹ "Next on the List," *UV*, 15 January 1941, 2; *NV* August 1939, 1; Food Problem," *NV*, 1 December 1940, 1; "Telling the Public," *NV*, 1 May 1941, 3; "The Sidewalks of New York," *NV*, 15 October 1944, 1; "Organizing Interstate," *NV*, 17 September 1944, 6.

the use of the female recipient. [Fig. 6-10.]¹²² Photo captions even trumpeted in self-conscious manner, the “posing” within such didactic shots. In “Uptown Minute Men!” the caption informed readers that the members in good standing are “visiting members who are delinquent in dues.” The caption continued: “these members are doing a great job, and they are also a bunch of fine actors as this impressive pose illustrates.”¹²³ This contrast between the dynamic composition of strike and mobilization photographs and the passive, staged shots of other organizing activities asserted a hierarchy of activism. The aesthetic power of street mobilization photographs reminded workers this their most important duty.

Nonetheless Local 65 photographers almost never lost an opportunity to make the union look more inviting. Like all union newspapers, *New Voices* had photographs of elections and contract ratifications—signs of organizing victory. In most papers these shots were the “deadly” and “hardly distinguishable” traditional group photographs, much like *Steel Labor*’s photographs of union locals.¹²⁴ But *New Voices* photographers enlivened these occasions. In “The Winner —Local 65!” a group of over twenty new unionists ranged themselves together. They mugged for the camera. [Fig. 6-11.]¹²⁵ Some

¹²² “Solidarity with Si-He-Go Strikers,” *NV*, 1 May 1940.

¹²³ “Uptown Minute Men,” *NV*, September 26, 1943, 3.

¹²⁴ Some shots certainly aped the more common visual formulas used by other unions. In “First Recruits in Union’s Drive for 2500 New Members” well-dressed members lined themselves along a stage, with women standing on the floor, and men standing about them, or sitting at tables on the stage. Some smiled out at the camera: others looked at one another. But the members were clearly marking their place as part of a group. *NV*, July 1939, 8.

¹²⁵ “The Winner,” *NV*, July 1940, 1. Alan Trachtenberg suggests in *Reading American Photographs* that Hine’s photos exhibit “sociality.” The term comes from the Progressive sociologist, George Herbert Mead. Though Trachtenberg was describing Hine’s own Progressive, Deweyite views of how to educate people using photography, I think it explains well what this photograph is doing. In many ways the photo stands counter to the reigning Depression-era aesthetic which didn’t demand the one-on-one

members leaned their heads back, gleefully laughing while others smiled coquettishly. Others stood with arms crossed, defiantly acknowledging the camera, resembling Lewis Hine's famous documentary studies of Slavic workers in Homestead Pennsylvania. These photos, taken a generation earlier, invite viewers to empathize and seek dialogue with them. [Fig. 1-8.]¹²⁶ The unionists' expressiveness broke the typical group shot mold and their engagement with the camera established a relationship of equality between the viewer and the new union members.

The "Sea of Upraised Hands," a caption to a photograph of workers who had just signed a closed shop agreement with Lerner's clothing store, shows how the Photo Staff enlivened a staple union paper photograph. The photo featured a room of workers with arms held high. The cameraman must have stood just above them, and from his vantage, the hands of hundreds of workers were visible. [Fig. 6-12.]¹²⁷ Workers sat under a banner that spanned the photo's horizontal frame, making its message "Organize Your Next Door Neighbor," stand out. By cutting right into the group of workers the photographer suggested that their numbers extended past the frame. The faces of some workers packed the foreground, while the arms of the workers behind them filled much of the remainder. The repetitive element of arms and hands, broken by members' faces,

sense of equality with the subject. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 201-209. For Depression-era photography see Maren Stange, *"Symbols of an Ideal Life:" Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Carl Fleishhauer and Beverly Brannan, eds., *Documenting America: 1935-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), along with citations in Introduction.

¹²⁶ See Walter Rosenblum, Naomi Rosenblum, and Alan Trachtenberg, *American and Lewis Hine: Photographs: 1904-1940* (New York: Aperture, 1977), 62.

¹²⁷ "Sea of Upraised Hands," *NV*, 15 February 1941, 1. Neg. # 542, and neg. #526, February 14, 1941. See also negs. # 499-500, 549-566, 597-608, all February 1941, *D65 photos*.

created irregular patterns that led one's eye through the frame. The union's "organizing eye" transformed an everyday meeting into a portrayal of vivid commitment to the union.¹²⁸ Local 65 photographers used this formula through the 1950s.

When Osman and the workers at H. Eckstein's first began organizing in 1933 they fantasized about a union big enough to fill Madison Square Garden. In December of 1941 with their Security and "7 in 7" drives complete, and sixteen thousand members, Local 65 could do just that. Union leaders planned a huge rally at the Garden to show that the union had arrived. Putting together an extravaganza investiture was no easy task. Just months before the CIO failed to get even 5,000 unionists to the Garden and Local 65 leaders "shudder[ed]" at the CIO's "catastrophe." Their Victory Festival to celebrate their organizing prowess itself became an organizing challenge, the "biggest challenge we have ever taken."¹²⁹

Despite leaders' fretting, over 20,000 "jammed" the January 12, 1942 Garden rally and *New Voices* captured it in pictures. In its next issue, editors covered the front

¹²⁸ See also: "It's Unanimous," *NV*, July 1939, 9; and *NV*, August 1939, 3; "In the Bag," *NV*, 15 March 1941, 1; *NV*, August 1940, 3; "Closed Shop," *NV*, 1 December 1940, 5; "Unanimous Ratification," *NV*, 1 September 1941, 2; "The Ayes Have It," *NV*, 17 January 1943, 3; "Well Worth the Fight," *NV*, 14 March 1943, 5; "Happy Warriors," *NV*, 10 October 1943, 5 and "Something to Cheer About," 3; "All in Favor," *NV*, 21 December 1943, 3, and "Say Ay!" *NV*, 17 September 1944, 3; "Smiles of Victory," *UV*, 14 October 1948, 12-13. In "Organizing Woolworths," *NV*, 27 September 1942, 8-9, the photographers created a montage of workers acclaiming their NLRB right to organize against the backdrop of the Woolworth's Warehouse. See Buchloh, "From Factura to Factography," 70-71 for Gustav Klucis's photomontage of upraised hands, and John Heartfield's "All Fists have been Clenched as One." This photomontage of a clenched fist with workers with upraised fists within it was the cover of an *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*. Local 65s photo staff eschewed the graphically bold iconography of the European left, which used the upraised hand as a symbol of workers power. In the European images, workers' individuality was lost in the repetitive patterning of clenched fist or open-handed assent. Local 65 photographers played with the use of the repeated, upraised hand, but kept members' individuality intact, typically through a close focus on member's faces and expressions.

page with an aerial photograph that stressed the power of united numbers. Taken from the back of the hall, the photo showed the four crowded rows of unionists sitting on the Garden's floor, the packed bleachers on either side, and the filled balcony rows rising up on either side of the main hall. The birds-eye view stripped the members of their individuality. The aerial vantage conveyed the sheer numbers that the union amassed through its two drives and unified the multitude into a single force, "the fighting army of Local 65." The crowd's placement under the many flags, which hung from the rafters, further emphasized this sense of unity. Months later a British magazine reprinted one of the rally photos. Member Emanuel Cohen, who was stationed in England as an army private, sent the photo, and he told *New Voices* readers that the reprint was "proof that Local 65 and its policies are not only watched by American labor, but by labor throughout the world...Keep the Green Banner flying."¹³⁰

"65 Unites Us—Americans All"¹³¹

Local 65 photographers dramatized its "fighting army" as thousands of united members, but union leaders also knew they had to appeal to a more diverse group: men and women, black and white, and a host of ethnicities. The union sought to do more than just attract different kinds of members, it also aspired to be an agent of change in racial and gender relations. Early leaders and members were sensitive to anti-Semitism and the anti-immigrant animus they'd experienced. Their communist ties, and their sense that success demanded a wide-armed embrace of all workers strengthened their resolve to free

¹²⁹ Recreation Report to the Executive Board, December 10, 1941, b1f6, *D65 papers*.

¹³⁰ For the "fighting army" see *NV*, 15 December 1941, 8. For the cover photo see: *NV*, 15 January 1942. A Local 65 member stationed in Britain clipped it, and it was reprinted in *New Voices* a second time on 2 August 1942, 13.

the union from the racism and sexism that plagued society.¹³² Local 65 cameramen helped. Unlike mass-cultural venues that often erased women and African Americans, their photographs visually integrated both groups into the “full and rich” life promised by the union. And Local 65 photographers resisted the highly charged and stereotypic visual strategies for representing gender and race so common in mass culture, instead union photographers imagined women and African-Americans as co-creators and co-recipients of union life.¹³³

Initially, the union associated with the United Hebrew Trades, but it quickly broadened its membership beyond Jewish employees. The first non-Jewish member was an African- American porter and years later members remembered with pride their choice to leave the confines of Orchard Street to serve all marginalized workers in the

¹³¹ Title from *NV*, 16 April 1944, B-5.

¹³² The union’s racial inclusiveness probably stemmed from its communist politics, though Osman and Livingston both claimed that the union had no choice. For it to exist, it had to pull in all kinds of members. Osman believed that black members had greater loyalty to the union. He claimed Local 65 was “licked,” without a broad, diverse membership that embraced both groups. By 1937 African Americans entered the union’s ranks in the textile and notions industries and by 1948 comprised twenty percent of the membership. Similarly women moved from being a small percentage of the membership to becoming the majority by August of 1943. Osman interview, 16, 13. Osman argued women must “assume responsibility with men...” instead of holding token positions that in other unions women had to fight for. He cautioned during the war that the union would fail if women’s leadership wasn’t encouraged. “A large reserve of active, able and devoted women leaders would be the union’s best guarantee of stable, competent leadership.” *NV*, 29 August 1943, 2. As Lisa Phillips points out in her dissertation on the union’s racial politics, other bottom-up CIO unions like the packing-house workers also committed themselves to racial equity. In New York, Local 65 contributed to a larger constellation of organizations committed to racial equity, such as the National Negro Congress. New York City was also an important locus of “black-labor-left coalitions.” Phillips, “Labor Movement,” 1-2, 11, 33-4, 62, 78, 150. The ILG with its significant number of women members unofficially was never allowed more than one woman on the Executive Board. Analiese Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 172-173, 201.

¹³³ Subtitle from *NV*, 16 April 1944, B-5.

distributive trades. Leaders were unusually sensitive to the ethnic, racial and gender mix they served. In 1943 they cautioned members that they needed more gentiles, more women, and more African-Americans as leader trainees to ensure adequate representation of their workforce. Early photos in *New Voices* trumpeted the union's diversity. [Fig. 6-13.]¹³⁴ "During Working Hours" showed "Four Nationalities Working Together: Jewish, Irish, Italian and Swedish" and "United Nations in a Local 65 Shop!" a caption for a photo of the Empire State Glass Decorating Section had members from Puerto Rico, Italy, Russia, China, Britain, Germany and Poland.

The union emerged as a leader for racial equality in its early days and remained a leader in civil rights struggles through the 1970s. In 1936, at his first AFL convention, Osman pushed the foot-dragging AFL craft unions to desegregate. Leaders and members championed the Scottsboro boys, but also rallied for national anti-lynching legislation, and fought to increase the employment rates of African-Americans and Jews at the Worlds Fair of 1939. Local 65 supported residential integration, and in the early 1950s they mobilized 3,500 members against segregation at Metropolitan Life's "model" apartment community, Stuyvesant Town.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ "United Nations in a Local 65 Shop!" 9 December 1943, 9. For first black member see Osman interview, 9; see also "During Working Hours" *NV*, March 1938. For need for gentiles, see "Need New Staff Members for Union," *NV*, 14 March 1943, 8.

