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The Fight Over John Q: How Labor Won and Lost the Public in Postwar America, 1947-1959

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The Fight Over John Q: 
How Labor Won and Lost the Public in Postwar America, 1947-1959

by

Rachel Burstein

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

2014
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

The Fight Over John Q: How Labor Won and Lost the Public in Postwar America, 1947-1959

by

Rachel Burstein

Adviser: Joshua Freeman

This study examines the infancy of large-scale, coordinated public relations by organized labor in the postwar period. Labor leaders’ outreach to diverse publics became a key feature of unions’ growing political involvement and marked a departure from the past when unions used organized workers – not the larger public – to pressure legislators. The new recognition of the liberal public as an important ally and the creation of a program for targeting it signaled larger shifts in the American labor movement: the embrace of bureaucracy akin to other major postwar institutions; the promotion of politics over collective bargaining as the defining objective of the labor movement; the prominence of a new, educated class of labor leaders; and the deradicalization of American unionism in favor of the postwar liberal consensus.

The dissertation details PR approaches of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and Congress of Industrial Organizations’ (CIO) at particular crisis points in the late 1940s and 1950s, after World War II and before the emergence of the civil rights movement and New Left. These campaigns were responsive and defensive and showed the difficulty labor leaders had in controlling the terms of debate, even as they were successful in maintaining rhetorical popular support. The case studies examined in this dissertation are: 1) the AFL and CIO’s efforts to defeat the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947; 2) the role of politics – particularly the 1948 election and the third party campaign of Henry Wallace – in forcing CIO leaders to expel communist unions from their ranks; 3) the 1955 merger of the AFL and CIO and labor’s efforts to counter the trope of
“big labor” in a world in which large institutions and elite groups increasingly vied for control; and 4) the AFL-CIO’s efforts to redefine itself in the face of accounts of union corruption during Congressional hearings on racketeering in organized labor from 1957 to 1959. In all of these cases, labor leaders positioned themselves and the union members they represented as part of a larger public committed to the same political objectives. Ultimately, this was a losing bet; they traded relevance for acceptability.
Acknowledgements

The work of the historian is often solitary. She spends many hours alone in basement archives sifting through dusty documents, or at her desk reading books and writing and rewriting manuscripts. But good history – the kind that challenges assumptions and captures some of the messiness of how and why people of the past behaved as they did and the outcomes of their decisions – emerges, at least in part, from engaging others. There is no end to the nonsense that one can think if one thinks too long in his own head. I am grateful to the many people who helped push this project forward through their critiques and encouragement, allowing me to get out of my own head and onto the page. Their contributions have made this dissertation a better product.

I am grateful to my adviser, Joshua Freeman, whose fine work in labor history and the postwar period I first came to know in college. Professor Freeman’s willingness to see this project through many years and many twists and turns speaks volumes about his commitment to his students. He consistently provided timely and valuable comments. I appreciate his willingness to take me seriously as a scholar and I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work with him. Joshua Brown helped me launch this project and offered important advice about how to frame the project in the context of the media of the time. Thomas Kessner, David Nasaw and Clarence Taylor all asked pointed questions that got me thinking in new ways. In addition, Professors Freeman, Brown, Kessner, Nasaw and Taylor are all exceedingly good people, a fact that has made my work with them a pleasure.

I am also grateful to the many institutions that have supported this project through grants and scholarships. The CUNY Graduate Center awarded me the Chancellor’s Fellowship, the Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Fellowship, a University Fellowship and the Michael Braun
Dissertation Fellowship in Labor History. The latter was especially meaningful as Michael Braun was a close colleague and friend whom I miss dearly. External funding came from the Colonial Dames of America, the Friends of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Library, the Hagley Museum and Library, the David Howe Fund for Business and Economic History at Harvard University and the Oxford Journals Business History Conference Doctoral Colloquium.

Many archivists shared their expertise as I conducted research for this project. I am grateful to staff at the Catholic University of America, the George Meany Memorial Archives, the Hagley Museum and Library, the New York Public Library, the Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, the Walter P. Reuther Library, the University of Michigan and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. William W. LeFevre at the Reuther Library and Sarah Springer at the George Meany Memorial Archives were especially helpful.

My greatest debt is to my family. My parents, Dotty and Paul Burstein continued to express interest in my graduate school career, long past the point when most people would have stopped listening. My brother, Will Burstein offered encouragement. My daughter, Ruby May Schifeling (generally) tolerated her mother’s retreat to the computer with a smile. Ruby was likely so willing to let me work because she knew that she would be in the care of my incredible husband, Jeremy Schifeling. He has been so many things to me throughout graduate school – an expert reader, researcher, proofreader and formatter, but above all, a loving, encouraging and constant presence. He is a mensch and I am grateful to him in more ways than he’ll ever know.
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Introduction

In the fall of 1955, with the merger of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) almost complete and labor union membership rates poised to reach new heights, the Teamsters dedicated a fancy, new building in Washington, D.C., a stone’s throw from the U.S. Senate. Nicknamed the “Marble Palace,” the Teamsters’ headquarters epitomized the new image of the labor movement in the postwar period – modernism, professionalism, power, bureaucracy, and sophistication. Violent strikes and tense contract negotiations still made headlines, but, increasingly, unions like the Teamsters showed their strength in gleaming buildings positioned close to the halls of Congress.

At the building dedication, AFL President George Meany told attendees, “Good public relations begin at home, rather than in Washington.” Meany plugged local unions’ community service programs and hailed the Teamsters’ efforts to promote better housing, roads, schools and social services in towns and cities throughout the nation. To be sure, these activities had value in their own right. But for Meany and other high-ranking labor officials in the middle of the twentieth century, the significance of local efforts lay elsewhere. If the public recognized the value of organized labor, then “their elected representatives in Washington are bound to become more friendly and less hostile to our cause,” Meany argued.¹ Increasingly, union leaders sought political influence on behalf of their own members and the larger public – groups they saw as less distinct than in the past. And increasingly, they pursued outreach to the public in order to advance that legislative agenda.

Labor leaders’ conception of the public owed much to a developing understanding of the value and meaning of public opinion in the twentieth century. Journalist Walter Lippmann’s

¹ George Meany, Teamsters Headquarters Dedication Speech, November 4, 1955; George Meany Papers, Box 59, Fol. 73; GMMA.
1922 work, *Public Opinion* introduced the idea of an irrational, uninformed public, whose opinions could and should be influenced by responsible media capable of synthesizing facts representing truth.\(^2\) Lippmann argued that without such intervention, political elites – themselves unable to see the forest from the trees – would make decisions with potentially disastrous consequences. For Lippmann, the public was essential to democracy, but he remained pessimistic about the public’s ability to sort reality from propaganda.

In the late 1940s, the sociologist C. Wright Mills sought to break down Lippmann’s undifferentiated mass of the public, distinguishing six “politically alert publics” (the far left, the independent left, the liberal center, the communists, the practical right, and the sophisticated conservatives) from “the great American public of politically passive people.”\(^3\) Mills’ political publics were not subject to the manipulation that Lippmann described. They were informed and engaged. Mills also expressed the belief that members of the politically passive public might enter the ranks of the politically active publics. As such, Mills saw an opportunity for union officials to engage both groups in order to obtain and retain “status and future power.”

But Mills also recognized that it made far more sense for labor leaders to court the independent left and the liberal center than it did to engage other political publics. He argued that these groups – particularly liberals – were most likely to support organized labor and could be mobilized to labor’s advantage. Mills painted liberals as naïve members of the middle class who sought to retain their political purity and connection to the “the people” by supporting unions. Mills’ liberals were timid and unambitious when it came to the future of labor, presuming that unions were and should be no more than member organizations with a narrow political agenda. But the liberal center could also be a valuable ally.

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A younger generation of anticommunist AFL and CIO leaders of the late 1940s and 1950s embraced Mills’ belief in the power of the liberal public to advance labor’s political agenda, though most viewed the liberal center as a more sophisticated and compelling ally than Mills did. It was this public that they most courted, though they sometimes also pursued a general public akin to Lippmann’s undifferentiated masses and Mills’ politically passive public, particularly when using the channels of mass media. Like Lippmann, labor leaders at mid-century saw the potential of external groups like labor to influence the public and political elites alike, but they viewed this role without cynicism, as a responsibility and public service.

To perform this role, labor unions in the postwar period adopted far reaching public relations strategies. These were broader than just the activities of public relations departments – themselves largely postwar creations. Labor leaders reached out to both members and the liberal public in numerous ways through both paid and unpaid media: speeches, press appearances, pamphlets and publications, radio and television programs, Congressional testimony, advertisements, and word-of-mouth. They deemphasized the specifics of collective bargaining negotiations and, instead, focused on the power of unions to better the quality of life for all Americans. This betterment came through contracts that raised wages and benefits for all workers, regardless of union membership; through the maintenance of industrial peace that allowed production to keep pace with consumer demands; and most importantly, through labor’s power to influence policy in Washington. Union leaders claimed that twisting arms on Capitol Hill on issues as varied as health care, Social Security, housing, infrastructure improvements, the minimum wage, and labor law demonstrated their status as a public interest group, speaking for all Americans.
Business leaders, industry groups, and conservatives countered this contention, arguing that organized labor was a narrow special interest group, representing its members in ways that were often damaging to the American public at large. They expressed alarm over the power that unions displayed in the 1950s, demonstrated through larger bureaucracies, merged organizations, greater outspokenness around issues unrelated to collective bargaining, and, most importantly, increased political spending and involvement. For conservatives, the pendulum had swung too far in the direction of unions, creating a labor behemoth whose enormous power was wielded on behalf of union officials and some members, rather than the larger public, or even all union members.

The reality was far murkier. At the same time the nation entered an era of so-called “Big Labor,” large corporations grew larger through mergers and acquisitions, and the federal government’s bureaucracy and spending also increased. All three institutions increasingly boasted educated, professional, white collar workers. Labor leaders argued an era of big labor was necessary if unions were to keep pace with these changes in American society. Big labor run by responsible union statesmen could police and eliminate communists and racketeers; ensure industrial peace by keeping wildcat strikes at bay and entering into comprehensive, lawyer-negotiated collective bargaining agreements; raise wages and improve working conditions for all; lobby for legislation beneficial to the American public; and help to rein in the excesses of business.

Even as union membership grew, postwar demographic, political and economic changes produced new anxieties for union officials. The union vote only extended so far. Two-thirds of union members were concentrated in just ten states in the North, Midwest and West Coast as World War II ended. The South’s unionization rate remained half that of the rest of the country,
and organizing efforts there were unsuccessful.\(^4\) Furthermore, states tempted employers to relocate through so-called “right-to-work” legislation in the wake of Taft-Hartley, increasing union leaders’ anxiety about a decline in unionization. The increase in white collar workers in the nation’s workforce demanded new organizing drives and models that postwar labor unions were often ill-equipped to offer to workers without a significant union tradition. Automation threatened union jobs, while suburbanization and new social organizations not tied to work threatened the primacy of unions as a defining feature of workers’ lives.

Unions were sometimes victims of their own success. As they raised wages and bettered working conditions, the urgency of their work lessened. As Meany’s speech before the Teamsters indicates, unions still turned to their members to make the case for organized labor in their local communities, but in a world in which groups controlled by elites vied for power, the uniqueness of organized labor as a representative for the general public was less compelling.\(^5\) Unions at the mid-twentieth century faced a catch-22; by ultimately choosing to accept cold war liberalism, mainstream unions made themselves acceptable to wide swaths of the general public, media outlets, government, and business. But they also lost an opportunity to promote a larger vision for what America could offer the public. Unions became just another special interest group, even at the height of their power. They won over the public, but public support ultimately mattered little in terms of a radical rethinking of what American society could be for union members and non-members alike.

This narrative of unions’ engagement with the public has remained obscure in the literature on postwar labor. Instead, much debate has centered on the value of the shift to so-


\(^5\) This view was developed by sociologist C. Wright Mills. See C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).
called “business unionism” in which deradicalized unions traded a large-scale vision of social change for fleeting power as economic organizations. Historians like Nelson Lichtenstein criticize this postwar “deal” as obscuring the labor question that had driven political discourse for much of the century. According to Lichtenstein, labor leaders’ narrowing of the function of unions to collective bargaining agents removed any potential for the industrial democratic vision earlier described by Progressives and advanced by leftists marginalized by labor’s turn toward liberalism. Critical historians have argued that labor embraced electoral politics narrowly in the postwar years, becoming a wing of the Democratic Party, publicly recognized but with little influence. In this view, unions – not their conservative adversaries – drove themselves to obscurity, failing to provide “a model of collective action” that could be used by the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s and 1970s. For these groups, unions were irrelevant at best, and hostile to progress at worst.

Given such analysis, it seems that C. Wright Mills’ gloomy evaluation of “the labor leader’s shift from political ideas and the will to carry them out to the fumbling confusion and false security of practical politics” came to fruition in the postwar period. Certainly, a turn to the general public was part of this push toward practical politics. And with this turn came a decline in union influence at both the bargaining table and in the public arena – a fact that scholars critical of the so-called “business unionism” of the consensus period are right to point

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7 Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 141; 141-77.

out. But we should not assume that public outreach *necessitated* this embrace of liberalism at the exclusion of a broader movement for social change. Instead, we should view labor’s new thinking about the role of the public in the late 1940s and 1950s as a reasonable response to powerful economic, demographic and social changes in America.

Examining labor’s public relations efforts and labor leaders’ evolving notion of the liberal public as an important ally in the postwar period offers a new perspective on the old debate over the labor bargain of the 1940s and 1950s. It suggests that labor unions of the postwar years were more than the sum total of narrow legislative victories and collective bargaining agreements. Instead of merely capitulating to the right or the weight of their own desire for respectability, they sought to shape the political discourse of the day more broadly, and emerged as a far more powerful political influence than they would otherwise. The fact that this political influence was wielded in concert with and with attention toward Mills’ “liberal center” reflected a pragmatic decision by labor leaders to court the public who could advance labor’s aims. It also reflected heartfelt beliefs among labor leaders.

With a few notable exceptions, these efforts to court public opinion were driven by a new type of labor leader. When compared with their older compatriots, few high-ranking labor leaders born in the 1890s or twentieth century had worked extensively in the industries that they now represented. Instead, many boasted college degrees and had made their careers as salaried, white collar workers within labor unions. This new breed of labor official had little experience with strikes from a rank-and-file member’s perspective and saw industrial peace as a realizable and desirable goal. With their early careers spent as leftist critics or supporters of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, they saw the power of political influence in advancing labor’s aims and in achieving social standing on par with the leaders of business and government. They embraced
bureaucracy, in general, and public relations techniques, in particular, in order to reach wider segments of the public across the country.  

Nowhere can these trends be seen better than in the AFL and the CIO, the nation’s two largest labor federations that merged into the AFL-CIO in 1955. Composed of affiliated unions, the AFL and CIO did not negotiate contracts themselves but, instead, coordinated policy across unions. In general, the CIO was more centralized than the AFL and had a longer tradition of political involvement, though the AFL moved to consolidate power and expanded its political activity under Meany. Both the AFL and the CIO possessed considerable resources and undertook large-scale, national public relations campaigns that most individual unions were ill-equipped to undertake. In addition, their presidents – William Green and George Meany of the AFL, Philip Murray and Walter Reuther of the CIO – possessed name recognition among the general public and were generally well-respected.

The study takes 1947 as its starting point and concludes in 1959. These years represented the height of cold war liberalism, an ideology that the labor federations came to embrace, albeit with considerable dissent. The defeat of labor-backed candidates in the 1946 election, outrage at high prices for consumer goods and a strike wave, as well as the 1947 passage of the Taft-Hartley Act that placed new restrictions on unions demonstrated the limits of union power. These events convinced many labor leaders that a more robust political strategy that targeted the public was necessary, leading directly to a new commitment to political activity in the AFL. The events of 1946 and 1947 put the AFL and the CIO on the defensive, forcing them to fight new restrictions on labor and improve the image of unions, rather than constructing a new progressive, political vision for America. By 1959, some proponents of pluralism were having

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9 The characterization of younger labor leaders in this paragraph comes from Mills’ 1946 survey of AFL and CIO leaders as described in Mills, The New Men of Power.
second thoughts and, within a few years, the New Left would challenge the values that organized labor promoted to the public throughout the 1950s: respectable leadership, industrial peace, moderation, modernism, and sophistication.

This study examines the infancy of large-scale, coordinated public relations by organized labor in an effort to understand how and why union leaders saw the public as vital to their political goals, and the ways in which their strategies in reaching that public shaped the future of the American labor movement. This study takes a broad definition of public relations, particularly at moments when official PR departments exercised far less power and received far less traction in the press than the activities of labor leaders. Chapter 1 traces the AFL and CIO’s campaigns to defeat the Taft-Hartley Act in the public arena, arguing that this marked a critical shift in the way that labor federations regarded the political importance of the public, and examines key differences between the AFL and the CIO’s efforts. It also sketches broader political and economic trends of the postwar period and earlier labor public relations efforts in an effort to distinguish the novel PR strategies of the post-Taft-Hartley era. Chapter 2 examines the role of politics – particularly the 1948 election and the third party campaign of Henry Wallace – in forcing Philip Murray’s hand in expelling communist unions from his organization’s ranks. The chapter explores how the issue of communism compelled Murray and the CIO to link their own activities to the fortunes of the public in a way that the federation had not done previously. Chapter 3 uses the 1955 merger of the AFL and the CIO as a platform for examining the trope of “big labor” in a world in which large institutions and elite groups increasingly vied for control. It details how AFL-CIO leaders tried to showcase the positive elements of “big labor,” emphasizing the new federation’s respectability, responsibility, and public service as exemplified by union officers. Chapter 4 shows how George Meany emphasized these same themes in his
messaging to the public during Congressional hearings on racketeering in organized labor from 1957 to 1959. As before, Meany and other AFL-CIO officers had a particular political objective in courting public opinion – a desire to ward off restrictive labor legislation.

The legacy of the choices that labor leaders made sixty years ago have had enormous impact on public perceptions of unions. Direct appeals to the public and the political goals they were designed to attain are only one small part of a much larger story of how and why labor’s fortunes have turned since union membership reached its zenith in the mid-1950s. There is much to say – and much has been said – about the impact of larger economic forces, policy choices, demographic changes, and union decisions on contracts, organizing, and political alliances. I hope that this study will shed a little light on one way that organized labor tried to address some of these shifts. Organized labor leaders positioned themselves and the union members they represented as part of a larger public committed to the same political objectives. Ultimately, this was a losing bet; they traded relevance for acceptability. Still, the idea that public welfare should be a key determinant of union policy is one that may yet offer hope to the American labor movement.
Chapter 1
“To Paint the Sky with… Slogans”: The AFL and the CIO’s Public Relations Efforts against the Passage of Taft-Hartley

In early June 1947, with the fate of Taft-Hartley still hanging in the balance, Victor Riesel, the syndicated labor columnist, offered his appraisal of the techniques used by the AFL and the CIO in their efforts to defeat the anti-labor legislation during the previous four months. Contrary to expectations, the CIO had not been able “to paint the sky with anti-Taft-Hartley slogans.” Instead, it was the AFL which had been “hiring the planes and sky-writing pilots.” While the AFL took out dozens of full page advertisements in newspapers across the country, sponsored musical events, and put high-priced Hollywood A-listers on the air in solidarity with organized labor, “the CIO virtually resigned from the big-time propaganda drive against the Labor Bill,” Riesel concluded.

According to Riesel, CIO leaders surely supported the AFL’s stance against Taft-Hartley and would have contributed more to the public campaign, but for one thing: “the CIO chiefs[...].lean bank accounts.” Instead of writing massive checks for paid advertising, as the AFL had done, the CIO’s national leaders turned toward their constituent unions, begging them to contribute time and funds to mount campaigns against Taft-Hartley in their own communities. Such local campaigns used the “canned publicity stuff” generated at the CIO’s Washington headquarters, but it was hard for the Washington CIO office to catalog – let alone control – the messages sent under its name by its local organizations. Indeed, Riesel concluded that the CIO’s “grassroots drive” was resigned more to building up support for Democratic Party political activity in the 1948 elections, rather than securing a presidential veto and Congressional support for upholding that veto in the coming weeks.1

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1 Victor Riesel, column, New York Post, June 5, 1947; UAW Public Relations Clippings, Part II, Box 26, Victor Riesel – New York Post Fol. (2 of 3); WSU.
Riesel was correct that the CIO leadership was inclined to cede a battle it perceived as unwinnable in order to make a bid for the larger prize – the 1948 election. But what Riesel missed was that AFL officials also came to join the CIO in viewing the 1948 election as a more important measure of labor’s strength than the passage of Taft-Hartley. The 1947 Congress was stacked against labor, and neither officials in the AFL nor the CIO believed that they could twist enough arms to sway the vote or to push softening amendments through both chambers. But both labor organizations saw outreach to the public around Taft-Hartley as a vital part of a larger political strategy – one that would have implications for the 1948 election and beyond. The differing strengths of their respective responses were dictated by money. But the AFL and CIO were on the same page in two important ways. Both organizations recognized that legislation could advance or diminish labor’s ability to engage in its core activities of organizing and collective bargaining, and both understood that a robust public relations effort could result in a Congress committed to realizing labor’s aims.

The attempt to remake labor’s image during the debate over Taft-Hartley marked a new way of approaching politics for both the AFL and CIO. Leaders in both organizations began to view labor’s political involvement as more than partisan and electoral activities. Instead, it was an effort to influence the political discourse of the day, to be a partner in cold war liberalism’s ascendancy, a trusted elite power in the pressure group-driven society of the postwar period.² This was a change for both the AFL and the CIO, but in different ways. The CIO had long made a connection between its public relations efforts and its political program, but its political efforts centered on the mechanics of electoral work: electing candidates, raising funds, and lobbying legislators. For its part, AFL leaders had a less-developed political organization, but were often

² The sociologist C. Wright Mills coined the phrase “the power elite” in describing this society. See C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).
portrayed by the press as respectable in comparison with their supposedly radical CIO rivals. In some ways, labor officials like AFL President William Green had already ascended to the status of pressure group spokesmen but had failed to capitalize on this politically.

The crisis over Taft-Hartley marked the first time that the legendary autonomy of AFL unions gave way to a comprehensive and professional public relations campaign directed at the national level. In many ways, the message and form of the AFL campaign represented what the CIO would have liked to do if resources had been more available, even if it lacked the sophisticated strategic imprint of the CIO’s renowned public relations director. Indeed, the AFL and CIO seemed to reverse roles in the types of public relations campaigns they employed during the first six months of 1947.

During the war years, the CIO secured its reputation as the more innovative of the two largest labor federations in its publicity strategy, even earning notice as “[t]hat wizard of public relations” in the Wall Street Journal as World War II came to an end. The organization won a trophy from the American Public Relations Association in 1946 in a contest against business heavyweights. Later in the year, the Public Relations Newsletter – a publication produced for publicity professionals, primarily in industry – hailed the CIO’s use of “scientific PR methods” as key to its success in “creating favorable public attitudes and fending off adverse public opinion.” On the other hand, one publication described the AFL as “neither as spectacular, colorful nor voluble as the CIO in telling its story” in 1946. This was about to change.

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3 Henry Gemmill, “Selling the CIO,” Wall Street Journal, March 28, 1945; Len De Caux Papers, Box 2, Fol. 9; WSU.
4 “A Trophy for CIO,” Business Week, April 20, 1946, 90; Len De Caux Papers, Box 2, Fol. 9; WSU.
5 Glenn Griswold, Public Relations Newsletter, May 6, 1946; Len De Caux Papers, Box 2, Fol. 9; WSU.
6 [no author], “How Labor Tells It’s Story” [sic], Mill and Factory, March 1946, 92; Len De Caux Papers, Box 2, Fol. 9; WSU.
The AFL’s message represented a fundamental shift as labor entered the postwar period: labor and the public were one entity possessing the same values. Labor and the public formed a unified public interest, whose perspective unions represented. They were opposed by the special moneyed interests represented by business groups and the Republican Party. Forced by limited funds to deploy its messages through its own unions and members, the CIO was less likely to make pleas directly to the public. Instead, it used its own existing political machinery – the PAC, especially – to mobilize its members in response to Taft-Hartley. The passage of Taft-Hartley, the influence of a new generation of labor leaders, and a new urgency in contributing to the national political discourse at the dawn of the cold war caused the AFL to come to a similar conclusion about the need to link its public relations campaign and its political efforts.

The fact that the AFL flexed its political muscle in an effort to defeat the Taft-Hartley Act had implications for the relationship between the AFL and CIO, unions’ engagement in politics, and the role of public relations in furthering labor’s legislative agenda. It also had implications for popular perceptions of unions. The 1947 campaign to defeat Taft-Hartley furthered the political clout of unions generally, as the AFL put significant money behind its political positions for the first time. This massive labor outreach – much of it issued through paid media – may have helped to stem the tide of declining approval rates and furthered labor’s influence as a proponent of cold war liberalism, but it also furthered public perceptions of organized labor’s tendency toward bloated bureaucracy, giant coffers, and excessive spending.

In addition, there were internal consequences of the Taft-Hartley campaign. As the more visible labor federation, the AFL diminished the CIO’s negotiating position in merger talks. This produced further mistrust between the organizations and prevented effective collaboration on

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7 While the CIO had established the CIO-PAC under Sidney Hillman’s direction in 1943, it didn’t become a particularly powerful force until 1948. The AFL did not establish a political action group until after the passage of Taft-Hartley, in December 1947.
legislative affairs. At the same time, it strengthened the position of national labor federations vis-à-vis their constituent unions and introduced a new generation of labor leaders to a national audience. The autonomy so highly prized by individual unions within the AFL was challenged as the national organization conducted its anti Taft-Hartley campaign in the same vein as the highly centralized CIO.\(^8\)

In this chapter, I argue that the campaigns implemented by the AFL and CIO to defeat the Taft-Hartley Act used public relations as a political strategy – a method that would inform much of labor’s postwar actions. Gradually, both the practical implementation and the larger discourse of politics came to replace collective bargaining as the defining influence of organized labor. In 1947, union membership rates were still high, but the loss of labor-friendly Congressmen in the 1946 election forced the AFL and the CIO to reach out to a larger public. The AFL, once reluctant to undertake large-scale political campaigns, was moved to action not only by the threat of anti-labor legislation and a hostile Congress, but also by a larger concern of being left behind as a broker of influence and the primary representative of labor in public discourse. Financial

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\(^8\) This is a far different lens for understanding the significance of the Act than most literature related to Taft-Hartley uses. Most scholarly accounts have focused on how Taft-Hartley has affected the internal functioning of unions, concluding that the law made it difficult for labor officials to recruit new members, exert influence at worksites and with employers, and lobby elected officials effectively. With the exception of those penned by legal scholars for law journals, older accounts of Taft-Hartley have painted the legislation as a distinct departure from the past. See Philip Taft, *The A.F. of L from the Death of Gompers to the Merger* (New York: Harper, 1959), 271. More recent scholarly works do not doubt the significance of Taft-Hartley but present it as the bookend of a longer slide away from governmental protection of labor. See Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor’s War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 238. And a number of historians have argued that the establishment of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) under the pro-labor Wagner Act, paradoxically enabled Taft-Hartley to have the bite that it did. Christopher L. Tomlins, *The State and the Unions: Labor Relations, Law, and the Organized Labor Movement in America, 1880-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 251. The historian James A. Gross has argued the decisions issued by the Board sometimes resulted in immediate victories for unions, but the institution of an appointed board ultimately eroded union autonomy. See James A. Gross, *Broken Promise: The Subversion of U.S. Labor Relations Policy, 1947-1994* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995). Others have examined Taft-Hartley as part of a larger cultural and economic shift toward the right, nationally, that undermined labor’s clout. See, for example, Michael Goldfield, *The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Literature also concentrates on the anticommmunist clauses of Taft-Hartley as contributing to conservative union leadership. See Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 122; and George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 175.
supremacy pushed the AFL ahead of the CIO in this public relations war, changing the balance of power between the two organizations.

In the first section of this chapter, I examine the political climate at the dawn of 1947, the legislative trajectory of the Taft-Hartley Act and related bills, and the attitude of union leaders to different legislative proposals. Both the AFL and CIO recognized the dangers of the proposed legislation, but the two groups could not come to consensus on specific proposals. The result was an uncoordinated lobbying effort and a failure to articulate an alternative to Taft-Hartley. This failure had implications for public perceptions of labor. The second section of the chapter examines the political and public relations history of the AFL and CIO, explaining how the campaign to defeat Taft-Hartley represented an enhanced public relations effort for the AFL and a weakened publicity program for the CIO. This section also addresses how these differences caused increased tensions between the two organizations, leading to a discontinuation of merger talks.

The third section of the chapter addresses press and industry group criticisms of labor, examining the images unions hoped to combat through their public relations programs. And the fourth section addresses how the AFL and CIO responded to these depictions through their public relations and political activities. The section traces the trajectory of the AFL and CIO campaigns against Taft-Hartley in paid and unpaid media, rallies, and political organizing. It also addresses the question of why these campaigns emerged in the way they did, including funding discrepancies between the two organizations. A fifth section argues that the AFL and CIO stressed similar messages around labor’s relationship to the public, even if the form and distribution channels for those messages were often quite different. In a conclusion, I assess the
significance of the Taft-Hartley campaign for the future of labor’s use of public relations as a political strategy.

The Postwar Context and the Legislative Backlash against Labor

It was hardly surprising that anti-labor legislation was introduced in 1947. Public concern about union power had been growing for some time, leading to a politically toxic atmosphere for organized labor in the year following World War II. The end of the war pushed the country into an economic slump as production declined significantly and layoffs in the manufacturing sector became routine. While still below four percent between 1946 and 1948, the unemployment rate represented a three-fold increase from the lows of the war years.⁹ In the three months between V-E Day and V-J Day, unemployment rose from half a million to one million. And after the Japanese surrender, unemployment tripled.¹⁰ Furthermore, with the government’s elimination of most wartime price controls in 1946, inflation reached unprecedented heights.¹¹ Double digit inflation rates alarmed both consumers and workers, who saw their wage increases decimated by the cost of goods in the summer of 1946 and into 1947.¹² The elimination of wartime bonuses and overtime furthered the erosion in real wages.

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¹¹ The National Wage Stabilization Board replaced the War Labor Board on January 1, 1946. The National Wage Stabilization Board made decisions on voluntary wage increases and corresponding price increases that would pay for these wage increases. Wartime price controls expired June 30, 1946. For all intents and purposes, price controls ended and the price of basic commodities rose by a quarter in two weeks. Congress responded by passing a new law controlling prices, but the prices on manufactured goods were much higher than wartime prices.
The resulting decline in purchasing power for workers prompted close to 5,000 strikes in 1946, following the pattern of worker discontent established in the war’s immediate aftermath.\textsuperscript{13} As unions began to negotiate new collective bargaining agreements in the postwar years, union officials could direct – or at least sanction – worker strike activity. This was in contrast to the wildcat strikes of the war years.\textsuperscript{14} Together, strikes involved 14.5 percent of the total workforce in 1946 and 6.5 percent in 1947.\textsuperscript{15} By the fall of 1945, hundreds of thousands of autoworkers at GM were on strike after GM refused to accede to UAW contract demands. At the beginning of 1946, three quarters of a million steelworkers went on strike, along with meatpackers, miners, and public utility workers. A strike by railroad workers in May 1946 brought the nation’s transportation network to a halt. Truman’s interventions in a number of these strikes caused many labor leaders to question the President’s commitment to organized labor’s interests, a concern that resurfaced during the lead-up to the passage of Taft-Hartley.\textsuperscript{16}

This heavy concentration of strike activity in essential industry impacted both public attitudes toward labor and legislative responses to the perceived threat to American political and economic dominance in the postwar period. Immediately after V-J Day, a Gallup poll found that fully 79 percent of Americans desired a “law guaranteeing collective bargaining” and three-

\textsuperscript{13} Jack Metzgar, “The 1945-1946 Strike Wave” in The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History, ed. Aaron Brenner et al. (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 216, 222. Metzgar argues that the 1946 strike wave was unusual in that the vast majority of strikes were focused solely on achieving wage increases. The fact that negotiations focused on set increases an hour, rather than on percentage increases, resulted in more benefit to lower-paid workers. In a continuation of wartime practices, all but 37 of these strikes involved fewer than 10,000 workers. Still, the small number of very large walkouts and the enthusiasm of strikers received much attention in the press.\textsuperscript{14} During the war years, wildcat strikes predominated and were opposed by national union leaderships, which had taken no-strike pledges and encouraged their members to raise productivity levels in exchange for government protections for the duration of the war. Joshua B. Freeman, Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II (New York: The New Press, 2000), 4.
\textsuperscript{15} The equivalent figures following World War I were 20.8 percent and 7.2 percent in 1919 and 1920, respectively. Lee, Truman and Taft-Hartley, 14-5.
\textsuperscript{16} In addition, Truman annoyed CIO leaders by failing to support the entirety of the labor federation’s legislative agenda. In particular, Truman refused to talk with labor leaders about increases in the minimum wage and demonstrated ambivalence about retaining price controls. Philip Murray, Proceedings of Meeting of the International Executive Board of the CIO, July 18-19, 1946, 116; Microfilm Reel 9 of “Minutes of the Executive Board of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, 1935-1955”; NYU.
fourths of respondents believed unions were “a good thing for the country.” But the public began to support specific measures to rein in unions as strikes interfered with ordinary Americans’ lives, and as industry groups pushed the idea that higher worker wages resulted in runaway inflation and lower standards of living. A June 1946 Gallup poll showed that 95 percent of Americans favored a required vote of workers prior to a strike, and 90 percent supported regular elections of union officers. In a poll just after the 1946 election, Gallup found that 66 percent – including 77 percent of Republicans – believed that the new Congress should “pass new laws to control labor unions,” with only 22 percent opposing new controls. Even so, public approval of unions in general remained high, still measuring 64 percent in the weeks after Taft-Hartley was passed into law.

But this figure was significantly lower than how the public perceived labor’s opponents. Furthermore, it did not capture public attitudes toward specific union federations. In the summer of 1946, a public opinion survey held that 77 percent of Americans thought well of the American Legion and 65 percent thought well of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, compared to 50 percent who thought well of the AFL and 26 percent who thought well of the CIO, a group many considered radical at best, and traitorous at worst. Meanwhile, 37 percent thought well of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). More alarming for labor officials than the low approval rate for the CIO was the disapproval rate of 56 percent, compared to just 17 percent for NAM. Among those who were not union members, only 43 percent and 20 percent thought well

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17 Individual companies and industry groups took out advertisements in newspapers to state their agreement with the proposition that prices should be kept low – but also to insist that business was capable of doing so, itself. See for example, Pitkin Avenue Merchants Ass’n, “A small annual profit is better than a depression!,” advertisement, New York Journal American, May 8, 1947.
18 Qtd. in Lee, Truman and Taft-Hartley, 18.
of the AFL and CIO, respectively, while the CIO’s disapproval rate was 61 percent. Union members were not significantly more likely to view NAM negatively than non-members (49 percent and 45 percent, respectively).

The public perceived labor as a more powerful – and successful – special interest group than either business or farmers. In turn, this colored how Americans perceived the need for legislative reform. In the wake of the 1946 election, the public believed that labor had devoted more energy to political lobbying than business interests and a November 1946 poll revealed that a plurality of Americans (43.9 percent) believed that labor unions put more pressure on Congress to get what it wanted than either businessmen (24.3 percent) or farmers (6.2 percent). They also believed that Congress paid the most attention to the demands of labor unions (37.8 percent), as compared to either businessmen (28.1 percent) or farmers (7.6 percent). In response, union officials complained about the biases inherent in such polls, using the work of a Columbia researcher to support their claim. In addition, they argued that the public supported labor’s legislative policies when they were impartially presented. Labor publications also argued that this public opposition to Taft-Hartley could be seen in other ways, besides opinion polls. This use of academic literature to challenge supposedly authoritative sources became a hallmark of the CIO during the postwar period and was a technique adopted by business groups during the merger of the AFL and CIO in 1955.

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21 Dr. Henry C. Link, *Washington Sunday Star*, August 4, 1946; Len De Caux Papers, Box 6, Fol. 26; WSU.
22 For example, the CIO’s *Economic Outlook* reported that 85 percent of Americans opposed the type of monopolies that Taft-Hartley would legislate by depriving unions of their collective bargaining rights. *Economic Outlook*, Vol. III, No. 6 (June 1947), 1; Len De Caux Papers, Box 4, Fol. 27; WSU.
23 AFL and CIO officials routinely cited a study by Columbia researcher Dr. Arthur Kornhauser to make this claim. In a *Public Opinion Quarterly* article, Kornhauser argued that the questions asked by pollsters from Gallup and other respected organizations were intended to illicit anti-labor responses. See Arthur Kornhauser, “Are Public Opinion Polls Fair to Organized Labor?” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 10 (Winter 1946-7): 484-500. For a critical response, see Henry C. Link, Albert D. Freiberg, John H. Platten, Jr. and Kenneth E. Clark, “Is Dr. Kornhauser Fair to Organized Pollers?” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 11 (Summer 1947): 198-212. For coverage in the labor press, see “Public Opinion Polls Loaded Against Labor, Study Shows,” Federated Press press release, March 20, 1947; Len De
Given these public attitudes, the results of the 1946 election were hardly a surprise. Highlighting union strike power and running on the slogan, “Had Enough?,” Republicans won a 246-189 majority in the House and a 51-45 majority in the Senate, taking control of both houses for the first time since 1930. There was light voter turnout, especially in urban areas dominated by labor interests as union members and their allies stayed home. Fed up with high prices and strikes, they remained unenthusiastic about labor’s Democratic supporters in Congress.

Meanwhile, the CIO-PAC managed to raise only $170,000 out of a hoped-for $1,000,000 war chest, signaling union member apathy toward the labor leadership in a time of declining purchasing power.24

The new Congress built on anti-labor legislation introduced during the previous session, especially a bill put forward by Rep. Francis Case (R-South Dakota) in the winter of 1946.25 Among other things, the bill reduced the power of the Department of Labor by establishing a new mediation board; permitted injunctions to govern union-administered welfare funds; prohibited supervisors from joining unions; permitted unions to be sued in court; prohibited secondary boycotts; mandated union reporting; and established cooling off periods before a strike could legally take place.26 Strikes by mine and railroad workers – the latter prompting the President to call for Congress to allow for the drafting of strikers against the government – spurred Senate approval of the Case Bill. An ambivalent President vetoed the legislation in June

Caux Papers, Box 6, Fol. 26; WSU; “Loaded Against Labor,” CIO News, March 31, 1947; Periodicals, WSU; “Toot Your Horn, Folks!” editorial, CIO News, April 7, 1947; Periodicals, WSU. Labor leaders also criticized the fairness of such polls without referencing Kornhauser’s work. See, for example, “Murray Hits ‘Loaded’ Taft Statistics,” CIO News, June 2, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.

24 Sidney Hillman, qtd. in Newsweek, October 28, 1946; cited in Lee, Truman and Taft-Hartley, 47.
25 One other large scale labor bill wove its way through Congress in 1945: the Ball-Burton-Hatch Bill (S. 1171, introduced June 20, 1945). The Ball-Burton-Hatch Bill stripped mediation powers from the Department of Labor and instituted an independent board appointed by the President. It also expanded enforcement by injunction powers of the President.
1946, bowing to pressure from unions, whose support he desired in the 1946 mid-term election and in the 1948 presidential race.

Truman signed a few other smaller labor reform measures in the spring of 1946, including the Lea Act to disallow featherbedding in the musicians’ union and the Hobbs Anti-Racketeering Act to criminalize the interference with interstate commerce through extortion, as practiced by the Teamsters. Just before the 1946 election, the possibility of another coal strike pushed Truman to call for emergency legislation and resulted in further public wariness toward union leaders.

Truman still advocated some labor reform after the election. He supported limits on secondary boycotts, but he also supported items favored by labor, including an expansion of the Department of Labor and a host of social legislation. Truman called for study groups to make recommendations about the advisability of restricting national strikes in essential industries, how to improve collective bargaining procedures, and for an investigation of what caused friction between labor and management.

The possibility of a series of study groups was not enough to placate a Republican Congress whose election was predicated on the backlash against union strikes and high prices. With the 1946 election results less than a week old, the Detroit News’ labor columnist stated the conventional wisdom that “It isn’t a question of whether the Republicans in the new Congress will attack New Deal labor legislation but of how far they will go to enact what they describe as reforms.”27

It didn’t take long to find out. On the first day of the 1947 legislative session, House members introduced seventeen different labor bills, most along the lines of the Case bill. Over

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27 Asher Lauren, column, “Liberals See No Abolition of Modern Labor Gains,” Detroit News, November 10, 1946; UAW Public Relations Department Papers, Box 27, 80th Congress, 1947 Fol.; WSU.
the course of the year, Congressmen introduced more than one hundred labor bills in the labor committees headed by Republicans, Rep. Fred A. Hartley, Jr. of New Jersey and Sen. Robert A. Taft of Ohio. Between early February and mid-March, both the House and Senate committees held hearings on the advisability of instituting modifications to the Wagner Act, particularly assessing the NLRB’s effectiveness and perceived bias toward organized labor. Other provisions under consideration were the exclusion of foremen from union representation; the enforcement of violations of no-strike pledges during a cooling-off period; the assignation of certain NLRB powers to a new Assistant Attorney General; an evidence requirement for NLRB decisions; union suability; reduction or elimination of union-security systems like the checkoff; the banning of secondary boycotts; and the banning of industrywide bargaining.

Despite objections from the Secretary of Labor, NLRB Chairman, and Truman that the proposals under consideration would do little to respond to the complex web of economic factors that had caused labor unrest in the postwar period, the House and Senate Labor Committees continued to draw on a “grab-bag of provisions, many of them derived from earlier proposals,” according to one historian. The House bill introduced by Rep. Hartley was written prior to the conclusion of testimony and allowed for only six hours of debate. This raised charges from House Democrats that the bill’s provisions were a foregone conclusion and that NAM had played an active role in drafting the legislation. On April 17, Hartley’s bill passed by a vote of 308-107, with 93 Democrats voting for the legislation. Taft introduced his labor omnibus bill on

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28 Lee, *Truman and Taft-Hartley*, 52, 54-56. Taft made no secret of his antipathy toward organized labor, but Hartley’s position was less certain. The AFL supported Hartley in 1940 after he supported AFL-friendly amendments to the Wagner Act in hearings for the 1939 Smith Act to protect craft unions. The CIO opposed Hartley.


30 In a January 1948 statement, the NAM denied charges that its lawyers had drafted the Taft-Hartley Act. For a detailed description of how the legislation was drafted, see Lee, *Truman and Taft-Hartley*, 66. Lee concludes that the NAM was involved in writing the legislation. Later in the spring of 1947, both AFL and CIO ad campaigns opposing Taft-Hartley and urging a presidential veto pointed to NAM’s hand in drafting the legislation.
April 17, choosing to dare a presidential veto and fight for an override in Congress rather than pushing piecemeal reforms through multiple bills. A minority effort to propose an alternate remedy for labor unrest failed on May 13.\textsuperscript{31} The Taft bill sailed through the Senate on the same day by a vote of 68-24, including 21 Democrats. Over the coming weeks, the House and Senate arranged for a joint conference to reconcile the Hartley and Taft bills, completing their work on May 29.\textsuperscript{32} After much deliberation, and extreme pressure from organized labor, the President vetoed the legislation on June 20. Three days later, Congress overrode Truman’s veto.

The final Taft-Hartley Act that labor leaders criticized as a harsh and ineffective antidote to the strike wave of 1946, rising inflation, and reduced purchasing power, made major changes to the Wagner Act. It increased NLRB membership to five members and burdened the Board with high evidentiary requirements for its findings. It outlawed the closed shop and put restrictions on when the union shop could be implemented. The legislation enumerated several unfair labor practices by unions, including secondary boycotts, refusal to bargain, and jurisdictional strikes. It excluded supervisors from organizing and created a new mediation service. Taft-Hartley also created cooling-off periods for national emergency strikes and permitted the President expanded power to intervene in emergency strikes. The bill made unions liable to suits in federal courts. It required some financial reporting by unions and eliminated the checkoff, except voluntarily. Non-communist affidavits were made mandatory. Unions could

\textsuperscript{31} The liberal alternative to the Taft bill was introduced by Senator James Murray, Democrat of Montana. While far milder than either the Taft or Hartley bills, many of the provisions – particularly around secondary boycotts, presidential seizure powers, and changes to rules around industrywide bargaining – were objectionable to labor.\textsuperscript{32} Much of the content of the bills was the same – prohibiting secondary boycotts, the closed shop, jurisdictional strikes and the ability of supervisors to organize, along with reducing the power of the Department of Labor, the establishment of a cooling off period, allowing for the suability of unions, requirement of non-communist oaths, expansion of the NLRB, and government injunction in emergencies. However, the Hartley bill also had stronger limits on industrywide bargaining, forbade featherbedding, mass picketing, strikes by government employees and most controversially, subjected unions to antitrust rules under the law. For a description of the legislative process for combining the two bills, see Tracy Roof, \textit{American Labor, Congress, and the Welfare State, 1935-2010} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 39-44.
no longer contribute funds for political activity. Federal employees could not strike. The law empowered states to institute laws prohibiting compulsory membership. It gave employees the power to call for new union elections, and it established a Congressional study group.