¹³⁵ For Osman's demands to the AFL see Phillips, "Labor Movement," 57. For the Scottsboro Boys support see Local 65 General Notes, November 13, 1934 and December 16, 1937, b1f1 and b1f2. For criticism of the discriminatory hiring at the World's Fair see "Unemployment Committee Notes," b6f2. The union also supported Popular Front anti-racism organizations in Harlem, "Unemployment Committee Notes," b6f2, all in *D65 papers*. Local 65 claimed to send the largest delegation to the Conference on Full Negro Whites, *NV*, 25 April 1943, 13; *New Voices* attacked the "Hitleristic" riots against blacks in Detroit who sought public housing, *NV*, 4 July 1943, 8-9; and continued to push for anti-lynching legislation, 28 May 1944, 7. For work on Stuyvesant Homes see *UV*, 14 January 1951, 28 January 1951, and 25 February 1951. Further from home, when white residents attacked a black family who moved to Cicero, Illinois, the union galvanized

Local 65's demands for gender equality were not as thoroughgoing. The union pushed for comparable worth, an unusual position in this time period. And it recognized concerns that were often in the purview of women's home budgets such as rent and food prices as central to the union's agenda. Their sensitivity to these gendered concerns, termed "community" concerns by feminist historians, was unusual.¹³⁶ However, the union rarely questioned women's subsidiary role in society or in the home. If Osman advocated comparable worth, he also claimed women's pay inequities might arise from their inability to "tackle jobs which require greater initiative, responsibility and ability to overcome obstacles." Even one woman leader complained that men's "brain and brawn" built the union, but not women's, indicating biased attitudes weren't confined to male leaders alone.¹³⁷

Locals 65 pushed racial and gender equity at the worksite and within the union. In the late 1930s the union established a satellite headquarters in Harlem on Saturday nights. Called the "Friends of 65," this satellite self-consciously drew black members in

Chicago members to protest this abuse and wired President Truman to take action against mob "ringleaders" and all "public officials" who tolerated their behavior. *UV*, 29 July 1951, 2. The union also stood up against racial injustice in the criminal justice system. *NV*, 7 November 1943, 4. Osman editorialized against the Teamsters who wanted the Japanese to have their citizenship revoked. "False Patriotism," *NV*, 10 December 1944, 7.

¹³⁶ See "Picket Line Protest" against OPA failure to limit rents, *NV*, 12 September 1943, 5. Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Faue's Introduction and Chapters Two and Three are especially helpful. Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 32, 248.

¹³⁷ The union pushed boycotting as a strategy and publicized community campaigns against high rents. *NV*, January 1938, 3; 12 September 1943, 5; 26 September 1943, 7; and 3 September 1944, 11. Another letter blamed women for "staying home, playing mahjong, Bridge and such, and living off their husbands... women had to be aroused and convinced to do their share of the war effort." *NV*, 28 May 1944, 14-15; other letter

through the union's trademark social activities. Members then invited Harlemites down to headquarters to join the Hiring Hall. With the Hiring Hall the union insisted that employers hire African-Americans and women. If they refused, the union persisted by sending only the discriminated group, as they did at Lane Bryants, and Arthur Beirs.¹³⁸ *New Voices* also encouraged members to challenge prejudice by taking matters into their own hands. A *New Voices* article, "How Gimbels Waitresses Won," explained how women waitresses insisted that African-American woman workers be permitted to work with them—confronting an institutional racism that kept black women in the kitchen and white women in the front of the house. Women members wrote to *New Voices* in gratitude for similar policies addressing gender discrimination. One writer recounted how a firm rescinded their offer to hire a married woman because they believed her Roman Catholicism would leave them in the lurch with a pregnant, non-working employee. The union got her the position.¹³⁹

Local 65 backed equality inside the union by diversifying staff and leadership along racial, gender, and ethnic lines. Cleve Robinson, an African American man, was prominent as the union's vice president for decades.¹⁴⁰ Lilian White Upshur, an African-

writers complained about women whose knitting insulted speakers at meetings, *NV*, February 1939, 4.

¹³⁸ For the satellite headquarters see Phillips, "Labor Movement," 81-2, 110-1, quoting Doswell interview by Paskin, n#19 #37, Tape 1 sides A and B, *D65 orals*. If employers failed to respond, the union threatened a punitive strike. Tabb, "White Collar Union," 123; Osman interview, 16. White workers didn't always share leadership's commitments and the union spent days in discussion convincing them of the rightness of this strategy. Osman interview, 16. Also "Union Hangs Up Another Shiner on Old Jim Crow," *NV*, 19 December 1943, 5; and also *NV*, 3 January 1941, 10; *NV*, 15 February 1941, 3, and *NV*, 1 March 1941, 7.

¹³⁹ *UV*, 25 March 1951 and Tabb, "White Collar Union," 123.

¹⁴⁰ *NV*, 27 February 1944, 8-9. Herbert Hill believes District 65 was radically different from the ILG, see Osman interview, 17-20. The first non-Jewish member was an African-American porter hired in 1935, Phillips, "Labor Movement," 7.

American woman, used her pulpit as a *New Voices* columnist to educate unionists about the concerns of black workers, but Upshaw was never “ghettoized” into addressing only their needs.¹⁴¹ Mollie Genser was an Executive Board member for the Organizing Department, “number one, in importance” in union hierarchy.¹⁴² The proportion of women and African-Americans in leadership positions never equaled to its proportion of membership, but the union perceived this as a problem to tackle. In January of 1942, women filled twenty-five percent of leadership positions, but by 1943, after concentrated effort, about half of staff were women, and one-third of shop stewards were women. The *New Voices* column “Meet the Members Who Lead the Members,” showed several committees where the proportion of women and African Americans almost equaled their numbers in the union.¹⁴³ Again the union seemed stronger on racial equity, than gender equity. It “groomed” African-American leaders, but not women, and after WWII, women

¹⁴¹ Upshaw’s column began in September of 1942 and continued through 1944. *NV*, 13 February and 27 February 1944; 31 January 1943; and 25 June 1944. Her 2 January 1944 column dealt with the holiday season and international poverty. One white member claimed White’s columns were “an eye opener.” *NV*, 3 January 1943, 13. Freeman, *Working-Class New York*. 45-47 comments on the ILG’s failure to diversify leadership.

¹⁴² *NV*, 1 February 1942, 9.

¹⁴³ In the early 1940’s one Recreational Director complained that the leadership, “had not kept pace” with a membership now, “typically American, enrolling a greater number of different nationalities and diverse religious and racial groups.” In response the union’s organizing training program drew one member from each shop for a more representative pool of leaders and staff. In 1944 with 4,000 black members the union hired eleven new African American staff. *NV*, 27 February 1944, 9; and 29 August 1943, 2. The Finance Board and the Administrative Board, with 12 of 26 members and 7 of 16 members respectively who were women or African-American bear this contention out. Other Committees, particularly the Organizing Committee, the Recreation Committee, and the Welfare Committee were far less representative of the union generally. See the “Meet the Members” column in *New Voices*, published from February 1 through April 15, 1942. In 1943 thirty-three of seventy-nine staff were women, 143 of five hundred stewards were women. These numbers for 1942 and 1943 come from *NV*, January 1942, and 31 January 1943.

played a less prominent role in the union. Although Local 65 might have done more in the fight for racial and gender equality, most unions did far less.¹⁴⁴

The union united its membership and advanced the fight against social inequalities through cultural pluralism. *New Voices* trumpeted the diversity message and by the late 1940s they did so in the bi-lingual *La Voz Hispana*. Its articles extolled the “first great organizer in Irish history,” Saint Patrick. The union also celebrated the first ever national “Negro week” and held classes on “the Negro in American Life” or “Women in America: Past and Present”.¹⁴⁵ Local 65’s “National Affairs” groups promoted ethnic culture and built inter-ethnic solidarity. Their suppers and socials such as the “Irish Easter Celebration” which commemorated Dublin’s Easter Uprising, the “Italian Fiesta” or the “Negro, Spanish and Jewish Affairs Dance,” had members dancing with arms wrapped around one another under banners proclaiming “NO

¹⁴⁴ Nancy Quam-Wickham, “In Search of Labor’s Culture,” *Labor History* 39, no. 3 (1998): 329 argues that “the ILWU, for instance, women warehouse members were segregated into a special “Women’s Division” and women members were prohibited from attending the union’s general membership meetings until the early war years, when a dramatic rise in the numbers of women workers compelled the union to revise its membership structure.” For limits to gender equity see Phillips, “Labor Movement,” 137-140. Herbert Hill’s interviews of Livingston and Osman turned on the question of Local 65’s inclusiveness in contrast to the ILG’s “lily white” leadership, which sought sweetheart contracts with employers, did little for workers, and represented them with white leaders. See Phillips *Ibid.*, 2, and 129, quoting Hill interview with Livingston, 12, 16-17.

¹⁴⁵ “St. Patrick and the Irish Organizing Tradition,” *NV*, 12 March 1953, 8-9. For articles on Negro history see *NV*, 13 February 1944, 3; and “NAACP’s Mr. Civil Rights at 65 Negro History Fete,” *UV*, 7 March 1953, 12; which showed Thurgood Marshall’s visit to 65; and “Exhibit Marks 65 Negro History Celebration,” *UV*, 8 February 1953, m2. Some classes were led by Philip Foner. If the union honored the struggles of African-Americans, they also celebrated their Irish members whose forbears battled to establish Irish unions and fought against British colonialism. *UV*, November, 195; and *NV*, 26 September 1943, 7. *La Voz Hispana* was printed by 1948 as a half page, it was increased to a full page at some point. Photos in the *Union Voice* also showed Latinos discussing the need for more Spanish-speaking physicians for 65 members. *RWDSU Record*, 19 September 1954, 7A.

Discrimination.”¹⁴⁶ Other unions pandered to their members’ racism. R.R. Brooks, an early historian of the steel workers union described how racism and sexism intertwined to limit solidarity. He pointed to one local leader who claimed: “The problem of race feeling is bad enough so that we can’t have a women’s auxiliary here because, although the men mix all right in the mill, they wouldn’t mix on the dance floor.”¹⁴⁷

Local 65 was different. Vice President Cleve Robinson remembered a union hall where all ethnicities mixed, and no evident hierarchy existed. Morris Doswell, an early African-American member, recalled his pride in a union “that did everything in [its] power to break down discrimination” in and outside the organization.¹⁴⁸ A white warehouse steward, Bob Ackerman, echoed Doswell by crediting Local 65 with reversing the racism he learned as a child:

When I joined Local 65, the only good Jew, I felt, was a dead one....Once I went to a dance where there were Negroes and whites and I couldn’t take it, I ran out of the place... Today I know twenty Negroes out here who would give their arms to save my rights. And the same with the Jews. I learned to hate when I was a kid... But I’ve learned different in Local 65.¹⁴⁹

Women members thought Local 65 challenged “subtle forms of discrimination” that held them back. One woman member penned a letter to *New Voices*, “speaking of myself, no

¹⁴⁶ Tabb, *White Collar Union*, 242. The photo is neg. # 7273, October 28, 1950. In neg. # 15582, Dec 1, 1956, workers of all races and genders crowd together, black men and white women. *D65 photos*. For Easter Uprising celebration see “Irish Night at ’65,” photos by Bea Eckstein, *UV*, 2 May 1954, m2. See also “Jewish Nite Brings Record Crowd! Which Folk Festival is Next?” *NV*, 27 October 1944, 11; “Italian Fiesta Spurs Call for Similar Affairs at Club 65,” *NV*, 3 September 1944, 9.

¹⁴⁷ Robert R.R. Brooks, *As Steel Goes: Unionism is a Basic Industry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940) 18.

¹⁴⁸ For Robinson see Phillips, “Labor Movement,” 166, quoting Paskin interview June 4, 1982, NS 19 #12. And Doswell, b6f2, *D65 orals*.

¹⁴⁹ Third Biennial Local 65 Convention, May 30 1948, in Tabb, “White Collar Union,” 236. Members often wrote to *New Voices* about the union’s commitments to ending

more worry... I still remember the personnel managers looking me over to see how pretty I am not, what a fine form I haven't got, and how young I used to be." She championed the union that allowed her to be judged by her work alone.¹⁵⁰

New Voices editors and its Photo Staff advocated racial egalitarianism by imagining a world where the color of one's skin made little difference to one's representation. Local 65 photographs integrated black and white members in its photos of crew meetings and picket lines. At a time when *de facto* Jim Crow kept whites and blacks from socializing, both groups mingled together in photos of 65's band practice. Photographs of dances in the union hall or dinners at its supper club, showed African-American and white couples joined in the fun together. [Fig. 6-14]¹⁵¹ And *New Voices* printed photos of the Negro History exhibition, where mixed crowds of black and white members examined the contributions of African-Americans to America's past.