In truth, the fact that neither the AFL nor the CIO offered any specific legislative alternatives to Taft-Hartley helped seal labor’s fate. When pressed, Green paid lip service to union financial reporting on a voluntary basis and agreed that the AFL would be “willing that the Wagner Act be changed so that the employer can engage in free speech.” But these were hardly large-scale proposals and, in May 1947, Green still contended that “no new legislation is necessary” in a nationwide radio broadcast. When confronted on this position in a debate with the president of NAM, Green claimed that the legislation that the AFL supported – national health insurance, an expansion of Social Security benefits, an increase in the minimum wage, and improved housing – would do much to resolve the human relations problems that resulted in industrial chaos.

CIO officials were even less visible than Green and the AFL in producing alternate proposals to the Taft, Hartley, and other labor bills introduced during the eightieth Congress, probably because the CIO had a less centralized, less public anti-Taft-Hartley campaign than the AFL. Like the AFL, CIO officials argued that the 1946 strike wave was due to artificially low, wartime wage rates – a standard of living problem that would not be rectified by simply making strikes illegal. A CIO-produced question-and-answer booklet from February 1947 argued that the “solution” and “labor’s program” were “to attack the basic economic problems confronting

33 William Green, testimony before the House Labor Committee, qtd. in “Green Tells House Labor Group He Will Accept a New Law Requiring Unions to Publish Financial Reports,” Wall Street Journal, February 27, 1947; UAW Research Dept. Papers, Part I, Box 1, Fol. 31; WSU.
34 William Green, radio address on NBC-radio, May 11, 1947; AFL Papers, Series 11, File E, Box 4, Labor Speeches B527 to B Fol.; WHS.
the nation through developing a sound national wage policy” in order to expand purchasing power and to fight for expanded government social programs. This failure among CIO and AFL leaders to suggest viable legislative alternatives for reducing industrial strife strengthened industry and press accusations that labor officials were obstructionist.

Even if they had proposed other options, it is unlikely that the leaders of the AFL and the CIO would have agreed on which legislative reforms were desirable. Much of the disagreement focused on the powers of the NLRB. CIO leaders claimed that the NLRB consistently favored the craft unions of the AFL by permitting union elections for small divisions of skilled laborers, including apprentices, when industry-wide contracts established by CIO unions expired. In cases of jurisdictional disputes, they also argued that the NLRB tended to favor AFL unions over CIO unions.

The AFL and the CIO also viewed the relationship between prices and wages differently. While Green went on record as opposing increased wage demands at a time of high prices, CIO leaders insisted on negotiating richer contracts across entire industries. In Green’s view, this would further inflation rates and increase prices. These differences, along with personal and political clashes between leaders of the two labor federations, created an environment of distrust that made a unified public relations and lobbying campaign against Taft-Hartley difficult.

Devising a New Public Relations Strategy for a New Era

36 “Questions and Answers on Proposed Labor Legislation,” CIO pamphlet, February 3, 1947, 6; Philip Murray Papers, Box 126, Fol. 20; CUA.
37 CIO leaders resented the accusation that they were to blame for the postwar economic slump and for runaway inflation rates. AFL and CIO leaders aired their criticism in public. A war of words between the AFL and CIO ensued after Labor’s Monthly Survey, an AFL publication, trumpeted that CIO union negotiated wage increases “broke the dam holding back inflation.” Qtd. in Len De Caux, “Looking Ahead,” column, CIO News, January 27, 1947; Periodicals, WSU. Months after the remark, Len De Caux, the CIO’s publicity director, continued to ridicule the AFL as “suffering from a lack of little grey cells in its Washington headquarters” and accused the organization of having “turned over its thinking to the National Association of Manufacturers.” Len De Caux, “Looking Ahead,” column, CIO News, March 17, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.
With the end of World War II and the dawn of the cold war, both the non-unionized public and the characteristics of union members began to shift. 3,250,000 union members had served in the armed forces over the course of the war, and their new identity as veterans threatened to undermine their identity as organized laborers. Veterans – both unionized and not – became the first battleground in wartime and postwar labor public relations. As the war wound down and the nation prepared for reconversion, NAM officials were optimistic about their chances of winning over soldiers-turned-civilians, a group NAM’s Public Relations Policy Committee labeled “the most important single group in the nation today.” A key piece of this strategy was to demonstrate that unions were responsible for the strike wave following the war - and the industrial chaos, service interruptions, and shortages it produced.

Business leaders’ public pronouncements of labor’s responsibility for strikes and the postwar recession put union leaders on the defensive. A 1945 CIO-produced pamphlet directed at veterans was typical of this defensive posture. The text mostly concerned itself with refuting “propaganda” issued with the “desire to keep the veterans out of the CIO when they came back” from war. It went on to assert that, with 85 percent of war materials union-made, union labor was responsible for American victory during the war. But even with such a strong statement of labor’s value to the country, the CIO pamphlet was chiefly concerned with recruiting new members from among the ranks of veterans returning to the nation’s workforce, rather than with stimulating appreciation for unions among the general public.

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40 “The CIO and the Veteran,” pamphlet, issued October 1, 1945, 3; CIO PAC Papers, Box 12, Fol. 1; WSU. This was one pamphlet of many that the CIO produced in 1945. Others that were clearly targeted at specific segments of the public include: “Church and Labor,” “CIO and the Negro Worker,” and “Labor and Education.” See Len De Caux, “CIO Public Relations Program, 1945,” entry for the Annual Public Relations Awards of the American Public Relations Association, [no date]; Len De Caux Papers, Box 2, Fol. 8; WSU.
But the divide between workers and the public also eroded during the war. High wartime production levels forced unionized plants to hire workers “with little interest or commitment to the labor movement,” according to the historian Robert H. Zieger. This forced unions to reach out to workers in unprecedented ways, relying on public relations techniques to convince workers that the union was worthy of their support. For example, during the war, the USWA, the UE, the UAW, and the CIO launched a $100,000 publicity campaign to convince workers to contact their elected representatives in opposition to federal wage stabilization policies. In this instance, the CIO relied on the same mass, paid media – newspapers, radio, billboards – that would later be used to reach more general audiences.41

After the war, the techniques used were often the same, but messaging was differentiated by audience, especially as a new and powerful constituency of war veterans emerged to become the new face of labor. The use of mass media to reach a segmented market – veterans, women, rural voters, farmers, the middle class, southerners, and other groups – was something new for labor, even if mass media had earlier been used to reach workers. Len De Caux, the CIO’s publicity director, was among the most innovative in pushing for the implementation of differentiated messaging for a variety of important postwar groups. To ensure that servicemen supported organized labor upon their return home, De Caux began producing special editions of the CIO member newspaper, the CIO News, and shipping them to military personnel abroad, free of charge, during the war.42 By 1946, Fortune Magazine reported that veterans had a more favorable attitude toward organized labor than the general population.43

41 Zieger, The CIO, 161. Zieger also cites opinion polls revealing a divide between the attitudes of union members and union leaders during the war. See Zieger, The CIO, 162, 178.
42 Len De Caux, “CIO Public Relations Program, 1945,” entry for the Annual Public Relations Awards of the American Public Relations Association, [no date]; Len De Caux Papers, Box 2, Fol. 8; WSU. The CIO distributed over 100,000 special servicemen editions of the CIO News.
43 “Fortune Survey Finds Public Increasingly Critical of Labor Unions,” Fortune Magazine press release, October 31, 1946; Len De Caux Papers, Box 6, Fol. 26; WSU.
The CIO’s implementation of a veteran-specific strategy would prove to be one of the most important testing grounds for union public relations work in the years leading up to Taft-Hartley, chiefly because it did not always try to reach servicemen as potential members, but instead operated on the “proposition that what is good for all the people is good for labor,” according to De Caux. CIO President Phil Murray routinely made the case that the CIO served as a “torchbearer” in representing “housewives and small businessmen and unorganized workers” against high prices and low wages in the postwar economy. The war forced unions to use public relations techniques and mass media to reach workers. In the postwar era, unions turned these approaches from workers alone toward a larger, segmented public, increasingly working in the political realm.

The first large-scale illustration of this strategy came in 1946 with union campaigns to protect price controls. In the summer of 1946, with high inflation rates and stagnant wages crippling purchasing power, the CIO undertook a political program to inform “the American people…[of] who has been responsible for this inflation,” and to generate support for CIO-backed candidates on election day. The CIO blamed the weakening and ultimate dismantling of price controls for the country’s economic woes.

The vast majority of the CIO’s efforts to promote price controls were not grassroots in nature. The CIO’s national leadership vociferously condemned wildcat strikes and unauthorized...
work stoppages aimed at protesting high prices and low wages that reduced buying power. Such actions threatened the CIO’s centralized structure on policy matters, and CIO leaders worried that contract violations would play into the hands of the corporate opposition. A.O. Knight of the Oil Workers urged members of the CIO Board to “get price control first and then get a wage increase that will amount to something” – a sequence that went unrecognized by work stoppages focused on compensation that would affect union members’ pocketbooks alone. CIO General Counsel Lee Pressman believed that mass work stoppages would “put the entire blame at the doorstep of organized labor for the chaos that would necessarily follow.” Despite the opposition of some CIO leaders, these voices for a centralized public relations campaign that targeted workers and the public held sway. Such internal divisions about whether to emphasize worker strength and solidarity or to pursue a comprehensive public relations campaign using mass media continued during the union campaign against the Taft-Hartley Act. But as the war ended, it was clear that a wide PR effort was already becoming the preferred approach.

The CIO used a number of public relations strategies in its advocacy of price controls. It supplemented paid advertising on the radio and in newspapers with expert testimony to Congress and the sponsorship of research by noted economist and war mobilization expert Robert Nathan. Union officials used the Nathan Report to provide intellectual legitimacy for the Office of Price Administration (OPA) campaign, as they would later use experts to advocate against Taft-Hartley. Murray remembered that “the hostile press” dismissed Nathan’s prediction that corporate profits would reach $15,000,000 in 1946, while Taft and other Republicans “defamed the CIO.” Yet, when corporate profits were reported for 1946, Nathan’s prediction proved

47 A.O. Knight, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, July 18-19, 1946, 152-3, microfilm, Reel 9 of 18; NYU.
48 Lee Pressman, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, July 18-19, 1946, 108, microfilm, Reel 9 of 18; NYU.
49 Opposition came from Douglas McMahon of the Transport Workers Union, among others. Douglas McMahon, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, July 18-19, 1946, 144-5, microfilm, Reel 9 of 18; NYU.
In a tactic that would be repeated during the Taft-Hartley debate, the CIO repeatedly publicly contrasted the findings of the Nathan Report with the statements of industry groups in order to discredit NAM and the Chamber in the minds of the public. In response to industry’s accusations that the CIO was engaged in “ruthless propaganda,” De Caux wrote, “I feel like starting a ‘Be Kind to the Rich Week.’” The CIO insisted that corporations embraced a “‘public be damned’ attitude” and that the CIO represented the best interests of labor and the general public.

But not all CIO leaders believed that the labor federation’s national office should be the one to make this point. Typical was a statement by Mike Quill of the Transport Workers Union to his fellow CIO Executive Board members. Quill conceded that “Nathan’s report is very good,” but argued that the CIO must fight at the local level, “in the wards, in the districts, and on a block by block basis.” The massive defeat of the CIO-PAC in 1946 and the assumption of power by a Congress hostile to labor motivated Quill and others to argue that on-the-ground district work was vital to advancing labor’s cause. In addition, the CIO’s own coffers dwindled, making it harder for the CIO to direct and control a national approach to defeating...

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50 Philip Murray, address before the UAW-CIO convention, November 10, 1947; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 61, Fol. 3; WSU. One survey reported that close to 90 percent of newspaper editorial boards opposed the conclusions reached in the Nathan Report. Twohey Analysis of Newspaper Opinions, qtd. in Len De Caux, “Looking Ahead,” column, CIO News, January 6, 1947; Len De Caux Papers, Oversize Box A, Fol. A-6; WSU.
51 See, for example, Nathan Cowan, letter to presidents of national and international unions, January 23, 1947; Philip Murray Papers, Box 126, Fol. 19; CUA; Minutes of Executive Committee of the CIO Legislative Department Meeting, December 11, 1946; CIO PAC Papers, Box 13, Fol. 3; WSU.
53 “Why Industry Says ‘NO’ to Labor,” CIO Economic Outlook, January 1946, Katherine Ellickson Papers, Box 37, Fol. 15; WSU.
54 Mike Quill, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, March 13-15, 1947, 64-5, microfilm, Reel 10 of 18; NYU.
55 The CIO-PAC used these very tactics in its election activities in 1946, even as it also relied on local volunteers to use mass media in their communities. The PAC called on local volunteers to direct door knocking campaigns and local committee meetings, but it also increasingly pushed its volunteers to use local mass media to make its case to segmented markets. A postwar PAC radio handbook by Joseph Gaer identified the best time to secure air time in order to reach certain audiences. Gaer explained that PAC supporters should air locally-produced spot announcements for housewives during the daytime. They could reach the “entire family” with short programs in the early evening. And Gaer described the middle of the night as “an undesirable period of radio time for your purposes.” See Joseph Gaer, PAC Radio Handbook, n.d., 10; CIO PAC Papers, Box 13, Fol. 20; WSU.
Taft-Hartley. Politics had become “the CIO’s crucial arena,” but the highly localized activities of political organizing now stood in contrast to a nationally-directed strategy of public relations. This divide represented the tension between a new and old vision of the meaning of political involvement for organized labor. The CIO’s national leadership certainly still valued get-out-the-vote efforts and fundraising, but they – along with the AFL, which had traditionally employed a less coordinated electoral strategy – increasingly sought to shape the terms of the larger political discourse of the day.

Though its leaders were also concerned about price controls, the AFL did far less than the CIO to publicize the issue to the general public in 1945 and 1946. When it did, it tended to rely on statements from its highest ranking officials, reflecting a trend that both the AFL and the CIO would use to craft an image of responsible labor statesmen in the pressure group society that would take hold in the 1950s. The American Federationist, the AFL’s monthly magazine that was supplied free-of-charge to union members, ran numerous stories on price controls and highlighted industry group errors in their projections of little inflation following the elimination of price controls. But the AFL typically directed these messages at union members and to Congressional committees, not the general public.

This divide between AFL and CIO political approaches continued during the 1946 election. The CIO undertook a full-scale campaign to elect progressive candidates to Congress through its PAC. The election was a turning point for the CIO-PAC. As with the CIO’s outreach to wartime workers, soldiers, and veterans, the CIO-PAC’s 1946 strategy recognized a

58 This rethinking of the distinction between workers and the public was not enough to save the 1946 election for organized labor. The CIO-PAC still reeled from the death of CIO-PAC visionary Sidney Hillman. It did not raise enough money to keep races competitive. Tensions between the left and right wings of the CIO resulted in accusations that the Soviet government supported PAC-endorsed candidates, reducing public support for the CIO. New York Times, October 18, 1946, cited in Zieger, The CIO, 245.
growing erosion of the division between workers and the public. As Jack Kroll, the director of the CIO-PAC explained in a 1946 article in the *New York Times Magazine*, “Today there are some 58 million people who have to work in order to live. These people and their families are no minority in our country. They are, in fact, the public… We of the CIO-PAC are dedicated to the protection of the interests of the majority of the people and to the struggle for a continued improvement in the standard of living for all our people.”

AFL leaders were far less direct in their articulation of the labor-public relationship, partly because the AFL’s on-the-ground political operation was far less developed than the CIO’s. The AFL historically supported lobbying over partisan political involvement, citing “the best interests of the entire membership,” even as it endorsed candidates on an ad-hoc basis and sent its officers as delegates to the Democratic and Republican conventions in 1944. Unlike the CIO, the AFL did not develop a PAC until after the passage of Taft-Hartley and did not solicit funds to use in a campaign to retain price controls. Indeed, AFL leaders refused to work with the CIO-PAC, which they continually dubbed “the dual organization” in the 1940, 1944, and 1946 elections.

Murray later reported that a CIO committee charged with discussing unity with the AFL “was not unmindful of the fact that the historic policy of the AFL of ‘reward your friends and punish your enemies’, has, by and large, been a policy of do-nothing in the political field.” Murray’s criticism was also a source of strength for the AFL. Because it had little existing infrastructure for widespread local campaign work, the AFL was better positioned to offer a coordinated, nationally directed campaign that sought to reshape public attitudes toward labor and business; it remained relatively unhampered by internal discord of the sort offered by Quill.

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59 Jack Kroll, “Why Labor is in Politics,” *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, 1946 [exact date unclear]; Len De Caux Papers, Box 6, Fol. 4; WSU.
61 Philip Murray, letter to all international unions, state and local industrial union councils and CIO regional directors, May 13, 1947; Walter Reuther Papers, Box 58, Fol. 9; WSU.
Murray’s comment about the AFL’s political activity also highlighted a growing tension between the two labor federations that prevented labor not only from presenting a unified front during the 1946 election, but also from developing a coordinated attack to the anti-labor legislative onslaught that followed. The AFL and CIO entered into protracted unity discussions from December 1946 through May 1947, though talks did not actually begin until the spring. But the two organizations could not overcome their differences.\(^{62}\) As an indication of how far apart the two labor federations were, the AFL formally prohibited its affiliates and state organizations from working with the CIO on political action, though local organizations did not always abide by this directive.\(^{63}\)

Looking back, a key member of the UAW’s legislative department recalled that “If we had had a higher degree of unity [both among CIO unions and with the AFL] back in 1946 and 1947… we would never have had the Taft-Hartley Act.”\(^{64}\) In the wake of Taft-Hartley’s passage, members of the rank-and-file blamed AFL and CIO leaders for their inability to develop a unified strategy. One union member characterized AFL and CIO action as “sheer criminal negligence.” “Had there been a united labor front, the workers would not be on the ‘chopping block’ today,” the unionist wrote.\(^{65}\)

This failure was not for lack of trying, especially on the part of the CIO, the group with smaller membership and fewer resources to fight Taft-Hartley. In February 1947, Murray argued

\(^{62}\) The 1946-1947 unity discussions between the AFL and the CIO were hardly the first contact that the two organizations had experienced since the CIO had split from the AFL in 1935. Indeed, in 1946, AFL and CIO leaders simply followed a pattern of unsuccessfully “spasmodically negotiat[ing]” an agreement for unity. See Zieger, *The CIO*, 358.

\(^{63}\) The 1947 AFL Convention instituted this policy. See AFL Executive Council Meeting Minutes, September 8-13, 1947, 61; microfilm, reel 13, U-Mich. The AFL Executive Council reiterated this policy in December of 1947, as it rejected the CIO’s request to establish a joint organization for the purpose of fighting the NLRB’s frequent applications for injunctions in the wake of Taft-Hartley’s passage. See AFL Executive Council Meeting Minutes, December 4, 1947, 6; microfilm, reel 13; U-Mich. The national AFL continued to work with liberal organizations like the Progressive Citizens of America (PCA), with whom the CIO was also allied.

\(^{64}\) Paul Sifton, “On Unity,” n.d. [presumably 1953]; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 300, Fol. 1; WSU.

\(^{65}\) Isador Weinstock, letter to William Green, July 1, 1947; AFL Papers, Series XI, File C, Box 29, Fol. 5; WHS. Green replied by blaming CIO officials.
that “unity of action” – though not organizational absorption – between the AFL, the CIO, and the Railroad Labor Unions was “of vital importance” and suggested that representatives from the three labor federations meet to devise a common economic and legislative agenda to fend off the imminent attack. But AFL personnel had less need for the CIO. The organization was capable of mounting the funds to develop its own public relations campaign and its leaders did not want to aid its rival unnecessarily. Furthermore, the AFL’s leaders worried that the CIO’s reputation for harboring leftist and communistic elements would reflect poorly on the AFL. Even when committees from the two organizations finally met in May 1947, the meeting produced nothing substantive about how the AFL and CIO might jointly address the legislative threat.

After the passage of Taft-Hartley, Murray renewed his call for the AFL, CIO, and the Railroad Brotherhoods to coordinate their political activities, especially during the 1948 elections. In response, the AFL reiterated its requirement of “organic unity.” In a speech before workers in July 1947, Green appealed to the CIO to, “Come back and live with us. Bring your family of whatever it is and live with the family of the American Federation of Labor in the house of labor, built by the American Federation of Labor, and erected upon an enduring foundation.” As before, CIO leaders responded that this prerequisite was irrelevant to a coordinated strategy and accused AFL leaders of acting in bad faith. With that, the 1946-1947 round of AFL-CIO unity talks effectively ended, with organized labor in far worse shape than...
when it had begun. The failure of the AFL and CIO to combine forces was especially
unfortunate for labor’s fortunes in the face of incessant criticisms by the press and industry
groups.

Press and Industry Groups Attacks on Labor

The mainstream press and business interests expressed overwhelmingly hostility to
organized labor in the years following World War II, blaming union strike action and wage
demands for causing an economic slowdown and driving up prices for average consumers.
Newspapers and radio stations – which were themselves often monopolies owned by big
business – had wide distribution. Industry groups were much better funded than labor interests.
NAM’s Public Relations Department budget for 1946 totaled $3,600,000, including $1.9 million
for national advertising.\(^{70}\) The figures were similar for 1947.\(^{71}\) By comparison, the CIO spent
just $200,000 a year directly on public relations and another $200,000 annually on the Research
and Education Department in the years immediately following the war, though this figure did not
include related expenditures on lobbying by the organization’s Washington office and politicking

\(^{70}\) “The Public Relations Program of the National Association of Manufacturers,” October 1946, 17; Len De Caux
Papers, Box 2, Fol. 5; WSU. Labor’s estimates of NAM’s expenditures on public relations were often higher than
this figure, reported by NAM itself. For example, in May 1947, a CIO committee claimed that NAM “spent
upwards of $3 million last year to kill OPA, [and] will spend nearly $5 million this year to prove that high prices are
caused by ‘labor monopolies.’” See “Comments on the Current Economic Situation for Economic Subcommittee,
CIO Legislative Committee,” prepared by William Glazier (ILWU), Seth Levine (CIO Maritime Comm.), and Bruce
Waybur (UE), May 9, 1947, 1; Len De Caux Papers, Box 4, Fol. 28; WSU.

\(^{71}\) The NAM Public Relations Department budget for 1947 was also reported as $3,600,000. Qtd. in “Telling the
Town!,” UE Guide for Community Action, Publication No. 71, July 1948, 14; Len De Caux Papers, Box 6, Fol. 17
;WSU. See also, “Industry’s Law against the People,” UE pamphlet, date unknown, 7; Len De Caux Papers, Box
10, Fol. 12; WSU. The March of Labor cited this same figure in its August 1952 edition, though it attributed it
solely to spending to promote Taft-Hartley, not to the larger budget. See Len De Caux, “5 Years of Taft-Hartley:
An Expose of the Anti-Labor Conspiracy,” March of Labor, August 1952, 6; Len De Caux Papers, Box 11, Fol. 18;
WSU.
through the CIO-PAC. AFL expenditures on public relations were even less than those of the CIO before the organization’s special expenditures aimed at defeating Taft-Hartley in 1947. 72

As a result of this huge funding discrepancy between the union federations and industry groups, labor leaders feared that press and business attacks would influence public opinion and provide a mandate for the newly elected Congress to institute punitive labor legislation. An independent survey of newspaper editorial positions found that 93 percent of editorial boards supported Taft-Hartley, including a substantial number of papers with prior records of supporting organized labor.73 In the pages of the CIO News, De Caux hammered home the idea that the press was “about 90% opposed to nearly everything labor advocates,” blaming it on the fact that the newspaper industry operated as “a big-business operation, a big employer itself… chiefly supported by the advertising of employing interests.”74 The AFL’s Secretary-Treasurer George Meany lumped the “anti-labor propaganda” of big business together with treatments of labor in the press. In his 1947 Labor Day message, Meany declared, “The anti-labor fabrications of Big Business and the faithful servants of Big Business in newspaper offices and legislative halls must be exposed.”75

Labor leaders grew concerned that these heavily financed messages would have a negative impact on public attitude toward unions. Perhaps more damaging than the messaging funding provided by business was the sponsorship of community activities through money


73 Twohey Analysis of Newspaper Opinion, for week ending June 7, 1947; Len De Caux Papers, Box 3, Fol. 27; WSU. For earlier Twohey figures reflecting more division in the press (before Taft-Hartley was finalized), see “For the Record,” CIO News, May 5, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.

74 Len De Caux, “Looking Ahead,” column, CIO News, May 19, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.

75 George Meany, “George Meany’s Labor Day Message,” American Federationist, September 1947, 32; Periodicals, WHS.
outside of PR budgets. Labor leaders worried that the public would come to regard business as acting in the interest of the general good because it sponsored community activities without an explicit anti-union bent. In contrast, underfunded unions seemed to act only on behalf of their members or, even worse, only to enrich their leaders. UAW President Walter Reuther articulated this concern in early 1947:

“[Companies] are fooling a lot of people. They are fooling a lot of people in our own union. How do they do it? …General Motors spent $45,000,000 for propaganda. They have Toscanini on Sunday afternoon and you listen to Toscanini conduct the most beautiful classical symphonic music. And, brother, you are sitting there, sitting back in that easy chair and you are at peace with the world, and just when you aren’t on guard they slip you the propaganda. And then Toscanini goes off and the Hour of Charm comes on. The all-girl orchestra. And Evelyn plays the violin. Oh, it’s sweet and it’s heavenly. And when she hits the highest note, they let you have it. That is going on every day in America. We have the job, and we don’t have $45,000,000 to spend, for making people realize that the magic formula that the boys in Wall Street profess to have a monopoly on is not some magic.”

Labor leaders like Reuther tried to change the terms of the political debate, by emphasizing business’s status as a special interest group, unanswerable to the general public. Big business contributed heavily to the Republican congressional victory in 1946, paving the way for labor legislation in 1947. Labor leaders drew attention to these contributions, making the case that anti-labor legislation was a political favor to employers. In contrast, they presented labor and the public interest as one in the same. Shortly after the election, Murray labeled General Motors’ Chairman Alfred P. Sloan’s statements that unions did not operate in the public interest “an actual declaration of war” that would be realized through “remedial legislation.”

Labor was at a disadvantage in making such arguments to the public. In addition to their huge financial advantage over unions, industry groups like NAM also made a deliberate effort to

76 Walter P. Reuther, speech before the UAW-CIO Educational Conference in Cleveland, Ohio, January 24, 1947; UAW Public Relations Department Papers, Box 26, Education Conference 1947 Fol.; WSU.
77 Philip Murray, Proceedings of Meetings of the International Executive Board of the CIO, November 13, 15, 16, 17, 23, 1946, 123-4; Microfilm, Reel 9; NYU.
soften their images and appeal to a public not always sympathetic to business’s aims. The *New York Times* reported that NAM leaders determined to make a “clean break with [NAM’s] past record, which often has been labeled reactionary.” While significant steel and auto interests were reported to have favored an aggressive campaign to repeal the Wagner Act altogether, the majority of NAM’s Board of Directors favored a rhetorically softer approach to engaging the public around potential legislation designed to curtail organized labor’s activities.  

Indeed, NAM President Earl Bunting worked hard to paint his organization as moderate, as compared with the position of union officials. Bunting argued that the NAM did not seek punitive legislation, but rather sought “fair play” on both sides. “[U]nfairness can only be corrected by fairness—fair rules and fair play applied without discrimination,” he declared, before Taft-Hartley had even been proposed explicitly.  

For their part, newspaper editorialists were less interested in the negotiating power of business, but more inclined to believe that labor had overplayed its hand. Newspaper editorials routinely condemned labor leaders for taking too much advantage of the privileges granted them under the Wagner Act. In an editorial calling for legislation to prevent strikes by public employees, the *New York Times* editorial page argued that “organized labor now enjoys privileges which enable it to exercise what amounts for all practical purposes to monopoly power.” While admitting that organized labor was “beginning to show that it comprehends its obligations,” the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board condemned labor “Bourbons” who continued

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79 Earl Bunting, qtd. in “NAM Leader Urges Amity in Business,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1947; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part II, Box 19, NAM Fol. (3 of 4); WSU.

to wreak havoc with Detroit’s auto production by temporarily shutting down plants in protest of the Hartley bill, as well as Detroit’s ongoing telephone strike.\textsuperscript{81} Rather than offering solutions to labor’s problems, such union officials merely exacerbated the problem.

In some cases, the press went one step further, castigating union leaders for corruption. A cartoon appearing in the \textit{New York Daily Mirror} during Congress’s votes on Taft-Hartley was typical. In it, the future Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Fred L. Packer shows “labor union dictators” in gladiator attire (Figure 1-1). Congress has successfully felled the “dictators” with the cudgel of legislation. When called upon to deliver his verdict in the affair, President Truman signals that the labor union boss should be condemned to death. Packer and the editorial staff of the vehemently anticommunist, anti-union tabloid \textit{Daily Mirror} no doubt hoped that Truman would strike a blow against what they regarded as unscrupulous behavior by union heads.\textsuperscript{82} The \textit{World-Telegram’s} cartoonist made a similar point, labeling union leaders “labor czars” in at least two cartoons. In one, a rotund man with a small head and a tiny top hat pleads with the White House to “save us,” his large behind facing the viewer (Figure 1-2).\textsuperscript{83} Tears or sweat pour forth as the man clasps his hands in prayer, begging for a presidential veto. The implication is clear: His position as a czar stood to be compromised if Taft-Hartley went into effect.

Not only did many editorial boards and cartoonists imply that union leaders benefitted materially from their unchecked positions of power, but many newspapers – both tabloid and broadsheet – ran editorials that blasted labor leaders for their irresponsible language and actions. A relatively measured \textit{New York Herald Tribune} editorial accused Murray of “vituperation and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{81}“Tactics of Labor: Bourbons,” editorial, \textit{Detroit Free Press}, April 23, 1947; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part II, Box 6, Defend Labor Rally, 1947 Fol.; WSU.
  \item \textsuperscript{83}Labeled, “The Wailing Wall,” the cartoon may have also have served as a reference to current events in Palestine. The United Nations appointed a committee to work on a partition plan the day before the cartoon was published.
\end{itemize}
name calling” in his descriptions of management. Later, an opinion writer for the same paper described organized labor leaders as “misguided” in their “ranting.” Often writers linked this characterization to union leaders’ use of the strike. With the country in the midst of a strike wave that showed no indication of subsiding, the correlation between union strikes and irresponsible action may have resonated for many readers.

Indeed, editorials and cartoons in the anti-labor press often referenced the overuse of strikes as a reason why legislation was needed in the first place. In a cartoon for the Hearst syndicate, the Journal-American, former sports page illustrator Burris Jenkins, Jr. depicted the president seated at his desk, deciding whether to sign Taft-Hartley into law, the recently vetoed tax bill already in the trash can beside his desk (Figure 1-3). A huge machete bearing the words “Strike threats at peak in nation’s history!” looms above his head. The message was unambiguous: The president needed to provide a check to unions that had wielded the strike as a weapon whenever they didn’t get everything they wanted. With “4,159 strikes notices on file in ’47,” labor was clearly overreaching.

The mainstream press argued that Taft-Hartley was a minor antidote to labor’s abuses. The press often used the metaphor of a swinging pendulum to represent a turn toward moderation from the Wagner Act’s favoritism of labor over business. A cartoon in the World-Telegram depicted unions as a singular entity in opposing regulation (Figure 1-4). While “the railroads,” “big business,” and “big industry” were purported to “thrive on [regulation],” only Big Labor screams, “Help! Murder! Police” at the thought of Congress attempting to “strangle me just like they did these other poor chaps!” In another cartoon by Tom Carlisle appearing in the usually measured, center-right Herald-Tribune, the bill was also presented as a mild

corrective (Figure 1-5). Congress uses the axe of labor legislation to cut off the tail of “labor abuses” (curiously attached to a puppy). Meanwhile, Union Labor and the Left Wing cry like a couple of small children. In all these cartoons, labor leaders were depicted as making a big stink over nothing.

Organized labor faced an uphill battle against such press depictions. An article in the pro-labor journal, Labor and Nation, asserted that the anti-labor press and industry groups were so successful that “the words ‘radical labor leaders’ have been linked together in people’s minds as ineradically as the phrase, ‘damn yankees,’ is in Georgia.” The press consistently cited this public demand for Taft-Hartley as a reason for the legislation’s passage. In a somewhat circular argument, editorialists even took Congressional votes as evidence of public opinion. In contrast, unions were assumed to be out-of-touch with the general public, and even with their own members. “[M]ost Americans” wanted “legislation to correct the union excesses which so gravely have injured the country and so surely have imperiled the real welfare of labor,” argued the editorial board of the World-Telegram. Taft-Hartley was “a response to insistent public demand.”

In the face of so much bad publicity, with limited financial resources and with significant time pressure, unions pushed a strategy that sought to discredit big business far more than it tried to rehabilitate labor’s image in the eyes of the public. Where it did present an alternative, it presented its own leaders as reasonable labor statesmen, rational and responsive to the general public. Labor’s argument to the public was that Americans should support labor and oppose

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Taft-Hartley not because unions were inherently good, but because American prosperity and freedom depended on it. This message was hardly consistent, and there were key differences in the AFL and CIO’s approach to adopting and deploying it, both structurally and in emphasis.

The Structure, Funding, and Activities of the AFL and CIO Efforts to Defeat Taft-Hartley

Though labor leaders knew that a legislative assault on unions was imminent, neither the AFL nor the CIO began serious discussion of public relations campaigns to defeat the measure until March 1947. This late start was partly due to the fact that the exact contours of the bills that were ultimately consolidated under Taft-Hartley were still unclear a few months into the new year. In addition, labor leaders from both federations initially approached the campaign with ambivalence. They remained convinced that their efforts would do little to change congressional opinion, which seemed destined to support legislation hostile to unions, no matter the public relations efforts of organized labor. In April 1947, Green insisted that “he did not think [substantive AFL-sponsored action against Taft-Hartley’s passage] would do any good because the members of Congress will not listen.”

Later, AFL leaders concluded that “had the campaign been launched earlier success in defeating the measure would have been assured,” but this remark was an effort to convince unions that had invested significant resources in the campaign that their contributions made an impact.

Though they began their campaigns at around the same time, the structure and content of the AFL and CIO efforts to defeat Taft-Hartley were initially quite different, until finally converging on a similar strategy to secure and uphold a presidential veto. The CIO used its political infrastructure – the CIO-PAC and the Legislative Department – to manage the

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90 William Green, Minutes of the AFL Executive Council Meeting, April 21-25, 1947, 31; Microfilm Part II, Reel 13; U-Mich.
91 Minutes of AFL Executive Council, September 8-13, 1947, 62-3; Microfilm Part II, Reel 13; U-Mich.
campaign, relegating its Public Relations Department to a backseat role. The CIO effort concentrated on convincing its own members to oppose Taft-Hartley and take that message to their neighbors, rather than controlling a message in Washington and addressing the non-unionized public.

The CIO adopted this approach more out of circumstance than conviction. It already had a political organization in place, and leaders reasoned that the short timeline did not allow for a radical redirection of public opinion toward labor unless local people initiated a campaign. Instead, they hoped that protests by workers would intimidate lawmakers concerned about reelection. Because Taft-Hartley came on the heels of affiliate contributions to Operation Dixie and because the CIO’s per-capita tax was already high, the CIO was reluctant to increase the financial obligation of its affiliated unions as Taft-Hartley was introduced. As a result, the CIO did not have the resources for a national, large-scale advertising campaign. In addition, some staunch anti-communists within the CIO already viewed De Caux with caution and may have hoped to marginalize his influence during the Taft-Hartley proceedings. For all these reasons, the CIO campaign was not what many in the CIO might have hoped. Indeed, some CIO leaders privately acknowledged that their campaign was far less effective than the AFL’s. Jacob Potofsky, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA), implored the CIO Executive Board to develop “national advertising, such as the American Federation of Labor has done.” Potofsky offered praise for the AFL’s efforts: “I don’t find any fault with it. I think it has been very effective.”

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92 Jacob Potofsky, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, May 16-17, 1947, 338; Microfilm reel 10 of 18; NYU.
For its part, the AFL effort was directed from the highest levels of the organization, with considerable external support from Morris Novik, a labor radio consultant. Unlike the CIO, the AFL had underdeveloped Public Relations and Legislative Departments, and the organization had no Political Action Committee. And unlike the CIO’s playbook, the AFL campaign included a nationally-directed newspaper advertising strategy, as well as the sponsorship of radio plays geared toward union members and non-members alike. The AFL engaged in little grassroots organizing until the end of the campaign, when the organization tried to show its political might by rallying union members around a presidential veto and a congressional vote to sustain the veto. Before the year was out, the AFL created the Labor’s League for Political Education (LLPE) as a political auxiliary, acknowledging the power of combining political outreach to members and robust lobbying in the halls of Congress with a tightly coordinated and very expensive public relations campaign to stop Taft-Hartley.

The CIO and AFL campaigns were also different in their funding mechanisms. While the CIO relied on internationals to finance local campaigns guided by – but not regulated by – templates produced in Washington, the AFL asked internationals to turn over funds to the national AFL office for a coordinated national campaign. This marked a departure from previous AFL policy, which had always imposed a far lower per-capita tax on the organization’s membership and employed many fewer AFL-paid organizers in the field and staffers in

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93 Neither the membership of the Executive Council nor the leaderships of the AFL’s international unions were polled about the public relations activities pursued in Washington. Instead, Executive Council Vice Presidents David Dubinsky and George M. Harrison joined Green, Meany, and Matthew Woll (the three officers of the AFL), in deciding to implement the program.

94 Philip Pearl, the head of the AFL’s Public Relations Department – a “one-man show” responsible for booking Green’s appointments with the press, putting out press releases and pamphlets, and assisting in the production of the text-heavy American Federationist that formed the essence of the national AFL’s public relations program – was only peripherally involved. “How Labor Tells It’s [sic] Story,” Mill and Factory, March 1946, 91; Len De Caux Papers, Box 2, Fol. 9; WSU. M.S. Novik, “Labor on the Air,” American Federationist, June 1947, 8-9, 15; Periodicals, WHS. Other small AFL departments which might have been expected to play a role included the Information Department and the Research Department. However, neither group seems to have been consulted in any significant way.
Washington, D.C. In 1946, the per capita tax for AFL unions was raised to two cents per member per month for members up to 200,000 and 1.5 cents for every member thereafter. The per capita tax for CIO unions during the same period was five cents – more than twice the rate of AFL unions. Enthusiastic support from the powerful Teamsters Union for a funding scheme that relied on union contributions allowed the Executive Council to overcome the historic resistance that the AFL had displayed to a strongly centralized governance model. Given the Teamsters’ reputation for strong-arm tactics, as well as the fact that the union’s membership was distributed across many industries in which other AFL unions had members, there were few on the Executive Council who wanted their opposition to Teamsters President Daniel J. Tobin’s financing plan recorded.

The Executive Council agreed to a voluntary per-head assessment of fifteen cents, to be levied and collected by the AFL’s federated unions. In telegrams to AFL-affiliated union heads, the Council “urged” unions “to make a contribution immediately” in order “to fight this evil threat which today hangs over the head of every American worker.” If all unions participated, the assessment was expected to generate $1,125,000, but officials believed that they could raise at least $1,000,000, a figure that would allow “a considerable job in the way of publicity in combating this legislation.” By May, the American Federationist was reporting that donations were fast and furious. “[C]hecks were arriving from unions large and small” before the Council meeting even ended, the Federationist informed readers. Indeed, Meany’s back-of-the-envelope estimate of $1,000,000 came very close to the actual revenue raised. Financial reports

96 Telegram from William Green and George Meany to Presidents of National and International Unions, Minutes of the AFL Executive Council, April 22, 1947, 34; microfilm, reel 13; U-Mich.
97 Minutes of the Executive Council, American Federation of Labor, April 22, 1947, 33; microfilm, reel 13, U-Mich.
98 “Executive Council Launches All-Out War on Slave Bills,” American Federationist, May 1947, 3; Periodicals, WHS.
indicated that member unions contributed some $1,020,000, and local unions kicked in another $14,000.99

This money had not been fully pledged, let alone collected, when the publicity began a mere week following AFL Executive Council discussions of the matter in April 1947. As a result – or perhaps as an effort to solicit more funding and garner bigger headlines – the AFL newspaper and radio campaign was reported to cost $1,500,000 in the press.100 The final financial reports for the two-month-long effort revealed that a significantly smaller amount had been spent than the figure projected in newspaper accounts. Expenses totaled some $850,000, the bulk of it spent on newspaper advertising ($424,000) and radio time ($330,000).101 It is unclear how the national AFL disposed of the $184,000 differential between revenues and expenditures for the campaign. Whatever the case, $1,000,000 represented a sizeable amount of money, enabling a nationally-directed AFL campaign that would grace the pages of over two hundred newspapers beginning in late April and the airwaves of over four hundred radio stations around the country beginning in early May.102

In contrast, the CIO did not place per-head assessments on its unions but, instead, relied on affiliates to sponsor local media campaigns when the federation couldn’t afford to do so. In part, this was because the CIO adopted a political strategy and relied heavily on the CIO-PAC which had its own grassroots organizing strategy and which relied on worker contributions rather than demanding contributions from affiliated unions. The CIO’s reluctance to tax unions also

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99 Secretary-Treasurer George Meany’s Report of Receipts and Expenses for September 1, 1946 through August 31, 1947, AFL Convention Proceedings, October 6-16, 1947, 142-7; Periodicals, WHS.
102 Philip Taft, The AF of L, 271.
came from the fact that levies were already in place for the CIO’s failing southern organizing campaign, Operation Dixie. By November 1946, six months into the southern campaign, the CIO had already spent some $800,000 of union contributions and the campaign saw virtually no return on investment as only $21,000 was collected in the field. By the time of the campaign to defeat Taft-Hartley the CIO was spending considerably less on the southern effort – some $100,000 a month – but unions were unexcited about financing another failed campaign. In addition, the CIO’s per-capita tax was much higher than the generally leaner and less centralized AFL. The AFL had the luxury of being able to vote an increase in per capita taxes in 1946, resulting in increased revenue in 1947.\textsuperscript{103}

Despite their different strategies and funding mechanisms, both the AFL and the CIO campaigns to defeat the anti-labor bills of the Eightieth Congress began with rhetorical flourish. The CIO leadership – especially the CIO-PAC and the Legislative Department – acted on its own. With the new Congressional session only a couple weeks old, the CIO’s Legislative Department Director Nathan Cowan issued a leaflet to all CIO affiliates under the heading, “YOUR UNION IS IN DANGER!” Cowan warned union leaders and their charges around the country that proposed anti-labor bills could “cripple the activities of organized labor,” stymying CIO unions’ efforts to obtain higher wages for members, and thereby reducing the living standards of workers.\textsuperscript{105} In addition, the national CIO office published half a million copies of

\textsuperscript{103}Zieger, \textit{The CIO}, 238.
\textsuperscript{104}Taft, \textit{The AF of L}, 450-2. The AFL’s per capita tax payments for 1946 totaled, $1,458,000, compared with $1,888,000 in 1947. The AFL did not see net losses in membership in any postwar year until 1948.
\textsuperscript{105}Nathan Cowan, letter and accompanying leaflet to Presidents of National and International Unions, January 23, 1947; Philip Murray Papers, Box 126, Fol. 19; CUA.
the pamphlet, “Defend Your Union,” a text-heavy legal analysis of Congress’ labor agenda and a call for political action by union members.\textsuperscript{106}

More coordinated action came in the months to follow. The CIO Executive Board did not schedule an emergency discussion between its regularly scheduled meetings of November 1946 and mid-March 1947. At the March meeting the Board approved the Legislative Department’s recommendation that the CIO declare April 1947 “Defend Labor Month,” an effort “to cut through the fog of phony propaganda, and to arouse the American people to the real dangers involved in the present legislative drive against labor.”\textsuperscript{107} During this month, CIO affiliates were encouraged to organize rallies, distribute leaflets, sponsor radio programs, and lobby in Washington, but such a declaration and the associated wires to locals, and materials distributed through the \textit{CIO News} did not represent a coordinated strategy to defeat Taft-Hartley; indeed, numerous other causes, including action around taxes, housing, prices, and healthcare among others, were collapsed into Defend Labor Month. Defeating Taft-Hartley was only one piece of a larger legislative effort.

Furthermore, the official call for action during Defend Labor Month was addressed to “all CIO members, friends, and allies throughout the country,” not to those members of the public who might be convinced to ally themselves with labor in its hour of need.\textsuperscript{108} As Van Bittner, an officer of the Steelworkers and the head of the CIO’s southern organizing drive explained, “Our first object is to stir up labor. That is the only team we have, the team of the CIO. We have no other team, and if then when we get our own people, six million of them stirred up, they can

\textsuperscript{106} Victor Riesel, Inside Labor column, \textit{New York Post}, June 5, 1947; UAW Public Relations Clippings, Part II, Box 26, Victor Riesel – New York Post Fol. (2 of 3); WSU; and Len De Caux, “Publicity Proposals for Defend Labor Month,” date unknown, 1; Len De Caux Papers, Box 2, Fol. 7; WSU.

\textsuperscript{107} Len De Caux, “Looking Ahead,” column, \textit{CIO News}, April 7, 1947; Len De Caux Papers, Oversize Box A, Fol. A6; WSU.

\textsuperscript{108} James B. Carey, reading from Statement on Legislation, Minutes of CIO Executive Board, March 13-15, 1947, 45; Periodicals, WSU.
bring a lot of others with them.” For Bittner and other members of the CIO Executive Board, the public was largely beside the point, except insofar as local action might persuade shifts in the thinking of neighbors. But why such an effort might succeed in 1947, when CIO union members and their neighbors did not push the Democrats to victory in the 1946 election – despite the best advice of the CIO-PAC – remained unclear.

Murray charged De Caux’s Publicity Department with helping the Legislative and Research Departments, as well as the CIO-PAC observe Defend Labor Month. Not content simply to report on letter writing campaigns, worker rallies and the Congressional testimony of CIO leaders in the *CIO News*, De Caux developed a thorough plan for publicizing labor’s objections to the Taft and Hartley bills to the general public. In it, De Caux detailed plans for all of the activities expected of the grassroots, member-focused programming that the CIO Executive Board had endorsed: the continued printing of CIO pamphlets and advertisement mats for placement (and payment) by international and local unions, special editions of the *CIO News*, and the use of existing CIO-sponsored radio programs to publicize Defend Labor Month activities.

But De Caux also pushed a set of projects designed to appeal to the non-unionized public. Indeed, De Caux saw no need to create separate messages for organized labor and for the public. For De Caux, “John Q. Public [was] labor.” His proposed public relations campaign reflected this belief. De Caux’s proposals included a set of pre-recorded and live radio addresses by Murray; radio scripts on Taft-Hartley to be placed, performed and produced locally; radio spot

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109 Van Bittner, Minutes of the CIO Executive Board, March 13-15, 1947, 124; Periodicals, WSU.
110 Len De Caux, “Publicity Proposals for Defend Labor Month,” date unknown, presumably March 1947; Len De Caux Papers, Box 2, Fol. 7; WSU.
111 The CIO sponsored two weekly radio programs during the spring of 1947 – “Labor U.S.A.” on ABC and “Cross-Section U.S.A.” on CBS.
announcements; the placement of CIO officials on existing public affairs programs on radio; paid newspaper advertisements; the production of standardized anti Taft-Hartley campaign kits for use in the field; and, most impressively, a sophisticated differentiated advertising campaign directed at African Americans, non-English speakers, and farmers, among others.

With a nod to the CIO leadership’s reluctance to impose additional taxes on its affiliated unions, De Caux emphasized that his publicity plan “ha[d] been prepared on the assumption that no substantial funds have been voted for an extensive advertising and publicity campaign.” Newspaper advertisements and radio time would require sizeable expenditures – $3,200 for a one-time, full-page buy in the New York Times or $730 for a page in the Washington Post, $350 for each bought radio spot announcement, and $300 for the translation and mailing of special foreign language newspaper inserts, according to De Caux’s estimates. But radio time deemed to be in the public interest could be had for free, and De Caux’s staff could place CIO officials on Washington talk shows without money changing hands.113

In many ways, the distribution program that the AFL implemented was similar to the one that De Caux had offered to the CIO, though the content of the message was somewhat different, and the plan was significantly less well developed than De Caux’s polished proposal.114 Green, Meany and AFL Vice President Matthew Woll proposed a two-pronged strategy: special radio programming possibly hosted by a professional commentator; and the placement of advertisements in large, mainstream newspapers across the country. While the CIO had engaged

113 There is no clear reporting of the CIO’s budget. Murray commented on the “strength of the organization” as measured by the CIO’s “financial report” in May 1947, but it seems likely that he was rallying the troops; there is no audit available that supports this. See Murray, CIO Executive Board Meeting, May 16-17, 1947, 65; Periodicals, WSU.

114 The three person committee of AFL officers appointed to develop a national strategy to publicize the dangers of Taft-Hartley did not include a public relations man or a journalist, but its recommendations were more outward-looking than the member-focused strategy used by the CIO. This committee was later expanded to include AFL Executive Council Vice Presidents Harrison and Dubinsky as well. See Minutes of the AFL Executive Council Meeting, April 21-25, 1947, 34; microfilm, reel 13, U-Mich.
in such activities in prior campaigns, this type of advertising was new to the AFL. In its 1947 report, the AFL’s Public Relations Department reported that the campaign against Taft-Hartley marked “the first time in its history [that] the American Federation of Labor was compelled to buy space in the newspapers and time on the air, day after day and week after week, to express its views in a way that would command public attention.” The change in policy came not only because of the AFL’s alarm over Taft-Hartley’s potential, but also because AFL leaders sought to influence the broader political discourse about labor and cold war liberalism. A younger generation of AFL leaders led by George Meany grew concerned that the public would perceive the CIO’s left-wing as representative of all of labor, lessening the influence of AFL spokesmen in Washington and challenging the AFL’s legislative agenda. Meany and other rising, younger AFL staff members celebrated the union bureaucracy and sophistication represented by a coordinated public relations campaign in the interest of political influence.

The AFL’s newspaper advertisements appeared as full or near-full page displays in newspapers whose editorial boards took varied positions on Taft-Hartley and on labor issues more generally. This diversity of papers was seen as essential by an AFL leadership determined to reach a wide public. AFL leaders did not necessarily see union members and the public as one-in-the-same as De Caux did, but they viewed the general public as the key to defeating Taft-Hartley. This stood in marked contrast to the CIO, which primarily reached out to union members.

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115 “Public Relations,” section of AFL Executive Council Report, *AFL Convention Proceedings, October 6-16, 1947*, 211; Periodicals, WHS.

116 In New York, the AFL ran advertisements in the following newspapers, many of which were syndicated to other cities: the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily News*, the *Herald Tribune*, the *Journal American, PM Daily*, the *Post*, the *Times*, the *Sun*, and the *World-Telegram*. Advertisements also ran in the *Wall Street Journal*, though none appeared in the *Daily Worker*. 
The AFL’s large-scale radio campaign also showed the organization’s determination to reach those who did not belong to unions. The AFL’s use of the radio was both conventional and boundary-pushing. The conventional elements involved appearances by the AFL’s leadership on networks that were accessed by a wide cross-section of the public, union members and not. The AFL sponsored on-air speeches by Green and Meany, agreed to two radio debates featuring Green – one with Senator Taft and the other with the president of the NAM, and encouraged their members to listen to nationally broadcast radio speeches by sympathetic politicians. In addition, the national Federation bought air time to relay the opinions of small employers opposed to the provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act. Among these was one Patrick McDonough, a steel plant owner in Oakland, California. McDonough lambasted Congressional Republicans and the NAM for refusing his request to testify before Congress on the dangers of Taft-Hartley. “I think the insult was to you, the American people,” McDonough told radio listeners.117

In addition to these more conventional uses of radio, the AFL sponsored a variety of radio plays with explicit labor messages and musical performances with few direct labor references in order to publicize organized labor’s viewpoints, and to establish an image of the AFL as a community presence. The idea was to employ “entertainment in the pursuit of activism.”118 In doing so, the AFL reached beyond its own membership, acting on the belief that a larger constituency could further the cause of defeating Taft-Hartley. The effort drew on “star talent in defense of organized labor’s freedoms” recruited from the ranks of the largest entertainment unions, overwhelmingly affiliated with the AFL.119 These big names included

117 “The AF of L Leads the Fight,” American Federationist, June 1947, 3; Periodicals, WHS.
118 Qtd. in Fones-Wolf, Waves of Opposition, 211.
119 These unions initially included the Associated Actors and Artists of America, the American Federation of Musicians, the American Federation of Radio Actors, Actors Equity Association, the American Guild of Musical

Within one week of the first meeting of representatives of the AFL’s entertainment unions, the AFL “started the airwaves crackling with programs the likes of which had never been heard before,” according to a retrospective roundup by Novik.\textsuperscript{120} This was not precisely true given the CIO’s previous forays into radio performances. But the star power lent to the effort, the huge financial investment, and the use of national, one-time airtime buys at primetime or during the afternoon, instead of an existing discounted, pre-scheduled, weekly radio show at a time designed to coincide with shift changes were unprecedented.

The AFL’s radio campaign used a sophisticated strategy of differentiated messaging on a scale previously unimagined in labor circles. The Federation bought time for three distinct programs to run across four different time slots on the ABC and Mutual Networks.\textsuperscript{121} “The Best Things in Life,” a soap opera to dramatize the plight of ordinary American workers aired in daily installments on 239 stations and was designed to appeal to housewives. It recalled the OPA fights of the previous year, legitimizing organized labor as a voice for consumers.\textsuperscript{122} “Lift Your Voices,” a variety show with no appreciable labor-specific content beyond remarks between musical pieces aired on Thursday evenings and again on 425 Mutual stations on Sundays at 1:30

\textsuperscript{120} M.S. Novik, “Labor on the Air,” \textit{American Federationist}, June 1947, 8; Periodicals, WHS.
\textsuperscript{121} CBS and NBC had policies of not selling time for programs their executives considered controversial. However, AFL leaders spoke in debates and interviews on these two networks. ABC and Mutual did not have this policy.
pm – the latter time slot designed for family listening. Finally, ABC aired “Labor Must Be Free,” on Tuesday nights. This program featured prominent citizens – from business, government and churches – speaking against Taft-Hartley.

For all the AFL’s outreach to the public in April and May of 1947, after Taft-Hartley’s passage in the House and the Senate and before the presidential veto, the AFL converged with the CIO in adopting a strategy to mobilize union members, rather than to appeal to the public. The hope was that rallies and union letter-writing campaigns, as well as intensified lobbying in the halls of Congress would intimidate the President and members of Congress with the threat of electoral retribution in 1948. Both AFL and CIO unions sought to demonstrate to the public that they did not need punitive legislation, and the AFL ran a few more newspaper advertisements targeting non-members immediately before and after the presidential veto. But for the most part, both labor federations concentrated on demonstrating worker strength and political solidarity.

A June 4th gathering at Madison Square Garden under the sponsorship of the AFL’s Central Trades and Labor Council of Greater New York highlighted the AFL’s new approach. AFL leaders spoke to 25,000 attendees alongside such prominent politicians as William O’Dwyer, the mayor of New York City, and the state’s U.S. Senators. Even as he hoped that listeners would bring the message of the rally back to their communities, Green acknowledged that he was addressing unionists. Declaring that organized labor was “not powerful enough – not united enough,” Green called for the organization of millions more workers. “Nothing will stop

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123 This became the format for AFL-sponsored music radio shows in 1948. Green reported that, “the radio people have learned that the general public will not listen regularly each week in any appreciable numbers to any program featuring a speech. There must be an entertainment factor to build and hold a listening audience.” Thus, the AFL kept its labor-specific content between musical pieces “short and pithy.” William Green, letter to E.D. McKinnon, September 14, 1948; AFL Papers, Series XI, File C, Box 8, Public Relations Fol.; WHS.
124 See M.S. Noviak, “Labor on the Air,” American Federationist, June 1947, 8; Periodicals, WHS.
125 “Freedom Rally,” American Federationist, 6-7; Periodicals, WHS.
us!” he thundered to the packed house. 126 The primary message of the rally was a threat: “Those who were so eager to jump on the anti-labor bandwagon will find that it may well turn out to be a speeding vehicle on the road to political oblivion,” David Dubinsky of the International Ladies Garment Workers told the roaring crowd. 127 If a Senator or Congressman failed to uphold the veto, “we shall have no choice but to regard him as our enemy,” Green declared. 128

The CIO’s veto rally was held six days after the AFL’s, in the same venue. Organizers predicted that it would attract 100,000 between those inside, participants in a march to the Garden, and those gathered outside. 129 Afterward, the CIO confirmed this figure, and claimed that a half a million New Yorkers had lined the parade route to watch. The CIO News reported that the event was “the biggest labor demonstration that labor has ever seen.” 130 Murray later stated that “profound opposition to this legislation has not come solely from labor but from all ranks of American life.” But whatever the turnout, the rally itself was very much a labor affair and CIO spokesmen emphasized worker solidarity in the 1948 election.

In addition to this rally, the CIO continued its letter writing and petition campaigns. Murray confided to the UAW leadership that, “At least a million letters or wires or signatures to petitions are needed,” as “[e]ach [Congressional vote] may be the decisive one.” 131 But the actual veto-related mail volume was somewhat less than Murray had anticipated and seems to have come from union members and not the neighbors whom the CIO believed unionists would persuade to attack Taft-Hartley. The CIO leadership boasted that 175,000 letters, 575,000 postcards and 26,000 telegrams supporting a veto had been sent at the bequest of the CIO to the

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126 William Green, speech at Veto Rally at Madison Square Garden, June 4, 1947; AFL Papers, Series 11, File E, Box 4, Labor Speeches – B527 to B Fol.; WHS.
127 “Freedom Rally,” American Federationist, 6-7; Periodicals, WHS.
128 William Green, speech at Veto Rally at Madison Square Garden, June 4, 1947; AFL Papers, Series 11, File E, Box 4, Labor Speeches – B527 to B Fol.; WHS.
129 “Giant New York Rally Points Up CIO Demand for Taft Bill Veto,” CIO News, June 9, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.
130 “New York Sparks Rallies Against Taft Bill,” CIO News, June 16, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.
131 Philip Murray, telegram to UAW, May 15, 1947; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 61, Fol. 2; WSU.
White House and to Capitol Hill.132 And while the CIO Legislative Committee did coordinate its petition drive with the Democratic National Committee and other liberal groups, the CIO portion of this effort was directed squarely at its own membership.133

*The Messages Used in AFL and CIO Campaigns*

The message of political retribution used by the AFL and CIO in order to secure a presidential veto and push for Congress to uphold that veto was very different than the arguments against Taft-Hartley used by both organizations during the spring of 1947. Speaking primarily to its members and the communities in which those members lived, the CIO tended to emphasize economic arguments that posited that Taft-Hartley would reduce wages, increase prices and lower the standard of living for all Americans. For its part, the AFL stressed the negative effect that the passage of Taft-Hartley would have on Americans’ Constitutional freedoms, sometimes tying these ideas to the economic health of the country. Because it was generally directing its messages to a wider audience and because the AFL was not dogged by allegations of communist sympathies as the CIO was, these political arguments were far easier for the organization to promote than they were for the CIO. They also served the purpose of differentiating the AFL from the left-wing of the CIO – a matter of considerable concern to Meany and other AFL leaders. But at various times throughout the spring of 1947, both the AFL and the CIO resorted to both economic and political arguments.

The CIO-PAC led the charge in defining the CIO’s economic arguments against the labor legislation proposed by the Eightieth Congress. In a public letter to the President, Murray argued that if Taft-Hartley were to be signed into law, “it will engulf not only the labor movement but

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133. Minutes of CIO Legislative Committee, May 13, 1947; and May 26, 1947; CIO PAC Papers, Box 13, Fol. 3; WSU.
the entire nation in tragic consequences,” principally a depression caused by weakening unions’ abilities to negotiate contract, resulting in lower wages and reduced purchasing power.\(^{134}\)

Meanwhile, industrial chaos would ensue as injunction rule reigned and unions lost the negotiating powers that had previously permitted them to secure adequate wages for workers. This stripping of labor’s rights would cause production backlogs that would negatively impact supply and prices to the consumer. This would both make goods scarcer (and therefore more expensive), and would erode the economic strength of the United States vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

The AFL tied this argument about a weakened America to a message of political freedom. “Slave labor is never productive labor,” announced the first AFL anti Taft-Hartley newspaper advertisement to run. The new charge of the United States as it entered the cold war was “to produce more and more goods to meet the dire needs of all people.” Under the heading, “a 1947 appeal to reason,” the advertisement argued that sufficient levels of production could not occur with “dangerous experiments with totalitarian controls that will ruin the efficiency of our productive plants” – experiments highlighted by Taft-Hartley (Figure 1-6). Other advertisements reiterated this theme. The public, workers and employers had “identical” interests involving “labor-management peace and increased production” (Figure 1-7). The advertisement contended that the end of industry-wide bargaining would result in chaos. Strikes would become more frequent as union leaders tried to negotiate new contracts with each employer in an industry. The result of all of this upheaval would be lowered productivity, generating still higher prices and a lower standard of living.

\(^{134}\) Philip Murray, qtd. in “Murray Demands Veto of Labor Bill,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1947; Part I, Box 5, Fol. 3; UAW Research Department Papers, WSU. For complete text see Philip Murray, letter to President Harry S. Truman, June 11, 1947; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part II, Box 31, Taft-Hartley Fol. 4 (of 4); WSU.
The national standard of living was threatened not only by lower productivity, but also by the lowered wage standards that Taft-Hartley promised, in the view of AFL and CIO leaders. Industry-wide agreements resulted in high wage standards that benefitted everyone. By negotiating on behalf of their own members across an entire industry, unions also benefitted non-union workers who saw their wage levels rise to be competitive in industries with wide union representation. *CIO News* editorials argued that, “When CIO unions win higher wages, they win them for all the workers, whether union or non-union,” resulting in a ripple effect “[l]ike the pebble dropped in the pond.” The entire nation’s economic fortunes and the living standard of the non-unionized public rested on big business’ attempt to “‘whip labor into line.’” One AFL advertisement argued that this “calamity” of lowered wages and purchasing power would “lead to a Taft-Hartley depression.”

As Murray explained in a nationwide radio broadcast over NBC, “the Taft-Hartley bill is an open invitation to every chiseling employer to start wage cutting.” This practice would ultimately force the country to “endure a man-made crisis, perhaps deeper and more threatening…than…the Great Depression.” Green also sounded an alarmist note. In Congressional testimony, he argued that if proposed labor bills were enacted, “the working people of this country would be compelled by law themselves to destroy the standard of living achieved over the years.” In a subsequent speech, Green argued that Taft-Hartley would “undermine and destroy the American standard of living and lower the wages of every man and

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135 “Putting on the Squeeze,” editorial, *CIO News*, January 20, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.
137 Philip Murray, “‘A Monstrous Bill,’” radio address over NBC, May 16, 1947, reprinted in *CIO News*, May 19, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.
138 William Green, testimony before the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, February 18, 1947; AFL Papers, Series VIII, File A, Box 24, George Meany Fol.; WHS.
woman who works for a living.”139 And in a national radio broadcast, Green asked listeners whether “the great mass of American workers….would be able to sustain the blow” of “wage cuts all down the line, for non-union members as well as union workers.”140 Another AFL official argued that all that stood between a repeat of the 1930s was the labor movement’s recognition of the threat that restrictive legislation and power-hungry, anti-democratic industry groups posed to the health of the nation’s economy.141

CIO advertising mats produced by De Caux’s Public Relations Department and placed and financed locally also stressed an impending depression. But CIO advertisements featured very different layouts and approaches than those of the AFL. Fictional characters narrating their personal stories appeared frequently, and illustrations and tag-lines adorned the page. In contrast, the AFL made the case that a depression would result from Taft-Hartley by listing facts about the pending legislation in tiny font. In one CIO advertisement, a man holding an apple remembered his fruit peddling during the last depression (Figure 1-8). He recalled that he could not afford to buy the very goods he made, the aggregated effect of which had produced the nationwide Depression.

Another sample advertisement featured a girl asking, “Why is my Pop worried?” (Figure 1-9). The answer came in memories of “the last Big Depression” when a “lot of people were out of work and hungry.” Pop worried because such a set of conditions would mean that his family would “be lucky to have beans on the table for dinner.” This would occur if Pop’s union was destroyed under the terms of Taft-Hartley. A fictional grocery store owner expressed similar

139 William Green, speech before the Convention of the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, May 15, 1947; AFL Papers, Series 11, File E, Box 4, Labor Speeches, B527 to B Fol.; WHS.
140 William Green, radio address on NBC, May 11, 1947; AFL Papers, Series 11, File E, Box 4, Labor Speeches, B527 to B Fol.; WHS.
141 James A. Brownlow, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL Metal Trades Department, “This Is Not the 1920s,” American Federationist, May 1947, 15-6; Periodicals, WHS.
sentiments, admitting that he relied on working people to buy his goods to make ends meet (Figure 1-10). Congressmen who embraced Taft-Hartley seemed to think that “working people—my customers—got too much money,” a view that stood to hurt the small business owner as much as the worker. The economic health of the country was at stake. If Taft-Hartley passed, and “unions were practically knocked cold” as they were during the 1920s, the country could expect another “Big Depression.” The bottom line was that “a prosperous America depends on good wages, regularly paid” (Figure 1-11). If strong labor unions were dismantled, wages would drop, and just as in 1929, “Everyone gets hit.” The entire economy would suffer.

While the CIO tended to emphasize these economic themes, the AFL concentrated on the threat to American freedom if Taft-Hartley became law. One AFL advertisement claimed that Taft-Hartley would cancel the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution declaring slavery and involuntary servitude illegal (Figure 1-12). The AFL argued that by prohibiting the right to strike in many cases, prescribing waiting periods for strikes, and threatening the possibility of treating organized labor as a trust, the legislation treated labor as a commodity. It represented “an unjustified invasion of an essential liberty” and violated the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, prohibiting involuntary servitude.142 “[V]irtual slavery is being proposed,” Green wrote in statement for the Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council.143 CIO statements also contended that anti-labor legislative proposals represented a violation of the Thirteenth Amendment and threatened “to turn the clock of history backward.”144

Labor leaders also argued that Taft-Hartley violated Constitutional freedoms because it was the product of NAM – the alleged author of the legislation – not a democratically elected

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142 “The AF of L’s Position on Anti-Labor Proposals,” American Federationist, March 1947, 30; Periodicals, WHS. See also, “NAM’s Bill Found Aimed at Labor’s Heart,” American Federationist, May 1947, 7; Periodicals, WHS.
143 William Green, speech before the Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council, March 21, 1947; AFL Papers, Series XI, File E, Box 14, Fol. 3; WHS.
144 Lee Pressman, memorandum on Ball Bill, February 18, 1947; Len De Caux Papers, Box 3, Fol. 10; WSU.
Congress. Through the anti-labor legislation, NAM sought “to enslave American working people and destroy trade unions by injunction” claimed one AFL advertisement. The legislation represented a retreat backward, overturning laws that had liberated workers from the clutches of “autocratic court orders” (Figure 1-12). It threatened American values, as much as American law.

“The Slave Labor bill is a travesty and a mockery of our American heritage. It is a threat to a free people,” argued another AFL advertisement (Figure 1-13). Like other AFL advertisements, this one posited that sinister forces intent on destroying American democracy had pushed the anti-labor legislation through the hallowed halls of Congress. NAM was not named explicitly, but a reader familiar with the AFL’s case would have understood the meaning behind the passivity of the statement, “[t]here have been other bills pressured through the Congress…but never one with more one-sided intent” (emphasis in the original). Another advertisement cautioned against the “deception” of the bill and its authors (Figure 1-14). Other advertisements made the case more directly. “Since when has the National Association of Manufacturers become the defender of the public interest? Can this leopard change its spots?” one advertisement queried (Figure 1-15).

The result of this pressure was a slow march toward fascism or communism, according to the AFL. Banners hung at the AFL-sponsored Madison Square Garden rally declared, “Taft Labor Law Revives Slavery in America,” and “Mein Kampf Written Into Hartley-Taft Labor Bill.” Depicting the bill as “an invaluable recruiting agent for the Communists,” Dubinsky claimed that the legislation’s framers “couldn’t do a better job than Stalin’s own agents in fostering resentment and strife in our land.”

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145 “55,000 Storm Garden to Hear O’Dwyer Blast GOP Labor Bill, PM Daily, June 5, 1947.
Almost uniformly, CIO officials in Washington described Taft-Hartley as encouraging fascism. Because the leftist De Caux and his CIO News staff designed most of the advertising mats circulated to oppose Taft-Hartley, and because Murray was mindful of keeping communist-sympathizing unions in the ranks of the CIO, CIO rhetoric against Taft-Hartley did not concentrate on the threat of communism as AFL materials did. Murray issued a message to CIO members stating that the bill was “the first real step toward the development of fascism in the United States of America.”¹⁴⁶ A CIO News article, under the jarring headline, “Which Way America?” claimed that Taft-Hartley followed a pattern of labor repression and dictatorship practiced in Nazi Germany (Figure 1-16).¹⁴⁷ Through their elected representatives, the American people could choose between a democracy or the union-busting, war-mongering dictatorship characterized by Nazism. The article urged CIO members to do “everything they can, first as individuals…second as union members…and finally as American citizens” to defeat Taft-Hartley.¹⁴⁸

CIO appeals to union members likened increased employer control to totalitarianism that could extend to America’s political system. “Save Your Unions, Save Democracy!” blared a CIO News headline, linking the public message of freedom to the internal crusade to keep unions strong.¹⁴⁹ Speaking to a 60,000-strong rally in New York, Murray was met with thunderous applause when he declared that Taft-Hartley converted the Wagner and Norris-LaGuardia Acts “into an engine for the destruction of organized labor.”¹⁵⁰ Yet, Murray also lambasted the bill as

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¹⁴⁶ Qtd. in “CRISIS! Save Your Unions, Save Democracy!” CIO News, April 21, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.
¹⁴⁷ “Which Way America?” CIO News, May 26, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.
¹⁴⁸ Philip Murray, “Western Union; To All CIO Members” CIO News, June 2, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.
¹⁴⁹ “CRISIS! Save Your Unions, Save Democracy!” CIO News, April 21, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.
¹⁵⁰ Qtd. in “CIO in Record Turnout Against Labor Bill,” PM Daily, June 11, 1947.
a threat to American democracy more generally, condemning it as creating “a fundamental change on the American form of government.”

In framing Taft-Hartley as an assault on freedom through the imposition of a slaveocracy, labor leaders responded directly to the image of labor promoted by industry groups and individual employers. Industry appeals to the public presented the closed shop and industry-wide bargaining as threatening to American freedom. The NAM, in particular, launched a “massive propaganda campaign, always couched in ‘public interest’ terms.” Six NAM advertisements graced the pages of newspapers across the country during the spring of 1947, countering and anticipating AFL advertisements. Appearing in 265 city newspapers and 1,876 small-town newspapers, these were part of a larger campaign around “the four roadblocks to prosperity – price controls, labor relations, government spending, and taxes” that cost $1,250,000 in the year 1947 alone.

The NAM argued that the closed shop was “contrary to the American way of life.” The “new monopoly” was “labor monopoly,” elevating “a single union officer” to dictator status with powers to “shut down an entire industry” (Figure 1-17). The NAM posited that it opposed all monopolies – both business and labor – and therefore acted in the public interest. If it had pressured Congress to enact legislation favorable to employers, it had done so in order to break up labor monopolies that threatened American democracy. Another newspaper spot made a similar claim, stating that industry-wide bargaining put “almost unlimited power into the hands of the few; the power to throttle the well-being of the many” (Figure 1-18). At a moment when the nation was caught up in discussions about whether to support President Truman’s newly announced Doctrine to aid anticommunist forces in Greece and Turkey, NAM hardly needed to

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151 Qtd. in “60,000 March at CIO Rally,” *New York Sun*, June 11, 1947.
152 Harris, *The Right to Manage*, 123.
elaborate what the consequences were if organized labor continued to have its way; the country was on the path toward the fascism defeated two years earlier, or toward the communism targeted in the postwar era.

Labor leaders presented themselves in contrast to these depictions of industry lobbyists. Just as they used the remarks of legislators and others outside the bound of organized labor to condemn NAM and other groups, CIO leaders collected positive treatments of union leaders by impartial experts. For example, when the Columbia sociologist C. Wright Mills released some of his findings about the characteristics of labor leaders in preparation for the 1948 publication of his book, *The New Men of Power*, labor leaders were quick to hail Mills’ contention that, “The labor leader is not a racketeer” but rather, “a politician and an entrepreneur” and “sometimes, for short periods, he be much more than either.” Mills’ suggestion that “[w]hen the president of the United Automobile Workers sits across the table from the president of General Motors, $10,000 a year is facing $459,000” was further confirmation of organized labor’s position that it was industry elites – not labor leaders – who were both out of touch with normative, middle class values and uninterested in serving the larger public.154 Labor leaders found this relatively sympathetic depiction of union officials useful in countering the portrait of labor developed by NAM and other industry groups.

Both AFL and CIO spokesmen contended that business elites developed and publicized “this weird, inconsistent and ever-changing fantasmagoria of all-powerful labor dictators, greedy unions holding up a meek little John Q. Public” in order to deflect attention from their own lack of regard for the public.155 They tried “to make suckers of the American people” by hiding the “real contents of the quack medicine they’re peddling” – legislation that threatened the larger

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154 C. Wright Mills, “What Kind of Men Run Our Trade Unions Today?: A Composite Portrait,” adapted by the STAR, 1947; Len De Caux Papers, Oversize Box A, Fol. 9; WSU.
public as much as union members.\textsuperscript{156} As Green explained in a May 1947 radio debate with his counterpart at the NAM, “The transparent attempt to separate the identity of labor and the public, which is fostered by the NAM’s propaganda campaign, is designed to hoodwink the American people” which was composed of a public which worked for a living.\textsuperscript{157} Union leaders found verification from outside voices – including that of Mills – to be helpful in contesting business claims widely distributed in an expensive advertising and public relations campaign.

While still harboring deep distrust of one another on a personal and professional level, the AFL and CIO thus issued similar messages about economic and political consequences for the country if Taft-Hartley were to pass. Both organizations recognized the need to convince the public that labor was deserving of trust if the public was to accept their message. But while the AFL spoke directly to the public, the CIO relied on its membership to take labor’s case to its members. The AFL concentrated largely on political freedoms as a consequence of economic calamity to the country while the CIO emphasized economic consequences for members and the implications that this would have for America as a whole.

\textit{Conclusion}

Organized labor’s public relations offensive during the postwar period was deeply connected to its political ambitions, as the struggle over the Taft-Hartley Act demonstrates. No longer content to rely on public messaging as a way of reaching potential members alone, the AFL and the CIO both began to view the larger public as worthy of courting. The consequences of failing to do so were dire: the hamstringing of labor through restrictive legislation and the curtailment of labor’s larger legislative agenda in a variety of areas including housing, wages, Social Security, and health care.

\textsuperscript{156} Len De Caux, “Looking Ahead,” column, \textit{CIO News}, February 17, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.
\textsuperscript{157} William Green, radio debate with Earl Bunting over the Mutual network, May 22, 1947; AFL Papers, Series 11, File E, Box 4, Labor Speeches, B527 to B Fol.; WHS.
While individuals like De Caux were influential in pushing public relations to the forefront, labor was also spurred to action by a changing business and media landscape. Big campaigns by business lobbying groups and the rise of a more national and sophisticated media threatened positive public attitudes toward labor. In addition, the nation’s economic conditions – especially high prices and scarce goods – and a large strike wave put labor on the defensive. Coupled with the election of an anti-labor Congress in 1946, these conditions caused organized labor to consider a new approach to the biggest legislative threat it had faced in decades. The fight against Taft-Hartley was the largest campaign yet in organized labor’s new postwar approach to engaging the public.

The campaign was also important because it marked attempts by both the AFL and the CIO to establish themselves as leading public interest groups able to shape the political discourse of the day. Meany and other young leaders in the AFL saw the position of their labor federation as a respected and powerful voice for the general public slipping with greater attention paid to communists within the CIO and with more coordinated industry campaigns designed to discredit organized labor. And the CIO sought to expand its political activity beyond the precinct-level tactics employed in elections. This engagement with the wider political space in which different pressure groups vied for power was to become a dominant theme in the years that followed.
Chapter 2
“As American as the Hot Dog” or “As American as Apple Pie”?: Anticommunism and the CIO’s Image in the Age of Wallace

In a fit of fury and a loss of patience, the 1949 CIO convention in Cleveland voted to try ten relatively small unions whose leaderships were believed to follow a communist line dictated from Moscow. The convention also voted to expel the communist-led United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) – the third largest CIO affiliate – after the delegates from that organization saw the writing on the wall and walked out of the convention proceedings. Together, the unions slated for expulsion in Cleveland represented just under twenty percent of the CIO’s overall membership, with the bulk of that coming from the UE (Table 2-1). But the smallness of this group was magnified in the public eye by ferocious press accounts, government investigations, and an increasingly anticommunist political environment, resulting in the CIO assuming a reputation as a bastion of radicalism at best, and a nerve center for treason at worst. As John A. Fitch, the labor relations expert and public intellectual, wrote in an article in The Survey a month after the convention, the actions of the communist unions “were a constant source of embarrassment to the CIO.” By taking steps to remove communist elements from its ranks, the CIO “emerges from the battle in a stronger position before the general public, with increased popular confidence and respect.”¹

This mere embarrassment was not enough to drive the purges; they were sparked more by organizing capacity and a desire to avoid government intervention. But the expulsions did transform the way the CIO presented itself to the public. In this chapter, I argue that, while the motivations behind the purges were diverse, the expulsions marked a singular change in how

¹ John A. Fitch, “The CIO and Its Communists,” The Survey, December 1949, 643, 647. Highlander Papers, Box 41, Fol. 2; WHS.
CIO leaders thought about the political positions of their members in relation to the public. 2 This resulted in a change in how the CIO communicated with the public; the CIO tried to transform itself from a special interest group representing the views of the members of its affiliated unions – or worse, the views of unions’ leaders alone – to a public interest group advocating on behalf of the organized and unorganized alike. The challenge was that anticommunist CIO leaders saw the general public and union members as having identical interests when it came to politics. But successfully representing those anticommunist, progressive political positions in the halls of Congress and in state capitals required eliminating communists from the ranks of the CIO.

The 1948 presidential election marked a critical turning point in how CIO leaders thought about unions with left-leaning leaderships, though most literature has underemphasized the importance of the campaign. 3 Instead, works look to the other debates of the period – over the

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3 Tensions were especially high after the Soviets signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler’s Germany and communists abruptly changed their stance. This led to charges that communists in the labor movement held allegiance to the whims of a foreign power. In the ensuing trials of communist unions, the CIO case rested on demonstrating that those on trial changed their position on intervention during World War II after the 1939 signing of the pact, and later in 1941 with the German invasion of the USSR in Operation Barbarossa.
Marshall Plan, the Taft-Hartley Act, and membership in the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) – as creating tensions. In addition, many historians have emphasized growing external pressures on the CIO to remove communist elements. These pressures include the non-communist affidavits required by Taft-Hartley, governmental investigations of communist influence in labor unions, CIO hopes of competing with the AFL for members, and the lack of organizing potential for communist unions.⁴

These reasons for the purges should not be discounted. But the 1948 election and the Progressive Party candidacy of Henry A. Wallace marked a greater crisis for the CIO for a number of reasons.⁵ First, Wallace’s association with communist groups highlighted communist influences in CIO unions at the dawn of the cold war, amidst a climate of increasing anticommunist hysteria. The recently passed Taft-Hartley Act required union leaders to take anticommunist oaths, causing considerable internal discussion and tension over how the CIO could comply with governmental regulations while permitting individual union heads to flout the anticommunist requirement. Government investigations of communist elements in organized labor and increased scrutiny of union policy during the war years created additional pressure on CIO leaders, who hoped to convince workers, voters, and legislators that they acted only in the best interest of the country.

⁴ In a fall 1946 survey, the biggest complaint of AFL members about the CIO was the perception that the “CIO is run by Communists and radicals,” a view that put CIO unions at a disadvantage in raiding members from AFL-affiliated unions. See “The Gallup Poll: What AFL and CIO Members Don’t Like About Each Other,” Washington Post, September 25, 1946; Len De Caux Papers, Box 6, Fol. 19; WSU.

Second, unlike contrarian positions taken by left-led union leaderships on the Marshall Plan, organizing workers in the South, or the best strategy for repealing the hated Taft-Hartley legislation, the Wallace campaign threatened organized labor’s political fortunes in Washington at a time when CIO operatives increasingly saw political influence as necessary for enacting social and organizing goals. After all, the passage of Taft-Hartley had demonstrated what could happen if Congressmen felt no allegiance to organized labor. CIO’s PAC was established in 1943, but the cold war, Republican victories in the 1946 election, and the resulting legislative turn against unions encouraged CIO leaders to devote more resources to the PAC and to view lobbying, campaigning, and politicking as an important means of ensuring labor’s strength. Wallace’s candidacy threatened that. In addition, Wallace’s poor showing in the election exposed the political weakness of the CIO’s communist-led unions and made CIO leaders, like President Philip Murray, more confident in their ability to purge the communist unions without disastrous consequences for the federation.

Third, as CIO leaders confronted member union dissension to their leanings toward – and ultimate endorsement of – Truman, they were forced to develop a new way of understanding union democracy. From the 1948 election campaign through the expulsions of communist unions in 1949 and 1950, CIO officials contended that communist leaders were politically out-of-step with their members, and that this was enough of a reason to topple leftist unions. This marked an important shift; as the CIO began to assume anticommunism as the dominant position

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6 Interestingly, a number of historians have argued just the opposite, stating that communist unions were far more democratic than their non-communist counterparts, and that the elimination of communist unions from the ranks of the CIO resulted in a less democratic trade union movement. See especially Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, eds., Left Out: Reds and America’s Industrial Unions (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Steven Rosswurm, ed., The CIO’s Left-Led Unions (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992); and Howard Kimeldorf, Reds or Rackets?: The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). The question of union democracy and autonomy would also appear again during the racketeering hearings of the late 1950s when corrupt union officials like Dave Beck and Jimmy Hoffa of the Teamsters defended their positions as democratically elected officers against an antidemocratic and intrusive, Washington-based AFL-CIO.
among the rank-and-file as a matter of policy, it increasingly viewed the political positions of union members as consistent with those of the larger, politically mainstream public of the early cold war era. Anticommunist CIO leaders argued that they were removing elements that did not speak for the rank-and-file, choosing to ignore the fact that members had elected those communist leaders. The anticommunist voting patterns of union members in the 1948 election helped the CIO to establish its membership as in in-step with the rest of the American public. This allowed CIO officials to argue that they represented the public interest and that expelling communist affiliates was done out of conviction, not political expediency. The anticommunist stance adopted at the CIO’s national headquarters was increasingly promoted as a service to the wider democratic middle, including workers and non-workers. This was particularly true of the CIO’s rejection of Wallace, whom the CIO PAC and federation officials routinely bashed as subservient to a foreign power as undemocratic as the unions who endorsed him. Communists within the CIO insisted that they were democratically elected, and that they either represented the political viewpoints of their members, their members had empowered them – through the ballot – to communicate their own views to the CIO’s national leadership, or their own personal political views – including the question of whether to endorse Wallace – were irrelevant to how well they negotiated contracts or organized workers. But in the increasingly hostile political atmosphere of the cold war, such objections were met with disdain by CIO officials.

In these three ways, the Wallace campaign forced the hand of the national CIO leadership. There were many other reasons for the expulsions of communist unions from the CIO. Progressive, anticommunist allies of the CIO including the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU) and the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) applied intense pressure to
the CIO to rid itself of communists. Taft-Hartley’s anticommunist oath provisions diverted attention and money to legal efforts and made organizing difficult in regions traditionally hostile to union organizing – especially in the American South – and among government workers. This concern about lost organizing potential was not borne out for the most part. In reality, there was not a dramatic reduction of members across the CIO’s left-led unions, even if particular industries suffered (Table 2-2). But Murray and others certainly expressed fears that the CIO would lose members and clout.

Convincing potential members, government officials, and the general public that the CIO did not harbor anti-democratic, communist tendencies became paramount for CIO leaders in the late 1940s, particularly during the 1948 presidential election campaign. But these efforts did not take the form of a formal public relations or advertising campaign in the vein of labor’s opposition to Taft-Hartley. The issue of communism in the CIO persisted over a number of years, with the Wallace campaign serving as a key transition point. This made a concentrated campaign difficult and expensive to sustain. More importantly, CIO leaders sought to correct

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8 The historian Robert H. Zieger argues that there were particular organizing difficulties associated with workers in the targeted sectors - white collar workers, food and agriculture, and service - and that the CIO failed to support the left-led unions in these areas. See Zieger, *The CIO*, 278-9. But it is certainly true that the lack of National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) protections for unions with officers that did not comply with the anti-communist affidavits required under Taft-Hartley created difficulties and ultimately may have reduced organizing potential over time.

9 Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin argue that, in purging communist-led unions, the CIO eliminated a valuable source of organizing leadership and instead committed itself to pursuing a political strategy over an organizing one. See Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*. It is impossible to say how quickly the memberships of newly-independent expelled unions would have grown without outside interference from CIO-created competitor unions or legal woes (Table 2-2). On the other hand, the Longshoremen continued with considerable success after the purges.
misperceptions of communist influences, while neither appearing defensive (and thus, reinforcing a preexisting notion), nor introducing the allegation of communist influence to the public for the first time.

In contrast to the AFL and its own anti-Taft-Hartley campaigns in 1947, the CIO’s efforts to counter allegations of communist leanings were ad-hoc. They were not directed by a centralized public relations department but were, instead, shaped by the evolving attitudes of the CIO’s leaders, especially Philip Murray. Murray was not particularly flashy in his presentation or strong in his anticommunist language until 1948, but, as labor columnist Victor Riesel wrote at the time, “When Murray stops speaking softly he moves quickly behind the scenes. Nothing crude like wholesale purges. He just makes it impossible for the pro-Commies to stick around.”

This understated style proved useful to Murray, who turned to expulsion only as a last resort. As Murray initiated the trials and eventual expulsions of the CIO’s communist unions, he began to emphasize two interrelated themes: first, the CIO’s commitment to democracy and freedom of expression (in contrast to communism’s tenets); and second, the service to the nation provided by the CIO through its firm stance against communism. The latter idea also emphasized organized labor’s ability to speak truth to power on behalf of a public whose anticommmunist views were shared by union members. These arguments would form the basis of CIO self-presentation in the 1950s and would be recycled in the AFL-CIO’s defense against charges of union monopoly in the lead-up to the organization’s 1955 merger, as well as in the AFL-CIO’s efforts to present itself as respectable and capable of self-policing amid allegations of racketeering among several constituent unions in the late 1950s.

The communist trials and expulsions of 1949 and 1950 were not conducted solely to court favor with the public and emerged more as a political response than a public relations one. With the suspected communist Len De Caux pushed out of his role as the CIO’s director of publicity, Murray turned to a cautious alternative. As a result of this change, and of Murray’s desire to chart the message of the organization in the face of opposition from both the left and right, the public relations department implemented expressions of CIO policy, rather than developing innovative ways of reaching new groups or developing messages itself – as it had done during De Caux’s tenure. The organization became more disciplined and consistent in its official declarations, more conservative and suspicious in its use of mainstream media, and less-cutting edge in its outreach to the public. The importance of the 1948 election and the left/right CIO divide over the Wallace campaign catapulted the CIO PAC to prominence as the key agency crafting anti-communist publicity, alongside Murray.

This chapter details this shift and argues that concern about communist union influence and a renewed commitment to political activity in the wake of Taft-Hartley forced the CIO to assume a new sense of public responsibility and public – not just worker – representation, at least rhetorically. The first section of the chapter details the trajectory of anticommunist sentiment among CIO leaders in the postwar period, culminating in the trials and expulsions of 1949 and 1950. It establishes the election of 1948 as the turning point in Murray’s attitude toward communists in the CIO’s ranks and shows how Wallace forced the CIO to address communism in its ranks. Above all, the election caused Murray to move from uneasy coexistence with the left to forceful agitation for its expulsion. The second section of the chapter shows how the Wallace campaign and the possibility of a Dewey victory over Truman threatened labor’s political fortunes in Washington and how the CIO responded to this threat. The CIO attacked
Wallace’s progressivism, smeared Wallace’s campaign as communist-inspired, publicized the consequences of a Dewey victory, and ultimately endorsed Truman. The third section of the chapter explores how this strategy impacted the way that union leaders spoke about union democracy and freedom of expression. And the final section examines the CIO’s stated commitment to the public and the nation in fighting communism in its ranks. I argue that this assumption that union members were anticommunist and democratic in line with the general public would inform CIO and AFL-CIO policy in the years to come.