Local 65's diversity certainly facilitated getting photographs of an integrated union. Other unions' photographs of job actions or social events were typically monochromatic, with few photographs of blacks and whites working, picketing, or playing together. Photos of African-Americans that did appear joined articles aimed at proving union attempts at diversification. SWOC, which sought to eliminate the racism that hindered earlier organizing drives, used head shots and groups portraits of black leaders to signal their inclusive organizing efforts. Similarly, the ILG with a growing black membership by the 1940s, printed photos of African-American workers to tout

racial discrimination. See *NV*, 1 April 1942, 4, where Albert Pearwell commends the union for making "labor history" in its fight against discrimination.

¹⁵⁰ Molly Genser, in *NV*, 4 November 1951, M8.

¹⁵¹ Neg. # 1620, March 1, 1944 with interracial band practice, which appeared in *NV*, April 16, 1944; and Neg. # 15582, December, 1, 1956 of the National Affairs group. See

their diversity. For both unions the photographs were window dressing. Certainly Local 65 sought to symbolically enact its racial commitments. But with the ILG and SWOC the photographs represented something that was not, rather than bolstering an ideal that the union contrived to realize.

Of course, labor media's limited representation of African-American workers was benign in light of a mass visual culture that erased, or worse, portrayed minorities in denigrating ways. Photo historian James Guimond claims mid-century photojournals presented a homogeneous, "lily-white vision of America." Minority groups were rarely represented, and when they were, they "were usually segregated in photoessays devoted to 'America's Problems.'"¹⁵² This was the era of Step'nfetchit, of the Hollywood mammy, stock characters that "invited ridicule" or confirmation of the racist views held within the dominant culture.¹⁵³ Major photo publications such as *LIFE Magazine* often employed visual stereotypes such as a photograph of an African-American man whose mouth was spread wide with golf-balls for readers' chuckles, or a story on watermelon farming that showed a bare-torsoed African American taking watermelons to market in his buggy. Mass market magazines also attracted readers with sensationalist violence which seemed invariably visited upon the bodies of dark skinned others, particularly African-Americans, to the degree that, in Guimond's words: "it seems clear that a kind of protocol was followed."¹⁵⁴

"Visiting Celebrities" with its photographs of black and white union leaders mixing at Club 65s tables," *NV*, 14 May 1944, 16.

¹⁵² Guimond, *American Photography*, 172-3.

¹⁵³ Mel Watkins, *On the Real Side: Laughing, Lying, and Signifying the Underground Tradition of African-American Humor that Transformed American Culture from Slavery to Richard Pryor* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 255, 258, 322.

¹⁵⁴ *LIFE*, 9 August 1937, cover, 50-52. For critique of *LIFE* see W. A. Swanberg, *Luce and His Empire*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 145. Lili Bezner claims

New Voices' photographers, on the other hand, made black workers "ordinary."

In affirming their normalcy, union photographers humanized African-Americans. Local 65's photos went further, envisioning a color-blind world where black and white Americans worked and played together. Integrating African-Americans into the everyday life of the union was a radical act. Nowhere can the union's anti-racism be better gauged than in a photograph of a union blood drive during World War II. In this era the majority population viewed social or physical intermixing of races as anathema. The Hearst photo syndicate fired one photographer who filed pictures of racial intermixing in a Harlem neighborhood because they wanted photos of white youth alone. At *LIFE* editors debated the propriety of printing a photo of white teenage girls in an enthusiastic embrace of the black pop singer, Billy Eckstine. "Blood" purity remained a social obsession: Local 65 even organized a protest against the Red Cross who enraged members by "segregating" black members' blood. In *New Voices* pages one could find a photograph of members, Benno Nordheimer, a white man, and Eunice Tucker, a black woman, donating blood. [Fig. 6-15.]¹⁵⁵ "Union Solidarity Spelled Out in Blood" showed the two lying side by side, Nordheimer's arm cradled the arm of Tucker, their "fraternal ties" unequivocal.

"historically African Americans have been generalized, idealized and superficially reduced to sociological "types" as subjects of a contorted, white and often male gaze." She contrasted Photo League imagery with the "clichéd, picturesque views of the impoverished, sentimentalized, or ennobled scenes of African American life.

Photography and Politics, 50-51. Guimond, *American Photography*, 156-161.

¹⁵⁵ Bezner discusses Arthur Leipzig's firing from Hearst's International News Photos, *Photography and Politics*, 97-8, quoting Bonnie Yochelson, *Arthur Leipzig: A Retrospective* (New York: Long Island University and Hillwood Art Gallery, 1989) 3-4. She also details how a key question in anti-communist hearings was: "Have you ever had Negroes in your home?" *Ibid.* 52. For *LIFE* see interview with Martha Holmes, New York City, 18 May 1993 in John Loengard, *LIFE Photographers, What They Saw*

New Voices photographs wove women workers into union life with their photographs much as they did with black workers, though their visual message matched the union's more limited stance on gender equality. Women were shown in all kinds of activities: as members of particular sections or crews, picketers on the line, and workers laboring in their shops, but also as cast members in the drama group and students in union classes. Unlike *LIFE*'s and *Steel Labor*'s depictions of women workers that called attention to their gender, these photographs rarely marked the members' gender as special.

With one exception. *New Voices* could present women as objects of sexual desire. From time to time the paper printed photos of women as "pinups" paralleling women's sexual objectification within the larger culture. [Fig. 6-16.]¹⁵⁶ The union held "beauty contests" at its annual picnics, and during the war *New Voices* asked women to compete as "65 girls" to accompany the boys overseas. Because women didn't rally to the call of being the Local 65's Betty Grabel, *New Voices* editors had to repeatedly urge women to supply their photos to the union's foundering "beauty hunt." Perhaps this form of representation didn't sit well with women members. *New Voices* asked its readership, "Where are the girls?" In "Optical Routes The Hallowe'en Blues" cameramen showed "nimble-toed Connie Middlebrook"—a "knockout." Though Middlebrook struck a showgirl's pose, it was other women in the photograph who seemed most appreciative of

(Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1998), 207. For blood drives see, *NV*, 10 October 1943, 9; "Union Solidarity Spelled Out in Blood," *UV*, 11 February 1951.

¹⁵⁶ "Optical Routes the Hallowe'en Blues," *NV*, 7 November 1943, 11. See also, "3,000 Make Merry At First Part of Union's Ninth Birthday Dance," *NV*, 15 March 1942, 9; and "A Cargo of Lovely Contenders for Union Voice Beauty Crown," *UV*, 9 March 1948, 22.

her efforts. *New Voices*'s could extol its "bevy of eye fillers," but it never really limited its representation of women to this narrow form of "exaltation."¹⁵⁷

"Girls" weren't hard to find in mass-market magazines or the labor media. As we saw earlier, *LIFE*'s coverage of the rise of the CIO presented women strikers as cute starlets in a labor drama that had less consequence for women workers than keeping up their appearances. And *LIFE*'s camera eye seemed more interested in exposing women strikers' "undies" as police carted them off to jail than in exposing the labor conditions they worked under. We saw how union press also sexualized women members. *Steel Labor* used pictures of "girl" members to animate an otherwise staid labor paper. Women's bodies appeared as prizes, or at a minimum decorative entertainment to an assumed membership of male readers.¹⁵⁸ Historian Rickie Solinger argues that the "babe" as she calls it, entered the lexicon of postwar photographic culture as a way to manage concerns about women's changing social and economic role by insisting on women's sexuality.¹⁵⁹ As we saw, her analysis could be extended back to the early 1940's. Unions like the USWA accommodated new female members during the war only because they had to. Local 65, on the other hand, saw organizing women as part of its

¹⁵⁷ For "bevy of eye fillers" quote see *NV*, 7 November 1943, 11. See also "Miss America!," *NV*, 12 September 1943, 5; "Soldiers Favorite," *NV*, 30 April 1944, 3; *NV*, 3 September 1944; 17 September 1944, 2.

¹⁵⁸ *SL*, 28 April 1944, 14, and January 1945, 9; and 22 January 1943, 4. The United Automobile Worker also presented women as pin-ups clad in bikinis. "Morale Builder," 15 April 1946, 6. Philadelphia Record's photographer, Martin Hyman, as quoted in "Publicity Photography" in the *Encyclopedia of Photography: A Complete Guide to Amateur and Professional Photography*, Vol. VIII, New York: National Education Alliance, 1949, 3020.

¹⁵⁹ Rickie Solinger, "The Smutty Side of *LIFE*: Picturing Babes as Icons of Gender Difference in the Early 1950's," in Erika Doss, *Looking at LIFE Magazine* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 201-219; and Angel Kwolek-Folland, "Gender, Self, and Work in the Life Insurance Industry, 1880-1930," in Ava Baron, ed.,

mission since the union's stability depended on women's involvement. Though *New Voices* did print photos of women as "babes," it traded on women's sexuality far less than the dominant media and the labor media did.

Neither did the union address the contradictions of having women do work heretofore conceived of as "men's work" by "masculinizing" women members as the image of "Rosie the Riveter" did. *New Voices* could represent female laborers as "one of the boys." In the war-time work-site photo-essays a few women appeared in the now familiar form of "Rosie," such as this photo of Helen Sosdian "strid[ing] through the textile market, a bolt of goods slung over her shoulders." [Fig. 6-17.]¹⁶⁰ But Local 65 used this visual trope sparingly, indicating more comfort with women doing "men's work." Unlike *Steel Labor* which feminized women with its "bright" captioning, *New Voices'* captions discussed men and women in similar terms.

Local 65 photographers also dispensed with the gendered maternal trope that was so widespread in this era. Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother" offers the exemplary image of a woman who despite personal obstacles and pain cares for her brood. Photographers for the FSA, and public murals commissioned by the Federal government all promoted maternalist icons. Labor newspapers also employed such imagery. As we saw, *Steel Labor* used such imagery during the post-war re-conversion era. Feminist scholars have argued this imagery was pervasive because it buttressed a populace challenged by deep economic and social insecurity. Despite the apparent approbation, such imagery could burden as well. Limiting women to the maternal role celebrated

Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 168-190.

women within a hierarchy where male labor and shop floor actions were deemed most important. Women were trapped in their “essential” roles as mothers, occluding their needs as workers. Local 65 did focus on women’s maternal concerns for low food and rent costs, but *New Voices* photographers envisioned women as unionists with these concerns, not as mothers alone.¹⁶¹

Local 65 photographers rejected the other pole in the gendered ideals of the 30s: the masculinist icon of the burly male worker. As we’ve seen, socialist-realist canvases, statuary, and murals idealized the average American and at times growing union power with this icon. The mass media and labor media also employed this visual trope. Even those unions with a predominately female membership, like the ILG, embodied their successes with such imagery. Equating union strength with this male figure excluded women, and as Elizabeth Faue argues: “shape[d] the subsequent relationship of women to labor unions” thereby “undermining the basis of inclusive working-class solidarity.”¹⁶² Local 65 proclaimed its radicalism in its militant numbers, and in its depiction of a diverse union community. It never relied on the idealized, gendered figure of heroic labor.

Local 65 didn’t ignore women’s gender. Women might be seen at a packing line in a crisp white uniform and cap; proudly seated behind a hand operated machine with protective gear and feminine jewelry and coiffure; working the “addressograph machine” in the *New Voices* office; or conducting a Saturday Night Social swing band. The

¹⁶⁰ *NV*, 20 December 1942, 16; see also *NV*, 3 January 1943, 16. The union encouraged female leadership during WWII by asking *NV* to illustrate women’s significant labor contribution to the war effort.

¹⁶¹ Faue, *Community of Suffering*, 83-95; For maternalism in New Deal imagery see Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture, Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington D.C. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

photographers documented the reality of gender trappings in this era, but their cameras were not as active in constructing gender into strict categories. Photographs of women unionists never symbolically struck at sexism in the ways that images of black workers struck at racism. Nonetheless union photographers did imagine women as full participants in the quest for union might and union community.

Union photographers' "organizing eye" valorized all members, facilitating the continued identification and involvement of a diverse membership in Local 65. Local 65's bold vision consisted in nothing more than eschewing the typical visual strategies of the day and treating each member, regardless of race or gender, with respect.¹⁶³ The union relied on culture to promote their egalitarianism—just as they used culture to build union community.

"Study and Play in the Organized Way"¹⁶⁴

Union community, making 65ers "feel as if...a 65er in 65s own home" lie at the heart of the union. A *New Voices*' photo-story of April 1953 announced the grand opening of the union's renovated penthouse restaurant and nightclub which epitomized this ideal. A full-page photo of Club 65's entrance, doors flung open greeted *New Voices* readers. [Fig. 6-18.]¹⁶⁵ Four photos of the restaurant's shining tables, gleaming tiles and

¹⁶² Faue, *Community of Suffering*, 99.

¹⁶³ The Kersten investigation into communism was particularly concerned that *Union Voices* be kept from promoting Communism to blacks and Latinos, as Lisa Phillips demonstrates. Advocating racial equality itself courted charges of communism. See Phillips, "Labor Movement," 192 quoting "Investigation, Report n. 16," 23-24, 26, 30.

¹⁶⁴ "Gotham's Wholesale Employees Keep Their Union Activities Moving at a Merry Clip," *CIO News*, 6 May 1939, quoted in *NV*, May 1939, 6. Or "Club 65: Where 65er Meet to Play and Plan," *NV*, 11 June 1944, 10.

¹⁶⁵ All quotes from "Club 65 Now Open: City's Finest Restaurant Opens at District 65 Headquarters," *UV*, 15 April 1953, M2. In an earlier incantation the club was mentioned

“spotless array of coffee urns, steam tables, dishes and trays” led right through these doors. Readers could literally push their way through and symbolically enter on the photographic “welcome mat” to the restaurant where it would be “fun to eat!” Strong diagonal lines created by aisles, lighting, counters and tables pulled the readers’ gaze into the Club’s serving line, kitchen, bar, and supper club. Having figuratively entered Club 65’s doors, in the rest of the story readers encountered photos showing members dining, dancing, drinking, and imbibing the atmosphere Local 65 created for them. [Fig. 6-19.]¹⁶⁶ The reporter touted the “finest bar in town” adorned with a mural painted by *New Voice*’s own art editor; the “handsome fixtures and lighting;” and the “crisp cleanliness” and “good taste throughout.” Another thought that “it was the little copper table lamps that added ‘just the right’ touch.” The article informed members that the restaurant had quality food where “prices were within reach,” and the supper club presented “show[s] at a price they can afford” produced by Local 65’s members. The article added that one “veteran reporter said that in all his years covering labor news he had never seen the like—a Union Headquarters designed from top to bottom to cater to the needs of the membership.”

Club 65 epitomized Local 65’s long-standing social and cultural activism. Club 65’s murals, modern fixtures, and elegant table lamps pointed to the union’s belief that workers have a right to material things, the best that money could buy. But in reminding members of the value they’d receive for their money the article rejected the notion that a

in the *Daily News* by a Broadway columnist as the “first workers nightclub” see Danton Walker, *Daily News*, 26 September 1949 in Foner, *COHC*, 190. For other “Club 65” stories see “Introducing Club 65!” *NV*, 14 May 1944, 16, and “Club 65—Workingman’s Nite Club,” *UV*, 10 June 1945, 12-3, also discussed the “charms,” of Club 65 which included “no tipping,” and its “object lessons[s] in democracy,” which came from the mix of clientele, clerks, truck drivers, teachers of “varied races and religions.”

mass consumer economy erased class differences; instead, workers could achieve the good life through unionism. As an institution the union provided culture to membership; but the collective labor of unionists produced this very culture. The photo-story's message paralleled a description of union culture made a decade earlier. "It was Union community in the full sense of the word. Not only did the members work together, and organize together—they played together, danced and studied and planned together—making the Union the gateway to the Pursuit of Happiness."¹⁶⁷ Invoking this mantra of American independence suggested the seriousness of Local 65's aims: workers had a right to culture and the union would be the vehicle to attain this right.

For even though Local 65 leaders had instrumental reasons for their interest in culture, leaders also assumed that "a trade union [could] not ignore the cultural problems of its members." Osman thought union leaders and policymakers had to consider the "problem" of filling workers' new leisure time, and *New Voices* articles and committees debated workers' lack of culture.¹⁶⁸ As a recreational leader wrote, the Local should fill in the breach.

It is only natural that workers should look to their trade unions for advancing their interests. Excepting in isolating instances, there is no public agency or free private enterprise to which a member can turn in his neighborhood for satisfaction of his recreational needs. Is there a community where a worker can join a band to develop his saxophone

¹⁶⁶ "Club 65 Now Open," *UV*, 15 April 1953, M2.

¹⁶⁷ *NV*, 15 March 1941, 5.

¹⁶⁸ Osman interview, 18. He said, "there were people working for seven or eight dollars a week working eighty or ninety hours or more. Now when we came into the picture, when we organized our industry and changed the hours to a 6 o'clock closing time people never saw such daylight before. Never went home when the sun was so shiny they were shocked. Many people were wondering what they were going to do with their leisure time. We were not the only ones. I remember Eleanor Roosevelt talking about we have to find ways and means of utilizing this leisure time. It was a problem." Also Dorothy Kuhn Oko, New York Public Library "Library Services to Trade Unions," Press Release, February 1, 1954, b67f1 *D65 papers*.

playing? We haven't heard of any. The same situation holds true for chorus, dramatics, sports, film and other activities.¹⁶⁹

Local 65 descried other unions' refusal to champion culture and wanted to "lay the groundwork for a real people's cultural movement in New York City." Osman claimed Local 65 a "recognized ... leader in such work" and latter day observers concur.¹⁷⁰

The union even promised active members a bonus—"romance the union way." As we saw, mass cultural texts, like *LIFE* used the narrative of heterosexual romance to frame all kinds of social and political dilemmas.¹⁷¹ In *New Voices* romance was a reward for active 65ers. The paper's "Meet the Members" page offered tips on the members' relationship status, and articles notified the reader if a featured member was "available." One *New Voices* war-time story even told how member Frances Berg saved sweetheart Elliot Zingman's life when the "fat juicy valentine" she sent him kept shrapnel from reaching his heart. At Local 65 members bettered their social lives as well as their political and economic lives. Photos of weddings and newborn children offered constant reminders of successes in the "heart-throb department." The 1939 cartoon "In Union There is Strength and Life," represented the enticement of union life in almost the same terms as *LIFE*'s ILG Unity House story—two members met at camp, romanced one another on a lonely lake in a boat, and ended up married.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Recreation Department Report, August 25, 1941, b1f6, *D65 papers*.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, "Organizing Wholesale;" and Moe Foner, *Not For Bread Alone: A Memoir* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 26-31.

¹⁷¹ In addition to the ILG melodrama and the Woolworth's strike, *LIFE* also had a full-page photo of two Milwaukee teenagers, one an AFLer the other a CIOer. Their love offered readers the ironic hope that the two labor federations could resolve their differences. See "AFL + CIO: In Kenosha They Are a Happy Pair," which includes the Milwaukee daters, "AFL Boy Meets CIO Girl," in *LIFE*, 2 December 1940, 28-29.

¹⁷² For singles status see "Meet the Members," *NV*, 15 April 1942; "Valentine Saves 65er: Proves Love Conquers All," *NV*, 28 May 1944. The large number of union romances certainly reflects the union's status as a local. And the romances indicate the

Local 65's vibrant union culture grew organically from several roots: earlier working-class practices and ethnic backgrounds, along with commercialized forms of popular culture. When members nursed a beer in the union's restaurant, they participated in working-class rituals almost a century old.¹⁷³ When members acted in a Drama Group pageant, joined a sing-along or formed a musical band they participated in popular cultural pursuits leading back to Yiddish and other ethnic associations, and socialist groups from the turn of the century.¹⁷⁴ Some of these early forms of working-class culture had become commercialized by the end of the nineteenth century. Members who danced at their own nightclub participated in just such a commercial amusement popularized by workers.¹⁷⁵ Other of Local 65's activities were pursued by millions of working and middle class Americans by mid-century. For example, members who hiked together along the Hudson partook of "naturalism," that Bernar McFadden had popularized in his mass circulation journal *Physical Culture* in the 1920's. And while Local 65's theatrical productions came out of their ethnic past, they presented to over

large numbers of men *and* women involved in this union. In Local 65 members from the same shop, of from the same geographic section met each other in the intimate, highly charged situation of the campaign. Local 65ers could find their life partners in the content of union life, and better yet a partner who shared their life commitment and who mutually benefited from their joint union activities. See *NV*, 1 January 1941, 7; *NV*, 1 August 1943, 10; "Wedding Bells Ring Out at Club 65," *NV*, 17 September 1945, 1; "Grossly Happy," *NV*, 26 November 1944, 6.

¹⁷³ Francis Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); and Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 35-64.

¹⁷⁴ Liebman *Jews and the Left*; Leviatin, *Followers on the Trail*; *NV*, 16 August 1942.

¹⁷⁵ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); and John Kasson, *Amusing the Millions: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

150,000 unionists in New York City, and to cross-class audiences at the 1939 World's Fair.¹⁷⁶

Local 65 meshed these older forms of popular, ethnic, and commercialized culture with newer mass cultural forms dependent on industrial production and mass audiences. Some of the music industry's finest entertainers such as jazz pianist Earl Hines, singer Sarah Vaughan or blues guitarist Leadbelly brought their rhythms to the Saturday Night Socials and union benefits. Union members made movies by joining other leftists to produce Frontier Films' *Native Lands*, a Popular Front exposé of the labor spy racket.¹⁷⁷ And 65ers' movie critics circle rated movies for ideological correctness and entertainment value.¹⁷⁸ Even the songs created for organizing sing-a-longs drew from the accents of mass culture as one stanza to their Security Drive song "10,000 members by 1941," (played to a ukulele no less), shows:

Now all get in step, and let's get hep,
Like the gaters do in jive
No jitterbug can cut his rug
Til his quota is filled for 65.¹⁷⁹

Of course *New Voices* writing and photography showed a sophisticated grasp of mass culture.

New Voices photographers posed a question to readers: What couldn't they do under the aegis of their union? Their images showed members sitting in classes where they learned American labor history or practical skills like typing or first aid.

¹⁷⁶ For naturalism see, Leviatin, *Followers of the Trail*, 33-35. For viewers of the "Wholesale Mikado," see, *NV*, 2 August 1942, 8.

¹⁷⁷ For Sarah Vaughn and Earl Hine's entertainment see *NV*, 1 April 1943; For *Native Land* which is based on Edward Levinson's best-seller *I Break Strikes: The Technique of Pearl L Bergoff* (New York: R.M. McBride, 1935), see Denning, *Culture Front*, 95; and *NV*, 3 August 1939, 6; *NV*, 10 May 1942, 5; *NV*, 20 June 1943, 11.

¹⁷⁸ *NV*, 29 April 1944, 11; and 24 December 1944, 10.

Photographs illustrated union life: workers attending lecturers, borrowing books from the union's lending library, or viewing a union sponsored art exhibition. [Fig. 6-20.]¹⁸⁰ *New Voices* editors joined these edifying images with photos showing members regaling audiences as comedians, strumming guitars and tooting horns, and dancing in their boat trips up the Hudson. Members bounced balls, swung bats, swam. They trouped across the stage in intimate sketches, and across the floor of Madison Square Garden in grand pageants. Members sipped coffee and imbibed cocktails at union functions. They lindy-hopped, mamboed, sambaed, and waltzed across the pages. [Fig. 6-21.]¹⁸¹

These photographs of social and cultural activism "documented" in the literal sense of providing evidence of the activities the union brought to its members. Photos appeared neutral: "slice of life" documents of a robust, vivacious union. The viewer saw the action as it happened. This transparency is a bit deceptive, as the gay exuberance of Local 65ers matched the hyper-reality of photos in *LIFE Magazine* where life was always abundant and optimistic. [Fig. 6-22.]¹⁸² The attributes of the good life as represented in *LIFE*: heterosexual romance, communal interaction, and high-stepping fun found its parallel in photographs on *New Voices* pages. And *New Voices* photographers didn't so much create an alternate vision of leisure, education, or the good life. Instead they employed the visual rhetoric of *LIFE* to tell members they could find utopic promise of mass culture within their union home.