Kid Gloves to No Gloves

In March 1947, a Life article featured unflattering, mug-shot photographs of suspected communists and argued that communist influences were so pervasive in the CIO that “Philip Murray, for all his good intentions, is a victim of the paradox that if he makes any real attempt to free his union from the Communists he may wind up without any union at all.”11 As a result of such negative publicity, CIO officials found themselves denying that they harbored communists in their ranks. There are “no reds in CIO unions who weren’t hired first by industry,” a defiant Van Bittner of the Steelworkers and the CIO’s southern organizing drive, told a Congressional committee in March 1947.12

By the fall of 1948, Murray and other CIO leaders had changed their tune. As Life reported under a series of pictures depicting cigar-smoking, tablecloth-waving CIO delegates celebrating Truman’s victory: “Phil Murray, having made the pleasing discovery that U.S. labor

11 “Labor’s Communists Come Under Fire,” Life, March 24, 1947, 35; UAW Research Department Papers, Part I, Box 4, Fol. 5; WSU.
can get along better without its Reds than with them, no longer felt constrained to be polite."

Victor Riesel reported that Murray’s new gloves-off approach to confronting the CIO’s left-wing resulted in CIO leaders singing new lyrics to the old nursery-rhyme, “The Farmer in the Dell”: “The Commies are on the run, The Commies are on the run, Let’s give them the heave, ho, The Commies are on the run.”

Between 1947 and the fall of 1948, Murray’s approach to communist unions within the CIO underwent a dramatic change. Whereas the head of the CIO acknowledged and attacked the communist leaders on his Executive Board only behind closed doors a year earlier, by the time of Truman’s election victory, Murray had spearheaded the expulsion of several communist-aligned unions in the most public way possible. What caused such a radical transformation in Murray’s thinking over the course of a year and a half? A number of factors played a role. These included pressures emanating from the enforcement of anticommunist affidavit provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act and divisions between communist and anticommunist factions on the CIO Executive Board over whether to support American aid to war-torn Europe in the form of the Marshall Plan.

But it was the election of 1948 and Murray’s frustration at communist union support for the third party campaign of Henry Wallace that forced his hand. CIO officials hoped to reverse the political setbacks of the “disaster” election of 1946, in which union-supported candidates lost

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13 “Labor Celebrates: It Makes New Political Demands, Gets Tough with Its Own Left-Wing,” *Life*, December 6, 1948, Katherine Ellickson Papers, Box 34, Fol. 19; WSU.
15 Taft-Hartley denied federal protections to communist-led unions and forced union officers to sign anticommunist affidavits. The 1947 convention managed to pass a measure hailing the idea of extending aid to war-torn Europe but could not muster enough support to mention the politically divisive Marshall Plan by name. In January 1948, the CIO Executive Board officially voiced its support for the European Recovery Program over the objections of its left-wing.
by wide margins, enabling the passage of Taft-Hartley the following year.\textsuperscript{16} As pressure from Washington on the communism issue accelerated, Murray saw the political consequences of remaining publicly ambivalent about communists in the ranks of his organization. Left-wing union support for Wallace’s candidacy threatened to undermine the political capital that the CIO had built and to reduce its influence at the White House and in Congress.

In the summer of 1948, the CIO went on record in support of Truman, committing PAC dollars to the President’s reelection campaign. Though the resolution praised Truman’s record on civil rights and his veto of Taft-Hartley, it spent far more ink condemning Wallace’s candidacy and criticizing the Republican Congress and Dewey. The endorsement alleged that the Progressive Party “created disunity and weakened the forces of liberalism in this country.”\textsuperscript{17} Van Bittner and others questioned the loyalty of left-wing Board members who rejected the endorsement. He wondered whether Board meetings were even necessary, if “some of our members decide, – well, whatever they do, we aren’t going to carry out the policy of the CIO adopted by the CIO Executive Board.”\textsuperscript{18} Board members were combative but, as the \textit{New York Times} reported, “the outcome of this discussion was never in doubt.” The split over the third party made the Truman endorsement – and the subsequent expulsion of communist-leaning unions in the CIO – inevitable.\textsuperscript{19}

Before things came to a head during the 1948 election, Murray moved to eliminate communist roadblocks to pursuing the political agenda he championed for his organization. Murray recalled the dysfunction of the CIO Executive Board at the 1947 convention: “I didn’t

\textsuperscript{16} See Foster, \textit{The Union Politic}, 67. In 1946, PAC had its sights set on winning 23 new House seats but Democrats lost 54 seats in the House. Democrats also lost 11 seats in the Senate.

\textsuperscript{17} “Political Action in 1948 Campaign,” Minutes of the CIO Executive Board, August 30-31, and September 1, 1948, 109, 106; WSU. The Truman endorsement passed by a vote of 36 to 12, with 2 absent.

\textsuperscript{18} Van Bittner, Minutes of the CIO Executive Board, August 30-31, and September 1, 1948, 163; Periodicals, WSU.

know whether I could talk freely to the members of my own Board or not, I didn’t know whether I was talking to a Fink, a Commie, or an FBI man.”

With Taft-Hartley on the books, a number of communist-leaning CIO officials were pushed out of the organization, including De Caux, who was replaced with the vehemently anticommunist former newspaper reporter, Allan “Pete” Swim, in the summer of 1947. The liberal paper PM reported that the “cordial” parting between De Caux and the labor federation he had helped to found “reflects the growing tendency of [Murray] to isolate and replace alleged leftists in CIO headquarters.” Murray and De Caux were never close, and there is little indication that Murray lost sleep over De Caux’s departure.

De Caux’s replacement had an impressive pedigree in the newspaper business. Born on a farm in Illinois, Swim got his professional start writing for the Daily Arkansas during the Depression. He followed this with a decade-long turn at the Memphis Press-Scimitar. It was while he was in Memphis that Swim achieved a reputation as a conservative within the labor movement. While Swim came to embrace the national CIO’s position for an expansion of civil rights after replacing De Caux, he opposed ending segregation during his time as president of the Memphis Industrial Union Council and as a member of the all-white American Newspaper Guild local during the war. He supported a “completely economical” approach to race, opposing CIO action on “the social angle” – an action that Swim claimed “would be cutting our own throats.”

Swim came to the top CIO news job after having served thirteen months as public relations director for the CIO’s southern organizing drive, where he continued his conservatism on the

20 Philip Murray, Proceedings of the Eleventh Constitutional Convention of the CIO, October 31 to November 4, 1949, 15; Periodicals, WHS.
21 William Shelton, “De Caux’s Leaving Fits Murray’s Plan,” PM, July 3, 1947; UAW Research Department Papers, Part I, Box 5, Fol. 3; WSU.
race question. But it was also in this capacity that Swim established himself as a good soldier and an adequate – if not extraordinary – labor newspaperman. And Swim’s anticommunist credentials were beyond a shadow of a doubt. Indeed, so taken was Swim by the anticommunist cause that he left the CIO in 1951 for a career in government service, beginning in Paris and joining the Foreign Service four years later. In the late 1960s, with the Vietnam War in full swing, Swim served as head of the publications department of the US Information Agency. In these various capacities, Swim worked to promote US cold war policy.

In his first editor’s note to CIO News readers, Swim made the contrast between himself and De Caux clear. “I’ll do my best to follow CIO policy—right down the middle without veering to right or left to satisfy some personal whim or advance some pet project,” Swim declared. Anticommunist elements in the CIO applauded the change. UAW public relations man Frank Winn congratulated Swim on his new appointment, writing, “It is a real pleasure to pick up the CIO News now and know that you are going to read about what the CIO is doing rather than merely a rehash of the party line.” Under Swim’s leadership, the CIO News became more conservative in both opinion and style. It contained less text, suffered a decline in writing quality and sophistication, removed advertisements (and their revenue), and eliminated the News’s award-winning, full-color serialized comic strip.

24 Like Swim, CIO officials in the South believed that active encouragement of civil rights would result in accusations of communism and a failure to make gains in membership. And many involved in the campaign were southerners who opposed full civil rights on cultural grounds. For a description of how Swim fit into this discussion, see Michael K. Honey, “Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing,” in American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture, ed. Robert W. Cherny et al. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 230.


26 Allan Swim, “New Editor Says: I Intend to Call a Spade a Spade and Play It Right Down the Middle,” op-ed, CIO News, July 21, 1947; Periodicals, WSU.

27 Frank Winn, letter to Allan Swim, August 29, 1947; UAW Research Department Papers, Part I, Box 5, Fol. 1; WSU.
Other personnel transitions were more difficult for Murray to orchestrate, and to bear emotionally, than De Caux’s departure. General Counsel Lee Pressman held on as long as he could but, by the winter of 1948, he was forced to resign at the insistence of the CIO’s right wingers, led by Walter P. Reuther, elected President of the UAW in 1946 over a left-backed ticket. Murray was reportedly chagrined about Pressman’s departure, “so overcome with emotion that he could not even step outside for a news picture.”

But Murray was also increasingly frustrated about the limits placed on CIO organizational growth and political expression due to a vocal minority of communists on the CIO’s Executive Board and within the CIO’s own Washington offices. The Reuther-led right-wing may have forced his hand on Pressman’s firing but Murray’s own anticommunist beliefs were strong. 1948 proved a decisive year, as Murray took steps to eliminate communist influence from the CIO.

In the postwar years, the CIO increasingly staked its reputation on its political successes and viewed the general, anticommunist public as a key force in electing pro-labor candidates at the polls. By splitting the vote and linking the CIO to communist elements, Wallace’s candidacy threatened to undermine this strategy. Even before Wallace entered the campaign in early 1948, pundits linked Wallace to the Communist Party, through both his political positions and his professional relationships. The historian Norman Markowitz asserts that Wallace’s campaign “was probably doomed from the outset” because Wallace did not counter charges that he was “a dupe of the Communists” and that his party was “a Trojan horse for the Republicans and the Soviet Union.”

Murray publicly skirted the issue of communist associations with Wallace, but he laid out parameters for a successful third party that seemed to be at odds with Wallace’s Progressive

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29 Markowitz, *The Rise and Fall of the People’s Century*, 266-7.
Party. In January 1948, the CIO Executive Board formally rejected the establishment of a third party. According to Murray, a successful third party needed to “come from a broad base of representative people—from a substantial segment of labor.” But all that Wallace’s group could do was “to divide labor—splinter it, split it.”

Over time, Murray went from simply repudiating the idea of a third party to actively smearing the Wallace campaign as a communist front. In May 1948, months before the CIO’s official endorsement of Truman in September, Murray told the Textile Workers’ convention that “the Communist Party is directly responsible for the organization of the third party.” The CIO News took the “anguished screams of denial from the Wallace neighborhood” and subsequent attacks on Murray and the CIO appearing in the Daily Worker as evidence of the close relationship between the Communists and the Progressive Party camp. In a typical column, Swim concluded that, “The party line mouthpiece, the Daily Worker, is having a wonderful time trying to prove that its war-time ‘hero’ Murray is a peace-time heel…. Murray didn’t change—but the party line did.” According to Swim, the twists and turns in the Communist position, and the increasing turn against Murray and the CIO in the communist press showed that Moscow was alarmed by the low rate of support offered by mainstream labor groups to the Wallace

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30 In a numeric breakdown that would characterize nearly all Executive Board votes related to the communism issue, the vote was 33 in favor of the resolution and 11 opposed, with 2 abstentions and 6 absentees. Jack Kroll, the head of the CIO PAC first announced that the PAC would not support a third party in 1948 in early January. The Executive Board vote extended this policy to the entirety of the CIO organization at its late January meeting. The CIO had also formally rejected the possibility of a third party in 1944.

31 Philip Murray qtd. in “Murray Declares: ‘Moral Obligation to Follow Policy,’” speech before the CIO Shipbuilding Union Convention, reprinted in the CIO News, February 16, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.

32 Philip Murray qtd. in Arthur Riordan, “CP Admits Setting Up Wallace Party,” CIO News, June 7, 1948; Periodicals, WSU. The Daily Worker did sometimes operate as a mouthpiece for the Wallace campaign and those left-wingers in the CIO who were deeply committed to Wallace were also likely to speak of the Daily Worker as a moderate, accurate news source in CIO Executive Board meetings. See, for example, Harry Bridges’ remark: “I will say as far as the Daily Worker is concerned I would believe it before I would believe the Herald Tribune or a lot of other papers, and so will my membership.” Harry Bridges, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, January 22-23, 1948, 323; Periodicals, WSU.
candidacy. Swim likely hoped that such publicity would convince union members and the
general public that the CIO was resolutely opposed to communism in its ranks, and supportive of
Washington maintaining a hard line on communism.

The truth was somewhat more complicated. Even as Swim declared the CIO’s
incontrovertible opposition to a third party as per both the policy of the CIO PAC and the CIO
Executive Board, a full 25 percent of the CIO’s internationals and organizing committees and ten
percent of city and state CIO councils openly or tacitly supported Wallace’s Progressive Party,
according to the CIO’s own estimates. (See Table 2-1 for my own calculations.) CIO leaders
also worried that workers would support Wallace’s bid. Citing workers’ concerns over
escalating prices, lack of housing, and attacks on civil liberties, Mike Quill of the Transport
Workers Union worried that “Wallace will take a terrific bloc of votes” – much of it labor – from
Truman. Harry Bridges of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) fanned
the flames by asserting that the CIO PAC “is almost a flop when you get down below and try to
get support.” James Durkin, representing the United Office and Professional Workers (OPW),
claimed that the Wallace campaign was a “grass roots movement” built on the support of union
members. Wallace’s candidacy “is developing down in the rank and file – maybe millions today,
but tens of millions in the very near future, and it will develop because the people and the
membership want it,” Durkin said.

For their part, Wallace, and his running mate, Senator Glen H. Taylor of Idaho, also
suggested that the CIO was out of step with the political orientations of many of its members. In

33 Allan L. Swim, column, “Commie Smear Campaign Under Way,” CIO News, April 19, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.
34 See Arthur Riordan, “75% of Unions Hit 3d Party,” CIO News, May 31, 1948; Periodicals, WSU; and Allan L.
Swim, column, “It Was the Natural Thing to Do,” CIO News, [date unclear – early May 1948]; Periodicals, WSU.
In addition, high-ranking individuals within uncommitted unions endorsed Wallace.
35 Mike Quill, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, January 22-23, 1948, 44; Periodicals, WSU.
36 Harry Bridges, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, January 22-23, 1948, 120; Periodicals, WSU.
37 James Durkin, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, January 22-23, 1948, 184; Periodicals, WSU.
response to the CIO’s attacks, Taylor told a rally, “Labor never has been so misled” and predicted that Murray and other right-wingers would be replaced by supporters of the Progressive Party within a few years. 38 Wallace’s own efforts to court the votes of workers and the campaign talents of former CIO personnel like De Caux and Pressman threatened the CIO PAC. The strategy that De Caux developed for reaching workers as Wallace’s head of publicity in the labor division built upon his public relations efforts at the CIO. De Caux used his connections with sympathetic CIO-affiliated union officials to create a grassroots network for Wallace within the ranks of labor.

The leaflets De Caux oversaw spoke directly to workers in much the same way that the CIO’s advertising mats against Taft-Hartley had done the previous year. But unlike the CIO during the debate over Taft-Hartley, the Wallace campaign had funding for mass distribution of its leaflets and posters. As a result, De Caux was able to develop Progressive Party messaging that spoke to the general public, not just workers. He no longer had to rely on union members to make the political case to their neighbors. Thus, the signature theme of the Wallace campaign’s publicity for organized labor was quite similar to the AFL’s “If you work for a Living, you’re Labor” articulation against Taft-Hartley. One Wallace brochure read, “If you work for a living it’s as simple as A B C. Vote for the only party that puts people ahead of profits.” 39 In this uncharacteristically image- bereft brochure, De Caux and his staff established a divide between big business and the Democratic and Republican Parties on the one hand, and a people inclusive of labor – unionized or not – on the other (Figure 2-1).

Another pamphlet produced by De Caux’s publicity arm of Wallace’s labor division relied on historical narratives to argue for an expansive category of labor opposed to a moneyed

38 Glen H. Taylor, Salt Lake City speech, qtd. in Arthur Riordan, “75% of Unions Hit 3d Party,” CIO News, May 31, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.
39 Henry Wallace for President Leaflet, “If you work for a living..,” Len De Caux Papers, Box 10, Fol. 8; WSU.
interest. The text of the brochure dismissed attacks on Wallace as “fishy,” comparing them to earlier condemnation of the supposed radicalism of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abe Lincoln, and FDR.\textsuperscript{40} But the Wallace campaign took heart in the fact these earlier efforts to discredit the nation’s best leaders were unsuccessful. “You can’t fool the American people! They know Henry Wallace is as American as apple pie or baseball.” The pamphlet did not explicitly take on charges of communist influences on Wallace, but it posited that the Progressive Party was firmly in the mainstream, just as workers and the larger public were.\textsuperscript{41}

Labor spokesmen for the Wallace campaign asserted that by allying itself against workers’ desire for a true progressive in the White House, the national CIO was outside of that mainstream and in league with big business. In a Wallace brochure, Pressman concluded that the leadership of the CIO had “already surrendered” to the “owners of American industry.” CIO officials resorted to “pitiful speeches” rather than mobilizing the “mass fighting energy of the rank and file.”\textsuperscript{42} But despite the Wallace campaign’s efforts to paint their candidate as a mainstream liberal in-step with the needs and politics of labor – organized and not, Wallace was deeply associated with communism in the press and popular imagination.

The Wallace campaign exposed communist activity within the CIO and forced Murray to confront it publicly. Murray gave notice to the leftist members of the Board that he would “wash out this damnable dirty linen [between communists and anticommunists] in the public prints, if need be.”\textsuperscript{43} By the CIO’s convention in Portland in the fall of 1949, Murray did just that. In the words of one newspaper editorial, for the first time, the CIO’s “mild-mannered, Scot-born

\textsuperscript{40} Campaign material routinely emphasized Wallace’s relationship with Franklin D. Roosevelt. Posters often showed photographs of the two men together during Wallace’s time as vice president. See, for example, Wallace-Taylor Nominating Petition poster, 1948; Len De Caux Papers, Box 10, Fol. 8; WSU.
\textsuperscript{41} Henry Wallace for President Leaflet, “FISHY, isn’t it…,” Len De Caux Papers, Box 10, Fol. 18; WSU.
\textsuperscript{42} Lee Pressman, “Labor Fights for Its Life,” in \textit{The Citizen} (published by the National Wallace for President Committee), May 1948, 5; Len De Caux Papers, Oversize Box B, Fol. 7; WSU.
\textsuperscript{43} Philip Murray, Minutes of the CIO Executive Board, November 17, 20, and 27, 1948, 50, 62; Periodicals, WSU.
president got ‘his Irish up,’” and “cut [the communists] down to size and hinted strongly that
some of the unions still infected had better get out.”  

James. B. Carey (secretary-treasurer of the CIO), Bittner, Carey, Reuther, and others on the right-wing of the federation were equally combative in their language, but comments like Reuther’s assertion that leftists were “colonial agents of a foreign government” were nothing new. Murray’s new public assault on communists within the CIO was a first.

The increased scrutiny of the CIO’s left-wing resulted in the press claiming that the organization did not act fast enough. When the CIO Executive Board finally made concrete plans to expel communist-inspired unions in the spring of 1949, the Detroit Free Press ran an editorial cartoon depicting Murray spanking a baby labeled “communists.” The house of the CIO was dirty with paint applied by this same “baby.” “Belated Clean Up” headlined the image (Figure 2-2). This understanding of the CIO as ineffectual at best, and treasonous at worst, threatened the CIO’s political fortunes at a moment when it could least afford to lose political clout.

Though there were more fireworks to come, the election of 1948 had proved a decisive turning point. The following May, the Executive Board approved a resolution requiring Board

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44 “The Scotchman Has His Irish Up,” editorial, Oregon Journal, November 24, 1948; Philip Murray Papers, Box 115, Fol. 14; CUA.
45 Walter P. Reuther, 1948 Proceedings of the 10th Constitutional Convention of the CIO, November 22-26, 1948, 169; Periodicals, WHS.
46 In the spring of 1949, the CIO Executive Board voted to pull out from the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) after continued disagreement over the Marshall Plan. In addition, the Board began discussion of a resolution to authorize the CIO to grant local industrial union charters to groups capable of organizing public sector and white collar workers more effectively than the left-led United Office and Professional Workers and the United Public Workers of America unions — the latter particularly affected by federal employee loyalty oath requirements. In the lead-up to its fall 1949 meetings, the Executive Board investigated nine individual Board members and eleven organizations. The UE pulled out of the CIO before it could be expelled, and the Farm Equipment Union (FE) was officially expelled at the 1949 convention. The CIO Executive Board expelled the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers; the Office and Professional Workers; the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers; and the United Public Workers in December 1949. In June 1950, the CIO Executive Board issued two more expulsions: the American Communications Association and the Fur and Leather Workers. Charges against the United Furniture Workers were dropped after the defeat of left-wing leadership at the union’s convention in June 1950 in Chicago. The International Fur and Leather Workers Union, under the direction of Ben Gold, disaffiliated from the CIO prior to the CIO Executive Board meeting in June 1950. The Longshoremen, the Fishermen and Allied Workers, and the
members to work for the achievement of nationally-dictated CIO political objectives. But by then, United Public Workers President Abe Flaxer’s protests that Murray sought to “convert our trade union movement into a political organization” hardly made waves. 47 For his part, Murray agreed: “It is political. Every division you have had in this Board is political. Every division of major consequence affecting national policy is political. You can’t beat around the bush about that.” 48 This political consciousness motivated the CIO to support Truman in the 1948 election.

Politics, Progressives and Pragmatism

Truman vetoed Taft-Hartley, but not without significant lobbying by union interests. He nationalized the railroads and nearly sent in the Army to break the railroad strike over the objections of organized labor. And Truman’s Fair Deal did not go far enough for many liberals within the CIO’s leadership. 49 While CIO officials would look back upon the Truman presidency with fondness during the Eisenhower years, going so far as to donate a quarter million dollars toward the establishment of the Truman Library in 1953 in conjunction with the Steelworkers, the CIO’s endorsement of the sitting president was far from a foregone conclusion in 1948. 50 To be sure, the Republican ascendancy in Congress during the 1946 election, and the subsequent passage of the Taft-Hartley Act convinced the CIO that it needed to reinvigorate its PAC for the 1948 election. But PAC leaders expected to concentrate their resources on local races and provide only tacit support for the Democratic Party, not Truman explicitly.

Marine Cooks and Stewards were expelled in August 1950. As it had with the IUE, the CIO established new unions to challenge the now-expelled international unions in the organizational field.

47 Abe Flaxer, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, May 17-19, 1949, 786; Periodicals, WSU. The resolution was carried 26 to 6, with dissenting votes from Bridges, Henderson, Selly, Bryson, Durkin and Flaxer.

49 Philip Murray, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, May 17-19, 1949, 798; Periodicals, WSU.

49 Murray and other top CIO leaders hoped they could convince Dwight Eisenhower to run against Truman in 1948, as a Democrat. When it didn’t pan out, these leaders turned their attentions to Justice William O. Douglas and Senator Claude Pepper. After the Democratic Convention, the CIO turned its attention back to Truman. See Markowitz, The Rise and Fall of the People’s Century, 281-2; and Foster, The Union Politic, 114-7.

50 James B. Carey, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, February 5-6, 1953, 43-45; Periodicals, WSU.
Wallace’s entry into the race changed this equation. Jack Kroll, other members of the CIO PAC, and anticommunist members of the Executive Board dismissed Wallace as a viable candidate in his own right but worried that he could play the role of spoiler. Murray explained to an audience of shipbuilders, “I do not subscribe to the idea that it is better to back a losing third party, get a reactionary Congress and then the people will rise in 1952.”

At a meeting of the CIO Vice Presidents a few months before the election, Joe Curran of the National Maritime Union (NMU) called Wallace “a divisive stooge for the Republicans.”

A PAC-produced flyer encouraging union members to register to vote included platforms for the Democrats and Republicans, but not those for the Progressive Party. The pamphlet explained that it had only printed platforms offered by “parties having a chance to make good their pledges.” By reducing the Progressives’ standing to that of the extremely low-polling Communists or Prohibitionists and associating it with the likes of the anti-progressive Dixiecrats, the PAC hoped to discredit the Wallace candidacy. A CIO News cartoon showed the anticipated consequences of this rejection of Wallace by the CIO. A battered airplane labeled “third party” readied for takeoff. However, its wings – labeled “labor support” – had been removed. The cartoon bore the headline, “Going Nowhere Fast” (Figure 2-3).

Throughout the election cycle, the CIO PAC and the CIO public relations department emphasized the dire consequences of a strong Wallace showing to its members. CIO officials routinely contrasted Dewey and Truman, referring to the former as “the candidate of big

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51 Philip Murray, qtd. in “Murray Declares: ‘Moral Obligation to Follow Policy,’” speech before the CIO Shipbuilding Union Convention reprinted in the CIO News, February 16, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.
52 Joseph Curran, CIO Vice Presidents’ Meeting Minutes, August 19, 1948; microfilm, WSU.
53 “Register NOW! Vote on Nov. 2!...and don’t forget your dollar for PAC!,” date unclear 1948; CIO PAC Papers, Box 13, Fol. 27; WSU.
54 Coak, “Going Nowhere Fast,” editorial cartoon, CIO News, February 2, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.
business” and the latter as “a friend of the people.” One CIO News cartoon depicted Wallace throwing a boomerang at Dewey, but hitting the figure of “pro-labor liberals” in the head (Figure 2-4). Another showed the Dixiecrats and the Progressives each depicted as puppies, yapping at a worried-looking “Democratic hopes of victory” as the GOP elephant looked on without disturbance (Figure 2-5). Indeed, the CIO Executive Board’s background materials for the endorsement of Truman dealt very little with the president’s own labor credentials, instead focusing on the dangers posed by the Wallace candidacy.  

The CIO’s public relations materials and its leaders’ statements accused communist supporters of Wallace of deliberately hoping to undermine a Democratic ascendancy and the CIO legislative agenda. With the election behind him, Swim vented his frustration in the pages of the CIO News. “The Reds wholeheartedly supported Henry Wallace although they knew a strong Wallace movement could result only in the election of Thomas E Dewey and a reactionary Congress,” Swim fumed.

For their part, left-leaning union leaders criticized the CIO’s strategy of picking a winner over a candidate committed to serving labor. The UE’s newspaper charged that the CIO backed “administration sell-outs” in 1948 and beyond. Bridges argued that, while Truman made alliances with Wall Street bankers and neglected his labor constituency for political gain, “Wallace is not a politician.” A year after Truman’s victory, the expelled Fur and Leather Workers Union accused the national CIO of having “capitulated and clung pitifully to the

55 Jacob Potofsky, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, August 30-31, 1948 and September 1, 1948, 120; Periodicals, WSU.
56 Coak, “Boomerang,” editorial cartoon, CIO News, September 13, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.
57 Coak, “Dogs in the Manger,” editorial cartoon, CIO News, September 6, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.
58 “Political Action in the 1948 Campaign,” recommendations of the executive officers to the meeting of the CIO Executive Board, August 30-31, 1948; CIO PAC Papers, Box 17, Fol. 12; WSU.
59 Allan Swim, “Give the Commies a Boot,” column, CIO News, December 6, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.
60 “Taft-Hartley Sell-Outs,” editorial, UE News, qtd. by Walter Reuther, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, May 17-19, 1949, 211; Periodicals, WSU.
61 Harry Bridges, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, January 22-23, 1948, 113; Periodicals, WSU.
coattails of the Truman administration.”62 In the early 1950s, De Caux drafted a series for the left-wing magazine, *March of Labor*, in which he asserted that the CIO’s purges of communist unions and its repudiation of Wallace had transformed the organization into a “stooging labor front for the Truman administration.”63 But the ability to influence policy by riding the president’s coattails was exactly what the CIO desired.

CIO leaders recognized that, if they were to be successful in electing Truman, they would have to reach beyond their own membership to the general public. In radio speeches and statements to the press, CIO officials took a much more measured tone in their criticism of Wallace’s candidacy, though they offered the same conclusion as in their Board meetings: Wallace was “a threat…to the forces of true liberalism.”64 Murray emphasized the CIO’s democratic processes in choosing to oppose the Progressive Party as well as the third party’s connections to communists. Reuther generally used more fiery language than Murray, but he, too, kept to script and concentrated on Wallace’s effect on Truman’s chances. In a nationally syndicated radio speech a few days before the election, Reuther offered the following to voters: “A vote for Wallace or any of the other splinter groups is an indirect vote for Dewey.”65

CIO officials were vocal in their condemnation of Wallace, but they were more reluctant publicly to examine and condemn the Progressive Party’s political positions. After the election, the Longshoremen’s Board claimed that Wallace had both contributed to Truman’s victory (by deflecting charges of communist influence from the Democratic Party) and also helped to move the nation’s political conversation further to the left (by forcing Truman to make political

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62 Fur and Leather Workers Union, press release, May 23, 1949; Philip Murray Papers, Box 98, Fol. 16; CUA.
63 Len De Caux, draft of “Inside CIO” series for *March of Labor*, 1951 or 1952; Len De Caux Papers, Box 11, Fol. 9; WSU.
64 Philip Murray, radio speech drafted by Jack Kroll, June 24, 1948; CIO PAC Papers, Box 13, Fol. 7; WSU.
65 Walter P. Reuther, transcript of radio speech, October 31, 1948, broadcast on ABC; UAW Public Relations Department—Frank Winn Papers, Box 1, Reuther Speeches, 1948-50 Fol.; WSU.
accommodations to Wallace supporters). Donald Henderson of the Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers Union made a similar point at the 1948 CIO convention, though his insistence that Wallace backers had “made their contribution through clarification of the issues” was met with shouts of “shut up—throw him out,” according to press reports.  

In fact, Henderson and other left-wingers within the CIO were correct about the impact that Wallace’s campaign had on Truman’s policy. Acting on a memo by the presidential advisor Clark Clifford, Truman embraced a variety of civil rights initiatives – including a permanent civil rights commission, federal legislation against lynching, the elimination of the poll tax, and the creation of a fair employment practices commission – in order “to undercut Wallace’s strength among New Dealers without giving ground on foreign policy,” according to a Wallace biographer. The strategy was to refrain from direct criticism of Wallace while empowering newly powerful “pressure groups” – like the CIO – that had replaced the political machines of old. Clifford hoped that these groups – which had great credibility with those on the left of the Democratic Party – would make the case against Wallace.  

With the critical exception of the Marshall Plan, there was little divergence between the CIO’s political platform and that of Wallace. Much of Wallace’s campaign – as well as disputes on the CIO Executive Board – centered on this divergence on the European Recovery Program. The leaders of communist-led unions held that the Marshall Plan was anti-peace, a measure that

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66 ILWU Executive Board Meeting Minutes, “Statement of Policy on the 1948 Elections,” November 30-December 1, 1948; CIO Papers, Box 4, Fol. 20; CUA.
67 Donald Henderson, qtd. in Frank E. Loomis, “CIO Meets ‘Left’ Challenge,” The Oregonian, November 23, 1948; Philip Murray Papers, Box 115, Fol. 13; CUA. Henderson’s language was also incorporated into a minority report in opposition to the CIO’s platform – the first in the organization’s history. See “Delegates Swamp Attack on Murray Report,” CIO News, November 29, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.
68 Culver and Hyde, American Dreamer, 466-7. See Clark Clifford, “Memorandum for the President,” November 19, 1947; Political File, Clifford Papers; Truman Library, available at http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/1948campaign/large/docs/documents/pdfs/1-1.pdf, retrieved December 9, 2012. For Clifford’s discussion of pressure groups (farmers, organized labor, liberals, the Negro, the Jew, the Catholic, the Italian, and the Alien Group), see 7-14.
gave former Nazis money for weapons under the guise of humanitarian aid. For their part, the CIO and the Truman administration promoted the European Recovery Program as a means of reconstructing postwar Europe and ensuring continued security and peace in the region. The CIO juxtaposed Wallace’s and the Soviet positions on the Marshall Plan to argue that the Progressive Party was beholden to Moscow. The CIO News presented Wallace as an unwitting agent of the communists. In September 1948, Swim wrote, “In his bumbling way [Wallace is] campaigning on the illusion that the European Recovery Program is a bad thing and that he’s making a contribution to liberalism.”

CIO leaders held that this position on the Marshall Plan both revealed Wallace’s incompetence and demonstrated the inhumanity of the communist stance. At the 1948 CIO convention, Carey gave voice to this perspective. “Perhaps the Soviet Union could give Europe some steel, some oil, cotton or coal for machinery, or food, and export from the Soviet Union the things the workers understand and need,” Carey said, contrasting the United States’ generous aid to Europe against the USSR’s inaction. “But no, their single solitary export is political ideology,” Carey concluded.

But this policy divergence between Wallace and the CIO on the Marshall Plan was unique. For the most part, there was little difference between the political stances of the two groups. CIO officials generally criticized Wallace as inconsistent, uncommitted, and naïve. This was particularly true of the CIO’s criticism and red-baiting of Wallace’s civil rights record. Wallace encountered violent opposition during his campaign tour through the segregated South. The CIO and mainstream civil rights groups worried that this would result in heavy black turnout for Wallace in northern cities though, in the end, Wallace garnered less than ten percent of the

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69 Allan Swim, “CIO Takes Political Stand,” column, CIO News, September 6, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.
70 James B. Carey, 1948 Constitutional Convention, 173; Periodicals, WHS.
black vote nationwide. CIO officers tried to counteract this possibility by enlisting support for Truman from well-respected black leaders. A month before the election, the CIO News ran an article by NAACP President Walter White in which White lambasted Wallace’s record on race as Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of Commerce.

In addition, CIO leaders attacked Wallace’s tactics for making progress on civil rights and contrasted them with the successful pragmatism of both the CIO and the Truman administration. Comparing Wallace to “another dreamer,” John Brown, Quill asserted that the most effective way of creating change in the South was through the CIO PAC and the CIO’s Southern Organizing Drive, “not a one man show that will die of its own weight.” In September 1948, the CIO’s vice presidents were so nervous about the impact of the civil rights issue on the presidential election that they issued a hyperbolic statement praising Truman’s record. “[N]o President in history ha[s] taken so forthright a position on civil rights, and… Lincoln was the only other President who [was] so outspoken,” the statement read.

Even after the election was over, CIO leaders continued to worry about the impact of the civil rights issue on the black electorate. In 1949, Murray railed against the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers after the Daily Worker characterized southern CIO operatives and the Steelworkers’ leadership as Klansmen and Nazis following an inter-union conflict in Bessemer, Alabama. Murray worried that a Mine, Mill pamphlet featuring a picture of a hooded Klansman alongside allegations that the Klan member was in league with the CIO Executive Board

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71 Markowitz, The Rise and Fall of the People’s Century, 289.
72 Walter White, “White Skeptical of Wallace on Bias,” op-ed, CIO News, October 11, 1948; Periodicals, WSU.
73 Mike Quill, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, August 30-31, 1948 and September 1, 1948, 173; Periodicals, WSU.
74 CIO Vice Presidents’ Meeting Minutes, September 7, 1948; microfilm, WSU. The resolution passed by a vote of 8-1. Albert Fitzgerald of the UE cast the lone dissenting vote.
“appeals to the prejudice of the colored people,” perhaps influencing the Steelworkers’ organizing capabilities in Alabama, as well as future national elections.⁷⁵

Murray and CIO PAC leaders believed that the distribution of such propaganda nationally, through the Daily Worker and the black press, threatened to turn the black electorate against the Democratic Party and toward future left-facing third party efforts. At the 1949 CIO convention, with the organization’s left-wing unions slated for expulsion and the 1948 presidential race behind them, the question of communist influence on the black community came into the open. William Townsend of the United Transport Service Employees begged convention delegates to counteract left-wingers’ attempts to influence the black community politically. “[W]hile you are cleaning out Communism in the CIO, please join with us in cleaning it out of the Negro communities,” he said.⁷⁶ The CIO PAC and the CIO public relations department under De Caux routinely issued advertisements and announcements targeted to the black community, but Wallace’s campaign forced the CIO to defend its civil rights record more explicitly in 1948 and in the years to follow.

The Wallace campaign – and the threat it posed to Truman’s reelection – created a direct link between the issue of communism and organized labor’s clout in Washington. But in order for the CIO to convince union members and the general public to vote for the anticommunist Truman against the Progressive Party interloper, the CIO had to first confront communism and dissension on the presidential endorsement in its own ranks. The Wallace campaign forced the issue. But Murray’s view that Wallace’s candidacy posed a threat not only to the Democrats’ chances, but to the fabric of American democracy also forced the CIO to confront the question of what constituted a viable progressive, liberal, democratic, non-communist alternative to the likes

⁷⁵ Philip Murray, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, May 17-19, 1949, 33; Periodicals, WSU.
⁷⁶ William Townsend, Proceedings of the Eleventh Constitutional Convention of the CIO, October 31 to November 4, 1949, 370; Periodicals, WHS.
of Harry Bridges’ ILWU, Albert Fitzgerald’s UE, Ben Gold’s Fur and Leather Workers or Donald Henderson’s Food and Tobacco Workers. During and in the wake of the Wallace candidacy, CIO leaders increasingly crafted a vision of union democracy that assumed a resolute commitment to anticommunism among its members.

Anticommunist Union Democracy in the Age of Wallace

CIO leaders celebrated the low percentage for Wallace as an indication that its left-wing unions were out of step with the political positions of their members. Wallace-Taylor won only 2.37 percent of the popular vote, receiving fewer ballots than Dixiecrat candidate Strom Thurmond and winning more than four percent of the vote only in New York and California.\textsuperscript{77} The actual opinion of CIO members toward the candidates in the 1948 election is murky, though a majority larger than the corresponding portion of the general public favored Truman. In April 1948, a Green-Brodie poll of CIO members in 25 cities indicated strong support (95 percent in some cities) by union members for PAC-endorsed candidates. But by October 1948, a Gallup poll of union members showed that only 55 percent supported Truman. Another survey revealed that 10 percent of CIO members planned to vote for Wallace, while only 58 percent were in favor of Truman.\textsuperscript{78}

CIO leaders like Murray and Reuther celebrated Wallace’s poor showing in southern California (where CIO political operatives battled former CIO leftists), in the industrial states of Michigan and Indiana, in the mining stronghold of West Virginia, and in the heavy union area of Philadelphia as evidence that workers supported the CIO’s endorsement of Truman. A subsequent study comparing election returns from counties with significant CIO membership to

\textsuperscript{77} Markowitz, \textit{The Rise and Fall of the People’s Century}, 295-6.
\textsuperscript{78} Foster, \textit{The Union Politic}, 126.
those with low CIO memberships “indicated not only that Democratic support was stronger in
CIO districts, but also that such Democratic support was a new phenomenon” in comparison
with previous elections. The bottom line was that “labor did play an important part in the
Truman victory.”79

The 1948 election cycle was the first time that communist-led unions spent considerable
sums of union money to oppose a policy position taken by the national CIO – funds that came
directly from union members.80 Indeed, the official charges eventually filed against the CIO’s
left-led unions often included significant analysis of union support for the Progressive Party, in
accordance with the communist line, and against the wishes of union members.81

For their part, accused communists asserted that the CIO was undemocratic, its leaders
tools of an uncaring Democratic Party. In criticism that would be resurrected by corrupt union
officials during the racketeering hearings of the late 1950s and later by the New Left, their
refrain emphasized the American value of due process – in which “[e]ven the worst criminal gets
a trial,” according to Harry Bridges – as well as union democracy that resulted in their lawful
election to their posts and support for candidates approved by their members.82 At his union’s
trial in 1950, Hugh Bryson of the National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards told the
Executive Board, “[T]he membership subscribed to the position they have taken and… they do

79 Foster, The Union Politic, 118-125, 129, 130. See also, R. Alton Lee, Truman and Taft-Hartley: A Question of
80 For discussion of the diversion of local CIO PAC money to fund Wallace in violation of the CIO’s official stance
against a third party, see Fred G. Taylor, “CIO Delegate Charges PAC Funds Diverted to Wallace Campaign,”
Oregonian, November 25, 1948; Philip Murray Papers, Box 115, Fol. 14; CUA. The New York World-Telegram
reported, “CIO right wingers are still in business with PAC, which is not to be confused with the PAC crowd
supporting Wallace,” in July 1948. See NEA Staff Correspondent, “Conventions Pull Welcome Mat from Labor,”
New York World-Telegram, July 12, 1948; Len De Caux Papers, Box 10, Fol. 5; WSU.
81 See, for example, Jacob Potořsky, Emil Mazey, and Joseph Curran, “Report of the Committee to Investigate
Charges Against the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers,” 1949; Philip Murray Papers, Box 99,
Fol. 18; CUA.
82 Harry Bridges, Proceedings of the Eleventh Constitutional Convention of the CIO, October 31 to November 4,
1949, 306; Periodicals, WHS.
not think they have taken the position that was in support of Soviet interests.”

Left-wingers argued that the CIO’s growing bureaucracy and political tilt toward the Democratic Party elevated the positions of elites over the values of the rank-and-file. In short, left-wingers accused the CIO of being a special interest group disinterested in the views of either its members or the general public it claimed to serve.

CIO leaders tried to turn such arguments on their heads, arguing that true union democracy resided in the anticommunist CIO, not in unions led by those on the political fringe. The organization’s publicity for the expulsion of its communist unions centered on the anticommunism, patriotism, and political diversity of its members. In a 1949 op-ed for the New York Daily Mirror, Murray defended his organization against employer organization charges that communists were overrepresented on the Executive Board in comparison with the number of communist members in the CIO, resulting in an inherently undemocratic governance structure. Murray wrote, “The CIO, which represents more than 6,000,000 workers” – a vastly inflated number – “is as American as the hot dog or the radio commercial. Its membership is as mixed – as to race, creed, color and political opinion – as is the entire population of the country.”

Murray contrasted this diverse – but overwhelmingly anticommunist – membership with the dogmatic, dictatorial leaderships of the CIO’s communist-led unions. A year after the election, Murray claimed that no more than ten percent of CIO members identified with the communist position, though it is unclear how he came to this calculation. Murray lambasted

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83 Hugh Bryson, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, August 29, 1950, 67, 63-64; Periodicals, WSU.
84 “Murray Drives for Showdown Fight with CIO’s Extreme Left,” Labor Relations Letter, published by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, June 1949; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Papers, Series II, Box 4, Departmental Newsletters 1944-49 Volume; Hagley. The ten percent figure cited by Murray understates the membership of communist-led unions in the CIO. The actual figure is something on the order of 19 percent (Table 2-1).
communist leaders like Bridges, Fitzgerald, and Henderson for attempting to impose a minority position on the entirety of their organizations. Murray justified the pending expulsions in terms of union democracy. “If the leaders of this 10%, often against the desires of their own membership, disagree and sabotage the majority on every important aspect of policy, it is clear that the majority has the inherent right to protect its course of action and its future stability,” Murray told the CIO membership.86 In this way, Murray allied representation of the rank-and-file with the democratic processes of the CIO Executive Board.

The 1948 election forced this argument about democracy. By demonstrating that its own members were anticommunist and pro-Truman, the CIO hoped to retain legitimacy in the national press, among the general public, and within its own membership. The organization did so in a number of different ways. CIO leaders actively worked to reinforce newspaper and magazine accounts showing the anticommunist sentiments of the CIO’s member unions. Articles like a June 1948 piece for Commentary by A.H. Raskin, the New York Times’ labor reporter, gave indirect support for the CIO’s justification of democracy in its stance against a third party. Raskin reported that worker discontent with rising prices and inflation translated into a growing reluctance for workers to embrace communism. “The depth of anti-Communism feeling in labor’s ranks makes it plain that any support Mr. Wallace receives will come in spite of, and not because of, his ardor for the Soviet cause,” Raskin wrote.87

By 1951, this notion predominated among liberal anticommunists. In an interview with U.S. News and World Report, Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota railed against the “subtlety and the viciousness of these [communist] rascals,” but reassured the public that

86 Philip Murray qtd. in “CIO President Murray Reports to CIO Convention,” CIO press release, October 31, 1949; UAW Research Department Papers, Part I, Box 4, Fol. 13; WSU.
87 A.H. Raskin, “All-Out War on the Production Front?: Labor Looks to Political Weapons,” Commentary, June 1948, 537; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part II, Box 6, Communist Party 1948 Fol.; WSU.
communists could never again hold sway in the American labor movement. Humphrey argued that “the overwhelming majority of the workers have no sympathy whatsoever with Communism.” Such statements of the rank-and-file’s turn against communism and distaste for Wallace’s communist connections were helpful in validating the CIO’s position that it – not its communist-led unions – represented the viewpoints of its members.