¹⁷⁹ *NV*, 1 March 1940, 6.

¹⁸⁰ "New Union Book Shop," June 29, 1944, neg. #1865, *D65 photos*.

¹⁸¹ For inter-racial band practice, see neg. # 1620, March 1, 1944 which appeared in *NV*, April 16, 1944; "Lindy-hopper" see "1941 Boat Ride," neg. # 690; and 1939 Boat ride, neg. # 229; the "mambo" shot is taken at a Spanish Fiesta, October 1949, neg. # 5648, the waltz, "Social Hall," by Leo Choplin, neg. #116, October, 17, 1940; all *D65 photos*.

The union sketched an idealized world in its cultural photographs, and *New Voices* editors often sequenced and captioned the photos in a formula that pointed to member involvement as a prerequisite for achieving this ideal. Pictures were often grouped together on the back page or in the centerfold and juxtaposed, they articulated a distinctive Local 65 commitment to workers' culture: unionists themselves were equally producers and consumers of the cultural world they enjoyed. A photospread of a 1939 Hudson boat trip exhibited a pattern that persisted through the 50s. An "iris view" in the center of the page showed a crowd of members pressed against the boat's rails in lines on two levels of the boat. [Fig. 6-23.]¹⁸³ Members seemed gleeful, but their strict division into squared spaces as a result of the boats' railings and levels held them within the figurative order of the union. A large banner identified the crowd to the reader as members of the United Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Union and its central position and bold text drew the viewer's eye and anchored the entire photo spread. Photographs of the days' boat trip radiated from the central pivot of the unionists standing behind their banner. Photographs showed "militancy at the plate" (baseball batters), couples dancing on deck, a series of groups before the microphones, the union's "Wholesale Talent," and two largish photographs of crowds of union members enjoying the high jinks of their compatriots. A *New Voices* reader confronted the world of "fun for all" that Local 65 brought them. Like those pictured in the audiences, they too could enjoy the union's "Wholesale Talent." But readers could also envision themselves as cultural producers or subjects: a "song-bird, the militant batter, the beauty queen "Miss United Wholesale."

¹⁸² "1939 Boat Ride," neg. # 232, *D65 photos*. *New Voices* reprinted this photo as part of a farewell article to Recreation Director, Sol Molofsky. "Sol Leaves a Trail of Happy Memories...", NV, 2 August 1942, 8.

¹⁸³ NV, October 1939, back cover.

Photos laid out in dialogue with one another drove home the point that the union was a site of culture for workers and who enjoyed unique access by producing it and consuming it within their union's confines. Much as readers of the article on Club 65 were asked to enjoy the club as their own home, as early as 1939 editors presented readers with a kaleidoscope of fun created by union members themselves. *New Voices* visual formula framed union work as collective, in the realm of politics and in the realm of cultural expressiveness. Without the union, however, the circle of cultural production and consumption would be incomplete. A 1940 article "Members Demand More Union Socials" was topped by a set of two photos of a St. Patrick's Day Social. Under the caption "celebrating the wearing of the green" two men—one playing the guitar, the other "rhumbaizing" a union ditty—perform. To the left a second photo shows a group of dancers encircling another whose skills draw their attention. The union's "community of interests" linked these performers and their audience. A decade later, in "To a Community Party on Long Island" the editors printed several photos of 65ers and their children singing and dancing to the tunes of an accordionist and horn blowers. [Fig. 6-24.]¹⁸⁴ At the bottom of the page, spanning the width of these images story was a picture of the members grouped around a picnic table, holding up drinks and hot dogs to cheer their successful party. Consciously or not, the editor's layout suggested that at the base of union celebration lie member participation.

New Voices emphasized time and again how members' skills, talents, and labors built a lively union culture that outshone what they'd get outside the union. In "A Tale of

¹⁸⁴ "Members Demand More Union Socials," *NV*, 1 April 1940, 6; "To a Community Party on Long Island," *UVs*, 12 July 1953; "Stars Shine for 65's Soldiers," *NV*, 20 June 1943, 11; "Hundreds Make Merry at Union Socials Every Saturday Night," *NV*, 1 October 1940, 4.

Two Night Clubs,” member Bob Dobbs described the indignities of taking his wife to a Broadway nightclub. Evening-clad guests swept past, a regimented flurry of activities parted money from their wallets and left them little time to dance on the stamp-sized dance floor. Dobbs concluded: “They say it’s a lot more fun because you really can’t afford it. They don’t know what they’re talking about.”¹⁸⁵ Photos and captions showed how Club 65 offered prices “at rates to fit workers purses,” a dance floor where they could “rub elbows and bump into friends,” rank and file entertainment, and “shows that always feature audience.” Included in the montage are photos of the couple laughing over drinks, dancing, and conversing with the union’s vice president, Cleve Robinson. Unlike imagery in *Steel Labor* that represented suburban ranch homes as if they were within workers’ reach, stories such as “A Tale of Two Night Clubs” reminded members that mass consumer culture’s abundance was not necessarily theirs. But the story hinted at the fun, intimacy and personal development they’d achieve by being part of an activist union like Local 65. Stories about workers enjoying union band rehearsals, or the Saturday Night socials similarly stressed the “Local 65 spirit” that infused the union’s culture, a spirit they created.

Because most unions didn’t offer Local 65’s wide-ranging social and cultural activities, their newspapers couldn’t possibly attain *New Voices*’ visual interest. Photographs from the social and cultural activities most unions did host—their obligatory holiday parties, celebration dinners, and sports teams—failed to enliven their papers. As we saw with *Steel Labor*, many labor papers relied on conventional group photography. In these formulaic photos, unionists stood in straight lines in ascending rows and looked at the camera eye, often without a smile. A photo of members at a party could just as

¹⁸⁵ “A Tale of Two Night Clubs,” *UV*, 17 June 1951, M8.

easily be unionists arriving from the negotiating table. These standardized photographs could have appeared in for a school yearbook, and said little about how unions might contribute to a richer cultural life for American workers.¹⁸⁶

Even the pioneer of union culture and education, the ILG, failed to use photographs to invite members into activity. *Justice*'s photographs showed off the union's cultural jewels.¹⁸⁷ *Justice* editors printed photographs that put the spotlight on individual members as artists. For the ILG's nationally known drama, *Pins and Needles*, editors used full body shots of cast members; for its choir the paper offered head shots of singers. Frequent shots of the union's president, David Dubinsky, with celebrity audience members at performances of *Pins and Needles* also could be found in *Justice*'s pages. These photos emphasized the union's cultural leadership or an individual member's talent. Also typical were the conventional group shots that established no connections between the cultural activity and the union. Nor did *Justice* editors group together the photos to suggest a relationship between the union as a collaborative site of

¹⁸⁶ David Nye, *Image Worlds: Corporate Identities at General Electric, 1890-1930* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 93-111.

¹⁸⁷ Orleck addresses the development of the ILG's educational and cultural programming. Like Local 65, the ILG shared a similar ethnic and gender composition for its membership, and the unions both faced similar industrial patterns of small, decentralized ownership. She also shows how leadership gave this programming short shrift, even as they pioneered it. *Common Sense*, 172-180. Collette Heyman has analyzed the difference between the union cultures of the ILG and Local 65 in relationship to their drama programs. She found that the ILG was more interested in using drama to promote public relations for the union. Once "Pins and Needles" became a hit, they sought out professional actors to play the roles and bring the union's message to a broader public. The ILG also believed cultural activities built member "loyalty." Local 65, she believed, wanted not just loyalty but active participation in the making of the union. To build the union from house to house was more important than moving the general public. The Drama program required mass member participation, the same as its organizing needs. Heyman, *Staging Strikes*, 85-89, 93, 102.

cultural production and consumption.¹⁸⁸ If *New Voices* photographs showed a rambunctious “second home” where members worked and played together, *Justice* invited member-readers into a “home” where the guests sat back as children performed their recitals.

From its first days Local 65 took its members’ needs—for expression, for association, for edification—seriously. By making their “Union the gateway to the Pursuit of Happiness,” union leaders involved thousands of working-class New Yorkers in a union where they could sing, knit, paint, dance, learn history, or just nurse a beer with other members. *New Voices* photographers documented these activities. But just as Osman understood that cultural pursuits could bind workers in tight solidarity, photographs in *New Voices* proposed that each member could, through the union, pursue individual and collective happiness.

“The Photo Union”

In 1953 *The Nation* rated the *Union Voice* “outstanding in the labor press” with the national papers of the AFL and the CIO, and *Steel Labor*.¹⁸⁹ The *Union Voice* had certainly continued to be innovative in its strike coverage as well as its cultural emphasis. In the union’s 1953 strike against Hearn’s Department Store the paper printed its trademark mass action shots, but it also developed far more sophisticated photo-layouts and photo-stories to dramatize union struggle. In “A Hearn Striker talks to New York,”

¹⁸⁸ In 1938 only three photos of cultural activity showed the actual activity, most *Justice* photos showed off the performer, or David Dubinsky and some politician or celebrity enjoying “Pins and Needles.”

¹⁸⁹ *The Nation* didn’t mention photography, but the chosen papers made vivid use of photography, either employing a single image—as did the *Union Voice*—in the cover, or

Helen Cooney stood tall beside a flagpole. [Fig. 6-25.]¹⁹⁰ The American flag fell to the right, as Cooney's lanky arms reached left to the microphone that she seemed to steady herself on. Wife to a WWI veteran, and mother to WWII and Korean War veterans, Cooney insisted on her patriotism, and workers' need for seniority rights, severance pay, and economic security at a moment when the union was being red-baited. Cooney had been photographed in the Bronx, speaking from a sound truck to the general public. But the *Union Voice* printed her picture by cutting her out from this context, and laying her out so that her body spanned the back page from top to bottom. The *Union Voice* universalized Cooney's struggle as all workers, suggesting this prim, erect woman had authority, much as *LIFE* had used a similar visual strategy to insist on the power of Detroit's "auto barons." The *Union Voice* employed this visual strategy multiple times during the Hearn strike.¹⁹¹

The paper also offered in-depth portraits of striking workers. "Why We're on Strike at Hearn's" had two photographs: of the seven member Walter Ferrara family and Katherine Flynn, a fifty-year employee. Flynn explained how she was the "sole means of support" for her sister and she was striking for job security, the same thing that Ferrara, a twenty years employee wanted. "American Labor's Newest Heroines" compared the elderly women out at Hearn's, many of them grandmothers, with Mother Jones and the 19th century Lowell mill girls. These heroines, with "bad feet, varicose veins, and high

many photographs like metropolitan newspaper. For *The Nation* story see *UV*, 23 August 1953, sec. 2, m-1.

¹⁹⁰ "A Hearn Striker Talks to New York," *UV*, 28 June 1953, 16.

¹⁹¹ See also "The Lines are Solid, Spirits High," *UV*, 31 May 1953, 16; "All 65's On Strike at Hearn's," *UV*, 14 June 1954, cover; "Hearn's Strikers Crown Their Queen," *UV*, 14 June 1953, m2; "500,000 Signatures Sought to Stop Taft-Hartley Plot at Hearn's!" *UV*, 9 August 1953, cover; "CIO Goes All Out to Win at Hearn's," *UV*, 23 August 1953, cover.

blood pressure” stood “on the line, rain or shine.” Unlike the imposing Mother Jones, these women’s smiles were bashful, though their direct gaze suggested their will to achieve security. *Union Voice*’s strike photographs showed members on the lines, but also speaking, petitioning, holding a coronation for the Queen of the strike, and massaging their aching feet. In iris eye cover photographs matronly women stood, parasols and strike placards poised against the sun. The *Union Voice* universalized and monumentalized strike participants, but it also provided readers an inside look into the human stories of specific strikers.¹⁹²

The *Union Voice* coverage of the Hearn strike, much like its Club 65 story photographs promised a labor journalism that kept in stride with an ever more sophisticated mass media. This promise was not to be fulfilled.¹⁹³ District 65, as it would come to be known when it re-affiliated with the CIO would remain a progressive union that organized marginalized workers. And it would remain committed to culture. But it would never enjoy the propulsive force it had during its first decades. The union was certainly a victim of anti-communism. It was investigated twice by the U.S. House of Representatives: first in 1948, and again in 1952. The second time U.S. Assistant Attorney Roy Cohn jailed Paley, then the union’s Secretary-Treasurer, and the union’s new President, David Livingston, for refusing to give up union records. By this point Osman and other leaders decided re-affiliation was necessary if they were to survive. With re-affiliation, Lisa Phillips argues, the union lost its organizing edge. It also limited

¹⁹² “Why We’re On Strike at Hearn,” *UV*, 14 June 1953, m3; “American Labor’s Newest Heroines,” *UV*, 6 September 1953, m2-3; “65 Battles New Hearn Attacks,” *UV*, 12 July 1953, cover.