CIO officials also took their case to union members, implying that support for communist leaders was incompatible with support for trade unionism. Murray and other right-wingers first inaugurated this line of argumentation in 1948, as Wallace threatened the CIO’s political influence in Washington. CIO leaders worked to portray Wallace’s communist associations as antithetical to American democracy and to American trade labor unionism. At a 1948 Board meeting, Murray praised the United States as “the best of all countries” because, in America, citizens were permitted to criticize “national shortcomings.” Murray further contended that, “The trade union movement in the United States has done much to cultivate good, sound, democratic thinking.” At a June 1950 meeting, Murray stated emphatically, “I owe my allegiance to the United States against the Soviet Union,” and “[m]y allegiance is to this [trade union] movement.” By extension, in following the Soviet line, Progressive Party supporters as well as American communists not only thumbed their collective nose at American democracy, but they stood against the democratic values espoused by the American labor movement.

This argument continued to gain traction in the early 1950s as the CIO’s legislative department worked aggressively to defeat Joseph McCarthy’s subversion bills and HUAC investigations. For example, a CIO Executive Board resolution opposing loyalty oaths for

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88 Hubert H. Humphrey qtd. in “Fighting Communism in Unions,” interview, U.S. News and World Report, December 28, 1951, 26; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part II, Box 6, Communist Party 1950 Fol. 1 of 2; WSU.
89 Philip Murray, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, January 22-23, 1948, 332, 333, 339; Periodicals, WSU.
90 Philip Murray, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, June 15, 1950, 43-44; Periodicals, WSU.
governmental employees and defense contractors criticized the proposed law as “undemocratic and unjust procedures” which gave “aid and comfort to Communist and other totalitarian groups.”91 By aligning itself with the forces of democracy, the CIO sought to be seen as helping to defeat communism at home.

AFL officials made similar arguments about the connection between democracy and organized labor, worried that the exposure of communism in CIO unions would reflect poorly on the AFL as well. The AFL used its sponsorship of the Frank Edwards radio program – a news commentary show that aired five nights a week at ten o’clock, at the cost of some $750,000 a year – to defend the organization’s anticommunist credentials and to explain how the communist system was antithetical to effective trade unions.92 Speaking to the general public rather than to workers alone, the AFL sponsorship spot read, “Like you, the eight million members of the AF of L love freedom and are devoted to democracy. But in addition, AF of L members know that in Communist Russia, a worker has no right – a worker is ordered when to work, where to work and for how much.” The advertisement concluded, “No wonder, then, that American workers hate Communism. No wonder the American Federation of Labor has consistently and tirelessly fought Communism at home and abroad!”93 Even more explicitly than the CIO, the AFL spoke directly to the public and tried to connect the internal democracy of its union, and the anticommunist position of its rank-and-file, with a more general analysis of the incompatibility of communism with a strong union movement in America.

91 Resolution on Government Employees, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, November 17, 20, and 27, 1948; 362; Periodicals, WSU.
93 AFL closing spot, Frank Edwards radio program, February 8, 1950 [and repeated frequently]; Morris S. Novik Papers, Box 1, Fol. 2; WHS.
The CIO did not mount many explicit campaigns to reach the general public. There were a number of reasons for this. The CIO relied on its PAC instead of its public relations department after De Caux’s departure and during the 1948 election cycle. The CIO’s member unions tended to invest in paid media to reach their own members or potential members, rather than the general public. Instead, the CIO used public statements, leaked board meeting actions, and convention rhetoric and resolutions to cultivate the linkage between democracy, anticommunism, and the CIO.

Individual unions within the CIO that harbored vehemently anticommunist positions also used other types of media to make this argument. In the wake of the 1949 expulsions, the UAW ran a radio play entitled “CIO and Americanism” as part of its CIO history series. In the play, George Baldanzi of the Textile Workers and musician Texas Bill Strength sang songs and discussed the latest labor news. Baldanzi described how communists at the CIO convention had “stood up and screamed things at the CIO leaders which, if they had been in Russia, they would have been taken out and shot for doing.” He continued, “Yes, Bill, they took advantage of the freedoms we have in order to take those freedoms away from us.” But because “the CIO is a democratic organization,” the communists “didn’t get to first base.”94 Like Murray’s speeches to the Board and his convention pronouncements, this radio play equated American and union democracy. But the play was targeted at radio listeners – mostly workers tuning in to the UAW station – rather than union officials and convention delegates.

In the relative privacy of Board meetings – made somewhat more public by the frequent leaking of proceedings to the press – Murray and Reuther railed against communism, but both men publicly condemned undemocratic, violent means in addressing dissent from the CIO’s left.

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94 “CIO and Americanism,” George Baldanzi/Texas Bill Strength, script of radio play, date unclear – presumably late 1949 or early 1950; UAW Community Relations Department – Mildred Jeffrey Papers, Box 16, Fol. 6; WSU.
When Abe Flaxer, head of the United Public Workers came to defend his union before the CIO Executive Board in winter of 1950, Murray and Swim disputed Flaxer’s accusation that the CIO’s leadership hoped to provoke a riot among communists in an effort to discredit the Public Workers and other accused unions.\textsuperscript{95} In 1950, after UAW members used violence to eliminate communists in local plants, Reuther took the high road by urging locals to use “legal ways of dealing with anyone connected with the Communists.”\textsuperscript{96} But such incidents were also useful to CIO leaders as they demonstrated the worker resistance to communist influence.

CIO leaders tried to distinguish between communist domination and communists themselves, asserting – however unsuccessfully – that while they opposed the former, they were comfortable with the latter expressing themselves in a functioning democracy. In reflecting on the events of 1948 in January of the following year, Carey summed up this idea. “No one said or even intimated that Communists would be prohibited from being Communists.… But it was also made clear that no individual, Communist or non-Communist, would be permitted to impose outside programs on a free American trade union movement.” The CIO highlighted its democratic processes for ridding itself of communist influences – following “a democratic tradition” in existence “since the year 1776,” in Carey’s telling.\textsuperscript{97} In a widely quoted statement, Reuther stated that the CIO was interested in defeating communism, not depriving Communists of free speech. According to Reuther, the CIO only “challenge[d], and we are going to put a stop to, their right to peddle the Communist Party line with a CIO label on the wrapper.”\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{95} CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, February 14-16, 1950, 483-492; Periodicals, WSU.
\textsuperscript{96} Walter P. Reuther qtd. in “Reds Rejected,” \textit{Business Week}, August 12, 1950; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part II, Box 6, Communist Party 1950 Fol. 1 of 2; WSU. See also, “UAW Deplores Anti-Red Riots,” \textit{Detroit Sunday Times}, August 6, 1950; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part II, Box 6, Communist Party 1950 Fol. 2 of 2; WSU.
\textsuperscript{97} James B. Carey, “Analysis – CIO – 1948,” January 1949; Philip Murray Papers, Box 120, Fol. 5; CUA.
\textsuperscript{98} Walter P. Reuther qtd. in John A. Fitch, “The CIO and Its Communists,” \textit{The Survey}, December 1949, 646; Highlander Papers, Box 41, Fol. 2; WHS.
leaders continued to contrast this tolerance for dissent against Soviet communists’ crackdown on the freedom of the USSR’s citizens.

The problem with this line of argumentation was that it did not address the contentions of leaders of communist-led unions that they were only acting on behalf of their membership, not in their own self-interest. At his union’s trial in 1950, Henderson summed up this argument: “We just can’t see how you can take an International Union and deny it the right of its membership to its constitution and conventions, its council meetings, its local union meetings, to determine their own policy, even if that disagrees with National CIO policy.”

Not once did Murray or any other national officer of the CIO ask for convention balloting information or any other record that might confirm or disprove the idea that the rank-and-file took a leading role in shaping union policy. At the trials for the accused unions, the charging committee did cite union newspapers that supported particular policy positions not taken by the national CIO – especially surrounding the 1948 election – as evidence that the leftists tried to brainwash their members. This attention to manipulation of the rank-and-file by the left – but not irregularities in elections or other examples of outright corruption – showed that the CIO’s national leadership viewed unionists as incapable of forming their own political positions without union intervention and assumed that their default position was anticommunist.

This view of workers as vehemently opposed to the communist line – unless successfully manipulated by a Bridges or a Henderson or a Bryson or a Fitzgerald – was consistent with CIO leaders’ understandings of the general public as well. In his 1950 Labor Day radio speech on ABC, Murray declared, “American workers have proven they are a bulwark of strength against

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99 Donald Henderson, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, February 14-16, 1950, 401; Periodicals, WSU.
Communist infiltration.” In expelling communist unions from its ranks, “the CIO has performed a real service to the nation,” Murray told listeners.  

Anticommunism as Public Service

Murray expressed a similar sense of public responsibility and service in the relative privacy of CIO Board meetings. After the Board had voted to expel nine unions in 1950, Murray praised the organization for having “rendered a distinct service not only to American workers” – who, Murray presumed, were vehemently opposed to communist influence in their unions – “but also to our country.” In other cases, Murray explained that the CIO not only demonstrated its commitment to the public through its confrontation with communists, but that it undertook those expulsions and supported anticommunist politicians primarily to help the public.

Murray and other senior officials explained that the CIO was not content merely to save its own organization, retain its clout in politics, and strengthen the collective bargaining positions of its member unions. As the CIO’s endorsement of Truman put it, the federation’s political and social “program does not serve the interest of labor alone but that of every section of our people. It is directed toward the achievement of those objectives which are shared by the overwhelming majority of Americans.” One of those key objectives was opposition to a Progressive Party and its communist cronies. Murray argued that this support for Truman made a real difference. He told a roaring crowd of convention delegates in the days after the election that, through its

100 Philip Murray qtd. in “CIO President Murray in Labor Day Speech, Sees US Unions as Bulwark Against Communism,” CIO press release, September 4, 1950; Philip Murray Papers, Box 137, Fol. 1; CUA.
101 Philip Murray, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, August 29, 1950, 74; Periodicals, WSU.
102 “Political Action in 1948 Campaign,” CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, August 30-31, and September 1, 1948, 105, 109; Periodicals, WSU.
election activities, the CIO “saved America, we saved men, and we saved women, we saved children. And we helped save the world.”

By 1950, with the 1948 election behind him, and with the expulsions of communist CIO unions steadily progressing, Murray was even more explicit in rhetorically crowning the CIO as savior of the American people – indeed, the universe – from the “wickedness” of communism. In a meeting with his Executive Board, Murray argued that by removing communists from the ranks of the CIO, his organization was “rising to the defense of these people here in this country as it is rising to the defense of all the peoples throughout the universe. It is singular in its devotion to the principles of democracy.”

A pamphlet produced by the CIO Department of Education and Research a year later, as the Korean War waged, made a similar claim to a wider audience than the Executive Board. The brochure urged readers to exercise their democratic duty to vote. In this way, ordinary people could help the pro-democracy forces as they waged a “struggle for the freedom of mankind.” “In this great effort once more labor has taken the lead” (presumably by eliminating communists), the pamphlet reported. Reiterating Murray’s position from the 1948 election campaign forward, the pamphlet assumed the anticommunism of the American public and submitted that organized labor was doing much to assert democratic values on the public’s behalf. With the U.S. enmeshed in a cold war, this argument about the CIO’s patriotism and ideological contribution to the war effort, in accordance with the views of both the general public and union members, was particularly salient.

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103 Philip Murray, *1948 Proceedings of the 10th Constitutional Convention of the CIO*, November 22-26, 1948, 301-302; Periodicals, WHS.
104 Philip Murray, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, February 14-16, 1950, 449; Periodicals, WSU.
105 “Spotlight on Mobilization,” CIO Department of Education and Research pamphlet, 1951; CIO PAC Papers, Box 12, Fol. 7; WSU.
Indeed, in the years following the expulsions, CIO leaders argued that their organization had done more to address the threat of communism than employers or the U.S. Congress. In 1953, a year into his tenure as president of the CIO, Walter P. Reuther explained to the CIO convention attendees that their organization had “far more effective experience with handling the communist problem than the demagogues in Congress” who railed against communist infiltration of the nation’s government and membership organizations. In an example of how the CIO used academics as legitimizing forces in arguments to the public, the CIO latched onto the noted labor economist and historian Philip Taft’s 1954 claim that the CIO had “sharply reduced” communist influence with “virtually no aid” from employers who tried to use communism as a wedge to divide the workforce. And, in an effort to prevent Congressional prohibitions on communists in the labor movement in 1951, Carey chastised the government and business for not “show[ing] the same zeal in resolving this problem that labor has shown.”

Carey and others even suggested that the CIO could develop a national political program to rid the country of communists, because it had successfully expunged communists from its own ranks. At a 1950 CIO Executive Board meeting, George Baldanzi argued that the CIO could present a foreign and domestic policy for the nation that steered clear of the hysteria of excesses of McCarthyism on the right or “Dirkenism” on the left. “[W]e ought to approach the Congress, the government, and the people of the United States with an overall program,” Baldanzi told a receptive Board. Representatives of the CIO used this logic to promote their foreign and domestic legislative agenda through much of the 1950s. A 1954 CIO Publicity Department

106 Walter P. Reuther, “Report to the CIO,” 15th CIO Constitutional Convention, November 16-20, 1953, 5; Katherine Ellickson Papers, Box 106, No Fol.; WSU.
107 Philip Taft qtd. in “Labor’s Cleanup of Commies Praised,” CIO News, January 4, 1954; Periodicals, WSU.
109 George Baldanzi, CIO Executive Board Meeting Minutes, November 16 and 24, 1950, 81; WSU.
report on the expulsions argued the CIO’s experience with communism offered a model for other organizations and governmental entities. The Publicity Department published the report “as a public service for trade union members and for all students of labor problems and of democracy’s successful efforts to combat the menace of totalitarianism.”

This effort to present CIO actions around communism in the late 1940s and early 1950s as a public service infused by a commitment to democracy and freedom of expression came as a direct result of the 1948 election. In 1948, the CIO tried to motivate its own members and members of the general public – principally the progressive, anticommunist left – to support Truman over Wallace. In the years following, the CIO sought to solidify support among these groups, not only in order to stave off “embarrassment,” as John A. Fitch had put it in his 1949 Survey article, but also to build a cohesive, pragmatic coalition capable of advancing the CIO’s political agenda. This could only be accomplished with support from a public that CIO officials presumed to be anticommunist. The expulsions helped the CIO in this effort. By 1953, public approval of labor unions surpassed its prewar high, reaching 75 percent. By comparison, at the height of tensions over communism in the CIO in 1949, public approval stood at just 62 percent.

Conclusion

In 1953, Victor Riesel claimed that American labor spent one billion dollars fighting communism in the United States and abroad, as well as serving the community through local drives, though he gave no indication of how he arrived at this staggering figure. However, the

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110 “Official Reports on the Expulsion of Communist Dominated Organizations from the CIO” CIO Publicity Department, publication no. 254, 3, September 1954; Katherine Ellickson Papers, Box 106, No Fol.; WSU.
111 “Gallup Poll Finds People Approve of Trade Unions,” AFL News-Reporter, November 20, 1953; John A. Fitch Papers, Box 15, Fol. 6; WHS.
columnist believed that the average reader had not heard of these actions by the labor movement. “There are scores of such incidents which go unreported because labor’s public relations is as outmoded as a town crier,” Riesel concluded.¹¹²

Riesel’s analysis was somewhat exaggerated. Contrary to Riesel’s statements, the AFL’s public relations program grew large and sophisticated in the years after the passage of Taft-Hartley. While the quality and innovation of the CIO’s public relations department declined substantially after De Caux’s departure from the organization, the CIO continued to produce an impressive array of publicity materials. But Riesel was correct that the publicity and political operations of the nation’s two largest labor federations did little to publicize their own good work in the community, on behalf of the general public.

Accusations of communist influence in CIO unions were a major reason why the labor movement’s publicity divisions failed to develop at the speed of its political machinery. With the onset of the cold war, communist infiltration became a serious political liability for the CIO at a moment when the organization was trying to promote its political platform among both CIO members and the general public. CIO officials feared that a serious public relations effort to convince the nation that the CIO did not support communists would have little effect on the political realities of 1948 – and potentially even draw new attention to the problem – especially before communists were forced out of the organization.

The possibility of a strong showing by Wallace forced CIO leaders to confront communism forcefully, but as a political issue, not a public relations one. Wallace threatened the CIO’s clout in Washington, and support for the Progressives among CIO unions gave the impression that the CIO did not have control over its own troops. CIO leaders worried that if

they failed to take action against communism in their ranks, the government would take draconian measures to remove communists for them. And Murray and others continued to worry that communist influences would exact a toll on CIO unions’ organizing capabilities, presuming that the rank-and-file would reject communist leadership for both ideological and practical reasons. After all, Wallace’s poor showing in union strongholds showed that leftist unions were outside of the mainstream. And the elimination of NLRB protections for unions led by those who refused to submit anti-communist affidavits, as required under Taft-Hartley, put communist unions at a significant disadvantage.

Of course the reality was considerably murkier than Murray and other CIO leaders allowed. In general, the purges did not result in higher memberships for CIO unions, and the CIO continued to do battle with the Truman administration on matters like the Wage Stabilization Board and the 1952 steel strike. It is impossible to say how organizing and membership rates would have changed had the CIO not launched massive efforts to steal members away from expelled unions and supported government investigations of communists in the ranks of labor. Within a few years, most purged unions were shells of their former selves, if they existed independently at all (Table 2-2).

But the CIO’s own efforts did not fare much better. The historian Robert Zieger explains that, despite boasts to the contrary, in the aftermath of the expulsions, “the CIO did little organizing.”113 The CIO’s newly established Government and Civic Employees Organizing Committee, its efforts to raid the food processing workers of the FTA (by pushing them toward the Packinghouse Workers, Brewery Workers, and the Gas and Chemical Workers), and its awarding of control of the department store and retail clerks to the Amalgamated Clothing

113 Zieger, The CIO, 290.
Workers over the left-leaning Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union were largely unsuccessful, though the CIO’s competitor to the UE built membership quickly (Table 2-3).

Many of the gains that the CIO’s new and preexisting unions saw between 1949 and 1955 were attained through raiding – not organizing – and few approached the potential of the labor market. For example, census data show that local, state and federal employees totaled over seven million workers in the early 1950s – including over two million federal employees. Yet the CIO’s Government and Civic Workers managed to organize just 25,000 in that period – far less than one percent, with many presumably raided from the United Public Workers, which dissolved in 1953.114 Even taking into account the fact that many of these employees were ineligible to join unions or worked in areas of the country hostile to unions, this figure is extraordinarily low. This compares with a United Public Workers height of over 61,000 members in 1946.115

The CIO’s failure to capitalize on a stated justification for the expulsions by organizing more workers after the purges ultimately threatened its political clout in future elections and its negotiating position vis-à-vis the AFL in merger talks in subsequent years. But the strategy that

115 Troy, Trade Union Membership, A-22. The same story of inadequate organizing and a failure to advance anti-communist critique to potential workers is true of other unions. In his study of the United Office and Professional Workers of America (OPW) and subsequent union organizing of white collar workers after OPW’s expulsion from the CIO, the historian Shannon Clark demonstrates that, while employers used anti-communist rhetoric to discredit the OPW during its heyday, they turned to alternate attacks on labor after the expulsion. The AFL’s Office Employees International Union (OEIU) did not devote resources to organizing in the wake of the OPW’s destruction, and the CIO only established a formal effort to organize governmental workers, not white collar workers as a whole. The result was a declining share of organized white collar workers. By 1956, when the AFL-CIO’s Industrial Union Department held a conference on white collar organizing, Reuther estimated that only 12 percent of the potential fifteen million workers were organized. The number of unionized white collar workers represented only one third to one half the level of other unionized workers. Furthermore, the OEIU – the AFL-CIO’s primary white collar workers union – had only around 53,000 members in 1960, a number similar to the OPW’s membership two decades before. The CIO failed to test Murray’s presumption that white collar workers, like the public, would be attracted to non-communist alternatives. See Shannon Clark, “The Cold War at the Office: Anticommunism and the Demise of the United Office and Professional Workers of America,” conference paper, Taminent Library, February 2011, 41. See Troy, Trade Union Membership, A-15 and A-22.
the CIO developed for addressing communism – insisting that it was out of step with the political views of a majority of its own members and that the CIO was acting on behalf of the entire nation – foreshadowed arguments used during the AFL-CIO merger in 1955 and union racketeering hearings in the late 1950s. As during the debate over communist-led unions, union leaders claimed their members were simply part of the larger public in both of these instances. In the future, the form of public outreach shifted; organized labor used differentiated messaging based more on demographic, regional, racial, and gender identifications than on union membership or non-membership. But the strategy on communism that tried to situate the CIO as a public interest group, rather than a special interest group representing labor alone, remained the same.
Chapter 3
A Movement Becomes an Organization: Selling the AFL-CIO to the Public

With a tentative agreement on a constitution for a merged labor federation drafted by AFL and CIO leaders, the editorial pages of the nation’s newspapers were atwitter with praise for the proposed organization in the spring of 1955. The New York Times saw the new organization’s proposed constitution as “a striking benchmark by which to measure the profound change in the philosophy of organized labor” since the founding of the AFL in the 1880s. In emphasizing the Federation’s responsibility “to serve the interests of all the American people,” the charter was proof that mainstream American unionism had abandoned an ideology of class warfare, and replaced it with an acknowledgement that “labor and management now share in a constantly growing economic pie,” of benefit to workers, businessmen and the public alike.\(^1\) The Detroit Free Press swooned over the way that the “proposed new constitution tacitly disavows the ‘class struggle’ philosophy.”\(^2\) The Detroit News hailed the abandonment of the principle of “class conflict,” as a confession of labor’s “absorption in the American political tradition,” showing that labor had, “in a word, become conservative.”\(^3\)

What had the new AFL-CIO constitution done to inspire such high praise? How and why did the merger between the AFL and CIO signal organized labor’s movement toward mainstream conservatism to the press? In fact, AFL and CIO leaders meticulously crafted the constitution that so enthused newspaper editors around the country in order to cultivate a sense of moderation. Concerned that the merger between the nation’s two largest labor federations would open the labor movement up to renewed attacks on monopoly unions and big labor by industry

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\(^1\) “Labor’s Charter,” editorial, New York Times, May 4, 1955; UAW Research Department, Part I, Box 2, Fol. 6; WSU.

\(^2\) “In the AFL-CIO Charter: Emphasis is Put on Responsibility,” editorial, Detroit Free Press, May 4, 1955; UAW Research Department, Part I, Box 2, Fol. 7; WSU.

groups, spokesmen for the new labor federation actively tried to spin the merger as a boon to the public – a powerful lobbying group committed to advancing the position of the union and non-union member, alike. The new AFL-CIO positioned itself as a democratic institution committed to free enterprise, opposed to Marxist doctrine, and “conscious of its responsibility to the people of this nation and the free world.”

The merger represented a high point of industrial pluralism, in which the ideal of an industrial democracy was replaced by a pragmatic investment in building a formidable negotiating partner for an ever-expanding business sector. The abandonment of the rhetoric of class struggle that commentators noted in the new AFL-CIO constitution was not for show. It embodied liberal thinking at mid-century, a centrism born from leftist intellectuals’ swift abandonment of the socialist ideas of their younger years, and a fundamental distrust of large, powerful institutions and controlling political systems in the wake of World War II and its aftermath.

For liberal public intellectuals of the 1950s, labor could provide a powerful counterweight to the growth of big business and its incumbent profits. But it would do so as an organizational structure akin to business, not as a democratic institution capable of transforming the social landscape of America. The latter role smacked of the class-consciousness that underlay European politics; in America, classes were not so far apart, and class distinctions were far more permeable. In America, modern technologies and consumerist behavior would render class structure obsolete. Labor would continue to operate politically as part of the “pressure group society,” argued *Fortune* writer Daniel Bell. But doing so effectively required effective management of its members, in order to present a united front in collective bargaining and in

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4 Meany and Reuther statement to the press, May 2, 1955; UAW President’s Office, Box 299, Fol. 6; WSU.
warring with other interest groups on the political front. As the historian Nelson Lichtenstein writes, liberal thinkers of the postwar period supported a “de facto oligarchy” governing America’s unions. They believed that bureaucracy and consistent, tight, and moderate rule by elites could advance the interests of union members incapable of and uninterested in representing their own interests at the bargaining table and in the political arena.

AFL-CIO leaders and the intellectuals who believed in the power of labor unions to advance workers’ economic interests through collective bargaining and political work championed bigness among responsible labor elements. Big wasn’t bad when mobilized for the public good, they argued. Indeed, bigness was a key feature of the postwar landscape, as the United States attained superpower status, legislators planned the creation of a more robust national highway system, federal government spending increased year-by-year, and a wave of business mergers swept the nation.

In 1951, nine large manufacturing and mining firms merged with combined assets of $201 million. The number of merged firms increased steadily year-by-year during the first half of the 1950s, standing at 67 large merged manufacturing and mining firms in 1955, with assets of $2,117 million. Furthermore, the percentage of manufacturing assets held by the 200 largest corporations increased from 48 percent to 53 percent during the same period. Meanwhile, government spending increased by more than half between 1950 and 1955, with receipts keeping pace. Thus, as the economy grew in the early 1950s, two key American institutions – business and government – grew with it.

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7 This constituted the third merger movement, from 1951-1968. The number of mergers did not increase steadily during this period, and there were dips year-to-year, notably during the recession in 1958. See James R. Williamson, *Federal Antitrust Policy During the Kennedy-Johnson Years* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing, 1995), 22-3.
Against such a backdrop, liberals saw the bigness of a merged AFL-CIO as a good thing. AFL President George Meany, CIO President Walter P. Reuther, and others argued that unity between the AFL and CIO resulted in an institution that could fight communism, protect the consumer, create a more efficient market, make workplaces safer, strengthen the middle class, and promote American values abroad. Most of all, big labor – even in a federation model – could pressure big employers at the negotiating table. As Meany put it, “We do not seek to recast American society in any particular doctrinaire or ideological image. We seek an ever rising standard of living.”

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, intellectual champions of industrial pluralism had largely changed their tune, concerned that bigness – and the bureaucracy and elitism that a concentration on standard of living promoted – suppressed worker democracy and shortchanged the potential for radical social change. But in the mid-1950s, AFL-CIO leaders and liberals viewed the rise of big labor optimistically. In doing so, they reflected new shifts in the labor movement in the postwar period: the trend toward professionalism, increased bureaucracy, a growing sense of national identity, political involvement, a projected – if not actual – preference for tough negotiations at the bargaining table instead of picketing, and the promotion of labor as protector and piece of the public. The merger between the AFL and CIO did not create these trends, but it exacerbated them, leading to praise of labor’s statesmanship and responsibility to the public on the one hand, and charges of monopoly power and a selling out of union members on the other hand.

AFL and CIO leaders did not merge their organizations as a public relations gimmick. There were far more substantive reasons for the merger. Meany and Reuther represented a new generation of leaders less personally invested than their predecessors in the original reasons for

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9 George Meany, qtd. in Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 147.
the split between the AFL and CIO and less committed to keeping the two organizations separate. The infighting, organizing woes, and declining resources following former CIO President Phillip Murray’s death and the CIO’s elimination of communist unions from its ranks provided an added incentive for Reuther to bring his organization into a new, stronger federation. Indeed, it wasn’t clear that the CIO would survive past 1955 without uniting with the AFL. Meanwhile, Meany’s AFL saw the merger as an opportunity to seize the upper hand against a rival labor federation. Merger provided a means of dealing with the persistent problem of raiding between unions, a problem that cost unions a considerable amount of time and money, often alienating workers and the public in the process. And merger also promised greater strength in two growing and intertwined areas of interest to both the AFL and CIO: public relations and politics.

Labor’s spin to the public through the mainstream press and its own media channels emphasized some of these reasons for the merger, but not others. The CIO’s internal civil war and the organizing capacity of a merged federation were matters of private concern, while labor leaders publicly promoted the virtues of a large labor entity that could act on behalf of the public in the political arena, as well as the value to the ordinary citizen of industrial peace created through no-raiding pacts and the use of conference rooms as opposed to picket lines. Enthusiasts for the merger contemplated a huge labor organization capable of enforcing an end to labor’s historical abuses in corruption and racial discrimination. Big was better when it came to certain things, AFL-CIO leaders argued. The AFL-CIO was a mature organization. With its

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10 Critics later charged that big labor allowed greater abuse in these areas, particularly after the McClellan Committee hearings of the late 1950s and the civil rights movement of the early 1960s. They argued that bureaucracy increased the potential for corrupt, labor strongmen like Jimmy Hoffa to wrest control away from the rank-and-file. And both the reluctance of Meany’s AFL-CIO to embrace the civil rights movement openly and continued racial discrimination in some unions convinced some that big labor was out of step with the times. See Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, ch. 4.
new constitution eschewing the class warfare language of the AFL’s original charter, labor had come of age.

In many ways, this argument surrounding the merger represented a climax of the trends typifying the public relations strategies of organized labor from the campaign against the passage of Taft-Hartley forward. As in the campaign against that Act and the CIO’s expulsion of communists, AFL-CIO leaders argued that their merged organization was capable of policing itself and that regulatory legislation – in this case, an end to anti-trust exemptions for organized labor – was not necessary. Labor leaders recycled this argument about the power of responsible labor to crack down on abuses in its ranks a few years after the merger during Congress’ investigation of union racketeering. The merger created a large public relations and lobbying bureaucracy that aided in the promotion of this message, crafted from on-high.

This chapter argues that the merger of the AFL and CIO was a defining moment for the new way that mainstream labor tried to present itself to the public in the postwar period – as a protector of the public interest against the excesses of both renegade unions and industry. Labor spokesmen countered charges of union monopoly by arguing that big labor was needed to defend the public against big business, and that bigness could help serve the public interest with legislative victories and collective bargaining agreements beneficial to all. At the same time, AFL and CIO officials argued that monopoly was a misnomer, with individual unions maintaining autonomy in many notable respects, including collective bargaining negotiations.

The first section of this chapter details the reasons and timeline for the merger, including the CIO’s internal strife, changed leadership in both federations, concerns about lost resources and alienation resulting from raiding, and the possibility of greater influence in Washington and with the public through combined forces. The second section of the chapter discusses the charge
of union monopoly and big labor in response to the merger, and the third section explains how AFL and CIO leaders counteracted this argument by differentiating themselves from other “big” entities of the postwar era, especially big business. The final section of the chapter considers the structural elements that the new AFL-CIO put into place and publicized to try to demonstrate its commitment to representing the public interest - and not just union members.

**Coming to Merger**

From the time of the split of the CIO from the AFL in 1935, commentators speculated on the likelihood of a reunification of the two labor federations. And for their part, AFL and CIO leaders engaged in on-again-off-again negotiations to broker a unity agreement over the course of the two decades the organizations remained separate. These “talks” were typically conducted through letters and telegrams with only the occasional in-person meeting. They were often tied to a particular crisis moment, such as World War II or the impending passage of Taft-Hartley, or to an area of shared interest, such as American labor’s representation on the international stage. Often, talks were not about merger, per se, but rather about shared interests and campaigns. Still, even in these cases AFL officials often insisted that their labor federation should absorb the CIO, leading to a breakdown in negotiations.

Unity talks or overtures to talks occurred in 1939 and 1940 at the request of President Roosevelt; in 1942 to discuss labor’s contribution to the war economy; in 1944 to discuss legislative unity; in 1947 to defeat anti-labor legislation; in 1949 to determine representation at the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU); in 1950 to discuss labor’s opponents; in 1952 to resume previous talks; and in 1953 to study the prevalence and outcomes
of raids. It was this latter set of talks under the direction of new AFL President Meany and new CIO President Reuther that led directly to the merger of the AFL and CIO in 1955.\footnote{For a more detailed account of talks between 1935 and 1955, see Philip Taft, The AF of L: from the Death of Gompers to the Merger (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 473-83.}

A committee of three AFL representatives and three CIO representatives compiled results from NLRB elections from 1951 and 1952, discovering that raids were, by and large, failures (Table 3-1). Union representation changed in only about two percent of cases in which elections resulted from raids.\footnote{Taft, The AF of L, 483. Meany cited the figure as one-half to one percent. See George Meany, speech before the New York State Federation Convention, July 19, 1954; George Meany Papers, Box 59, Fol. 41; GMMA. Raiding was also expensive for the unions involved. The Wall Street Journal reported an estimate of $500 spent for every member obtained in a raid. See Stephen K. Galpin, “Inter-Union Truce?” Wall Street Journal, June 2, 1953; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 21, Fol. 19; WSU. This seems to be a grossly inflated figure. Meany put the cost at somewhere between $10 and $40 a member. See Joseph Goulden, Meany: The Unchallenged Strongman of American Labor (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 194-5.} As a result, the committee recommended that the AFL and CIO commit to a no-raiding agreement. Despite opposition from representatives of the building and construction trades and from some CIO unions opposed to Reuther’s leadership and skeptical about AFL unions’ commitment to honoring the agreement, the no-raiding agreement was endorsed by both the AFL and CIO conventions in the fall of 1953. Meany and Reuther gave the document teeth by twisting arms to make sure that individual unions signed and complied with the agreement.

The no-raiding pact of 1953 set the stage for unity negotiations. In October 1954, with the pact producing impressive results, the AFL and CIO appointed committee members to agree to principles for a merger (see Table 3-2 for results of the no-raiding agreement). The committee composition showed the weight that each federation placed on the talks as well as the need to cement support from all quarters within the fast disintegrating CIO. From the AFL were Meany, Secretary-Treasurer William Schnitzler, and Harry Bates of the Bricklayers Union. The CIO committee was composed of Reuther, Secretary-Treasurer James B. Carey, and Reuther’s rival,
David J. McDonald of the Steelworkers. This committee of six generated and signed a merger agreement on behalf of their organizations in February 1955. The AFL and CIO conventions approved the merger agreement in December 1955, officially forming the AFL-CIO.

Why did labor unity come in 1955 and not before? Contemporary commentators most often pointed to the greatly weakened CIO in the wake of the organization’s fight against communists in its ranks between 1948 and 1950, and in the leadership struggle that followed the death of Philip Murray in 1952. Though the CIO reported an all-time high postwar membership rate in 1953, it fell significantly in the years following. With the government limiting the impact of collective bargaining agreements in industries engaged in wartime production during the Korean War, the CIO had already lost considerable clout.\(^ {13} \) At the same time, the AFL saw gains in membership every year from 1937 to 1955.\(^ {14} \)

Given the CIO’s difficulties, the *U.S. News and World Report* was not alone in concluding in early 1953 that, “The odds, as of now…seem to favor a collapse of the CIO.”\(^ {15} \) Industry groups agreed. In late 1952, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s *Labor Relations Letter* concluded that, the “AFL is nosing ahead of its jealous CIO rival,” and openly “wonder[ed] if the CIO can remain intact through a crisis it has been ill-prepared to weather.”\(^ {16} \) The historian Robert Zieger concludes that, with the CIO on life support, “Within the CIO, outbursts of hostility toward the AFL increasingly gave way to a sense of inevitability” about the need for

\(^{13}\) In November 1953, the CIO reported membership of 4.9 million, a postwar high. By 1954 and 1955, the CIO reported that it had lost one million of those members. However, these figures were probably inflated. It is likely that the drop in membership was considerably higher, according to Zieger and journalists at the time. Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO: 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 339. Even during the war years, when membership rates remained constant, the CIO lost clout. The Defense Production Act of 1950 held sway, limiting prices and wages, curtailing production, and, most importantly, placing union contracts under government approval. On the Defense Production Act, see Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 246-7; Zieger, *The CIO*, 295-6.

\(^{14}\) Taft, *The AF of L*, 450.


\(^{16}\) [no title], *Labor Relations Letter*, December 1952, No. 102; US Chamber of Commerce Papers, Series II, Box 4, 1952-3 Volume; Hagley.
merger. For his part, Meany grew concerned that a possible CIO disintegration would “be bad for labor” but also recognized an opportunity to gain the upper hand in merger negotiations with the CIO.

The infighting at the CIO following Murray’s death led to these appraisals of the imminent collapse of the organization. In defeating Allan Haywood, the CIO’s organizing director by a 52 to 48 margin, Reuther broke the UAW-USWA truce maintained by Murray. Personal animosities between McDonald and Reuther further fanned the flames. Reuther’s insistence that press accounts of tensions within the CIO had been manufactured by “newspaper men [who] obviously felt, ‘Here is a good story,’” underscored the fact that these internal divisions were well known.

But as much as Reuther was a lightning rod within the CIO, it was also his assumption of power – and the assumption of power by George Meany in the AFL – that enabled successful unity talks. The public respected Meany and Reuther’s predecessors, William Green and Philip

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17 See Zieger, The CIO, 360.
18 Meany, qtd. in Goulden, Meany, 186.
19 Zieger, The CIO, 334-7; Nelson Lichtenstein, The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 322-6; Kevin Boyle, The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 100-1. There was also a philosophical divide between Reuther’s Auto Workers and Murray’s Steelworkers. While the Steelworkers were more likely to go on strike for extended periods of time, the UAW signed long contracts with auto manufacturers. There were personal rivalries at play as well. David J. McDonald, Murray’s successor in the Steelworkers resented Reuther’s assumption of leadership in the CIO and rejected what he perceived as Reuther’s interest in socialistic policies. When McDonald lost to I.W. Abel in the 1965 election, Reuther stated that “when USW and UAW are marching arm in arm, there is no power that can halt the American labor movement,” a clear departure from his coolness to McDonald. Qtd. in Judith Stein, Running Steel, Running America: Race, Economic Policy and the Decline of Liberalism (Chapel Hill: University Stein, Running Steel, 93.of North Carolina Press, 1998), 93.
20 Walter P. Reuther, Proceedings of Meeting of the International Executive Board of the CIO, April 6, 1953, 59, 60; Periodicals, WHS. Over the years leading up to the merger, CIO leaders continued to counter public perception that merger meant that the AFL was taking over a weakened, failing and unstable CIO. In 1954, Joe Curran of the National Maritime Union cited reports that “we are going to be in the AF of L” – a contention that he lambasted as “not a fact.” “[T]he CIO goes into these unity meetings as the Congress of Industrial Organizations, a powerful self-sustained labor organization in America that has brought a great deal of security to the workers in the country and is not begging its way anywhere,” Curran told the convention delegates and the large press delegation in attendance. Joseph Curran, Proceedings of the CIO Sixteenth Constitutional Convention, December 6-10, 1954, 415; Periodicals, WHS.
Murray, respectively, citing them as their favorite labor leaders in postwar surveys. But Green and Murray had little use for one another or the organizations that each served.

For his part, Green undertook a “vindictive crusade” against the CIO fueled by his belief that the CIO supported radicalism and encouraged class conflict, according to Green’s biographer. In the immediate postwar years, the editor of the CIO News charged that Green delivered a “hysterical crescendo” of “attacks on the CIO” based on distrust of the personality of the CIO’s leadership rather than on substantive issues. Indeed, one top AFL official with Green’s ear even characterized Murray’s desire to discuss unity on legislative issues as a “Communist-inspired maneuver.” While Green claimed to support unity, his overtures, presuming that the CIO should “come back” into the Federation that it had left, were a non-starter for CIO leaders, especially Murray.

As someone who had been involved with the CIO from its founding, Murray was especially wary of engaging in unity talks on the older federation’s terms. Politics – the area of obvious collaboration between the two organizations in the immediate postwar era – was particularly fraught. As long as communist-controlled unions remained in the ranks of the CIO, Green forbid AFL affiliates from working with CIO unions on legislative issues, though this

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21 See, for example, “Fortune Survey Finds Public Increasingly Critical of Labor Unions,” October 31, 1946 press release commenting on November 1946 issue of Fortune Magazine; Len De Caux Collection, Box 6, Fol. 26; WSU.
23 Union News Service of the CIO, Vol. 9, No. 37, September 23, 1946, from “Looking Ahead” column by Len De Caux, 1; CIO PAC Papers, Box 13, Fol. 10; WSU. Green frequently chastised state federations and central trade council leaders for working with CIO officials on legislative matters at the local level. See, for example, Letter from William Green to JJ Guenther, President of Nebraska State Federation of Labor, January 27, 1947; and Letter from William Green to Peter Olson, Sec of Minneapolis Central Trade Union, February 24 1947; AFL Papers, Series XI, File C, Box 26, Fol. 4; WHS.
24 Letter from David Dubinsky to William Green, December 10, 1946; AFL Papers, Series XI, File C, Box 29, Fol. 5; WHS.
25 There is no complete biography of Philip Murray, though his attitude toward collaboration with the AFL – if not outright merger – is discussed in a number of works. For a biographical sketch, see Ronald Schatz, “Philip Murray and the Subordination of the Industrial Unions to the United States Government,” in Labor Leaders in America, ed. Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 234-57.
command was frequently ignored at the local level. Still, suffice it to say that Murray resented Green’s insistence on the superiority of the AFL.

Meany and Reuther represented a new generation of union leader, distinct from the “porkchoppers of the old school” who sat on the AFL Executive Board. They were further removed from both the personalities and substantive differences that had informed the original split between their two federations. Meany remembered that, unlike Green and Murray, “my contacts with the CIO in those years were not adversary contacts; they were contacts of cooperation” forged on the War Labor Board during World War II and through wage stabilization efforts during the Korean War. Neither did Meany intend to “ask [the CIO] to come back to the House of Labor like a group of wayward boys,” as Green had done.

To be sure, there were still enormous tensions between Reuther and Meany, but their differences were not insurmountable. Contemporary commentators also recognized the importance of new leadership. In 1951, Collier’s prophesied, “the final act of complete labor unity awaits only the retirement or passing of three onetime cronies, Green, Murray and [John L.] Lewis [of the Mine Workers]” and the “competitive civil war” in labor organizing that they

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28 George Meany, qtd. in Goulden, Meany, 182.
29 George Meany, qtd. in Robinson, George Meany and His Times, 163.
brought with them. With Green and Murray dead, and Lewis’ Mine Workers independent of
the AFL in the wake of Taft-Hartley’s passage, the path was paved for unity.  

The structure that Meany and Reuther adopted in pursuing unity also helped to facilitate
successful merger.  Meany and Reuther understood that a major factor contributing to distrust
between the AFL and CIO in the early 1950s was the prevalence of raiding between affiliates of
the labor federations.  At the same time, a desire to eliminate the expensive and largely
unsuccessful practice of raiding was a major reason that Meany and Reuther entered unity
negotiations in the first place.  Meany wrote to Reuther in early 1953, “there is not much hope of
obtaining any real harmony of functional relations as long as the
organizations continue to fight
one another in the organizational field.”

Their initial talks centered on eliminating this thorny issue of jurisdictional disputes,
ultimately leading to the implementation of the no-raiding agreement on a voluntary basis.

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30 Edwin A. Lahey, “The AFL Will Absorb the CIO When…,” Collier’s Magazine, September 1, 1951, 23; Len De
Caux Collection, Oversize Box B, Fol. 9; WSU.
31 To be sure, there remained tensions at all levels of the organizations, even after Meany and Reuther assumed the
presidencies of the AFL and CIO, respectively.  Older members of the boards of both organizations had long
memories and were still unwilling to trust opposing leadership.  Daniel J. Tobin, the 77 year-old leader of the
Teamsters union wrote to Meany in March 1953 that, “it is my opinion that there are certain leaders in the opposite
union who do not sincerely desire an agreement or understanding, or amalgamation.” Letter from Daniel J. Tobin to
George Meany, March 19, 1953; George Meany Papers, Box 27, Fol. 3; GMMA.  In 1954, 67 year-old Charles
MacGowan of the Boilermakers Union still expressed “skepticism of the good intentions of the CIO leaders to
effectuate a program of worthwhile unity.” Letter from Charles MacGowan to George Meany, November 23, 1954;
George Meany Papers, Box 62, Fol. 26; GMMA.

In the CIO there was significant resentment toward the prevalence of Teamsters’ raiding.  “Our largest
enemy is Dave Beck and his Teamsters,” declared a Brewery Workers delegate before the 1953 CIO Constitutional
Convention.  See Tom Rusch, Proceedings of the CIO Fifteenth Constitutional Convention, November 16-20, 1953,
366; Periodicals, WHS.  The Brewery Workers had actually gotten their start within the AFL, but had been expelled
from the organization in 1941, largely because no agreement on jurisdictional disputes with the Teamsters could be
reached.  See Taft, The AF of L, 461-5.  Witwer argues that the Teamsters under Tobin employed a certain non-
ideological flexibility in pursuing jurisdictional disputes like those with the Brewery Workers.  Witwer also shows
that AFL unions like the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and the Railway Clerks were subject to extensive raiding by
the Teamsters, especially under Beck.  Witwer quotes one union official as saying, “Dave will take anybody he can
get his hands on, then he’ll find some kind of jurisdiction for it.”  See Witwer, Corruption and Reform, 72-3, 136.
32 Letter from George Meany to Walter P. Reuther, January 21, 1953; George Meany Papers, Box 27, Fol. 3;
GMMA; See also CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 21, Fol. 15; WSU.
33 For a discussion of the no-raiding agreement, see Ziegler, The CIO, 360, 368.  Zieger calls the no-raid pact “the
first significant step toward eventual merger”.  See also, Taft, The AF of L, 483-5.  For discussion of earlier failed
attempts at a no-raiding pact between the CIO and the AFL, see Taft, The AF of L, 477-480.  Many unions initially
This initial effort was also vitally important in reassuring the famously independent unions of the AFL that their autonomy would be preserved in a new organization. It was only after the pact proved successful in reducing raiding that merger negotiations began in earnest. As Meany said at the time, without the approval of the no-raiding agreement, “it means the end of the unity talks with the CIO.”

Meany and Reuther and their allies recognized that the more efficient and organizationally strong unions resulting from the no-raiding agreement could produce the ultimate goal of merger – political strength. Far more than their predecessors, both Meany and Reuther were committed to advancing an expansive legislative agenda, if not a radical visioning of social democracy. By the mid-1950s, there was little substantive policy difference between the two organizations on issues as diverse as Social Security, housing, and labor law, though there were certainly differences in emphasis and on specific details, as well as in the culture of the organizations. For example, Reuther and other CIO leaders grew concerned that the AFL was not doing enough to advance civil rights legislation and eradicate racial discrimination in its ranks, and to eliminate corruption, though the AFL was on record as supporting both positions, at

resisted signing the agreement and the Carpenters broke with the AFL on the issue, though they quickly rejoined the AFL. Seeing the results of competition between AFL and CIO unions on the ground, union members viewed no-raiding as an unachievable goal, and the proposition of unity, itself, as a sellout to the opposing federation.

Even those unions that agreed to sign were cautious. The head of the Furniture Workers Union wrote to Reuther “to underline a very important contingency” in his organization’s agreement to no-raiding, citing the document’s ineffectiveness unless the Carpenters, Teamsters and Upholsterers of the AFL agreed to sign as well. These qualms continued, even after most of the holdouts had decided to sign onto the no-raiding pact. Letter from Morris Pizer to Walter P. Reuther, December 4, 1953; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 21, Fol. 19; WSU.

34 Meany, qtd. in Goulden, *Meany*, 197.

35 This difference in emphasis was particularly true in three of the “honored principles” that Reuther identified as sacred in merger negotiations: organizing the unorganized, eliminating racial discrimination, and ending racketeering. Corruption and racism were not absent from CIO-affiliated unions but, in general, the centralization of the organization, the ability of the parent body to issue expulsions without too much difficulty, the communist purges, and the organization’s forceful resolutions on both matters minimized both concerns within the CIO. In cases where corruption or racism did arise, the CIO’s leadership was quick to take action. For example, when it was discovered that a number of union-facilitated employee welfare funds in New York were mismanaged and/or had been pilfered by union officials, the CIO launched an investigation and called for legislation to complement the self-regulation the CIO was already doing. See “Report of CIO Standing Committee on Ethical Practices with Proposed ‘Employee Welfare Plan Disclosure Act,’” May 7, 1955; NAM Papers, Series I, Box 97, Org: AFL-CIO Fol.; Hagley.
least rhetorically. Meany remembered that Reuther “was making speeches attacking the AFL as having a lot of corrupt unions,” trying to save face with CIO affiliate leaders who believed that the AFL had the upper hand. The fact that the CIO still promoted marches and singing while the AFL generally eschewed such demonstrations of worker solidarity created further tensions.

Apart from substantive and cultural differences, the national federations sometimes promoted animosity between the labor organizations in the years leading up to the merger. In June 1952, the national newsmagazine of the AFL ran a photograph of the Minnesota federation’s public relations campaign, in which the majority of poster space was devoted to publicity campaigns designed for “fighting the CIO raiders.” Such public rhetoric made merger more difficult, even with Meany and Reuther at the helms of the AFL and CIO, respectively, and even with Meany and Reuther’s shared commitment to political action.

Negotiating the structure and personnel for a merged political unit in the new AFL-CIO was also made more difficult because the political function of the new organization was so

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36 Though the internal and external civil rights question garnered little attention in the mainstream press, it was of deep concern to CIO negotiators. In an analysis of press reaction to the merger, the head of public relations at the CIO wrote to Walter P. Reuther in March 1955: “Almost no views are expressed on [discrimination] except in the Negro press. Negro papers compare the far better record of the CIO with the AFL and hope that that will be reflected in the new merged group.” See Henry Fleisher, Memo to Walter P. Reuther, “RE: Editorial Reaction to Labor Unity,” March 7, 1955; Walter P. Reuther’s Papers, Box 289, Fol. 3; WSU. Furthermore, while Meany and other top leaders in the AFL continued to voice their opposition to racial discrimination, four AFL unions specifically excluded African Americans. Seven others – including the influential Electrical Workers and Plumbers – “refus[ed] to admit Negroes by tacit consent,” and two unions – including the giant Carpenters – tolerated discrimination by locals. Memo from Bill Oliver to Walter P. Reuther, February 2, 1955; Walter P. Reuther’s Papers, Box 299, Fol. 2; WSU.

37 Meany, qtd. in Robinson, George Meany and His Times, 169. In the privacy of CIO Executive Board meetings, Reuther expressed considerable alarm about union corruption, which “frightened [him] more than anything else” because it reflected poorly on the entirety of the labor movement, making political work and organizing more difficult. Though the AFL had, after experiencing considerable pressure from legislators, the press, and public opinion, expelled the corrupt and violent Longshoremen in 1953, Reuther feared that such criminal elements were not unique to the expelled union. Though its national leadership may have deplored such behaviors, the AFL could “conveniently run away from their basic responsibilities by hiding behind the autonomous rights,” Reuther argued. Walter P. Reuther, speech before the CIO Executive Board, December 1, 1954; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 21, Fol. 21; WSU.

38 Lichtenstein, State of the Union, 148.

39 See American Federationist, June 1952, 29.
important to both Meany and Reuther. And both leaders recognized that, with increased political clout, the new organization would have to temper critics who accused it of turning into a union monopoly that sponsored a ghost government.

**Accusations of Union Monopoly and Ghost Government**

The new labor federation was going to be big - that much was clear to merger observers. A *US News and World Report*’s December 1955 headline questioned “How big can labor unions get?,” echoing an implicit concern that big was not better when it came to labor unions. Despite such concerns, most mainstream news outlets did not share industry groups’ alarmist cries about the dangers of a new, enlarged labor federation. Most agreed with *Newsweek*’s contention that the AFL-CIO was “unlikely to become an all-out labor monopoly in the foreseeable future.” Even the *Wall Street Journal* emphasized that a combined AFL-CIO “will not always speak with one voice,” as affiliates’ positions would be protected within the federation structure. As the historian Nelson Lichtenstein shows, a cadre of liberal intellectuals and academics were influential in arguing for the importance of bigness in equalizing the power of business and labor, therefore reducing labor to an interest group, rather than a transformative force for social change – a theme the press picked up. But the very fact that commentators considered the question of labor monopoly at all pointed to the success of industry groups’ public relations war against big labor.

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41 “Bigger Big Labor: Watch Merged Unions, Politically and Economically,” *Newsweek*, December 5, 1955, 25; John A. Fitch Papers, Box 32, Fol. 16; WHS.
43 Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, ch. 4.
The theme of labor monopoly appeared repeatedly in the Congressional testimony, internal publications, public statements, and literature issued by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce related to the merger. A cadre of business-friendly economists from universities and think tanks produced work to lend credibility to industry groups’ arguments, both implicitly and explicitly countering the claims made by liberal commentators like Daniel Bell, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Clark Kerr. Among the most prolific of these academics was Leo Wolman, a Columbia University economist, whose name also appeared on the NAM payroll as director of NAM’s Study Group on Labor Monopoly – a group whose very name evoked the idea of a think tank, rather than publicity and propaganda.

NAM staffers clearly believed that Wolman’s credentials as an Ivy League professor uniquely qualified him to deploy the same arguments of labor monopoly, power, and inherent irresponsibility that their own leadership also voiced at every opportunity. NAM staff delighted in the fact that one Wolman address before a NAM convention had been “hailed as a brilliant and clear revelation of union tactics in the abuse of monopoly power,” and made plans to rush it into publication as a stand-alone NAM pamphlet. In numerous media appearances, Wolman was introduced as an impartial expert, seemingly unconnected with business interests, and his

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45 For a description of the development of the economic union monopoly argument from the vantage point of the 1950s, see Gladys W. Gruenberg, “Union Monopoly?” Social Order, March 1958, 117-122; John A. Fitch Papers, Box 31, Fol. 8; WHS. Phillips-Fein and Fones-Wolf both detail how industry groups and individual corporations relied upon academic experts to substantiate their claims – or, in the case of GE, trained GE’s managers to become “thought leaders” in their own right. See Kim Phillips-Fein, Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 101-2; and Fones-Wolf, Selling Free Enterprise, ch. 6. Lichtenstein describes the arguments of liberal intellectuals promoting industrial pluralism in the 1950s in State of the Union, ch. 4.

On Wolman, see “NAM Employee Relations Division’s 1955 Year-End Review”; NAM Papers, Series VII, Box 126, IRD Staff Activity Reports, 1955-1957 Fol.; Hagley; and “Industrial Relations Division Highlights, November 1955 to April 1956”; NAM Papers, Series I, Box 109, 1956 Labor Materials Fol.; Hagley. For an example of how the news media incorporated Wolman’s comments, see “Merging of CIO and AFL,” editorial, Des Moines Register, February 11, 1955, which identified Wolman as “an economist and recognized authority on labor relations.”
Columbia affiliation was always prominently displayed in NAM-distributed pamphlets he authored on union monopoly. Indeed, newspaper articles and editorials on the AFL-CIO merger often cited Wolman as an expert, no doubt drawing on NAM-supplied press releases, pamphlets, fact-sheets, and conference proceedings that cited Wolman as an authority.

Stories from disgruntled union members and labor officials helped add color and detail to NAM and Chamber charges. These stories lent legitimacy to the idea that “compulsory unionism” threatened the freedoms of real individuals who disagreed with union policy and political positions or who wished not to be represented by a union at all. NAM used testimony from union supporters who had changed their tune to demonstrate that unions were narrow special interest groups representing the views of their leaders, rather than the members and public they purported to serve. In particular, NAM publicized the work of the lawyer Donald Richberg, a key architect of New Deal labor policy turned conservative commentator, in the late 1940s and 1950s. In 1957, Richberg authored a book that summed up his later thinking on unions and their potential for abuse. The merger did not produce this line of argumentation, but it intensified the frequency, urgency and focus of the attack.

46 In his 1948 study of labor leaders, the sociologist C. Wright Mills showed that labor officials regarded their strength as stemming from people, while they viewed business’ control of money as that sector’s primary strength. This public support for labor’s positions translated to more votes. Underlying this view was the belief that labor represented the viewpoints of its members and the general working public when it came to both collective bargaining and politics. The NAM challenged this belief through the use of specific examples of union members and leaders who became disillusioned with union activities. See Mills, New Men of Power, 136-7.


48 The idea of labor monopoly had a long history in business and legal circles. The 1908 Danbury Hatters’ Supreme Court case – in which the Hatters were ruled to be in violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act – established the principle that labor unions could be legally culpable as trusts, colluding in matters such as organized boycotts of goods produced with non-union labor. A number of legislative acts during the Progressive and New Deal eras attempted formally to define unions as outside the parameters of anti-trust rules. The Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914 specifically excluded labor unions from consideration as trusts, allowing union actions – such as strikes, boycotts and pickets – that had been subject to anti-trust accusations. The Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932 disallowed the use of federal court injunctions in nonviolent labor protests. The 1935 National Labor Relations Act granted additional protections for collective bargaining and employee association, further eroding the classification of union activity as monopolistic, as defined in the Danbury Hatters’ case nearly three decades earlier.
NAM’s tactics of using academics, intellectuals, and disgruntled union members to legitimize their views to the public took a page directly from the CIO’s playbook. The CIO often commissioned or publicized reports authored by sympathetic academics – notably the 1946 Nathan Report on price and wage policies – and noted the academic credentials of key members of its education and research staff in press releases. The flow of personnel from the CIO national staff to academia – notably Kermit Eby from the education group to the University of Chicago – also helped to lend credibility to CIO policy perspectives from supposedly outside, objective experts. And like NAM, the CIO also frequently used stories of how unions had made a difference in the lives of individuals to lend support to their policies, as we have seen in the case of the campaign against Taft-Hartley.

While liberal intellectuals promoting industrial pluralism in the early 1950s were important in shaping press and public attitudes toward organized labor in general and the merger in particular, the AFL and the AFL-CIO did not cite such thinkers directly. As journalists, sometime critics of the labor movement, and established public figures in their own right, individuals such as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. were less inclined to tow the party line and serve as reliable labor spokesmen. Furthermore, the very philosophy of pluralism identified a very narrow area of labor activity – projects that would produce a better living standard. As such, the mobilization of intellectuals, workers, and other groups in coalition smacked of the very revolution that such thinkers rejected. That said, even without the explicit use of intellectuals by

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The passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 altered the legal designation of organized labor in relationship to anti-trust legislation. Taft-Hartley did not explicitly subject organized labor to prosecution under the nation’s anti-trust laws, but it did prohibit the closed shop, secondary boycotts, and jurisdictional strikes. In making these amendments to the NLRA, Taft-Hartley began the process of putting labor within categories developed for business, including that of monopoly. In effect, the Act suggested that union-negotiated contracts were antithetical to the public interest because they violated individual freedoms and subjected entire industries to one set of procedures and wage dictates. This was monopoly, pure and simple.
the labor movement, pluralism certainly gave shape to widespread acceptance of the AFL-CIO merger.

Without such support from the press and intellectuals on their side, the Chamber and NAM increased their attacks on labor bigness. They employed public relations professionals and used a wide variety of media to connect the merger with other legislative priorities. NAM officials recognized the importance of semantics in making an appeal to the public, taking great care to use language that would resonate with the public. “‘Great public concern’ revolves around the fear of ‘too much power in unions’ rather than the charge of ‘labor monopoly’ as such,” explained NAM’s public relations director. 49

The Chamber and NAM tried to capitalize on the merger explicitly in making these points. For example, in 1956, when NAM undertook a campaign to eliminate “compulsory unionism,” strategists argued that the effort was particularly timely because “The merger of AFL-CIO projected the Bigness aspect to the public in a highly dramatic and spectacular way.” With public opinion polls showing that people experienced “more worry about Bigness in Labor than Bigness in Government or Business,” NAM staff expected the nation to be particularly receptive to its message of the necessity of so-called right-to-work legislation. 50

Industry groups’ attacks on the merger, big labor, and the prospect of union monopoly were fourfold. First, business groups argued that there was an inherent danger of a private group becoming so big as to challenge the democratic processes of the United States. NAM surrogates characterized organized labor as “the most powerful private group in this country” and worried

50 “1956 Public Relations Program for NAM Campaign Against Labor Monopoly Abuses,” [no date]; NAM Papers, Series V, Box 62A, Union Monopoly and Antitrust – Labor Folder; Hagley.
that such a concentrated power without regard for the public interest could compromise the
United States’ position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{51}

Second, NAM and the Chamber contended that big labor had the potential to exercise its
monopoly power to shut down industries, posing a risk to national security and to the consumer.
This argument served a dual purpose of delegitimizing industry-wide bargaining, a plank of
NAM’s political platform for many years, as shown earlier in its campaign in support of Taft-
Hartley.

Third, business federations challenged the democratic qualifications of labor leaders,
arguing that bigness enabled union corruption and thwarted union democracy. On the eve of the
AFL-CIO merger, one NAM surrogate argued that, without checks, unions would expand their
“menace to the public welfare.” Indeed, the threat was so serious, the surrogate argued, that
unions endangered “our constitutional form of government and our constitutional liberties.”\textsuperscript{52}

Unions also challenged the democratic freedom of members. A typical NAM pamphlet quoted
union members – many of them “forced” into an affiliation which they did not desire and which
did not benefit them – about how they felt about the unions that supposedly helped them and
their families, along with the rest of the nation.

And finally, business groups asserted that labor bigness could and did result in violence
in local communities. References to particularly violent strike activity also helped to bring home
the point that union members and their communities were often at the mercy of powerful labor
leaders who did not speak for them. The bloody United Auto Workers (UAW)-initiated Kohler

\textsuperscript{51} Leo Wolman in transcript of “It’s YOUR Business!,” NAM radio program, January 28, 1956; NAM Papers,
Series I, Box 109, 1956 Labor Materials Fol.; Hagley.
\textsuperscript{52} Donald R. Richberg, “How Shall We Deal with Labor Union Monopolies?,” speech before the Economic Club of
Detroit, September 26, 1955; NAM Papers, Series VII, Box 128, Employment Relations Division – General, July-
December 1955 Folder; Hagley.
and Perfect Circle strikes of the mid-1950s provided fuel for the NAM attack. Using quotations from local members of the working class, NAM pamphlets painted the previously unsullied UAW as a bastion of irresponsibility, all the more dangerous because of its bigness.

Even in cases in which labor leaders represented their members, they did not speak for the public interest, business groups argued. For example, NAM and Chamber of Commerce leaders frequently cited John L. Lewis’ call for a three-day work week for his Mine Workers as a particularly egregious example of labor leaders’ disregard for the public interest. “[N]o businessman has the coercive power over other people that even a small-time labor leader has,” a typical U.S. Chamber of Commerce statement of 1954 argued. In opposing anti-trust laws, labor leaders put themselves above the law, went the argument. The arrogance of such a belief separated labor leaders from responsible business leaders who put the community interest first.

Together, these arguments painted a portrait of the corrupting influence of the merger in particular, and organized labor in general, on everyday citizens’ lives. This condemnation of labor’s bigness rested on the assumption that unions were inherently undemocratic and were opposed to the American values exemplified by the hard-working small business owners comprising the membership rolls of NAM and the Chamber. NAM officials emphasized that the vast majority of their own members were not part of big business and opposed monopoly in any sector. In a 1953 radio broadcast, Charles Sligh, NAM’s president and himself the head of a small Michigan furniture company (and a champion water skier), asserted that “NAM…is

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54 See, for example, Thomas R. Reid, Statement before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee, February 22, 1950; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Papers, Series II, Box 6, Presentations to Congress, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, 1950 Volume; Hagley.


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against any monopoly in business.”⁵⁶ NAM curricula for grade school students showed the many constraints on small businesses faced by a high school entrepreneur. These included high labor costs.⁵⁷

Making this point about their own members was particularly important for NAM and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in light of the business merger wave that the country experienced in the early 1950s - a phenomenon that industry groups tried to downplay in their literature and in public statements. Ignoring the size of corporate mergers and the industries involved, the Chamber’s appeal was typical. A newsletter from that organization contended that if one examined Federal Trade Commission data, it would make “the reader wonder why the hysteria about mergers arose.” The so-called merger “surge” actually represented “less than half of [the number of mergers in] the late ‘20s.”⁵⁸ According to industry groups, the problems of “concentration” and “competition” were highlighted not by the business conglomerations of the 1950s, but rather by “the widespread apprehension which developed over the implications of the merger between the AFL and the CIO into one giant labor organization.” Labor’s bigness deserved investigation as a violation of anti-trust law just as much as – if not more than – any newly merged corporation.⁵⁹

In fact, the labor monopoly was inherently different from the business monopoly, NAM and Chamber officials argued in the years leading up to the merger. Whereas the public held “veto power” over business conglomerations by deciding if and what to buy, no such mechanism

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⁵⁶ Charles Sligh, radio interview on KJR Seattle, April 24, 1953; NAM Papers, Series VI, Box 122, Sligh Speeches – Mimio – 7/1953 Fol.; Hagley.
⁵⁷ M.R. Brunstetter, PhD, “Teacher’s Guide for the Film ‘Three to be Served,’” NAM Papers, Series XVI, Box 224, Three to Two Fol.; Hagley.
⁵⁸ “More Mergers?”, Economic Intelligence, published by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, No. 86, September 1955; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Papers, Series II, Box 4, Department Newsletters, 1954-1955 Volume; Hagley.
⁵⁹ “Mergers,” 1957, 24 page booklet, 1; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Papers, Series II, Box 22, Chamber of Commerce Publications 1957 – L to Z Volume; Hagley.
existed for the public to curtail union bigness.\textsuperscript{60} As representatives of such businesses, the
policies of industry groups on labor questions should not be considered “anti-labor, but rather
pro-public.”\textsuperscript{61}

Indeed, even profits were a measure of the commitment that business leaders had to the
public. For example, in a 1955 booklet entitled, “So the People May Prosper,” NAM writers
argued that profits were another kind of capital flow from the consumer back into the economy.
Corporate profits spurred further production, encouraging greater employment levels and lower
production costs that were then fed back to the consumer in the form of lower prices.\textsuperscript{62}

But the biggest differentiation that NAM and the Chamber made between business and
labor was the relationship that each had with the government and the political power that each
wielded. NAM and, to a lesser extent, the Chamber, used the AFL-CIO merger to raise the
specter of intensified political involvement by organized labor – an involvement that they
painted as outside of both the public interest and the interest of union members. Privately, NAM
and Chamber officials hoped that smearing labor’s political aims would pave the way for
business success in advancing its legislative agenda.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{60} Herman W. Steinkraus, “Measuring Monopoly: A New Approach – A Statement of National Chamber Policy on
Concentration of Economic Power,” before the House Judiciary Subcommittee, November 21, 1949; U.S. Chamber
of Commerce Papers, Series II, Box 18, Chamber of Commerce Publications 1949 – A to O Volume; Hagley.
\textsuperscript{61} Thomas R. Reid, Statement before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee, February 22, 1950; U.S. Chamber
of Commerce Papers, Series II, Box 6, Presentations to Congress, 81\textsuperscript{st} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, 1950 Volume; Hagley.
\textsuperscript{62} “So the People May Prosper,” NAM booklet, 1955; NAM Papers, Series VI, Box 122, GAW Conference – New
\textsuperscript{63} NAM publicized five labor legislative objectives of its own in the first few months of 1956: elimination of the
closed shop, eradication of “coercion” by unions through violence or other means, an end to “restrictive” union
practices like featherbedding, elimination of union control of the labor force in certain industries, and a complete
prohibition on the use of union monies for political purposes. Henry G. Riter, “Employee Relations – Rights and
Wrongs,” speech before the Industrial Management Club of Bayonne, New Jersey, March 20, 1956; NAM Papers,
Series VII, Box 128, Industrial Relations Division – General – January to May 1956 Fol.; Hagley. Many historians
have made this argument that business’ efforts to discredit unions was tied to a larger interest in pursuing tangible
collective bargaining outcomes (or to eliminating unions altogether). See, for example, Fones-Wolf, \textit{Selling Free
Enterprise}; Howell J. Harris, \textit{The Right to Manage: Industrial Relations Policies of American Business in the 1940s}
(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); and Phillips-Fein, \textit{Invisible Hands}. 

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Industry groups focused on labor’s plan to consolidate the AFL’s Labor’s League of Political Education (LLPE) and the CIO Political Action Committee (PAC) into COPE (Committee on Political Education), a single, powerful Washington lobby force – combining the financial resources of groups that the Republican Party claimed contributed over $400,000 each during the previous election cycle. The GOP believed that this amount could not possibly have come from voluntary contributions alone, in violation of the Taft-Hartley law of 1947.

Industry group literature focused on how this new organization would presume to speak for the 16 million members of AFL-CIO affiliated unions and their families, comprising a total of 40 or 50 million voters, many of whom did not agree with the positions of the labor bosses that controlled COPE funds. Union members were going to have to “cope with COPE…whether they like[d] it or not.” Union arm-twisting to assure a one-dollar COPE contribution from each union member would see to that, argued NAM officers. NAM officials linked the merger to unions’ creation of a “ghost government” with “a handful of men, not elected, not authorized by the American people [able to] pull strings behind the scenes to direct the destinies of the nation.”

Using the remarks of AFL and CIO leaders against them, industry groups contended that the merger threatened the nation’s two-party political system. Few people believed that the

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65 Staff of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, “Labor Union Political Expenditure,” November 1955, 3; John A. Fitch Papers, Box 31, Fol. 14; WHS.


AFL-CIO intended to form a third party. But in giving serious consideration on air and in literature to the possibility that the new, powerful AFL-CIO might launch a progressive labor party – even if the idea was then discounted as a real possibility – or that it would serve as an auxiliary to the Democratic Party, industry groups furthered the idea that organized labor possessed power out of proportion to its membership rolls and that this power was being used for ends detrimental to the American public and way of life.

NAM leaders repeated statistics indicating that two-thirds of union members believed “it to be improper for a union to support the Democratic party in a national election and… opposed to the idea of a so-called ‘labor party’” and that half of polled union members stated that their unions should refrain from participating in partisan politics. Conservative politicians also voiced this sentiment. Writing five years after the merger, Arizona Republican Senator Barry Goldwater summed up this perspective, questioning, “Is it morally permissible to take the money of a Republican union member, for example, and spend it on behalf of a Democrat?” This idea that union leadership was out of step with its own members furthered the idea that a powerful labor political interest was inherently undemocratic, and should be regulated by the state.

AFL and CIO leaders rebutted such accusations by industry groups aggressively. The elimination of unions’ exemption from anti-trust laws did not seem likely, but labor leaders recognized that a failure to combat NAM and Chamber depictions of union power unresponsive to member opinion and the public interest could jeopardize both their organizing and political

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68 For a denial that labor would form a third party, see Henry G. Riter III (president of NAM) on “Tex and Jinx” program on WRCA-Radio (NY local NBC station), March 27, 1956; NAM Papers, Series XII, Box 196, NAM Presidents Addresses Fol.; Hagley.
69 Cola G. Parker, speech before the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco, March 30, 1956; NAM Papers, Series VII, Box 128, Industrial Relations Division – General – January to May 1956 Folder; Hagley. See also, Cola G. Parker, “The Shape of Things to Come in Employee Relations,” speech before the 28th NAM Institute on Industrial Relations, March 19 1956; NAM papers, Series VII, Box 139, Union Monopoly Power 1956 Fol; Hagley.
objectives in the long-term. In doing so, they did not dispute the notion of “big labor” so much as they argued that “big labor” was good for the public.

Defending Big Labor

Recognizing the threat posed by business attacks, labor leaders mounted a strong defense of the importance of big labor to the public in the lead-up to and immediate aftermath of the merger. Labor’s efforts were far less coordinated than the NAM and Chamber campaigns and did not emanate from a central public relations unit, though the Research and Public Relations Departments of the merged organization did release literature to support leaders’ positions.

Instead, Meany and Reuther served as spokesmen for the AFL-CIO offensive, leveraging their responsible stewardship of the AFL and CIO, respectively, to counteract attacks on union leadership. The AFL-CIO would embrace a similar strategy during the racketeering hearings of the late 1950s. Industrial pluralism suggested that responsible rule by elites was a natural and positive outgrowth of big labor and an important step toward the realization of labor as a special interest group promoting industrial peace. The political scientist Robert Dahl’s characterization of “polyarchy” to describe American democracy in the 1950s showed how many individual leaders representing many groups negotiate and rule together.\(^{71}\) In this context, the use of Meany and Reuther as carriers of labor’s appeal to the public made enormous sense.

Meany and Reuther’s defense of big labor rested on five primary arguments. First, they argued that mere bigness did not constitute monopoly. Second, they asserted that big labor was fundamentally different than big business; it represented the public interest against an entrenched business interest. Third, the AFL-CIO campaign promoted the notion that bigger labor would produce industrial peace, providing benefit to the consumer. Fourth, Meany and Reuther

downplayed the political reach of the new organization, while also emphasizing the benefit to the public of labor’s legislative agenda. And finally, labor leaders stressed that the structure of the new organization would prevent the excesses of which big labor was accused by industry groups.

From the beginning, those involved in merger negotiations grew concerned about accusations of monopoly, even though they knew that there was little chance that Congress would amend anti-trust regulations to end exemptions for labor unions. Indeed, one of the first publications produced by the newly formed AFL-CIO was a pamphlet entitled, “The ‘Labor Monopoly’ Myth.” In it, the Research Department condemned the “fear-ridden voices” that viewed the merger of the two labor federations as an unrestrained “‘monopolistic power’ which threatens to destroy the economic fabric of the nation.” Instead, the booklet explained that a federation was not a union capable of negotiating collective bargaining agreements, thereby rendering the monopoly labor charge a myth.72 The Research Department made plans to distribute the pamphlet to some 40,000 community leaders, public libraries, and members of the press in an effort to counteract the literature that the NAM had been circulating on the issue.73

The argument against labor’s inclusion as monopoly went further than merely pointing to the AFL-CIO’s role and structure. It also hinged on downplaying the numeric strength of the labor movement. Meany and Reuther posited that AFL-CIO affiliated unions did not claim a large enough percentage of the working population as members in order to be understood as a

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72 “The ‘Labor Monopoly’ Myth,” in *Labor’s Economic Review*, AFL-CIO, Vol. 1, No. 2, February 1956, 13; Katherine Ellickson Papers, Box 47, Fol. 1; WSU. See also Letter from George Meany to pamphlet recipients, n.d.; George Meany Papers, Box 38, Fol. 6; GMMA.

73 Letter from Stanley H. Ruttenberg to George Meany, May 21, 1956; George Meany Papers, Box 38, Fol. 6; GMMA. For their part, industry groups like NAM launched a five-part program to challenge labor monopoly. A key piece of this effort involved the distribution of literature intended for employers, women’s organizations, farm groups, educators, politicians, and thought leaders. See Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*, 258-61. For a treatment of how conservative business leaders shaped the right-to-work movement in the wake of the merger, see Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, 107. Leaders at companies like Chase Manhattan Bank and the Prudential Insurance Company framed right-to-work legislation as necessary to combat labor monopoly and level the playing field, spearheading local campaigns in the western states in the late 1950s.
monopoly. Independent unions like the railroad brotherhoods represented a significant number of workers and a majority of workers were not represented by unions at all, union leaders argued.74 Labor columnist Victor Riesel cited the influence of these independent unions, “many of which are powerful and many of which have multi-million dollar treasuries.” If united, these “independents” could “rival ‘Big Labor,’” Riesel claimed.75 Thus, despite the fact that the new AFL-CIO’s affiliated unions would claim more members than any other labor federation in the nation’s history, its 25 percent share of the labor market was still a minority stake.76

Furthermore, labor leaders argued that the laws of monopoly could not reasonably be applied to unions, which was a market composed of people, not goods. This was not an argument unique to the merger negotiations. By the early 1950s, UAW public relations staff made this point repeatedly in correspondence with letter writers who accused the Auto Workers, in particular, and the CIO, in general, of constituting labor monopolies. “[W]e do not believe that labor, which is done by people, is a commodity to be classed by goods,” a typical response read. As “voluntary organizations… ruled by majority vote of their membership,” labor unions

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74 This argument was frequently dismissed in the press. For example, the New York Times printed a graph showing the independents as together having some two million members, as compared with around ten million in the AFL and about five million in the CIO. The independent share of unionism since the turn of the twentieth century had never been substantial, at most constituting about a third of overall union membership half a century before the merger. Furthermore, the Times’ graph showed that the five largest unions in the nation were affiliated with either the AFL or the CIO, not with independent unions. “Labor Union Membership Since 1900,” graph in the New York Times, February 13, 1955; UAW Research Department Papers, Part I, Box 2, Fol. 6; WSU. There were also persistent rumors that independents like the railroad brotherhoods might join merger negotiations or that disgruntled unions like the Teamsters or the Steelworkers might exit the coalition and join independents like John Lewis’ Mine Workers. Despite being dismissed as “complete nonsense” by Meany, this supposed “power play” came to nothing, but received wide coverage. George Meany, “Meet the Press,” television interview, September 5, 1954; George Meany Papers, Box 59, Fol. 45; GMMA. Joseph A. Loftus, “CIO Goes Ahead with No-Raid Pact,” New York Times, May 11 1954; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 23, Fol. 4; WSU.


76 For example, in response to a charge that organized labor was “the new leviathan,” the chaplain and former AFL and CIO staff member David Burgess queried “how the new merged federation comprising less than one-fourth of the total labor force – 15 million out of 63 million – can properly be defined as an economic monopoly.” David Burgess, “In Defense of Labor’s Merger,” Christian Century, November 9, 1955, 1299-1301; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 54, Fol. 4; WSU.
exercised far less control over members than organizations like the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association.\textsuperscript{77} 

AFL and CIO leaders raised such points when confronted with legislation that would place organized labor under the anti-trust legislation designed to regulate big business.\textsuperscript{78} Indeed, in 1947, with anti-labor legislative proposals not yet consolidated under Taft-Hartley, the AFL’s newsmagazine stressed the difference between labor and commodity in its discussion of legal attacks on industry-wide bargaining.\textsuperscript{79} AFL President William Green also emphasized this difference in Congressional testimony in the winter of 1947, and again, when Congress began discussions of applications of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act to organized labor in 1950.\textsuperscript{80}

By the mid-1950s, all but a handful of conservatives had abandoned attempts to overturn anti-trust exemptions for labor unions.\textsuperscript{81} Congressional committees held hearings on the topic, but few commentators expected proposed legislation to advance. Hearings initiated by Attorney General Herbert Browning, Jr. in 1954 examined the Justice Department’s anti-trust activities more generally, but did not seek to restrict unions significantly. Some conservatives feared that

\textsuperscript{77} Letter from Frank Winn to Lewis A. Wald, April 16, 1952; UAW Public Relations Department Papers, Box 24, Walter Reuther Correspondence 1952 Fol. 3; WSU. The American Medical Association came in for particular criticism by labor leaders, both on the topic of monopoly and for the policies pursued by the organization. See, for example Roof, \textit{American Labor}, 69-72 for a discussion of the AMA’s objection to the labor-liberal plan for national health insurance during the Fair Deal.

\textsuperscript{78} Arthur Goldberg characterized “[t]he drive of business groups to impose anti-trust regulations on labor unions” as a “‘throwback to discredited economic thinking’ and a revived attempt to treat labor as a ‘commodity,’” in June 1955, according to the \textit{CIO News}. See “Applications of Monopoly Laws to Unions Assailed by Goldberg,” \textit{CIO News}, June 20 1955; Periodicals, WSU.

\textsuperscript{79} See “The AF of L’s Position on Anti-Labor Proposals,” \textit{American Federationist}, March 1947, 5; Periodicals, WHS.

\textsuperscript{80} William Green, testimony before the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 80\textsuperscript{th} Congress, first session, February 18, 1947; American Federation of Labor Papers, Series VIII, File A, Box 24, George Meany Fol.; WHS. See also, William Green, testimony before a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, hearing on S. 2912, exact date in 1950 unclear; American Federation of Labor Papers, Series XI, File E, Box 16, Fol. 2; WHS.

\textsuperscript{81} An exception was the ever-principled Arizona Republican Senator Barry Goldwater. In his 1960 work, \textit{The Conscience of a Conservative}, he detailed the importance of the Sherman Act and other anti-trust laws in eliminating singular company control over particular industries and noted, “These laws, however, have never been applied to labor unions. And I am at a loss to understand why. If it is wrong for a single corporation to dictate prices throughout an entire industry, it is also wrong for a single union—or, as is the actual case, a small number of union leaders—to dictate wages and terms of employment throughout an entire industry.” Goldwater, \textit{Conscience of a Conservative}, 51.
by raising the issue of monopoly, they would invite further limits on the growth of business. In addition, like some liberals, many conservatives had come to embrace growth in all sectors – including government – as important to the nation’s strength in the world and improving quality of life. But despite the fact that there were few legislative proposals for anti-trust rules to apply to unions, industry groups and news outlets – many of the latter the result of merged organizations themselves – promoted the view that unions controlled particular industries and were able to affect consumers negatively through their insistence on higher wages and other unreasonable concessions.

In response to this charge, labor made both a legal-economic case and a moral case to differentiate labor from commodities and to argue that the term “monopoly” could not reasonably be applied to the former. The CIO’s General Counsel Arthur Goldberg repeated the Clayton Anti-Trust Act’s declaration that “labor of a human being is not a commodity” in appearances before Congressional committees in the lead-up to the merger, and labor federation literature also reprinted this statement from the 1914 legislation.\(^82\) The Economic Review of the newly merged AFL-CIO visually illustrated this distinction in the winter of 1956.\(^83\) It was absurd to think that a union member – or a person, for that matter – could “store his services while waiting for a better offer,” could possibly “know his true market value,” “ship his services from place to place,” or operate effectively in a market where demand typically exceeded supply, went the argument. People were not goods. Treating them as such violated fundamental freedoms as well as the law.

Labor leaders also made a moral distinction between the goods produced and traded by business and the workers represented by unions. In late 1954, with merger negotiations

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\(^83\) Labor’s Economic Review, February 1956, 13 [front]; Katherine Ellickson Papers, Box 47, Fol. 1; WSU.
underway, Goldberg angrily attacked an Attorney General investigation of anti-trust exemptions for labor. Goldberg argued that regarding labor as a commodity akin to manufactured goods would “institute a desperate form of competition between workers” resulting in a race to the bottom in terms of wages, an outcome that was not only undesirable from a purchasing power perspective but also undermined an American social contract promising prosperity to those who worked hard.  

Labor leaders marshaled other moral arguments against regarding labor unions as monopolies. Resurrecting the old anti-Taft-Hartley argument against “slave labor,” AFL and CIO leaders explained that if labor was viewed legally as a good – as it would be if the labor market was understood as corruptible through monopoly – then workers exercised no control over their own bodies. Withholding labor through a strike, a picket, a work slowdown, or other means would be considered a restraint of trade. Similarly, if unions constituted monopoly, the combination of workers for any reason – including wage demands made through collective bargaining, especially on an industry-wide basis – could be viewed as obstructing trade, in violation of the law. The labor monopoly charge threatened the ability of individuals to exercise their freedom of speech, their right to free association, and their claim to freedom from involuntary servitude. Unlike commodities, the labor market had protections under the law, labor leaders argued.

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84 Arthur Goldberg qtd. in “CIO Registers ‘Strong Protest’ to Attorney General Against Reported Plans to Place Unions Under Anti-Trust Laws,” CIO press release, October 6, 1954; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 21, Fol. 6; WSU.

85 See “Applications of Monopoly Laws to Unions Assailed by Goldberg,” CIO News, June 20 1955; Periodicals, WSU.

86 This argument was a staple of the postwar period. For example, in Congressional testimony in 1950, Green argued, “[T]he only true ‘monopoly’ in the employment relationship occurs when there is no union organization,” when workers were not permitted to have a say in the terms of their own employment. William Green, testimony before a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, hearing on S. 2912, exact date in 1950 unclear; American Federation of Labor Papers, Series XI, File E, Box 16, Fol. 2; WHS.
Combatting the notion that unions were monopolies fed directly into the AFL-CIO’s second argument – that big labor and big business operated very differently. Rather than simply endorsing the view that big labor was “a natural development, historically and economically,” paralleling the growth of big business and big government as a *New York Post* op-ed piece did, AFL and CIO leaders argued that labor was fundamentally different from big business. With no profit motive, the merged labor federation would benefit – and, indeed, represent – society as a whole. As George Meany explained in a spring 1955 address to the Executive Board of the CIO’s Steelworkers, “How can there be too much power if it is for good and is used only for good? You just can’t have too much power.” On the one hand, this challenged pluralism’s insistence that labor and business were equal negotiating partners. On the other hand, it also highlighted liberals’ view that labor’s fundamental goal was to raise the standard of living of union members and non-members alike, rather than to empower workers to fight for a new brand of democracy.

Whereas NAM and the Chamber had defended excessive profits as helpful in jumpstarting the economy and low wages as a boon to consumers rewarded with lower prices, labor leaders attacked industry incentives as out-of-step with the public interest, and presented unions as representing the little guy against a powerful business lobby. For years, the AFL newsmagazine highlighted the financial resources of major corporations as compared to organized labor. For instance, in 1950, an article contended that General Motors’ receipts for 1948 – though not its profits – were six times as much as the receipts of all labor unions combined. The bottom line was that “the financial resources of organized labor do not begin to

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88 George Meany, qtd. in *John Herling’s Labor Letter*, March 5, 1955, UAW Research Department, Part I, Box 2, Fol. 6; WSU.
approach their counterparts across the bargaining table,” the article argued. In speeches, media appearances, and written material, labor leaders argued that this disparity was not only unfair; it also meant that the public – comprising both union members, who operated as citizens and as consumers, and non-union members – was not as well served legislatively and financially as business.

Labor leaders pointed to the benefits that big labor created for the consuming public. This third argument emphasized two themes: first, the production of better quality goods and the establishment of a healthier economy with better workplace conditions, better skilled employees, and increased worker purchasing power; and second, the establishment of industrial peace through the merger as a boon to the public interest. In making both of these arguments, AFL and CIO leaders drew on a longer tradition of postwar labor rhetoric and also reflected the pluralist discourse of the day.

Labor argued against business’s accusation that union strength – presumably intensified by merger – drove up wages, which were then passed along to the consumer in the form of higher prices. Certainly criticizing large corporate profits was one piece of this; high profit levels indicated that businesses had enough cushion to provide high wages and maintain good prices simultaneously. But labor leaders in the early 1950s also criticized the assumption that union representation produced excessive wage hikes. In a typical example of this line of argumentation, the AFL’s Assistant Economist explained that, in the goods market, the seller determined when he could extract the highest price for his goods and sold at that point, whereas in the labor market, the seller “literally has to make a sale in order to live.” The idea of wage setting in labor was an illusion; the need to eat resulted in urgent, hurried negotiations in which the worker – even with union protections – exacted far less than might be possible if he waited
interminably to sell his labor.89 This argument also reflected industrial pluralism’s emphasis on unions as helping to usher in a higher quality of life for both workers (through wage increases) and for consumers (through lower prices and more readily available goods). It also deemphasized work conditions as important in the modern world, instead concentrating on compensation and consumption. Reflecting pluralist arguments, labor leaders argued that labor needed to be big enough to extract reasonable demands from big business as an equal negotiating partner. As Reinhold Niebuhr put it in 1960, “[T]he equilibrium of power achieved between management and labor… is one of the instruments used by a highly technical society, with ever larger aggregates of power, to achieve that tolerable justice which has rendered Western Civilization immune to the Communist virus.”90

AFL and CIO officials also presented the merger as producing industrial peace – the ultimate goal of industrial pluralism – benefitting the general public in a way that big business could not. AFL-CIO spokesmen emphasized that the merged federation would not engage in collective bargaining agreements itself. But by implementing a robust no-raiding agreement and potentially combining rival unions, the merged organization promised to reduce the potential for conflict on the shop floor. The pact promised to improve collective bargaining, increase production, and reduce the number of strikes - a contention that the press also promoted.91 This view was given further legitimacy by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) chairman,

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89 See Peter Henle (Assistant Economist, AF of L), “The Myth of ‘Labor Monopoly,’” American Federationist, February 1950, 15, 34; Periodicals, WHS.
90 Reinhold Niebuhr, qtd. in Lichtenstein, State of the Union, 153.
91 AFL leaders acknowledged this press reaction. The Public Relations section of the President’s Report to the 1953 convention read, “The successful progress toward accomplishment of a no-raiding agreement was also well received throughout the press,” though it also pointed with alarm to an “avalanche of speculative stories throughout the summer that the CIO’s demise was imminent.” See President’s Report, Proceedings of the Fifteenth CIO Constitutional Convention, November 15-20, 1953, 88; Periodicals, WHS. While the conservative Wall Street Journal voiced a host of reasons why the no-raiding agreement might be ineffective, it expressed the hope that it would work. “Businessmen, too, deplore the raids,” the Journal reported. Stephen K. Galpin, “Inter-Union Truce?” Wall Street Journal, June 2, 1953; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 21, Fol. 19; WSU.
who praised the proposed dispute resolution machinery as “reasonable,” stating that it would “contribute to the peaceful disposition of representation disputes.”