¹⁹³ Some of the social activity photos also received attractive layouts. See “Play Ball,” *UV*, 2 May 1954, 16; and “Call to 65ers, You’re needed in B’Dale Drive,” *UV*, 28 January 1954, 2.

cultural activities deemed less directly tied to members' welfare. Phillips maintains the *Union Voice* was an additional "casualty" of returning to the RWDSU umbrella. District 65 published under the RWDSU's control, and 65's paper that had grown to 24 pages was forced to consolidate into an ever diminishing space in the *RWDSU Record*.¹⁹⁴

The paper's Photo Staff also suffered. Nothing in the union's internal records indicate that they chose to limit their photographic efforts; nonetheless, as former chairman Ed Roth put it, "little by little [the Photo Staff's work] just dribbled out." Roth thought the Photo-Staff received less attention from leaders after the early 1950s, as the union had "more pressing problems."¹⁹⁵ Some of the Photo Staff's early leaders moved into upper level positions and were replaced by less personable leaders who had a hard time keeping up Photo Staff spirit.¹⁹⁶ The Photo Staff was also buffeted by the effects of red-baiting on New York's cultural sphere. Its productive relationship with the New

¹⁹⁴ Phillips, "Labor Movement," 15, 250-1. The *Record* could look interesting, but it substituted the focus on leaders that was the staple of labor journalism. For a great cover see "Labor Day-1955," *RWSDU-CIO Record*, 4 September 1955. For leaders see *Record*, 6 June 1954, 1; and "RWDSU Organizing Drive Rolling at Huge New Shopping Center," *Record*, 20 June 1954, 6-7. Such full-scale photo explorations were unusual however. For an inside view of how Local 65 leaders repudiated communism for organizational viability, and the internal "bloodbath" that resulted see Foner, *COHC*, 196-206.

¹⁹⁵ The union was red-baited from the start. *New Voices* reprinted snippets of *New York Times* and *New York Journal* articles where employers claimed the local was communist in its first campaigns in 1936, 15 March 1941, 3. In 1948 the union was investigated for "plugging" May Day parades, contributing to Henry Wallace's campaign and Osman's endorsement of the *Daily Worker* as "Very nice, well put up, compact and very readable," in "Investigation of Communism," 367-390, 400-445. On the 1952 arrests see *UV*, 20 April 1952, 1-4, and m1-5. In 1951, instead of mobilizing members to march on May Day, the Executive Committee let locals decide whether or not to march. That year, only five of the twenty-three locals participated. See Tabb, "White Collar Union," 155. The union did retain some core commitments that were perceived as "communistic" by the right-wing, including its advocacy of international peace during the Cold War and its support of civil rights. *UVs*, 14 January 1951.

York Photo League offered members one of the “best schools in the world,” according to Ed Roth. When the federal government hounded the League out of existence in the early 1950s, Local 65 lost an important ally.¹⁹⁷

But for many years the Photo Staff’s “organizing eye” helped build the union. One Local 65 shutterbug, Manny Molofsky, trained as a G.I. photographer in Denver Colorado. Like many members, he corresponded to his member-friends through the pages of *New Voices* during the war. His open letter to members described his pride in devoting union-won skills to the nation’s defense. He told members he looked forward to returning home and “repaying his debt” to the union by training new member-photographers. Molofsky also shared an anecdote with the *New Voices* editor and readers about meeting another 65er in training camp.

In my class there was a boy arguing about the photo Union. Another one said it was a racket, while a third one said he didn’t think so. He also said he was a member of a Union. In fact the best in the country. Naturally I was curious so I asked him what Union it was. He promptly replied Local 65. When I told him I too was a member of 65, he called me Brother.¹⁹⁸

Imagine—two New Yorkers, finding they were “Brothers” more than halfway across the continent because of their shared commitments to Local 65, the “photo Union.”

¹⁹⁶ The assessment on the photographic quality of later work comes from conversations with the archivist of the collection and an early Photo Staff member. He claimed later club chairmen could not limit their egos for the larger group, Roth interview, *D65 orals*.

¹⁹⁷ For attacks on the Photo League see Bezner, *Photography and Politics*, 16-113; Bethune, “A Case of Overkill,” and *History of Photography* issue devoted to the Photo League, 18 no. 2 (Summer 1994).

¹⁹⁸ “Letters from our Fighting Forces,” *NV*, 4 July 1943, 14.

Conclusion

I began my project looking for something that I believed did not really exist, but had a strong cultural presence: the stereotype of “the welfare queen.” Instead I found something that has been hidden, but was once pervasive: news photographs that defined workers, their struggles, and their place in American life.

The complicated set of images of labor that appeared in labor papers, p.r. campaigns, and mass media venues recommends a broader focus than the documentary and populist aesthetic for the 1930s and 1940s. Without a doubt the populism of documentary photographs, government-sponsored murals, regional scene painting, and political propaganda was a characteristic aesthetic—if not, corporations would not have been so apt to parrot this style in their advertising. But once news photographs of organized labor are factored into an understanding of mid-century visual culture, it is clear that labor’s representation is far too complex to be reduced to a celebration of “the people,” either in aesthetics or in content. If the heroic male laborer symbolized labor’s new collective muscle, in *LIFE* he represented the inter- and intra-class warfare that beset the U.S. with CIO success. If Dorothea Lange’s “Migrant Mother” or Walker Evans’s southern tenant farmer Annie Mae Woods Gudger represented America’s backbone through a threatened maternal survival—in labor papers and in the mass media striking girls with their glorious gams, and their attention to “prinking” more described representations of working women. Even when the proto-feminist Rosie came on the scene, she might be described in feminine terms, not as the can-do woman who broke down the divide between men and women. Labor’s collective strength—men and women

picketing to establish unions—could be represented as symbolic of exciting changes in America’s political and economic landscape both in the labor press and in the mass media—but it could also be visualized as a threat to America and its values—or, not represented at all, as we saw with the early *Steel Labor*. And appearing as new symbols for labor could be found union’s statesmanlike leaders, or a rank and file involved in a consumerist frolic.

Here I’m suggesting two things. A lacunae in the scholarship on photography generally—and the visual culture of the 1930s and 1940s more specifically—mars our understanding of the new “culture of sight and sound” surrounding Americans.

Lawrence Levine and Warren Susman both suggest 1930s popular culture was tension-laden, and when it comes to imagery, we have much to do to describe the contours of working Americans’ representation in the new visual culture.¹ It is difficult to know if Americans were more affected by the strong emotional pull of documentary images or the colorful, vibrant murals of this era instead of the banal, everyday images they might encounter in union papers, or the more visually enticing photos of *LIFE*. But without a doubt Americans became increasingly attuned to the visual over the course of the 1930s and the continued focus on a subset of imagery ignores the commercial and institutional

¹ Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 164 argues in “The Culture of the Thirties,” that as much as this era’s culture, including its new “culture of sight and sound,” critiqued “the failures and meaninglessness of an urban-industrial civilization,” it also was nationalistic and “reinforced conformity,” in ways that were “far more conservative than radical.” Lawrence Levine writes of the tensions in the photographic record of the FSA in “The Historian and the Icon: Photography and the History of the American People in the 1930s and 1940s,” in Carl Fleischauer and Beverly Brannan, eds., *Documenting America, 1935-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 15-42, especially 20-27. See also his “The Folklore of Industrial Culture: Popular

media that saturated Americans' lives to an ever greater degree.² Additionally, the focus on the populist, laborer, or common man and woman aesthetic, certainly a focus of much mid-century arts, whether government-sponsored or individually made, misses a cultural sphere crammed with contradictory messages about everyday working Americans that shaped their destiny.³

Symbolic battles about organized labor waged with photographic imagery show the fluidity of relationships between culture and politics, and labor and business under consumer capitalism. Conceptions of labor's place in American life operated not only in

Culture and its Audiences," *American Historical Review*, 97 (December 1992), 1369-1399.

² An analysis of dissertations, books, book reviews and articles addressing mid-century American photography appearing in *American History and Life* over the course of the past decade would find approximately 100 citations. Admittedly an "unscientific" survey, the record shows some interesting holes. There were more citations on war photography or the OWI, or on art photography, than on photojournalism. A quarter of the citations addressed the FSA, or individual documentarians such as Doris Ullman or Louis Faurer. There are a few interesting exceptions. See Bonie Brennan, "Strategic Competition and the Value of Photographer's Work: Photojournalism in Gannett Newspapers, 1937-1947," *American Journalism* 15, no. 2 (1998): 59-77; Keith Kenney and Brent Unger, "The Mid-Week Pictorial: Forerunner of American News-Picture Magazines," *American Journalism*, 11 no. 3 (1994): 242-256; and two articles on resistance to news photos into the 1930s: Jonathon Coopersmith, "From Lemons to Lemonade: The Development of AP Wirephoto," *American Journalism* 17 no. 4 (2000): 55-72; and Barbie Zelizer, "Journalism's 'Last' Stand: Wirephoto and the Discourse of Resistance," *Journal of Communication*, 45 no. 2 (1995): 78-92. A quick scan on Project Muse replicates this finding, though there are a few additional articles on the New York tabloid photographer Weegee (Arthur Felig). Photojournalism as an institutional practice and as a practice of individual photographers is woefully understudied. It's impossible to know exactly why this is the case. The banality of many of these photos; the anonymous nature of their practitioners; the difficulty in attributing intent given the multiple "authors" of the work, the added difficulty of interpretation once sequencing and text is added; and of course the biggest obstacle, the seemingly limited nature of the archive might contribute to this lacunae.

³ In *American History and Life* there are no citations that expressly address organized labor, and none that address workers, though one can assume that of the dozens of citations on the documentary, some address working Americans. To set up a bizarre

the political and economic spheres, but also in the cultural realms of American life.

To understand labor's successes and failures we must grapple not only with worker culture, or union culture, but the larger culture organized labor operated within as mid-century visual culture helped and hindered labor in its battles to gain recognition.

The camera's democratic potential was touted from the instrument's invention in the nineteenth century. Anyone dexterous enough to manipulate a mechanical instrument and some chemicals could re-create reality. George Eastman further facilitated the medium's use with his Kodak, which promised, "you push the button, we do the rest." He filled his pockets by making photography part of a mass-leisure and mass-consumer economy. The middle class embraced the camera by the turn of the century, and by the 1930s many working Americans had cameras.⁴

If Eastman imagined a classless leisure pastime, others imagined a class-specific photography. As we've seen, Lewis Hine, operating from the premise that class divided America, argued the "popularizing of camera work...by those...in the thick of the battle" offered workers a crucial "lever for social uplift."⁵ Hine believed in an expansive notion of democracy, one where workers contributed to, and could draw upon, the promise of

contrast, the subjects of photography and lynching, American Indians, the Holocaust, Hollywood, and the West all have multiple citations. The same is true on Project Muse.

⁴ Oliver Wendell Holmes's essays, loping excursions into the meaning of photography sketched the democratic potential of the medium while expressing anxiety about its possibilities. "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1859, 738-747; "Sun Painting and Sun Sculpture," *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1861, 13-19; and "Doings of the Sunbeam," *Atlantic Monthly*, 1-15. See Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 102-106. Strasser shows how into the 1920s Eastman Kodak's marketing strategy primarily sought elite consumers.