Early successes in reducing inter-union conflict helped Meany and Reuther to make their case for the merger’s positive impact on industrial peace. Meany and Reuther publicized this success internally and to the general public, even as they privately sparred over specifics. Forty-one percent fewer cases were filed with the NLRB in the first year of the no-raiding agreement in comparison with the previous year. And over 150,000 fewer union members were affected by raiding in the same period, a seventy-five percent drop (Table 3-2). While these figures captured the actions of signatories and non-signatories of the no-raiding agreement alike, union leaders agreed that such a sizeable decline in raiding activity could not be attributed to chance alone. The end result was fewer disruptions to production.

Meany and Reuther argued that the merger would benefit the public in other ways, too. Meany and Reuther began merger negotiations in no small part to increase labor’s political clout, but they argued that this political influence – always designed to increase the nation’s quality of life as opposed to institute a radical reimagining of societal structures – was beneficial to the

92 Guy Farmer, letter to Walter P. Reuther and George Meany, March 8, 1955; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 22, Fol. 1; WSU. James P. Mitchell, Eisenhower’s Secretary of Labor, was similarly optimistic about the direction of AFL-CIO talks with regards to ending jurisdictional disputes, though he saw the negotiations as useful principally because they created efficiencies of another sort. “The Government does note with great gratification this further evidence that the working men and women of America can solve their own problems without governmental interference or intervention,” he stated. James P. Mitchell, qtd. in “94 Unions Accept No-Raiding Pact,” New York Times, June 10, 1954; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 23, Fol. 4; WSU.
93 A key dispute between Meany and Reuther occurred in November 1954 over an accusation of raiding by three AFL-affiliated unions on the UAW-CIO organized North American Aviation Company. None of the involved AFL unions were party to the no-raiding agreement. At an unrelated meeting with the impartial arbitrator designated in the no-raiding agreement, Reuther brought up the North American Aviation Company dispute. In a letter after the meeting, Meany described Reuther’s action as “completely improper.” Meany continued, “I can not escape the conclusion but that you deliberately brought this matter up in the presence of Mr. Cole [the arbitrator] for the purpose of conveying to him an unfavorable impression of a lack of sincerity and good faith on the part of the American Federation of Labor.” Thus, despite the ongoing talks on merger between the AFL and CIO, internal distrust and tension persisted. See Letter from George Meany to Walter P. Reuther, November 17, 1954; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 298, Fol. 18; WSU.
94 George Brown, memorandum to George Meany, October 21, 1955; George Meany Papers, Box 62, Fol. 27; GMMA.
larger public. Meany contended that “the Congress is dominated by big financial interests” and proposed an AFL-CIO lobbying interest as a counterweight to this influence. As in its argument about the value of opposing business in collective bargaining, labor leaders painted the merger as leveling the playing field in politics, rather than giving unions more power than other groups. In an August 1955 debate, AFL Machinists’ President Al Hayes countered a NAM speaker’s accusation that the AFL-CIO merger would pave the way for organized labor to “control the Government,” by wryly insisting that “We in organized labor only hope we become as strong and influential as the NAM or the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.”

Furthermore, labor spokesmen insisted that their influence in politics only went so far, a viewpoint that the press generally validated. They countered claims that COPE would “deliver the labor vote” and coerce union members to support the AFL-CIO’s political agenda and endorsed candidates by turning to historical example. The results of the previous presidential election in 1952, in which Eisenhower had won in a landslide, and the election of 1950, in which labor’s massive effort to defeat Senator Robert Taft had failed miserably, demonstrated that labor union endorsements only went so far. In 1952, though Adlai Stevenson had received the backing of both the CIO and the AFL – the latter issuing its first official presidential endorsement since 1924 – union members had not uniformly turned out to the polls, nor heeded the advice of their

95 Meany, qtd. in Goulden, Meany, 197.
97 Many newspaper editorials highlighted these internal political divisions and labor’s inability to deliver a union vote to endorsed candidates. For example, a Long Island newspaper reassured its readers that, “No one ever has been able to ‘deliver the labor vote,’” even as it prophesized that “The merger may bring new militancy.” “The AFL-CIO and Politics,” editorial, Long Island Press, February 12, 1955; UAW Research Department Papers, Part I, Box 2, Fol. 8; WSU. The largest newspaper in Omaha, the Republican leaning World-Herald, argued that the cherished American freedom to vote independently would result in a “new alliance hardly able to dominate American politics by brute strength.” See, “The Big-Labor Merger,” editorial, Omaha Evening World-Herald, February 11, 1955; UAW Research Department Papers, Part I, Box 2, Fol. 10; WSU.
labor representatives. Furthermore, not all unions within the AFL and CIO endorsed Stevenson. The AFL’s Carpenters and Teamsters both went out for Eisenhower. Labor leaders argued that such divisions would continue even within the merged labor federation; individual affiliates could make their own decisions about whom to support.

AFL and CIO surrogates emphasized their interest in working within the existing party system. Even so, division in the ranks of labor over the question of whether to pursue a third party fueled newspaper editorials and news reporting on the merger. Mike Quill, the charismatic and colorful head of the Transport Workers Union consistently voiced the concern that “we are tying ourselves too tight to the Democratic machine,” though he did not explicitly endorse the formation of a labor third party. Both AFL and CIO leaders argued strenuously against Quill’s assertion that organized labor was in the “vest pocket” of the Democratic Party. In a closed-door session of the CIO Executive Board, Reuther bitterly claimed that Quill only insisted on candidates whose viewpoints exactly aligned with the CIO’s when he thought he could get press attention for his principled stand. “Mike didn’t give a damn until he thought he could get some cheap headlines,” Reuther declared. But however often Meany and Reuther

98 Zieger reports that only 57 percent of union members voted for Stevenson. This compares unfavorably to 1948, when 81 percent of unionists voted for Truman. See Zieger, The CIO, 310.

99 Labor leaders closely followed the treatment of the third party question by the press. Reviewing hundreds of editorials on the merger supplied by a clippings service, the CIO Director of Public Relations reported to Reuther that, “There is general discussion as to whether unity will lead to a labor political party along the lines of the British Labor Party. General hope is expressed that this won’t be so.” Henry Fleisher, memorandum to Walter P. Reuther, “RE: Editorial Reaction to Labor Unity,” March 7, 1955; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 289, Fol. 3; WSU.

100 Mike Quill, Proceedings of Meeting of the International Executive Board of the CIO, February 2, 1955, 61, 62; Microfilm Reel 17 of “Minutes of the Executive Board of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, 1935-1955”; WSU.

101 Mike Quill, Proceedings of Meeting of the International Executive Board of the CIO, February 2, 1955, 63; Microfilm Reel 17 of “Minutes of the Executive Board of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, 1935-1955”; WSU.

offered denials that they aimed to form a labor party, lingering suspicion of the political influence of the new, merged organization, and the possibility of a third party did not disappear from the headlines.103

Protesting that a merged AFL-CIO would have anemic political influence was a losing argument, especially because AFL and CIO officials both publicly stated a desire for more influence in the halls of Congress. It was hard to turn back from a statement such as Meany made in the lead-up to the merger: “This is not going to be any milk toast movement…No little men with loud voices in either political or industrial life are going to turn us aside.”104 Far more compelling was the fifth argument that labor leaders used to defend the concept of big labor – that a federation enabled each union to retain autonomy.

The Federation Structure

Labor leaders and those sympathetic to unions used the planned structure of the AFL-CIO to show that an umbrella organization could not be accused of controlling the constituent unions within the larger whole. The AFL-CIO might include upward of 16 million people, but those people were not members of the AFL-CIO and the AFL-CIO exercised no control over the policies of the international unions that belonged to the larger whole, Meany, Reuther and other national leaders argued. Though strong-arming by internationals and union federations on political issues was the norm, power in collective bargaining – the bread-and-butter of the labor movement – was significantly more decentralized. The historian Nelson Lichtenstein has

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103 The editorial boards of conservative papers were especially concerned at the prospect of a third party, though most believed it would not be as radical as its European counterparts. The editors of the Wall Street Journal took heart in the fact that there was “much less class consciousness” than in Europe, preventing “the rigid divisions [of] a farm party, a business party or a labor party” from ever presenting themselves. “A Comforting Difference,” editorial, Wall Street Journal [NY edition], February 17, 1955; UAW Research Department Papers, Part I, Box 2, Fol. 8; WSU.
104 Meany, qtd. in Robinson, George Meany and His Times, 182.
characterized industrial relations during this period as “positively baroque” because of the enormous fragmentation of collective bargaining agreements and local union organizations – thousands of each in contrast to a dozen or two in other industrial nations.\textsuperscript{105} Furthermore, there were often very serious – and well publicized – disagreements between union leaders, further eroding the power that big labor could hold.\textsuperscript{106} Labor officials argued that the federation structure proved accusations of big labor false, even as Meany and Reuther tried to establish structures and constitutional safeguards to strengthen the federation’s authority over its constituent unions in certain areas.

The autonomy of affiliated unions remained a sticking point throughout merger negotiations. By 1955, the historical distinction between a decentralized AFL where union autonomy was privileged and a centralized CIO where national federation policy held sway was largely a thing of the past. Both Reuther and Meany exercised strong control over their organizations, demonstrating their willingness to let errant organizations walk away from their federations. Even so, the CIO’s top leaders remained fearful that the merged organization would be unable to crack down on corruption and institutionalized racial discrimination – both viewed as problems unique to the AFL – and to coordinate large-scale organization campaigns. As negotiations with the AFL got underway, Reuther privately worried that the AFL leadership was “hid[ing] behind the word ‘autonomy’” and “looking the other way” by “permit[ing] racketeers and gangsters to have positions of power and leadership.”\textsuperscript{107} Reuther worried that the national leadership of the AFL-CIO would have its hands tied, diluting the impact of the enlarged labor

\textsuperscript{105} Lichtenstein, State of the Union, 142.
\textsuperscript{106} As the Baltimore Sun editorialized in mid-1954, “So long as men like Lewis, Beck and McDonald continue to look askance at men like the CIO’s Mr. Reuther and the AFL’s Mr. Meany, the abuses of totalized union monopoly remain happily academic.” “No-Raid Agreement Between AFL and CIO,” editorial, Baltimore Sun, June 11 1954; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 298, Fol. 12; WSU.
\textsuperscript{107} Walter P. Reuther, Proceedings of Meeting of the International Executive Board of the CIO, February 5-6, 1953, 60; CIO Executive Board Bound Proceedings Collection, Box 4, February 5-6, 1953 Volume; WSU.
movement. And for his part, Meany agreed. “We have got to have some machinery to keep order in our own house,” Meany thundered in what even a U.S. Chamber of Commerce newsletter termed a “devastating rebuttal” to union leaders who desired little oversight from the merged organization.¹⁰⁸

Still, from the beginning, Reuther and, especially, Meany, understood that union heads needed to be reassured that the AFL-CIO would not exercise too much control over internal union affairs. Such arguments also had the added benefit of reassuring the public of the modest ambitions of the merged organization. In their very first public statement after hammering out a merger agreement, the AFL and CIO presidents stressed the document’s intent to “preserve the identity and integrity of the more than 140 trade unions now affiliated with the CIO and the AFL,” even as the statement confirmed that efforts to eliminate raiding and jurisdictional disputes would continue. Meany and Reuther were clear that constituent unions of the merged AFL-CIO would “continue, under this plan, to conduct their own individual collective bargaining with employers, as in the past.” Some unions operating in the same field might merge, but this would be voluntary, not compulsory.¹⁰⁹

The proposed AFL-CIO structure protected the right of unions to decide voluntarily whether to join the new federation and if to enter any of the AFL-CIO’s trade and industrial departments.¹¹⁰ Meany pointed out that the constitution allowed small unions to decide whether to join larger unions in the same jurisdiction. This contention was further supported by the

¹⁰⁹ George Meany and Walter P. Reuther, joint statement, February 9, 1955; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 21, Fol. 22; WSU.
¹¹⁰ The creation of an Industrial Union Department (IUD) was a concession to Reuther and to CIO unions that worried that the new AFL-CIO would obscure the particular needs of industrial unions and the political positions of the old CIO. As Meany recalled, “The Industrial Union Department has performed a service, but I want to be very frank to say that at the time the idea was broached as part of the merger agreement I didn’t see any real need for it.” Meany characterized the IUD as a “political base” for Reuther. See Meany, qtd. in Robinson, George Meany and His Times, 182.
literature and broadcasts released by the public relations departments of both the AFL and CIO. A UAW-CIO broadcast from early 1955 was typical. In it, regular commentator Guy Nunn reported that “the key elements in the merger agreement are this: the integrity of the existing unions would be preserved,” with combination to eliminate jurisdictional overlap only in cases where consent was given.\textsuperscript{111}

Indeed, Reuther stated that the only areas in which the new labor federation was determined to centralize its operations were in regard to communism and corruption. “This is essential to preserve the dignity and decency of the labor movement. In everything else there is absolute autonomy,” he declared.\textsuperscript{112} The AFL-CIO constitution set up an ethical review board and took a firm rhetorical stance against corruption. Still, there was only vague language on racketeering in the constitution. It gave the convention of the new organization the power to expel – through a two-thirds majority vote – any union that undermined democratic principles.\textsuperscript{113} But a similar expulsion process was possible in both the old AFL and CIO. And on the issue of civil rights and racial discrimination, the constitution privileged autonomy above federation power.\textsuperscript{114}

In addition to constitutional provisions allowing for AFL-CIO intervention in a few particular areas of union affairs, the AFL-CIO exercised wider influence through a large

\textsuperscript{111} Guy Nunn, transcript of “Labor Views the News,” February 10, 1955; Roy Reuther Papers, Box 27, Fol. 17; WSU.
\textsuperscript{113} Section 7, Article VIII of the constitution stated that the AFL-CIO “must be and remain free from any and all corrupt influences,” as well as communist and totalitarian principles.
\textsuperscript{114} The \textit{New York Times} called the AFL-CIO’s stance against racial and religious discrimination “unequivocal,” but the constitution provided no clear machinery for dealing with the problem, despite protestations from A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and an AFL vice president. “Labor’s Charter,” editorial, \textit{New York Times}, May 4, 1955; UAW Research Department Papers, Part I, Box 2, Fol. 6; WSU.
bureaucracy and treasury. As we will see, merged departments and more concentrated spending in legislative affairs and publicity allowed the AFL-CIO to assume greater visibility on the national stage. AFL-CIO leaders may have used their federation status to argue against the idea that their organization constituted big labor or advocated for class struggle. But the bureaucratic growth of the AFL-CIO demonstrated its strength as an organization.

Conclusion

Throughout late 1954 and much of 1955, AFL and CIO leaders fought over what name the merged labor federation should bear, garnering much speculation in the press. The name issue, characterized as “one of the minor but difficult obstacles to unity” by a U.S. Information Service pamphlet about the merger, was largely symbolic. If the new organization was called the AFL, it would signal that the larger organization was simply absorbing the CIO into its ranks, abandoning industrial unionism and Reuther’s unity “principles” along the way, CIO leaders argued. Such an organization would hardly be new. For their part, AFL leaders rejected other combinations of the two labor federation names proposed by CIO officials – American Congress of Labor, chief among them – as indicating a merger on equal footing and as denying the long and rich history of the AFL by removing its name from the masthead. So concerned were AFL and CIO leaders with preserving elements of their old federation names that they did not

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115 The old CIO practice of employing national staff through affiliated unions (e.g. Jack Kroll, the political director through the Amalgamated Clothing Workers), ended with the creation of the AFL-CIO. All national and state staff were employed by the AFL-CIO. There was also a dispute over whether there should be a board made up of the heads of affiliates. Meany preferred that the officers of the organization and the executive council make decisions without an additional board, while Reuther advocated for the board. McDonald sided against Reuther with Meany and the strong board of union heads idea was nixed.

116 See, for example, Edwin A. Lahey, “The AFL Will Absorb the CIO When…,” Collier’s, September 1, 1951, 70-1; Len De Caux Papers, Oversize Box B, Fol. 9; WSU; Victor Riesel, Inside Labor column, “All Trace of CIO to Vanish Early in December,” Daily Mirror, July 13, 1955; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part II, Box 26, Victor Riesel 1955 Fol.; WSU.

consider any entirely new names. Instead, the debate over names was largely a case of the two labor federations jockeying for a symbolic indication of their place in the new labor organization.

In the end, the name “AFL-CIO” and the creation of an “Industrial Union Department” within that organization represented a compromise and satisfied few, despite Meany’s public characterization of it as “a very happy solution,” and Reuther’s comment that it “embodies the names of both organizations, on an equal basis.”¹¹⁸ “[I]t is too damn long – as bad as the name of my International Union,” commented Karl Feller, President of the International Union of United Brewery, Flour, Cereal, Soft Drink and Distillery Workers of America.¹¹⁹ The Worcester Evening Gazette characterized the name as “a cumbersome monstrosity.”¹²⁰ To such complaints by members of the press, Meany used humor. “You mean it will be tough for the headline writers on the Washington Post and Times-Herald? Or the New York World-Telegram and Sun?” Meany joked.¹²¹

But the name of the new organization was hardly a joke. The question of what the merged labor federation ought to call itself represented a larger question about how the AFL-CIO intended to present itself to the public in the years after the merger. And it indicated a transformation in how the labor movement conceived of itself. Mid-nineteenth century trade associations like the Sons of Vulcan (named for the Roman god of fire and representing puddlers in the steel industry) or the Order of the Knights of St. Crispin (named for the patron saint of cobblers) took their naming cues from medieval guilds and referenced icons of old. Such references to the past proudly highlighted skills of members and condemned the modern rise of

¹¹⁸ Henry C. Fleisher, “‘AFL and CIO’ is Labor Unity Name,” CIO News, July 25, 1955; Periodicals, WSU.
¹¹⁹ Karl Feller, letter to Walter P. Reuther, August 15, 1955; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 23, Fol. 7; WSU.
¹²⁰ “The AFL and the CIO Should Try Again,” editorial, Worcester Evening Gazette, July 26, 1955; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 299, Fol. 8; WSU.
¹²¹ George Meany, qtd. in Henry C. Fleisher, “‘AFL and CIO’ is Labor Unity Name,” CIO News, July 25, 1955; Periodicals, WSU.
machinery that threatened the positions of those skilled workers. In the late nineteenth century, many of these early labor organizations dissolved or were absorbed by more powerful combinations of skilled workers (the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers in the case of the Sons of Vulcan), capable of standing up to the large companies of the Gilded Age. The names of such organizations – frequently headed by Amalgamated – reflected a new notion of how skilled workers jointly operated within a new economy.

The formation of the CIO in the 1930s introduced a new tendency in naming – the use of the term “united,” as well as the term “organizing committee,” to indicate that workers of all levels were involved, to show the breadth and strength, rather than the exclusivity of the venture, and to emphasize the distributed power and growth of affiliated unions. Thus, the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) received the first charter of the CIO, and the CIO sponsored the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC).

The decision to hyphenate the AFL and CIO into a long collection of letters signifying their merger reflected the place of the labor movement in the mid-twentieth century and the influence of pluralism. It was, first and foremost, an organization of members with siloed jurisdictions, an entity made strong because of the many members and unions it encapsulated, not because it portended a new way of thinking or because those many members and unions were especially committed to its vision. The merger itself made the organization strong and the name reflected a pride in becoming Big Labor, an organization with a name akin to the names of merged corporations and law firms. In naming itself the AFL-CIO, organized labor signaled its place in postwar America.

Increasingly, the AFL-CIO was an organizational force rather than a movement. Reuther continued to champion unions “not as a narrow economic pressure group, but as a labor
movement that understands its historic responsibilities and its social responsibilities and moral responsibilities.” But with merger talks in full swing, Henry Fleisher, the CIO’s public relations man worried that the long-term consequences of the public perception of “big labor” would convince the public otherwise. “Public attitudes that labor is merely one tremendous pressure group, no more humane or humanitarian than big corporations like General Motors or U.S. Steel, can lead, quickly, to a deterioration of organized labor’s status in a society and resultant anti-labor legislation of a probably drastic sort,” Fleisher wrote.

This concern over the political consequences of public perception of labor as a special interest group, unresponsive to those who did not belong to unions, reached a crisis point during the racketeering hearings of the late 1950s. The discourse of industrial pluralism that helped to reassure the public of the value of the AFL-CIO merger was premised on the notion that elite stewards could act responsibly on behalf of union members incapable of and disinterested in forming their own social democracy. It was this optimism that labor could be made strong through bigness and bureaucratization that also proved to be one piece of labor’s undoing.

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122 Walter P. Reuther, speech to the Sixteenth Constitutional Convention of the CIO, December 6, 1954; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 298, Fol. 18; WSU.
Chapter 4
“Labor Still Has Clean Hands”: The AFL-CIO’s Public Relations War in the Era of Landrum-Griffin

In December 1957, as the nationally televised and heavily reported Congressional investigations into union corruption concluded their first year, AFL-CIO leaders worried about the long-term consequences of the adverse publicity. Newspapers and magazines, television and radio newscasts daily reported on the McClellan Committee’s revelations of bribes and violence, runaway spending and the Teamsters’ threats of muscling entire industries into submission. AFL-CIO President George Meany feared that just as Taft-Hartley provided no “solution” for the problems underlying the 1946 strike wave, the legislative proposals bandied about by labor’s opponents in Congress in 1957 would seek to use the cover of McClellan Committee-revealed abuses to implement “restrictive and punitive legislation.” According to Meany, the problem was that, in 1957, “the trade union movement is confronted by a widespread, adverse publicity and the threat of hostile legislation as a consequence.”

The AFL-CIO sought out a way to prevent this possibility.

This fear of destructive legislation drove AFL-CIO leaders to confront corrupt individuals and unions aggressively between 1957 and 1959. The AFL-CIO was largely unconcerned with the attitude of the public for its own sake. But AFL-CIO staffers were deeply worried over the public’s influence in pushing potentially repressive labor legislation in response to the Congressional investigations. It was this fear and subsequent fury at the Teamsters and

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1 George Meany, transcript, draft resolution, General Board Meeting on Legislation of the AFL-CIO, December 10, 1957; UAW Political Action and Citizenship Department – Roy Reuther Papers, Box 12, Fol. 8; WSU.
2 There is a debate in the literature about the extent to which corruption also affected organizing activities. Though they deal with earlier time periods, see two works that exhibit this debate: David Witwer, Shadow of the Racketeer: Scandal in Organized Labor (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009) examines the 1930s; and Andrew Wender Cohen, The Racketeer’s Progress: Chicago and the Struggle for the Modern American Economy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) examines the 1900-1940 period. While Witwer argues that publicity surrounding corruption in the labor movement (and not parallel corruption among employers) had an adverse effect on organizing, Cohen is more nuanced in his discussion. Cohen asserts that while corruption among certain unions
other corrupt entities for “the black eye” that they had given labor in the public imagination that forced the AFL-CIO to take drastic steps to demonstrate its commitment to eliminating corrupt elements from its ranks and to voice concern about public attitudes toward organized labor.³ It was also the threat of being tarnished as corrupt that encouraged the AFL-CIO to reach out directly to the public to make the case that it was a responsible, honest body acting in the public interest.⁴ This strategy was no secret. As the Congressional hearings began in February 1957, a New York Herald Tribune editorial explained that Meany’s determination to clean the ranks of labor was dictated by an understanding of the public as decisive in legislative battles. Meany “knows that where right and wrong are concerned the public will exert an irresistible pressure for

³ The image of the corruption in a select number of unions giving all of labor a “black eye” was used routinely in the press. See, for example, Personal from Pearson, newsletter, March 30, 1957; UAW Washington Office Legislative Office – Donald Montgomery Papers, Box 26, Fol. 7; WSU. See also, Jay G. Hayden, column, Detroit News, March 1, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part I, Box 7, Fol. 5; WSU; “The News of the Week in Review: Labor on the Spot,” New York Times, March 31, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part I, Box 7, Fol. 8; WSU; and “Unions Losing Strength,” editorial, Burlington, Iowa Hawk Eye Gazette, April 10, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 29; WSU. Senator McNamara (D-MI), a former union member, leveled this charge directly at Dave Beck in Congressional hearings. See “McNamara Charges Beck Gives Labor a Black Eye,” Detroit News, March 27, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part I, Box 7, Fol. 2; WSU.

⁴ To my knowledge, there are no other works examining the AFL-CIO’s public relations efforts during the McClellan hearings in great detail. There are a number of works that detail corruption in labor unions and the internal maneuverings of AFL-CIO unions around this issue, as well as the impact of media coverage. On the Teamsters, see David Witwer, Corruption and Reform in the Teamsters Union (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), especially 157-211. This work demonstrates how the Committee was able to shape much of its own news coverage, and is especially strong in exploring how the hearings influenced public perceptions of union corruption. Kim Phillips-Fein addresses the influence of conservative business elites in shaping the proceedings of the McClellan Committee. See Kim Phillips-Fein, Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), especially 117-130 on Barry Goldwater. For discussion of the legislative processes that resulted in the passage of Landrum-Griffin, see Tracy Roof, American Labor, Congress and the Welfare State, 1935-2010 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), especially 75-78; and David Stebenne, Arthur J. Goldberg: New Deal Liberal (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), especially 188-97. Thaddeus Russell explores the McClellan hearings in terms of manliness in his biography of Jimmy Hoffa. See Thaddeus Russell, Out of the Jungle: Jimmy Hoffa and the Remaking of the American Working Class (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).
reform,” the Herald Tribune concluded.⁵ This fear of political repercussions fueled the AFL-CIO’s publicity efforts during the McClellan hearings.

Meany routinely issued denials that his organization planned to implement a formal public relations campaign to combat the images of corruption conjured daily in Congress’ racketeering committee hearings.⁶ The Public Relations Department’s response to the McClellan Committee investigations was largely limited to the production of pamphlets and the voices of radio and television commentators already sponsored by the AFL-CIO. But the actions taken and rhetoric used by the AFL-CIO to expel corrupt unions and leaders, to develop new infrastructure to maintain ethical behavior, to support moderate labor legislation, and to publicize the ways in which unions acted for the general good constituted a public relations effort, in and of themselves. Far from being the mere “public relations window dressing” that the media sometimes imagined, the varied AFL-CIO responses to allegations of unethical behavior represented the culmination of a movement toward engagement with the public that emphasized politics above collective bargaining or organizing.⁷ Between 1957 and 1959, Meany and his staff explicitly reached out to the public, formalizing previously-made arguments about organized labor’s economic, social and political value to the nation as a whole, and connecting these to organized labor’s larger legislative mission.

In this chapter, I argue that the publicly unfolding crisis caused by the McClellan hearings forced the AFL-CIO to view public relations not as a goal in itself, or even as something that could be orchestrated by a single department, but rather, as a means to advancing

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⁶ See, for example, George Meany, interview on “Labor Answers Your Questions,” AFL-CIO radio series, transcript printed in Technician Engineer (May 1957): 7; Henry W. Flannery Papers, Box 25, Fol. 4; WHS.

⁷ See, for example, “Reuther’s ‘Public’ Board,” editorial, Adrian, Michigan Telegram, April 1, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 29; WSU.
a primary mission of the organization – the achievement of a progressive legislative agenda. The first section of this chapter presents the legislative and political context in which the AFL-CIO mounted its response to charges of corruption. The second section examines how the intensive media coverage of the McClellan hearings presented a crisis within an AFL-CIO leadership that recognized the importance of public opinion in shaping legislative outcomes. The third section explores how the AFL-CIO leadership responded to that threat, bypassing its own public relations department as the central decision-maker in formulating a strategy for developing a public response to allegations of corruption, and using a variety of media and forms to reach the public. And the fourth section investigates the arguments that the AFL-CIO used to counteract media images of corrupt unions during the McClellan hearings, and to forestall the possibility of anti-labor legislation. These messages promoting the honesty of the overwhelming majority of union leaders, the AFL-CIO’s advocacy of the public interest, and labor’s willingness to embrace some – but not all – legislative reform had implications for the future of labor’s political involvement and public relations strategy. The structure and form of the AFL-CIO’s outreach to the public during the McClellan hearings was not a departure from the past, but it marked an intensification of unions’ efforts to embrace the public ally in advancing a political agenda. It also marked a key moment in unions’ steady movement from clout in collective bargaining to clout in political organizing.

The Legislative Context

The Senate’s Select Committee on Improper Activities in Labor and Management under the leadership of Senator John McClellan (D-AR) and staff chief counsel Robert F. Kennedy began its investigations on February 1, 1957 and released its final report in March 1960. The
Committee had an equal number of Democrats and Republicans, but northern Democrats routinely criticized Kennedy’s interrogations of witnesses as promoting the impression that all of labor was suspect, as well as McClellan’s sensationalist rendering of hearings conducted behind closed doors. Indeed, Pat McNamara, the Democratic Senator from Michigan, himself a former union member and a political ally of the AFL-CIO, resigned from the Committee in 1958 in protest of the Committee’s handling of labor investigations and failure to investigate business to any considerable degree.

The McClellan Committee began its investigations by playing damning recorded tapes of discussions of illegal activity between Teamsters’ official Jimmy Hoffa and mobsters. Dave Beck, the Teamsters President testified in March 1957, repeatedly pleading the Fifth Amendment and implicitly drawing attention to the AFL-CIO’s poor oversight of his organization. Live television coverage of the Beck’s testimony, coupled with closed door hearings for the UAW and other less-sensationalist, more-politically motivated investigations gave wide public exposure to union abuses, fueling the impression that all unions were corrupt. Kennedy’s badgering of witnesses without careful attention to the legal details of the case led some commentators to compare the episode to Joseph McCarthy’s (himself a member of the Committee until his death in May 1957) politically motivated investigations of communists half a decade earlier. But the investigations also showed that a number of unions – most notably the Teamsters, the Bakery Workers, and the Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union – engaged in corrupt behavior that extended to the highest levels of their respective organizations.

In 1958 and 1959, the McClellan Committee changed its tack. The ultra-conservative Arizona Republican Barry Goldwater set the tone as the Committee began to concentrate on union political activity and handling of strikes, implicitly condemning these legal union
functions as tainted by corruption. In addition to this investigation into political activity, the Committee looked into mobsters’ connections with a handful of unions, leaving the impression that union connections to organized crime were routine, and that business bore no responsibility for such abuses. This shift was particularly true in the Committee’s focus on the UAW’s handling of the ongoing and violent Kohler strike in early 1958 and the fall of 1959.

Neither investigation revealed high-level abuse, though the decentralized governance model of the Autoworkers (in contrast to other large unions, like the Steelworkers) allowed abuses in individual locals. Despite the lack of evidence that the Autoworkers were engaged in systematic corruption, the appearance of UAW officials before the Committee cast a cloud of suspicion over the UAW in the public arena. The UAW hearings also had the effect of correlating union involvement in politics with illegal behavior, reinforcing depictions of unions as out-of-step with the viewpoints of their members, and as large special interest groups requiring severe governmental regulations, in contrast to businesses – like Kohler – that were never investigated at all.

The political nature of the hearings, and the ways in which they bruised even clean unions was shown in a 1959 cartoon in the politically idiosyncratic Detroit News (Figure 4-1). It depicted a badminton game between Committee Democrats and Republicans in which the

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8 Reuther biographer Nelson Lichtenstein traces the trajectory of this change. Lichtenstein shows that while Reuther successfully countered Goldwater’s claims of UAW corruption and illegal activities during the Kohler strike in testimony before the McClellan hearings, his very appearance before the Committee and defense of his history of leftist policies gave fuel to Republicans. Lichtenstein writes, “Reuther easily divorced himself from the Teamster corruptionists, but like the ex-radicals of the McCarthy era, he nevertheless offered his tormenters much ideological terrain. He denied that the UAW had any particular influence in the politics of the upper Midwest, downplayed the need for mass picket lines, repudiated the usefulness of flying squadrons in difficult strike situations and reaffirmed his anti-Communist bona fides.” Though the UAW’s financial records cleared Reuther and his organization of corruption charges, and even though McClellan himself signed a letter attesting to the inauthenticity of the letter used to assert Reuther’s communist sympathies, Reuther’s testimony allowed the Republican Party’s campaign committee to produce a 216-page handbook called, “The Labor Bosses—America’s Third Party,” half of which attacked the UAW and Reuther. See Nelson Lichtenstein, Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 346-9, especially 348.

9 Arthur Poinier, editorial cartoon, “Caught in a Badminton Game,” Detroit News, August 20, 1959; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Box 1, unmarked Fol.; WSU.
UAW hearings were the birdie. The cartoon argued that both Democrats and Republicans on the Committee tried to use the UAW hearings to show their commitment to eliminating labor abuses, with the UAW and responsible unionism the victim in the public eye. But this cartoon was the exception. The mainstream press generally offered little distinction between legitimate but potentially problematic union activity like that undertaken by the UAW, and criminal activity by the likes of the Teamsters. Officials from both corrupt and clean unions were subjected to intense questioning before a Congressional investigatory committee on national television. Many television viewers made little distinction between corrupt leaders like Beck and clean leaders like the UAW President Walter Reuther.

The McClellan revelations spurred Congressional legislative action. In the spring of 1957, Congressmen introduced various bills to place unions under antitrust regulations, but these did not go very far. In the late spring of 1958, a bill to curtail abuses in welfare and pensions passed the Senate with no votes opposed; a variation on this bill was implemented in July of 1958. In June 1958, the Kennedy-Ives bill to impose more reporting requirements on unions passed the Senate with only one dissenting vote. But Kennedy-Ives failed after an unsuccessful attempt to pass the legislation without a committee hearing. *Time* reported that neither Democrats nor Republicans liked the bill; the former group believed it to be too harsh, while the latter felt it was not harsh enough. In the end, the magazine believed that “the loser” was “the U.S.”

Most commentators saw the failure of Kennedy-Ives as a lost opportunity to address the criminal behavior revealed by the McClellan Committee.\(^{11}\)

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\(^{10}\) “LABOR: Done to Death,” *Time*, September 1, 1958.

\(^{11}\) For their part, AFL-CIO officials blamed NAM and other industry groups for the failure of Kennedy-Ives. Throughout the autumn of 1958, they continued to paint NAM as an obstructionist group when it came to enacting reasonable labor legislation. John F. Kennedy repeated these accusations, though he claimed that he had not asked the AFL-CIO for approval of Kennedy-Ives before he introduced it. In an appearance on *Meet the Press*, Kennedy asserted his independence by arguing that his bill “was opposed for some time by some members of labor.” He believed that AFL-CIO leaders had come to support the legislation because they believed it “was in the public
John F. Kennedy introduced a new bill, Kennedy-Ervin, in January 1959, but Republicans attached amendments to the legislation that caused division within the Democratic-labor coalition, even as these additions led to passage of the bill in the Senate. Meanwhile, the Eisenhower-backed Landrum-Griffin bill made its way through the House of Representatives. That bill imposed new financial reporting requirements on labor unions, and set new guidelines regarding secondary boycotts and organizing – the former specifically designed to counteract a tactic used by the Teamsters as an organizing tool. However, in the process of regulating basic union functions as opposed to cracking down on previously illegal activities, Landrum-Griffin had the effect of marking all union activity appear criminal.

Reconciliation between the Senate’s Kennedy-Ervin bill and the House’s Landrum-Griffin bill resulted in a slightly altered version of Landrum-Griffin as the final version. Eisenhower signed the bill in September 1959, establishing a clear legislative victory for the McClellan Committee and a clear end to the bulk of the Committee’s activity.

This seeming criminalization of normal union behaviors through the Committee's investigation of the UAW, and Landrum-Griffin’s regulation of strikes and political spending also drove the introduction of right-to-work legislation, including Goldwater’s introduction of a national bill in January 1958. Such proposals did not get far, and an onslaught of state right-to-work proposals in 1958 generated only one victory (in Kansas) for right-to-work supporters. But these efforts diverted union resources toward fending off such legislative attacks, and established the justifications and stage for more right-to-work drives in the years to come.

interest.” But the close connection between Kennedy and organized labor gave the impression that organized labor was willing to support moderate reforms only as a way to stave off more monumental, punitive regulations. See John F. Kennedy, transcript, *Meet the Press*, NBC-TV, November 9, 1958; Box 12, Fol. 13, UAW Political Action and Citizenship Department – Roy Reuther Papers; WSU.
The AFL-CIO responded to the negative spotlight cast on both clean and corrupt elements of organized labor by developing new and enforcing already-existing machinery for eliminating corruption among its affiliated unions. Drawing on AFL-CIO constitutional language prohibiting racketeering and permitting limited interventions into the autonomy of its member unions, the labor federation approved a Code of Ethical Practices in February 1957 and a code of ethical practices for the management of union funds in May of the same year. A January 1957 Executive Council decision to expel union officials pleading the Fifth Amendment for personal protection or to avoid legitimate investigation by authorities further empowered the Council.

In addition, individual unions adopted their own ethical codes of conduct, and the Industrial Union Department (IUD - the remnant of the generally clean CIO), also headed by Reuther, developed procedures for eliminating abuses. For its part, Reuther’s UAW established a public review board of respected citizens to judge possible violations of the union’s ethical code in binding decisions in 1957. At its May 1957 meeting, the AFL-CIO’s Executive Council began the process of removing affiliates whose leaders had transgressed the organization’s ethics code. The fact that the Executive Board could not mandate new leadership but, instead, had to hope that members would elect new officials on their own through clean elections demonstrated the inadequacy of the AFL-CIO’s procedures for policing unions.

It also mirrored the limited choices possessed by the national CIO leadership when it tried to eliminate communists from its ranks nearly a decade earlier. In both cases, union democracy – in which members could not be counted upon to reelect non-communist or non-corrupt leaders – represented a problem for the national federation. Both cases illustrated a tension and distance between labor’s growing bureaucracy in Washington and the wishes of its
rank-and-file – a tension that would explode into hostility and significantly weaken the labor movement in the decades to come.

In December 1957, the only credible action that the AFL-CIO could mount to stave off corruption in its ranks was to expel the Bakery Workers, the Laundry Workers, the Teamsters, and their leaders. In the summer of 1958, the Executive Council moved to isolate the Teamsters further by requiring its affiliates to end their relationship with the union. Neither decision was taken lightly; without Meany’s behind-the-scenes arm-twisting of reluctant Council and convention members, the AFL-CIO would likely not have taken such decisive action, eliminating a significant stream of revenue and reducing AFL-CIO influence in important sectors.

Meany publicly insisted that this host of anti-corruption measures was based on the fact that racketeering was wrong, and was not driven by the possibility of eroding public opinion during the hearings. On its surface, this was true. The AFL-CIO was scarcely a year old when Congressional hearings began, and Meany was still struggling to keep elements of the old and new federations from warring with one another in the new organization. He likely envisioned a full cleanup of the organization after proving his effectiveness to all parties, but was forced to act sooner by the McClellan Committee hearings. The AFL-CIO’s 1957 convention proceedings emphasized that investigations of four unions had already begun before the McClellan hearings opened, though it did not begin to examine the mighty Teamsters union until Beck became a target of the Congressional inquiry. But the firestorm created by the hearings demanded that

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12 The AFL-CIO also launched investigations into the Distillery Workers, the Allied Industrial Workers and the United Textile Workers Union. All three unions were permitted to remain in the AFL-CIO after their leaders either pledged to combat corruption or were replaced with untainted leaders.
13 See Meany’s 1957 speech before the UAW convention. See “No Flash in the Pan,” editorial, Providence Labor News, April 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 29; WSU.
Meany and the AFL-CIO mount a more robust public response to what was rapidly becoming a public relations crisis for organized labor. Meany and his colleagues worried that this crisis would result in legislation from which unions would never recover.

The Crisis of the McClellan Revelations

The McClellan hearings threatened labor’s progressive legislative agenda very directly, precisely because they were so visible. That legislative agenda encapsulated a progressive economic and social agenda that envisioned a prominent role for the federal government in domestic issues, economic policy and foreign affairs. The policies that the AFL-CIO promoted did not always concern union members directly. The labor organization agitated for a number of labor-related policies including a higher minimum wage, greater workplace protections, and a loosening of Taft-Hartley’s rules on organizing. Indeed, amending Taft-Hartley became the major legislative concern of the AFL-CIO in the 1950s, a fact that made corruption hearings particularly damaging; charges of racketeering put the AFL-CIO on the defensive and seemed to suggest that Taft-Hartley did not go far enough. But the AFL-CIO’s legislative affairs office was not just concerned with labor and economic issues. It also lobbied for government-sponsored health care, rent control and an end to racial segregation. In addition, the AFL-CIO stood firmly behind the cold war policies of the day, even as it argued for protection of free speech and government transparency. The McClellan hearings threatened labor’s ability to lobby for this progressive agenda effectively.

Between 1957 and 1959, the unfolding drama of the McClellan committee hearings captivated the nation, even as some commentators criticized the committee’s handling of...
witnesses. There was a new, dramatic revelation nearly every week. The press traced the fall of Beck from a man *Life* described as “Seattle’s most distinguished citizen” in 1954\(^{15}\) to a target of Senatorial chastisement for demonstrating “utter and flagrant contempt” for Congress through his repeated invocation of the Fifth Amendment.\(^{16}\) Commentators gasped at how the head of the Bakers’ Union sold out his own membership by negotiating contracts with substandard wages in exchange for kickbacks from business associates.\(^{17}\) And the public expressed shock at the routine extortion of “protection money” from small businessmen by New York union gangster Johnny Dio, as evidenced by obscenity-laden recordings played before the Committee.\(^{18}\)

From the beginning, these revelations stunned even veteran reporters and fed the impression that unions were either unwilling or unable to police themselves. Fewer than two months into the investigations, the *Muncie Star* reported that, “The AFL-CIO leaders can be honestly worried at the prospect of strangling anti-union legislation,” and editorialized that “some [legal controls] are necessary.”\(^{19}\) The *St. Petersburg Times* concurred, calling upon “big and statesmanlike leaders of labor” to “cooperate with Congress in drafting remedial legislation” to protect union democracy and establish strict disclosure requirements for union funds.\(^{20}\) And the *Morristown Record* warned that “the public has just about had it.”\(^{21}\) The implication was clear: If responsible labor leaders did not step in to prevent abuses from within their ranks,

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\(^{15}\) Robert Coughlan, “The Boss of the Teamsters Rides High,” *Life*, April 19, 1954, 124; UAW Public Relations – Clippings, Part I, Box 7, Fol. 3; WSU.

\(^{16}\) Senator John McClellan, qtd. by George Hamilton Combs (substituting for John Vandercook), ABC radio broadcast, March 27, 1957; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 22, Vandercook Broadcasts Vol. 59; WHS.

\(^{17}\) John Vandercook, ABC radio broadcast, June 19, 1957; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 22, Vandercook Broadcasts Vol. 59; WHS.

\(^{18}\) John Vandercook, ABC radio broadcast, August 7, 1957; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 23, Vandercook Broadcasts Vol. 60; WHS.

\(^{19}\) “Labor Cracks Down,” editorial, *Muncie, Indiana Star*, March 27 or 28, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 29; WSU.


\(^{21}\) “Labor to the Offense,” editorial, *Morristown, New Jersey Record*, April 9, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 29; WSU.
Congress would have to do the job for them. The Record commended the UAW’s establishment of a public review board in the spring of 1957 as a step in the right direction. “Labor is on the defensive and the best defense is an offense,” the paper commented. But Business Week’s reporters believed that the timing of the announcement was “revealing,” occurring “right at the height of the McClellan committee’s revelations of Teamsters scandals.”

Other papers were harsher in their calls for immediate governmental action based on public demand. The Chicago American argued that the AFL-CIO Council “leaped too late” in suspending the Teamsters in October 1957, pursuing such action only when the movement was already under fire. “It is to Congress, not to the AFL-CIO, that the public is looking for action to bring the operations of labor union bosses under the control of law,” the American argued. A 1959 cartoon for the Chicago Tribune was one among many claiming that AFL-CIO leaders were uninterested in pursuing real legislative reform (Figure 4-2). In it, the labor lobby of Reuther and Meany – dressed as Indians – attempt to kill an unsuspecting little girl representing minor legislation. Editorialists like Ed Holland, the Tribune’s cartoonist, routinely depicted labor as unwilling to reform itself.