⁵ Lewis Hine, "Social Photography, How the Camera May Help in Social Uplift," *Proceedings, National Conference on Charities and Corrections* (June 1909), in Alan

American life. He himself took up photography to document the burgeoning social inequalities of the Machine Age. For Hine, the camera let workers illustrate their vital contributions to American life, and point to gaps in the nation's promise to its citizenry.⁶

Despite the ease with which the average American worker could snap a photograph, Lewis Hine's notion of a self-conscious, working-class photography has seldom come to pass in the U.S.⁷ Instead, following Eastman's marketing strategies, Americans photographed only a slice of their lives—their domestic celebrations and intimate life.⁸ Close to a century after Hine visited the steel-making town of Homestead, Pennsylvania, two academic investigators retraced his steps. They found “few people in

Trachtenberg, *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 109-113.

⁶ James Guimond's *American Photography and the American Dream* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 57-98, also makes this argument.

⁷ Workers in other industrialized nations did realize Hine's hopes. In Germany thousands of workers represented their lives to other workers by organizing camera clubs and workers photojournals like the *Der Arbeiter Fotograf*. Their efforts spawned similar groups in England, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Holland, Austria and France. These groups were connected with Communist organizing efforts in Europe. Leah Ollman, *Camera as Weapon: Worker Photography between the Wars* (San Diego: Museum of Photographic Arts, 1991). In a parallel case study, Steven Ross documented workers intense interest in motion pictures, and how this interest was ultimately quashed by a highly concentrated industry which tightly controlled production, distribution and exhibition practices. *Working Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁸ The French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, notes class distinctions in the making of photographs, with workers documenting their personal lives, and the middle class being more apt to take photographs with artistic ambitions. See Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, trans. by Shaun Whiteside (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). There is agreement on the domestic quality of much snap shooting, in line with the hopes of the Eastman Kodak corporation. Kodak makes far more money from snap shooters, than from professional, or serious amateurs like the District 65 camera club. See Don Slater, “Marketing Mass Photography,” in *Language, Image, Media*, edited by Howard Davis and Paul Walton (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 244-263; and Slater, “Consuming Kodak,” in *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography*, edited by Jo Spence and Patricia Holland (London: Virago Press,

Homestead had snapshot versions of laboring and learning to labor. Outsiders take pictures of work, but insiders do not.”⁹

If workers as individuals rarely defined their labors or their collective needs and ambitions with the camera, the institutions surrounding them did. We’ve seen how not only New York’s distributive workers union, but also the United Steel Workers of America increasingly used photographs to draw members into specific visions of union life. Many Americans must have been touched by the labor press, which by 1950 came to the homes of workers—perhaps thirty million union papers reached American working men and women by 1953.¹⁰ The CIO’s new journalism was a far cry from the “treatises on the humanities and labor ideology” found in earlier AFL papers. Echoing J.B.S. Hardman’s assessment of the labor press, Ben Pearse, writing for the *Nation*, suggested that accompanying the CIO’s new industrial unionism came a “mass-production journalism,” with national editions, clip sheets, columns, and editorials. Pearse claimed that “there were still too many pages of solid type and too many pictures of officials shaking hands” and he quoted the San Francisco Labor Council which believed there were “too many...smudgy mat-service photos of an individual laying a cornerstone in Peewee, Ohio.” Nonetheless, he pointed to *Steel Labor* and *New Voices* as exemplars of the labor press’s “trend” toward “readability”—though he could also have said visuality.¹¹

1991), 49-59. Douglas Nickel, “The Snapshot: Some Notes,” in *Snapshots: The Photography of Everyday Life* (San Francisco Museum of Art, 1998), 9-14.

⁹ Judith Modell and Charlee Brodsky, *A Town Without Steel: Envisioning Homestead* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), xv.

¹⁰ Ben Pearse, “The Labor Press,” *The Nation*, 25 July 1953, 71.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 72-73. The CIO and AFL sponsored the Labor Press Association to furnish these options and photos.

If unions used photos to shape conceptions of organized labor and its possibilities, so too did corporations. We've seen how in quaint Hershey, and in the begrimed mill towns Tonowanda, New York or Canton, Ohio corporations and peak associations believed photographs could make unions seem violent and anti-American. Mass media corporations, best exemplified by *LIFE*, also defined labor in its photographs. Prior to the 1930s the mass media was more apt to ignore workers, or to treat them voyeuristically, as a type, or "Other" they could view without "compassion," or "romantically," as part of a new urban scene.¹² We've seen how not only *LIFE*, but also *Newsweek* and *TIME* increasingly represented organized labor over the course of the 1930s and 1940s. Though the *Saturday Evening Post* never gave up its condemnation of organized labor, other mass-circulation magazines like *Collier's* forwent its enchantment with winter ski slopes and other middle-class leisure activities to cover an increasingly organized working class during the war years.¹³

In part, labor's growing stature within the public imagination can be traced through press coverage of its leaders. During Samuel Gompers's life, no publication beyond the middle-class opinion or muckraking journals ever covered him as they did

¹² Peter Seixas, "Lewis Hine: From 'Social' to 'Interpretive' Photographer," *American Quarterly*, 39 no. 3 (Autumn 1987): 381-2

¹³ For *The Saturday Evening Post's* continued condemnation of organized labor see "Why doesn't CIO Let Those Erring Communists Go," 29 October, 1949, 10; "Why Can't Wage Disputes be Settled like other Controversies, By Law?" 16 July 1949, 12; "Will it be the Organized Labor Department," 8 January 1949, 104; "Having More by Making Less is Still Bunk," 31 July 1948, 96; "Blueprint for Conquest of a Labor Union," 3 July 1948, 104; "Whose Government is It," 5 July 1947, 120; and "Who Wins by Stabbing America," 22 June 1946, 132. *Collier's* also covered labor more, and was only a bit more tolerant. See S. Stavitsky, "Can the CIO Get Rid of the Commies?" 29 October 1949, 18-19. L. Budenz, "Red Web in U.S. Labor," 23 October 1948, 13-14; "Manpower Boosters," 12 June 1943, 18-20 and "Workingman's War," 19 April 1941,

America's industrial titans. His successor, William Green, merited even less, a mere handful of articles in the *Literary Digest* and the *Review of Reviews*.¹⁴ Contrasted to coverage of industrial heads like Henry Ford, Walter Chrysler, Judge Gary, or even Myron Taylor, labor was not much on the public mind nor labor's face before the public eye, in part because national magazine's were not much interested in putting it there. During the CIO's rise leaders like John Lewis, Philip Murray, Harry Bridges, David Dubinsky, Sidney Hillman, and Walter Reuther appeared again and again in a variety of mass media venues—sometimes as chieftans of exotic warring tribes, but other times as statesmanlike administrators who shaped American economic life.

Workers themselves appeared as participants in a new America. As productive labor in the pages of *LIFE* or *Steel Labor*; as men shaking the vacation checks brought to them by their union in *Steel Labor*; as content homeowners in *LIFE* or *Steel Labor*; or as couples kicking up their heels in communal dance or falling in love in the photographs of *LIFE* or *New Voices*, workers took a step into a world that seemed less bound by class. Workers, with cash in hands and glee in their hearts, could partake of the leisure and consumer activities of other Americans—the new American Dream. As James Guimond writes, in the Dream, “America [is] a kind of magic environment that has the power to transform people's lives....a unique place where the limitations, boundaries and

26, all *Collier's*. For their labor coverage in the 1930s see Ch. 2, “Consuming Labor,” n. 75.

¹⁴ When Gompers died in 1924, his passing was covered by many of the major magazines, *Collier's*, *New Republic*, and the *Literary Digest*. See also J. Spargo, “Passing of Gompers and the future of Organized Labor,” *North American Review* 221 (March 1925), 405-416; “Will the Death of Samuel Gompers Split Labor?” *Literary Digest*, 27 December 1924, 10-11; and R.W. Breure, “Gompers: The Sources of His Power,” *Survey*, 1 February 1925, 539-541. On Green see “Green vs. Red in the A. F. of

inequities that formerly confined the human race either do not exist or are about to disappear.” Guimond argues for two conceptions of the Dream: one conservative, where an Algeresque select enjoy their just rewards, and another, more egalitarian, which assumes that “citizens of all ranks,” should have better lives.¹⁵ In keeping with Nelson Lichtenstein’s notion that mass production and consumption could lead to a “humane capitalism and reinvigorated democracy,” news photos in a variety of venues seemed to show that workers and their unions were woven into a new America with promise for all.¹⁶

But even as news photographs in labor papers and the mass media visually integrated workers into a new vision of America, such photographs also constrained organized labor. We’ve seen how *Steel Labor* never represented the real lacks in workers lives: how limits in wages led to execrable housing choices for many workers and absolute limits in clothing and food choices. Members knew the problems they faced. A Chicago women’s auxiliary complained about the “insecurity, poor wages and continual want” of steel families, and the “sordid surroundings and hopeless outlook” that resulted. In words that called on the documentary tradition, she wrote, “Verily, one half of this country knows not how the other half lives, or at least does not bother to describe...such underprivileged as the steel workers, unless their pitiful stories can be embellished with picturesque or notorious surroundings.”¹⁷ Her words betray an ambivalent relationship to

L,” *Literary Digest*, 24 October 1925, 12-13; and “Labor’s Chief: William Green,” *Review of Reviews*, November 1933, 21-23.

¹⁵ Guimond, *American Photography*, 12-16.

¹⁶ Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 25-26.

¹⁷ “The Convenient Forgotten,” *Women in Steel*, vol. 6 (March 1937), 3 in microfilms, *Chicago Historical Society*.

workers' representation. On the one hand she suggests workers wants, on the other hand she notes "pitiful stories," and "embellishment" that steel workers perhaps wanted no part of. But despite the pervasiveness of the documentary aesthetic and its success in building support for the New Deal, her husband's union paper chose not to describe its member-workers as "the other half" in photographs. Similarly distributive workers, some of the most underpaid New York workers, seemed more comfortable describing the utopic possibilities of unionism. Intriguingly the union newspaper, *New Voices*, never documented the gap between union aspirations and reality for many workers, mimicking mass media like *LIFE*, which also never represented workers' want.¹⁸ It's impossible to know why this is the case. Perhaps unions were shielding members from the "intrusive eye" of the camera, insisting on workers' respectability. Perhaps unions thought an aspirational message was better strategy. But this failure to represent also raises the possibility that workers had a harder time convincing the larger public of their needs—they were not unmentionable, they were not even seen.

Similarly the failure of magazines like *LIFE*, and union's own papers, like *Steel Labor*, to represent rank and file members as active creators of union life may have affected workers' sense of possibility. In both venues workers were recipients of union's success—they didn't create it themselves. Unions found real ways to limit participation by members, whether it was cutting off members from organizers, keeping them in the dark about the inner workings of the union, organizing local meetings that failed to excite

¹⁸ *New Voices* photographers did do one project where they documented workers' homes, almost all of which were made to look like the suburban ideal, with family joined in a spacious living room, nice furniture and even television sets. A few of these photos were printed in *New Voices*. A few photos were taken of tenement buildings, where workers

interest, or developing social activities and social spaces like union halls that felt exclusive. But representation matters too. Labor news editors along with mass media editors might have educated unionists or the general public about involvement as solidarity, or at a minimum as citizenship, but they often did not.

The representation of workers and their unions found in news photographs also limited union power by stratifying membership by race and gender. We saw with *New Voices* how photographs could imagine a equitable community where men and women, black and white, worked, played, and organized together. This vision was a rare one. In *LIFE* African-Americans were barely represented at all, much less as union members. In *Steel Labor* African-Americans were represented with a high degree of decorum. The women of the Timken Rolling Mills appeared as serious and committed, with the full-bust portrait typically reserved for leaders, and this portrayal was used for African American civil rights and community leaders as well. If *New Voices* almost seamlessly wove black members into union life, these other publications—both union and mass market—marked African Americans difference either through erasure or respect, making African-Americans distinct from other rank and file. Similarly, women were represented as dissimilar from the average member. As scholars such as Elizabeth Faue, Angel Kwollek-Folland, Patricia Cooper, and Dana Frank maintain, the focus on gender difference made it hard for women's participation in the union movement to be taken seriously. Women were perceived as subsidiary players in the union movement, pleasing to look at perhaps, but not full-fledged activists. White men members might have had a

their families were crammed into small spaces with bare light bulbs, and kitchen and sleeping quarters joined. Such photos were never printed.

harder time understanding their community of interests with women and black members given their clear demarcation, even in their own union papers.¹⁹

Finally, the representation of violence in news photographs suggested a link between union activism and threats to the social order. Unionist described the toll of bad press—and imagery. George Patterson, the Chicago steelworker and union activist, described press photographers seeking “some action,” who gave write-ups that were “disastrous” to the “cause.”²⁰ Also conscious of the power of photographs was Henry Kraus, active in the UAW’s organization. Kraus wrote of Pearl Berghoff’s “streamlined...new times, new methods” strikebreaking techniques. He described the “core idea” of the campaign, which echoed Bergoff’s description of the Mohawk Valley Plan to the LaFollette Committee. The activities “exalted” a “peace loving, contented, ‘American’ *majority*,” who sought to dominate a “violent, trouble-making, radical *minority*.” [Italics his.] General Motors’ used its in-house publication to promote this message. The *IMA News* “blossomed” from a “neuter sports and fraternal sheet” with

¹⁹ Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Angel Kwollek-Folland, “Gender, Self, and Work in the Life Insurance Industry, 1880-1930,” in Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 168-190; Patricia Cooper, “The Faces of Gender: Sex Segregation and Work Relations at Philco, 1928-1938,” in Baron, *Work Engendered*, 320-30; and Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

²⁰ See Patterson, “Embryo of a Steel Worker,” 160 -161, b9f6, and his interview by Ed Sadlowski, b10f7, both in Patterson Papers, *Chicago Historical Society*. Patterson also described how one steel company, Fansteel in North Chicago “took over” the Chicago papers. The company created a publicity stunt, the “Trojan Horse,” a scaffold that allowed police to get into the mill after pelting workers with gas. The end result, a “mecca for cameramen and reporters” who clicked their cameras and wrote their stories. Patterson was right, the Fansteel story enthralled national media as well. *LIFE* readers

cartoons, “into a news organ devoted to printing ‘items of fact,’” and photos which “emphasized this viewpoint, showing a small group of fist-waving, frenzied men standing at the plant gates while an enormous mass of calm and silent workers approached slowly and inexorably toward them.” Kraus noted that Detroit papers took photos of “several thousand workers waiting for their checks” and printed large, eight-column spread images, under captions which said the photos showed a “protest meeting,” with men who were in an “ugly mood.”²¹

That a company in-house paper would use the resources at hand to promote its anti-union ideology is no surprise. And press photographers do seek out violence—for over a century their job had been to capture the newsworthy and the spectacular, and the turmoil arising from strikes offered both.²² The Mohawk Valley Plan formulated by James Rand, promulgated by NAM, and instituted by professional strike breakers like Pearl Bergoff and corporate heads like Tom Girdler, Earnest Weir, Alfred Sloan certainly sought to establish the equation of labor and violence in the public’s mind. To a large degree they were successful. Labor’s congressional allies on the LaFollette Committee established corporate and state responsibility for such violence. But in the press, unions were typically called to account for this violence, not corporations.

Unions themselves, as we saw with *Steel Labor*, even shied away from addressing strike violence. If “public opinion” was a determinant in labor struggles, and there’s no

were treated to the story of “a novel way to end a sit-down strike,” a “strange implement of war.” *LIFE*, 8 March, 1937, 16.

²¹ Henry Kraus, *The Many and the Few: A Chronicle of the Dynamic Auto Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2nd ed., 1985), 116-120.

²² Jack Price, *News Pictures* (New York: Round Table Press, 1937), 34-35, writes of a cameraman “assigned to a second-rate labor dispute,” who caught a labor melee between

question that business thought it was, unions, despite their long-term victory at stemming corporate violence, couldn't seem to shake the image that labor was at the bottom of troubles. The most significant economic action a union could take, the strike, seemed anarchic and anti-American, making it harder for unions to prevail.

Expanding what we look at when looking at labor in the 1930s and 1940s suggests that the pro-business publicity attack that sought to assert managerial prerogatives and stem union and New Deal growth succeeded in the 1930s, a period where corporations are seen as on the defensive. Labor historians of management's p.r., Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and John Howell Harris, analyze the import of attacks by NAM, the Chamber of Commerce, and even the more liberal Committee on Economic Development. Both suggest anti-union campaigns began in the 1930s, but their primary focus is on the war period and afterwards. While both examine employee relations, community relations, and different forms of propaganda like film or pamphlets, neither one examines the building blocks of such campaigns, such as news photography.²³ While Richard Tedlow and Stuart Ewen focus more on media campaigns by the NAM, only Ewen examines imagery. He too notes how the "forgotten man," was appropriated as visual rhetoric by NAM for its free enterprise campaign which appeared in many media, including cartoons, billboards, and educational booklets.²⁴ This analysis

unionists and the police. "One classic shot of this battle received a high award in an annual exhibition of news photographs."

²³ Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 1-10, and 32-57; Howell John Harris, *The Right to Manage: Industrial Relations Policies of American Business in the 1940's* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 39-40, 192-199.

²⁴ Richard Tedlow, *Keeping the Corporate Image, Public Relations and Business* (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1979), 59-105. Stuart Ewen, *PR!: A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 307-316.

applies these insights into specific strikes, and shows how NAM and its corporate affiliates made and illustrated the news exactly as they hoped to. The incidents at Hershey, and also with Republic Steel, show how the texture of reality itself could be shaped for millions of Americans. Even if companies could no longer rely on guns, gas, and knuckles in their fight with unions, they were well on their way to identifying themselves with core American values and interests, helping them win the war for minds.

The contradictory messages about labor found in news photography also suggests that much of the recent scholarship on mass culture and labor which sees possibilities for workers must be qualified. Countering earlier critics of mass media, scholars have recently maintained that mass cultural tools like the union media helped strengthen the union movement. Lizabeth Cohen claims that mass culture was “shared,” diminishing earlier ethnic and cultural differences that hurt union drives. She argues the CIO employed tools of mass communication such as labor papers and radio stations to generate solidarity. Jointly, this “culture of unity” advanced the CIO.²⁵ Michael Denning’s *The Culture Front* premises a “laboring of American culture” that occurred in the 1930s through the 1970s. Denning shares Cohen’s optimistic view that union culture, and unionists’ participation in a larger mass culture, strengthened unionism through a “cultural front.”²⁶ That “shared culture” was double-edged. The culture that union

²⁵ Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 324-333. Cohen’s analysis of mass culture and working class activism sparked lively debate over the role of 1930s mass culture in facilitating unionism. She deals with the common culture of workers in the 1930s. She argues that radio broadcasts, and *Steel Labor* in particular were key to generating broad support for the CIO and its activism, 341-7.

²⁶ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1997), xvi-xvii. Denning and Cohen challenged earlier assessments of a mass culture that “enslaves” workers into “‘obedience’ to the

leaders and rank and file members “labored” so hard to create was at times a culture of rank and file passivity, of dependence on leadership, or inequality between different groups of workers. The “culture of unity” provoked by an ever more pervasive national mass culture, sometimes thwarted the union and workers’ capacity to create an expanded role for themselves within the union and within society.

Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s several Popular Front experiments in photojournalism attempted to represent labor and its demand by documenting working Americans distance from the nation’s pledge of possibility. *Photo History* offered a retrospective look at labor. In its analysis state and corporate violence was put to the fore, and the injustices of the American courts to labor was also condemned. Unlike *New Voices*, *Photo History* played with the layout of photographs, offering its readers photomontage, along with bold layouts akin to *LIFE*’s visual style.²⁷ The well-known *PM* analyzed why workers supported unions, it examined the continued use of force against labor, and it did stories on economically ravaged steel towns, showing the gap between working Americans lives, and the promise they’d been given. Photos were central to their new journalism²⁸ *Friday*, another Popular Front effort, ran stories on the average New York worker. One story offered an intimate, domestic portrait of the

social hierarchy.” This is the (in)famous Frankfurt School dicta. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) 120-167.

²⁷ See “Labor’s Challenge,” a special issue of *Photo History*, 1 no. 2, July 1937. *Photo History* ran for one year, from April of 1937 to 1938.

²⁸ For *PM*’s interest in labor see, Paul Milkman, *PM: A New Deal in Journalism: 1940-1948* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 108, 114, 116, 125, 129, 131-135, 138-145. See also Roy Hoopes, *Ralph Ingersoll: A Biography* (New York: Atheneum, 1985).

worker, along with other pictures that documented the worker's spare home life.²⁹

But all these Popular Front commercial experiments in photojournalism failed, most within a brief time span. By 1950 *LIFE*'s vision of promise for workers, an optimistic, if glossy and glossed over image, prevailed. Simultaneously the documentary aesthetic lost its government sponsor—*LIFE* even crowed to its membership about Congressional attacks against propagandistic photographers.³⁰ One of the most famous private efforts at promoting the documentary aesthetic, the New York Photo League, was hounded out of existence for communism. Instead, the vague humanist spirit of the "Family of Man" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art took its place. Contributing many of the photographs were *LIFE* cameramen and women.³¹ Documentary photography didn't go away, it just lost its cultural salience. Soon television would alter the visual landscape entirely.

The labor movement itself still fought battles, but the terrain was different. An uneasy truce prevailed between companies and the labor movement. The SWOC kicked out communists in 1939, and the CIO was forced to kick out left-led unions in the late 1940s, blunting in part, labor's radical edge. Soon, the CIO would join with the AFL.

A current bumper sticker exclaims: "Unions, the folks that brought you the weekend." The bumper sticker works because it highlights a "forgotten" element of American history. Many of us enjoy the weekend, health insurance, access to consumer

²⁹ *Friday* began publication in March of 1940, and ended publication in 1941.

³⁰ Guimond writes about this in *American Photography*, 141. "Senator on Warpath," *LIFE*, 7 June 1948, 40-41. *LIFE* offered as one of the FSA's "better work," a white church, its steeple piercing a New England sky. Their choice is indicative of *LIFE*'s vision of Americanism.

³¹ Lili Corbus Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal into the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999), 16-113.

goods, welfare or unemployment insurance, because two generations ago workers and their unions fought to extend them to working Americans. In the past two decades these advances have been stripped away, but as Jack Metzgar reminds us in *Striking Steel*:

“Unions played an essential part in changing the rules of the game in all aspects of American life. The dramatic improvements in working conditions and life standards that we still take for granted today would not be there for us to defend or lose if the unions of the 50s had been as weak, corrupt and inconsequential as they appear in the official memory of postwar America.”³²

Metzgar describes how traditional histories and cultural critics slight labor’s contributions, at the same time they erase the difficulties of workers lives, then and now.

For reasons intrinsic and extrinsic to organized labor, its path wasn’t quite the one they first hoped for. Labor leaders believed they had to muzzle rank and file activism to maintain their stability, but in so doing they lost their propulsive power. By isolating women and African-American workers they consoled many white male laborers, but ultimately failed to organize a heterogeneous workforce. Labor’s allies built a welfare state that protected many Americans, but the deals and compromises they submitted to in establishing these programs endangered the whole two generations later.³³ Historians of labor and political culture have done a superb job of exploring these dynamics. Cultural historians have contributions to make as well.

³² Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 209.

³³ Historians have advanced a variety of explanations for organized labor’s inability to solidify and extend its hold on American life. Persistent racial and gender divisions within the working class and within the union movement; the government switch to “commercial” over government-driven Keynesianism; the imposition of “rule of law” and administrative activism over rank and file militancy; along with business’s renewed authority, all, in different ways, help explain labor’s rout. For a brief introduction to these arguments see Gary Gerstle and Steve Fraser, *The Rise and Fall of the New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Photography, a preeminent recorder of what is, could simultaneously help create what is not. In the balance, news photography visualized workers as participants in the American dream. But it also narrowed the political and economic terrain workers and unions could operate on, and ultimately contained their place within that Dream. American labor underwent a revolutionary transformation from 1900 to 1950. By the 1950s, it could be argued, American industrial workers were not only politically incorporated into American life, but culturally incorporated as well. Organized labor entered the arena of mass culture as subjects and producers, affecting the representation of themselves and their struggles. But labor achieved a limited bargain at the moment of its greatest strides, and pictures not only document this, but contributed to it.

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