Even if they did not think that higher-ups in the AFL-CIO could be effective in eliminating union corruption, most newspapers distinguished between the mainstream unionism represented by AFL-CIO officers and the corrupt outliers hauled before the McClellan committee, subpoenaed, arrested and ultimately convicted for their egregious behavior. In November 1957, Fortune praised Meany for recognizing that the “rewards of leadership are

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22 “UAW’s Watchdogs Try Their Teeth,” Business Week, July 12, 1958; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 31; WSU.
23 “The Teamsters are Suspended: But Virtue Came Late,” editorial, Chicago American, October 27, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 30; WSU.
24 Ed Holland, “The War Tribe,” editorial cartoon, Chicago Tribune, March 10, 1959; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Box 1, unmarked Fol.; WSU.
found not in the salary but in the calling,” in contrast to the corrupt leaders hauled before the McClellan committee. After the AFL-CIO’s Executive Council voted 25-4 to forgo an $85,000-a-month per capita tax contribution by suspending the Teamsters, *Time* praised Meany’s “tough hand” in spearheading the vote. Such coverage allowed that Meany and others at the AFL-CIO’s national office had the public interest and not a desire for immediate gain at heart. “[A] powerful majority had shown that the AFL-CIO would risk its own future to protect unions from creeping corruption,” *Time* concluded.

Smaller news sources promoted a similar image of the AFL-CIO as a force for good, and Meany as a powerful, but benevolent labor statesman, in contrast to some other actors within the ranks of organized labor. A November 1958 editorial appearing in the *Fort Wayne News-Sentinel* was typical. The piece lauded Meany’s “high concept of patriotism and personal honesty,” but it wondered if those qualities would be enough to counteract the effect that Hoffa and Beck’s tarnished reputations had on the public’s perception of organized labor. There were some outliers, especially among newspapers with highly conservative editorial pages and those from the Deep South. Such publications condemned all unions as corrupt or led by dangerous socialists, often linking anti-civil rights, pro-states’ rights, and pro-right-to-work positions together. But the vast majority of news publications viewed the leadership of the IBT, the Bakery Workers, the ILA, the Carpenters and other unions that Congressional hearings revealed as harboring corrupt elements, as out of the mainstream.

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27 “If All Labor Leaders Were Like Mr. Meany,” editorial, *Ft. Wayne [Indiana] News-Sentinel*, November 12, 1958; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn papers, Scrapbook No. 31; WSU.
Henry Fleisher, the head of the AFL-CIO’s Public Relations Department, believed that this favorable coverage of his organization was pervasive. Fleisher, a college-educated Army and Office of Strategic Services veteran from World War II and the former Director of Publicity for the CIO later went on to found his own public relations firm, a group that became Maurer, Fleisher, Zon and Anderson. With his education, lack of blue-collar work experience, and connections in the press and public relations worlds, Fleisher represented a novel brand of labor bureaucrat and spearheaded a new emphasis on marketing labor to the public.  

In the fall of 1957, Fleisher used newspaper editorials as a proxy for public opinion. He reported, “Paradoxical as it may seem, the AFL-CIO stands higher and stronger in public esteem today than ever before,” as a result of its “prompt and forthright stand against wrongdoing.” Many news outlets did acknowledge the good intentions of the national AFL-CIO’s office in eliminating corruption. But Fleisher’s insistence that the McClellan Committee revelations had little impact on public perception of the AFL-CIO revealed the extent to which the Public Relations Department was marginalized in formulating policy during the crisis caused by credible charges of corruption in labor unions. For however favorable editorialists were in their coverage of Meany and the AFL-CIO, most national leaders worried that the labor federation’s reputation would be compromised – even if only by association – by the unfolding drama in Washington.

The media’s belief in the good intentions of AFL-CIO leaders did not mean that editorialists believed that the responsible leadership of the AFL-CIO could handle the enormous problem of corruption on its own – or even that it would follow-through on its promised reforms. At the beginning of the hearings, the Bridgeport Post recalled that Reuther’s declaration that

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“American labor had…better get the stiffest broom and brush it can find” in order to “take on the job of cleaning its own house from top to bottom,” sounded very much like Beck’s three-year-old statement that he would “crucify anyone guilty of racketeering.” The editorial called on labor leaders to “do more acting on this grave matter, and less shouting.”

The *New York Times* praised the UAW’s decision to set up a public review board as an internal mechanism for evaluating potential abuses, but it also had reservations about the board’s ability to prevent abuse. “[T]o punish the culprits is not guarantee against future misdeeds,” the *Times* editorialized. The *Rochester Times Union* raised similar concerns about the capacity of AFL-CIO unions to police themselves. “Cleaning up their own house is essential…But the question remains whether that will or can go far enough to safeguard the public interest,” the paper cautioned.

The media generally recognized AFL-CIO leaders as well-intentioned labor statesmen desirous of cleaning house, but questioned their ability to do so effectively, without government intervention. A 1958 *Philadelphia Bulletin* cartoon was typical of this viewpoint (Figure 4-3). It showed a fancy black car labeled “labor racketeers” hightailing it out of town - an image that was often used in cartoons depicting labor racketeers, especially because the corrupt Teamsters controlled much of the trucking industry in the United States. In the *Bulletin* cartoon, a figure representing “reputable organized labor” was left in its dust, the Senate probe in its pocket and

34 For other examples of labor racketeers in general, or the Teamsters in particular shown as fleeing cars and trucks, see the following: Herblock, “‘We Control Everything that Rolls – Almost,’” editorial cartoon, *Washington Post*, date unclear; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Box 1, Miscellaneous Cartoons Fol.; WSU; and Vaughn Shoemaker, “Hit and Run,” editorial cartoon, *Chicago Daily News* (reprinted in the *Garden City Newsday*), April 13, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 29; WSU.
its hat knocked to the ground by the force of the racketeers’ exit. The cartoon ran under the headline, “Cleanup Needed.”

Somewhat paradoxically, at the same time as media outlets questioned the AFL-CIO’s effectiveness in combating corruption, they also drew a direct link between labor’s turn toward national-scale bureaucracy and the spectacles arising from the McClellan Committee hearings. Media commentators viewed the AFL-CIO as both impotent to change the behavior of its decentralized member unions, and as an example of the unparalleled strength that unions had acquired in the decades since the passage of the Wagner Act. Critics argued organized labor’s political and economic clout made abuse easier. In a televised press conference in the fall of 1957, the poet Carl Sandberg said, “When I was young, there used to be in every town a two-story building and the words upon it said ‘Labor Temple.’ Now there are offices and statistics.” Sandberg explained that the temple of old had morphed into a palace. This allowed labor leaders to forget that they should be in service to union members, not themselves.35

“Nothing could look less than an under dog than today’s big union” lamented the Detroit Free Press in 1959.36 Newspaper editorial boards recorded similar thoughts from the beginning of the hearings. According to the Boston Globe, the bottom line was that “big labor has become big business.”37 The Newark News concurred. “[B]igness can be a defect of labor no less than of corporate interests,” the News commented in explaining the union abuses uncovered by Congress and the need for legislation.38

35 Carl Sandberg, qtd. by Victor Riesel, “Beck, the Boss, Smashes a Union,” column, New York Mirror, October 30, 1957; UAW Public Relations – Clippings, Part I, Box 7, Fol. 3; WSU.
36 “Obsolescence in the Unions,” editorial, Detroit Free Press, October 16, 1959; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 33; WSU.
37 “Obligations of Stature,” editorial, Boston Globe, March 26, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 29; WSU.
38 “A Sorry Figure,” editorial, Newark News, March 27, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 29; WSU.
Editorial cartoons routinely used the image of an octopus to depict organized labor, asserting that unions behaved as monopoly businesses. Since the early twentieth century, commentators had used the octopus as a stand-in for railroads and other monopoly businesses, most famously in Frank Norris’ 1901 novel. The use of the octopus to represent organized labor rather than big business showed the success of American Plan backers in promoting the idea of a “labor trust.”

A 1959 cartoon in the *Los Angeles Times* demonstrated the reach of “Hoffa’s tentacles” (Figure 4-4). The image showed the strangulation capabilities of labor; the “octopus” had the potential to shut down entire industries without regard for the wishes of the rank-and-file. Editorialists at the *Chicago American* expressed similar alarms over Hoffa’s calls for a general strike in reaction to any Congressional action in the spring of 1959. They urged Congress to “apply anti-trust laws to unions, and do it fast.” In their minds, only Congress – not the AFL-CIO – could strip Hoffa of his “vast power” that posed “a clear danger to the United States.”


40 The Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 provided no exemption for labor unions in the prosecution of trusts. Prosecutions of labor unions relied on provisions of the Act which forbid combinations – interpreted as capitalistic or not – that interfered with interstate commerce. For a contemporary review of cases of labor unions prosecuted under the Sherman Act in its first twenty years, see C.J. Primm, “Labor Unions and the Anti-Trust Law: A Review of Decisions,” *Journal of Political Economy* 18(2), February 1910: 129-38. In 1914, Congress passed the Clayton Antitrust Act, which modified and clarified the Sherman Act. The Clayton Act exempted labor unions from prosecution as trusts. However, the union exclusion under the Clayton Act generated a renewed push in the business community to lobby for unions to be reclassified as eligible for prosecution as trusts. Business’s American Plan of the 1920s tried to eliminate the closed shop. Part of this campaign involved lobbying to classify the closed shop as a union monopoly. As the historian Elizabeth Fones-Wolf has pointed out, the American Plan also corresponded with the early days of public relations. Businesses like US Steel, General Motors, DuPont and business groups like NAM all took to the airwaves to argue against the closed shop and lay out a vision of American prosperity for the public. See Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, “Creating a Favorable Business Climate: Corporations and Radio Broadcasting, 1934-1954,” *Business History Review* 73(2), Summer 1999: 221-55. Economists also spoke of the idea of the union monopoly in this period. For a roundup of the arguments used by economists to defend this position in the ensuing decades, see Charles E. Lindblom, “The Union as a Monopoly,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 62(5), November 1948: 671-97.


42 “Hoffa’s Orders to Congress,” editorial, *Chicago American*, May 22, 1959; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 32; WSU.
The *St. Petersburg Times* saw an even greater threat in “our era of Bigness – Big Labor, Big Business, Big Government” – all on equal footing. The newspaper reported that this type of “perversion of power, corrupt and immoral, led to Fascism in Italy and National Socialism in Germany.” The paper warned that “the survival of our society” depended on big special interests recognizing the rights of their individual constituents – workers, customers and citizens.

Labor supporters protested that these media attacks were misguided at best, hypocritical and cynical at worst. In the summer of 1957, John Dunlop, the Harvard labor economist responded to media criticisms that unions had become too big, behaved like businesses, and used their bureaucracies to agitate for legislation and candidates outside of a strict collective bargaining mission. On one hand, “the community expects labor to be economic celibates,” Dunlop wrote. On the other, the press praised unions that “most fully adopted the latest types of business techniques,” including increased bureaucracy. “The American community having created a labor movement in its own image now seems to be finding fault with the design,” Dunlop concluded. Dunlop defended the AFL-CIO Ethical Practices Code as reflecting the values of public service, rather than a commitment to union members alone. For labor observers such as Dunlop, the media’s insistence that unions be free of the context that conceived and sustained them was unrealistic.

In some ways, though, accusations that the structure of big labor allowed racketeers to run amuck derived from a weakness in the AFL-CIO’s public relations strategy during the merger, as well as a larger rethinking of industrial pluralism following the recession of 1957-58. When the AFL and CIO combined their organizations in 1955, labor leaders promoted big labor

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43 “In Quest of a Moral Sense,” editorial, *St. Petersburg, Florida Times*, April 11, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 29; WSU.

44 John T. Dunlop, “The Public Interest in Internal Affairs of Unions,” July 12, 1957; Merlyn S. Pitzele Papers, Box 60, Fol. 3; WHS.
as strong enough to police its member unions on matters like racketeering, but also loose enough
of a federation so as not to constitute a monopoly. With the McClellan Committee hearings, it
became clear that both assertions could not simultaneously be true, short of the AFL-CIO’s
ability to expel unions that did not comply with the AFL-CIO constitution. Thus, the AFL-CIO
was revealed as possessing none of the positive powers associated with big labor at the same
time as it was slammed in the press for all of the negative connotations. The merger was a lost
opportunity for the AFL-CIO to offer a different vision of its power, rather than to defend its
status as big labor.

Instead, criticisms of labor as too big, too bureaucratic, and too much like business
persisted as revelations of corruption piled up. This was particularly true as the McClellan
Committee’s investigations shifted from scrutiny of the violent and illegal activities of the
Teamsters to the legally-sanctioned union-related programs of the UAW during the Kohler
strike, or the political contributions made by AFL-CIO-affiliated unions to Democratic
candidates. With this shift in the Committee’s emphasis after 1957, it became more difficult for
the AFL-CIO to frame the rogue activities of Dave Beck or Jimmy Hoffa as outliers. The shift in
committee emphasis forced the AFL-CIO to defend its size as a virtue in eliminating corruption,
and compelled the organization to defend the everyday activities of its member unions –
organizing, political involvement, and strikes – as benefitting the public, not criminal activities
deserving of regulation.

AFL-CIO leaders were deeply concerned that media portrayals of organized labor – and
the McClellan hearings themselves – could produce a public backlash, giving impetus for
conservative lawmakers to push both national legislation that restricted labor’s organizing
abilities and political reach and so-called “right-to-work” legislation at the state level. The
hearings threatened the AFL-CIO’s push to amend or repeal Taft-Hartley and placed the AFL-
CIO on the defensive. At the 1957 AFL-CIO convention, Meany admitted, “Sometimes I think
some of these fellows [in the press] get great enjoyment out of playing this up to make us look
bad.”

Though he was careful to say that he supported the investigations, Meany routinely
criticized the Committee’s interim reports as “disgraceful example[s] of the use of
sensationalism in an attempt to smear the labor movement.” In Meany’s view, McClellan’s
emphasis on wrongdoing in unions threatened to tarnish the entire movement. A 1957 AFL-CIO
resolution made this point by questioning the Committee’s “objectivity and fairness.”

AFL-CIO leaders claimed that the McClellan Committee’s procedures benefitted labor’s
critics, by allowing committee members to harangue witnesses and televising descriptions of
particularly egregious abuses while holding closed hearings for testimony by clean labor’s
champions. Meany protested that business was equally responsible for abuses. He also claimed
that the Committee refused to sufficiently recognize the safeguards that the AFL-CIO had
voluntarily put into place to protect the public from corruption, at considerable financial and
emotional cost to the organization. For example, the 64-page report released in September 1957
by the AFL-CIO’s Ethical Practices Committee, detailing corruption in the Teamsters, rivaled
the McClellan Committee’s report for its condemnation of Hoffa’s associates’ convictions for
“everything from highway robbery to murder.”

Meany worried that, without recognition that

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45 George Meany, speech before the 1957 AFL-CIO Constitutional Convention, *Proceedings of the AFL-CIO
46 George Meany, qtd. in John Vandercook radio broadcast on ABC, March 28, 1958; Harry W. Flannery Papers,
Box 23, Vol. 61; WHS. See also, George Meany, qtd. in Robert S. Ball, “Meany Charges ‘Smear’ in Senate Rackets
Report,” *Detroit News*, March 25, 1958; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part I, Box 7, Fol. 1;
WSU.
47 “Investigations of Improper Activities in Labor and Management Fields,” Resolution No. 144, *Proceedings of the
AFL-CIO Constitutional Convention 1957* – Vol. I: Daily Proceedings, December 5-12, 1957: 479-80; Periodicals,
U-Mich.
48 AFL-CIO Ethical Practices Committee report on the Teamsters’ Union, qtd. on John Vandercook radio broadcast
on ABC, September 18, 1957; Harry W. Flannery, Papers, Box 23, Vol. 60; WHS.
the AFL-CIO was as committed as McClellan Committee members to exposing and eliminating these instances of corruption, the public would be convinced that “restrictive labor legislation” was needed, punishing the entirety of the labor movement for the abuses of a small minority.

For similar reasons, representatives of “clean” labor were equally critical of the press’s coverage of the proceedings. After the passage of Landrum-Griffin, Meany blamed the media’s effort “to whip up public hysteria for punitive action against unions,” condemning it alongside the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and the Chamber of Commerce.49 Union leaders complained that only corrupt unions received attention from the press.50 On the AFL-CIO-sponsored radio series, “Labor Answers Your Questions,” Meany protested that the fact that most union welfare funds were well-run “doesn’t make news.” “Let one be improperly conducted and have some scandal, and of course, it makes news,” Meany continued.51 On the same radio program, Albert Hayes, the president of the Machinists Union and the head of the AFL-CIO’s Ethical Practices Committee made a similar point in the summer of 1957.52 Speaking on behalf of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, Hayes revealed that “the investigation thus far has been of material assistance to us,” but expressed concern about the negative publicity generated by the reporting of the hearings in the press. Hayes accused the media of having “misled…the public who have no other source of knowledge to believe that most of the trade-union movement is corrupt.”

49 Qtd. in Archie Robinson, George Meany and His Times (New York: Simon and Schuster), 213.
50 This was hardly a new argument, but its use intensified during the McClellan hearings. The argument was used frequently during the merger between the AFL and CIO, as commentators correlated labor’s bigness with the increased potential for corruption. In 1956, the Railroad Brotherhoods’ newspaper, Labor wondered why “racketeers make news,” while “clean unionism doesn’t.” The editorial concluded that for publishers intent on selling papers, “the fact that most unions are honest and led by integrity isn’t news.” Still, Labor queried the mainstream press: “How about placing that picture [of labor crooks] in its proper context?” See “Racketeers Make News, Clean Unionism Doesn’t,” editorial, Labor, July 21, 1956; George Higgins Papers, Box 148, Fol. 9; CUA.
51 George Meany on “Labor Answers Your Questions,” April 22, 1957, transcript reprinted in Technician Engineer, May 1957: 7; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 25, Fol. 4; WHS.
52 Albert Hayes, transcript, “Labor Answers Your Questions,” moderated by Harry Flannery, early June 1957; reprinted in the Congressional Record, July 2, 1957, A5263; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 25, Fol. 4; WHS.
Labor’s allies made similar claims about the media’s unbalanced and sensationalist rendering of the committee hearings. In a speech before journalism students at Wayne State University, Senator McNamara disparaged newspapers for granting “relatively immaterial matter” top billing, giving the impression that all unions were corrupt.53 The liberal press sometimes also supported such contentions of media bias in editorial comments. After Beck was hauled before the McClellan Committee, the New York Post charged that the mainstream media was hypocritical in condemning Beck’s behavior.54 “For years he has been immortalized in numerous conservative journals as the very model of the ‘new’ labor statesmen… It is time for a lot of word-swallowing,” the Post told its readers.

Labor leaders and their allies were deeply concerned about the media portrait of the McClellan Committee hearings because they believed that the public could be swayed by such portrayals. Even before hearings began in early 1957, the UAW released its Board’s resolution against corrupt activity in labor unions to the press. In a letter to Meany, Reuther explained that his union decided to make the resolution public because the Board “was greatly concerned and disturbed by the extremely unfavorable stories appearing in the newspapers which the Board felt was doing great damage to the good name of the whole labor movement.”55 This fear among labor leaders that the public would adopt negative attitudes toward unions because of the adverse publicity surrounding the Congressional hearings continued for the duration of the proceedings.

AFL-CIO officials continually worried that “the sins of the few” would jeopardize opinions of the entirety of the labor movement, bringing down public opinion rates for organized labor that, at the start of 1957, matched the highest levels ever recorded since polling began in

53 “McNamara Criticizes Reporting of Beck Quiz,” Detroit News, November 6, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Clippings, Part I, Box 7, Fol. 3; WSU.
54 “The Decline of Mr. Beck,” editorial, New York Post, March 31, 1957; UAW Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 29; WSU.
55 Walter P. Reuther, letter to George Meany, January 21, 1957; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 301, Fol. 4; WSU.
1936. Though union approval rates had slipped by 10 percentage points from their January levels by August and September 1957, it is noteworthy that they were not even lower, given all the negative publicity organized labor had received in the intervening months. Public approval of unions hovered at this level of around 65 percent through 1958, with disapproval rates creeping slowly upwards as the McClellan proceedings continued. Approval rates would recover by August 1959 at 73 percent as the passage of labor reform seemed assured in the form of Landrum-Griffin. Favorable views of unions never again reached their January 1957 levels.

Commentators and union officials attributed the relatively high poll numbers to George Meany’s responsible leadership of the AFL-CIO, the legitimacy extended to Meany through his associations with President Eisenhower and others, and the distaste that Meany expressed publicly toward corrupt elements within the American labor movement. Though the AFL-CIO Executive Council never endorsed Eisenhower, Meany forged a close personal relationship with the President, and the press reported on this relationship. Reflecting on Eisenhower’s tenure fifteen years later, Meany’s attitude was shaped by his positive personal associations with the General. “I think you get in down deep enough on a personal basis, he was a pretty liberal guy…I think considering all the circumstances, he made a pretty good President,” Meany told a biographer.57

Meany was also helped by his public distance from Beck, Hoffa and other labor racketeers. Hoffa played his part in highlighting the contrast between responsible and corrupt

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labor unions by publicly assailing Meany, telling *Life* that “Meany’s forgotten he’s a labor man. But what the hell, he’s never conducted a strike in his life.”

And for his part, Meany received press and public accolades for remaining firm in disallowing the Teamsters from reentering the AFL-CIO, so long as Hoffa remained President. “Jimmy Hoffa is not a trade unionist. He has his roots somewhere else. And frankly, we can’t afford him. He’s too rich for our blood,” Meany contended.

Such public exchanges helped establish the AFL-CIO leadership as responsible, perhaps accounting for the relatively high public approval rates for organized labor throughout the McClellan Committee hearings.

Still, Meany and his staff continued to worry about public opinion. Meany later recalled, “And, then, very, very frankly, we were concerned on the question of public opinion—what the public might think of us if this corruption were to become some sort of a creeping paralysis fastening itself on the trade union movement.” Labor leaders did not view favorable public opinion as a goal in and of itself, but rather as an essential tool in staving off repressive labor legislation. As Meany put it to Beck in Executive Council proceedings against the Teamsters’ leader, “If the AFL-CIO follows the proposal of your organization and equivocates on this question [of whether to expel union officials who invoked the Fifth Amendment], we will get legislation that will hurt every one of our members and hurt every one of our unions.”

Meany continued, “The big question is what we must do at this particular point from the standpoint of public relations.” Throughout the proceedings, AFL-CIO officials walked a fine line in supporting “some federal legislation to help unions eradicate the last vestiges of corruption from

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58 Qtd. in Goulden, *Meany*, 253.
59 Qtd. in Goulden, *Meany*, 253-4.
60 Qtd. in Goulden, *Meany*, 235.
61 Qtd. in Goulden, *Meany*, 236.
the labor movement,”\(^{63}\) while remaining firm that their organization opposed proposals that would serve as “a truncheon to break the union movement.”\(^{64}\)

They quickly recognized that the public could be either an ally or an opponent in this effort. The AFL-CIO’s radio spots on shows that it sponsored urged listeners – both union members and members of the general public – to tell their Senators and Congressmen to vote for legislation supported by organized labor and to oppose legislation that the organization did not support.\(^{65}\) The group’s leadership recognized that most members of the Republican-Southern Democratic alliance would oppose provisions championed by unions, but they hoped that they could convince those on the fence through the use of constituent pressure. This was part of a larger expansion of labor’s political education and political action program in the 1950s. A 1957 report on the AFL-CIO’s political activity explained that this growth had become “a matter of necessity” as labor’s critics tried to use the cover of negative media attention to limit labor’s political influence and to prevent unions from organizing effectively.\(^{66}\)

*The Shape of the Public Campaign*

The Public Relations Departments of both the AFL and the CIO produced radio and television programming before the merger, but the post-merger labor programming conceived in reaction to the labor racketeering hearings was fundamentally different from that from the past. Most of these earlier programs featured the voice of an independent, respected liberal news commentator, despite several projects by AFL and CIO constituents, like the UAW, that

\(^{63}\) AFL-CIO, press release, August 27, 1958; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 301, Fol. 7; WSU. This press release was issued after Congress approved the labor-supported Douglas-Teller Disclosure Act for welfare and pension funds, but failed to enact the labor-backed Kennedy-Ives bill.

\(^{64}\) Edward P. Morgan, AFL-CIO radio broadcast, May 15, 1958; Edward P. Morgan Papers, Box 80, Fol. 8; WHS.

\(^{65}\) See, for example, the openings of the John Vandercook, ABC radio broadcast on November 14, 1957 and April 17, 1958; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 23, Vol. 60, Vol. 61; WHS.

simulated news conferences. In contrast, the programs developed by the new AFL-CIO were much more likely to place Meany and other AFL-CIO officials directly before the public. These appearances provided a counterpoint to the Dave Becks and the Jimmy Hoffas hauled before Congressional committees and reinforced media depictions of Meany as a labor statesman. This illustrated the lack of influence the PR department had in shaping the AFL-CIO’s public message. Though programs like “Labor Answers Your Questions,” were technically crafted and funded by Fleisher’s department, they were really ways of promoting Meany and his vision of responsible labor statesmanship. The bulk of the Department’s programming and budget were devoted to projects conceived before the McClellan hearings began, even if the hearings forced new discussion of corruption in the ranks of organized labor.

This continued reliance on preexisting programs reflected the Public Relations Department’s marginalization in directing the public strategy against the charges aired at the McClellan hearings. Instead, the AFL-CIO relied on its officers to promote labor’s value to the country and the need for moderate labor legislation reform in the public arena. This was partially because the Public Relations Department’s budget was mostly tied up in the sponsorship of radio programs whose commentators the AFL-CIO did not explicitly control. But it also reflected three other facts. First, when the AFL and CIO merged in December 1955, their respective Public Relations Departments were combined rather awkwardly. Fleisher, the CIO’s PR director assumed the top job in the combined organization in 1957 after Philip Pearl, the former AFL PR director, left to start his own firm. But the group came to assume a lower prominence than it had in the CIO, reflecting the dominance of the AFL perspective in the merged organization. Meany and other AFL leaders viewed Fleisher as a loyalist to Reuther and the IUD and were reluctant to let him direct the organization’s response to racketeering –
especially because it involved the delicate matter of handling the Teamsters, a union the CIO had routinely criticized from the beginning.

Second, AFL-CIO leaders did not regard their efforts to reach the public during the McClellan Committee hearings as public relations; they understood it largely as political activity—a domain overseen as an organizational priority by AFL-CIO officers and COPE, the AFL-CIO’s political action committee. This view highlighted organized labor’s relationship to the public in the postwar period, as well as Meany’s own commitment to legislative action and faith in Andrew J. Biemiller, the AFL-CIO’s chief lobbyist. A former Congressman from Wisconsin who drafted the 1948 Democratic convention plank on civil rights that resulted in the walkout of Southern Democrats, Biemiller became the AFL-CIO’s man on Capitol Hill at age 49 in 1956. A colorful figure, Biemiller was known for his “casual” relations with lawmakers—a distinction obtained over many drinks. See Michael Norman, “Andrew J. Biemiller Dies at 75; Was AFL-CIO’s Top Lobbyist,” obituary, New York Times, April 4, 1982.

Biemiller and Meany’s close relationship was one factor in the decision to rely more heavily on the Legislation Department than on the Public Relations Department. But Meany and other AFL-CIO leaders were also deeply concerned about the public’s reaction to allegations of corrupt behavior within organized labor because they perceived the public as a kingmaker in advancing or derailing labor’s immediate political agenda, or in forcing further legislative restrictions on organized labor.

Third, as Meany assumed greater prominence in the media as the face for labor statesmen and clean unionism, he came to displace the Public Relations Department as the primary messaging vehicle. Increasingly, AFL-CIO leaders saw their own organizational actions in reaction to corruption—not the activities of the Public Relations Department—as the primary mechanism for combating negative publicity.
The personnel of the Public Relations Department did not have enough heft within the merged AFL-CIO to manage the fallout of the McClellan Committee revelations. In poor health, and with declining influence with incoming officers from the CIO, Philip Pearl, the AFL-CIO Public Relations Director left the organization in 1957. He left Henry Fleisher of the CIO and head of Publications for the AFL-CIO in charge of the Public Relations Department as the Congressional inquiry intensified. The leadership transition, as well as Fleisher’s unfamiliarity to an AFL-CIO officer corps composed mostly of former AFL officials, weakened the position of the group. At the same time, reporters and industry group staffers speculated that Meany believed Reuther’s combative tendencies threatened the AFL-CIO’s attempt to create a portrait of the AFL-CIO as a force for good, with clear-thinking and measured leadership. Meany may have been reluctant to have a CIO loyalist at the helm in structuring the AFL-CIO’s outreach to the public during the racketeering crisis.

The Public Relations Department continued to wield enormous budgets, but these were deceptive. The AFL-CIO’s radio programming consumed the bulk of PR spending even before the McClellan Committee hearings got underway, and radio and television programming rapidly expanded as the Congressional investigations intensified. Technically under the PR domain, the content of these shows was typically dictated by the priorities of the AFL-CIO leadership, principally Meany. Pearl, Fleisher and their staffs were marginalized. In its first year and a half of operation, the AFL-CIO continued to broadcast most of the radio programs that the AFL and the CIO had sponsored before the merger, resulting in huge expenditures. Between July 1956

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and June 1957, the AFL-CIO’s Public Relations Department spent over $750,000, with all but $100,000 of that figure applied toward radio programs.\(^{69}\)

While there was some internal debate about whether radio was the most effective allocation of the Public Relations Department’s funding, the consensus of those within the department and the consultant M.S. Novik was that radio reached more members of the public than most other media at a fraction of the price. In July 1959, the AFL-CIO’s Public Relations Director Albert J. Zack responded to grumbling among Executive Council members about the large radio budget by arguing that neither television nor newspaper advertising reached as many people as radio, and that radio was “clearly the cheapest medium of communication.”\(^{70}\) Zack continued, “Countless surveys prove that radio reaches more people on a per-dollar-per-person basis than newspapers or television,” a point that was borne out by the AFL-CIO’s own calculations. For the cost of its 1959 radio programming, the AFL-CIO could purchase only twelve nights of television a year or four full-page advertisements in 40 major newspapers a year, Zack concluded. In addition, Zack showed the importance of the link between public relations and the AFL-CIO’s legislative agenda by arguing that radio news programming helped to “create a liberal and progressive political climate” by attracting consistent audiences receptive to the AFL-CIO’s position. More limited television appearances or newspaper advertising would not generate such a reliable and receptive ongoing audience. This view of radio showed the extent to which the AFL-CIO was committed to paid mass media as a strategy for reaching the public, rather than a grassroots, worker-directed approach. It also reflected the considerable budget that the AFL-CIO had, even if it was not enough for ongoing television spending.

\(^{70}\) Albert J. Zack, memorandum to George Meany, “Continuation of present Radio Program,” July 2, 1959; George Meany Papers, Box 37, Fol. 8 (Radio and Television, 1959-1960); GMMA.
As indicated by Zack’s comments on audience, most of the AFL-CIO’s radio programs were news commentaries with a liberal bent, like those featuring John Vandercook and Edward Morgan, or were entertainment programs sponsored but not produced by the AFL-CIO. But as the McClellan Committee hearings heated up, the AFL-CIO began to invest in radio programs, literature, media kits and informational packets for schools and churches that allowed its leadership to set the record straight specifically on the corruption issue. Still, radio and television programming – media that were not well controlled directly by the PR department – continued to occupy the largest line items in the Public Relations budget, even as the overall publicity budget expanded.

This fact did not escape notice in the press, though reporters and editorialists generally assumed that the Public Relations Department was in full control of the spending. In the fall of 1957, as the AFL-CIO bi-annual convention approached, the press reported that the organization’s Executive Council had committed to expand its public relations expenditures by over 50% in the coming year – a move that commentators criticized as a smokescreen. The New York Daily News editorialized that the AFL-CIO could save itself the $1.2 million by removing corrupt unions and staying out of politics. These “actions should do more to improve the outfit’s public standing than any number of words from any number of press agents,” the Daily News concluded.71 Both newspapers and industry groups drew a direct connection between the budgetary bump and the revelations in Congress. The conservative Phoenix Republic charged that the fund was designed “to counteract the unfavorable news that has come out of Senate investigations.”72 Staffers at NAM privately expressed the view that “the revelations of the

71 “How to Save $1.2 Million,” editorial, New York Daily News, October 29, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 30; WSU.
72 “Reuther’s Record,” editorial, Phoenix Republic, November 4, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 30; WSU.
McClellan Committee have cost the AFL-CIO substantial public prestige and support,” resulting in slowed union organizing and the possibility of restrictive labor legislation. NAM feared that the AFL-CIO’s increased public relations spending would “result in a barrage of skillful propaganda” to combat labor legislation of any type.

AFL-CIO staff viewed the increased expenditure for public relations as necessary “to counteract the harm done to decent unionism” by corrupt individuals within the labor movement and by the propaganda campaigns undertaken by industry groups and employers as collective bargaining negotiations for 1958 began. Fleisher envisioned the new funding as enabling the organization to develop “a major public relations campaign” consisting of three pieces: a “thorough pamphlet” explaining the AFL-CIO’s commitment to enforcing ethical behavior among its affiliated unions and making the case against “bad legislation”; a 28-minute film presenting the pamphlet information through another medium; and advertisements, leaflets and posters. Fleisher’s program promoted a singular message to both union members and non-

73 “Some Suggested Activities for NAM’s Labor Program – 1958,” internal memorandum; NAM Papers, Series VII, Box 140, NAM Labor Programs, 1953-1961 Fol.; Hagley. In fact, union organizing did not substantially slow during the late 1950s. The total membership of American trade unions declined from 17,686,900 to 16,501,400 between 1957 and 1959, a loss of 6.7%. The share of non-agricultural employees who were unionized declined from 24.5% in 1957 to 22.3% in 1959. The AFL-CIO’s membership dropped from 16,078,400 to 13,714,900 in the same period, a loss of 14.7%. See Leo Troy, Trade Union Membership, 1897-1962 (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1965): 1, 2, and 8. But these declines are not necessarily attributable to slowed union organizing efforts or successes. The recession of 1957-1958 reduced employment overall and union membership rates in particular. Furthermore, unions did not de-prioritize organizing during this period. The economist Paula Voos has shown that spending on organizing as a percentage of overall union spending by a representative sample of unions remained constant or even rose slightly in the 1957 to 1959 period. More importantly, while overall membership declined, expenditure on organizing per member rose. Overall organizing expenditures rose substantially between 1956 and 1957 and remained relatively constant over the period of the McClellan hearings. Voos concludes that, “The hypothesis that unions reduced their commitment to growth, and thus are partially responsible for the decline in the unionized portion of private sector employment, is not supported, in my opinion, by the data examined here.” Still Voos writes, “It is nevertheless plain that union organizing programs did not increase rapidly enough in this period to offset the forces working to reduce the size of the organized sector.” See Paula Voos, “Trends in Union Organizing Expenditures, 1953-1977,” Industrial and Labor Relations Review 38(1), October 1984: 52-63, qtes. 62-3.

74 Henry Fleisher, “Some Proposals for a Public Relations Program to be Undertaken by the AFL-CIO,” memorandum to the AFL-CIO Committee on Public Relations, November 21, 1957; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 320, Fol. 2; WSU.
members through multiple media channels, including a new emphasis on television spending and a reduction in radio spending.\textsuperscript{75}

In tandem with the AFL-CIO’s existing radio programming, pamphlets and kits for “opinion makers,” Fleisher hoped that the new materials would convince the public that the AFL-CIO would successfully clean up corruption, eliminating the need for repressive labor legislation. In reality, though, the increased PR spending by the AFL-CIO was relatively limited compared to the significant negative publicity created by the Congressional hearings. And, much of that budget was still consumed with radio programming both unscripted by the AFL-CIO and only marginally concerned with the McClellan hearings. Radio programs like “Labor Answers Your Questions” and other programs, such as AFL-CIO-sponsored kits to prepare college debaters to oppose right-to-work, were directly responsive to allegations of corruption. While the latter was conceived and executed by the PR Department, the far more visible radio program, “Labor Answers Your Questions,” featured AFL-CIO officers in unscripted appearances before sympathetic reporters over thirteen weeks.\textsuperscript{76}

A few PR Department-sponsored programs bucked the trend of promoting the AFL-CIO’s officers. In 1959 the Department began to run a series of fifteen minute “telefilms” documenting the important work that unionized men and women did. These films did not respond to the McClellan hearings directly, but the timing of their development and release was

\textsuperscript{75} Labor’s early television programming generally consisted of filmed versions of roundtable discussions and “press conferences” broadcast on radio. The 1958 AFL-CIO Public Relations Department budget included a television increase of $300,000, still well below the $500,000 allocated for radio. Henry Fleisher, “Report on Sub-Committee for Public Relations – April 28, 1958”; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 320, Fol. 2; WSU.

\textsuperscript{76} For more on the AFL-CIO’s radio program, see Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, Waves of Opposition: Labor and the Struggle for Democratic Radio (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006). NAM staffs described these panels as “stacked,” and worried about the impact of such programming on a public that might mistakenly identify the shows as network-produced news. See G.W. Johnstone, memorandum to Stephen F. Dunn, “Re: AFL-CIO’s radio tape series,” June 28, 1957; NAM Papers, Series VII, Box 128, Industrial Relations Dept. – General – April-June 1957 Fol.: Hagley. For its part, the AFL-CIO tried to expand its “news” programming far and wide. The organization supplied free, taped copies of the program to radio stations around the nation. The budget for the program came from the Public Relations Department, but the voices of Meany and other AFL-CIO leaders controlled the content.
not accidental. In presenting the rank-and-file as noble, patriotic Americans whose work formed the foundation of the country’s prosperity, the films provided an implicit counter to the corrupt union officers appearing in Congressional hearings. In its communication with television station managers, the AFL-CIO presented the series as fulfilling two functions: “to instill in workers an even greater pride in their jobs,” thus increasing productivity and aiding the consuming general public, and to encourage “our fellow Americans to take pride in our nation’s workers and their contributions to the free enterprise system in a democracy.” Programming that emphasized workers rather than union leaders and that demonstrated the AFL-CIO’s commitment to democracy (as opposed to corruption) and free enterprise (as opposed to communism) challenged the conventional wisdom about unions that the McClellan hearings had reinforced.

The “Americans at Work” segments were produced by an independent company, Norwood Studios, at considerable expense – some $243,000 – but AFL-CIO leaders hoped that television stations would show the segments as public service programming, eliminating a huge television buy, which was much more expensive than radio. In a letter to the 495 commercial television stations to which the AFL-CIO offered the series, Meany emphasized that one-third of television audiences were AFL-CIO members, and that this population would likely tune into the series. Meany argued that the program was both “entertainment” and had “real educational value” for everyone, but the AFL-CIO’s pitch concentrated on the “pre-inserted audience” of union members, along with “their families, their friends, their dozens of good neighbors with whom they do business.” The series was not intended solely for union members, but the Public Relations Department – like the political units of the AFL-CIO – still concentrated on using

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77 George Meany, letter to television station managers, December 9, 1958; Walter Reuther Papers, Box 337, Fol. 9; WSU.
78 “TV Syndication Review,” Variety, April 29, 1959; Walter Reuther Papers, Box 305, Fol. 12; WSU.
79 George Meany, letter to television station managers, December 9, 1958; and “Americans at Work: An entertaining new public service series,” AFL-CIO brochure, December 9, 1958; Walter Reuther Papers, Box 337, Fol. 9; WSU.
members as the linchpin for reaching out to a wider public, even as late as 1959. As union membership declined to a much smaller percentage of the American public in the decades to follow, the Public Relations Department would be forced to change its approach.

Despite the significant resources that the AFL-CIO committed to the project, television critics were not as enthusiastic as Meany about “Americans at Work.” Variety panned “Fabric to Fashion,” the first installment of the series highlighting the work performed by ILGWU members as “a film of decidedly inferior quality” whose “net effect was dullness.” Reflecting the conventional wisdom about union inefficiencies, Variety also complained that the “clichéd musical background” required the use of twenty unionized musicians, when “canned music” would have served the film much better.⁸⁰ Still, the “Americans at Work” series gave the AFL-CIO a relatively low-cost way of drawing a new image of unionism in the very same medium co-opted by McClellan and his colleagues.

The work-themed AFL-CIO films were unusual as elements of the AFL-CIO’s public response to the threat of corruption charges. As the McClellan Committee hearings progressed, COPE, the Legislative Department and the President’s Office overtook the Public Relations Department as the primary spaces through which AFL-CIO publicity was shaped, sometimes unintentionally. None of these groups commanded budgets as large as Public Relations, but the President’s Office was far more visible in crafting the organization’s public response, and COPE and the Legislative Department were tasked with the immediately more important projects of fending off objectionable labor legislation and electing a new Congress and President who would promote labor’s aims. All three groups used the public to advance their aims, but public relations were not explicitly a part of their missions. Indeed, Meany was reluctant to characterize his organization’s public reaction to the racketeering hearings as a publicity

⁸⁰ “TV Syndication Review,” Variety, April 29, 1959; Walter Reuther Papers, Box 305, Fol. 12; WSU.
campaign. In the spring of 1957, a reporter asked Meany whether his organization was planning a campaign “to convince the public that…the great mass of the [labor] movement is basically honest.” Meany clarified that the reporter was asking about a “publicity campaign,” and acknowledged the value of favorable public opinion. But he replied that, “there isn’t any such campaign contemplated or in the works at the present time.”

Instead, the organization largely focused on counteracting the charges made by industry groups and overzealous Senators, and disputing the impression that all of labor was corrupt. In the midst of the Congressional investigation, the AFL-CIO’s Sub-Committee on Public Relations reported that organized labor required “no public relations ‘gimmicks’; we need only honest and adequate presentation of the facts.” The committee acknowledged that “the best public relations” were not pamphlets or radio programs produced in response to crisis but, rather, the “record of the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions and their day-to-day contributions to the whole of society.” This included the active citizenship of members and the community service initiatives of affiliated unions, but it also suggested that the daily remarks of the AFL-CIO’s top leaders to the press, the testimony provided by AFL-CIO officials before Congressional committees, and the fundraising and information produced by COPE were all key pieces of the AFL-CIO’s public relations program. The Public Relations Department declined in importance as AFL-CIO leaders perceived the political implications of adverse publicity.

Meany routinely stated that he feared that anti-labor Congressmen would use the McClellan revelations as a pretext for implementing repressive labor legislation. In comments to the IUD convention in the fall of 1957, Meany pledged “no surrender to anti-labor legislation

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82 Henry Fleisher, “Report on Sub-Committee for Public Relations – April 28, 1958”, Walter Reuther Papers, Box 320, Fol. 2; WSU.
that is proposed in the guise of eliminating corruption.”

This fear of such dire legislative outcomes as prohibitions on secondary boycotts, further restrictions on the political involvement of unions, and the application of anti-trust laws to unions shaped the AFL-CIO’s public response to the hearings. It also derived from the McClellan Committee’s own confounding of criminal and political activities as it investigated crimes committed by the likes of Dave Beck, alongside the supposed abuses perpetrated by the UAW’s political operations.

COPE and the Legislative Department both engaged in behind-the-scenes maneuverings to apply pressure to union-supported lawmakers and to provide research assistance, position papers, and information to Congressmen. The Legislative Department did a small amount of direct outreach to union members, urging support for labor reform legislation backed by the AFL-CIO – including the production of a pamphlet entitled, “Get Crooks – Not Unions,” that was distributed at plant gates and union meetings in 1959 – but its outreach to the general public was minimal.

COPE implemented a far larger public campaign – rare for an “off” year and demonstrative of the extent to which AFL-CIO leaders perceived the racketeering allegations as a political problem. In August 1957, the head of COPE reported that his organization had sent out 5,000,000 pieces of literature since the beginning of the year. Judged by this measure, “it would be hard to tell that this is an ‘off’ year in politics,” the COPE director told AFL-CIO higher-ups. This large volume was also responsive to labor’s defeat in the 1956 presidential election, as well as the complete transition to an AFL-CIO political arm following the 1955

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83 George Meany, qtd. in Asher Lauren, “Meany Bars Surrender in Cleanup of Rackets,” *Detroit News*, November 1, 1957; UAW Public Relations – Clippings, Part I, Box 7, Fol. 1; WSU.
84 Memo from Andrew Biemiller to the AFL-CIO Executive Council, June 11, 1959; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 305, Fol. 9; WSU.
85 James L. McDevitt, Report of James L. McDevitt to Administrative Committee of the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education, August 13, 1957; UAW Political Action and Citizenship Department – Roy Reuther Papers, Box 47, Fol. 10; WSU.
merger of the AFL and CIO. But the corruption hearings created a new sense of urgency during a year that had no electoral significance.

Still, COPE emphasized outreach to union members much more than outreach to the general public. In 1957, COPE instituted a voter registration and PAC contribution drive among AFL-CIO union members, publicized through the labor press and at local and state union conventions. While the COPE’s Director remained concerned about the political implications of adverse public opinion toward the McClellan hearings, as late as August 1957, he emphasized two longer-term “political problems” for labor: a belief among minorities that the AFL-CIO had dragged its feet in supporting civil rights and the strength of conservative voting patterns among rapidly expanding suburbs. The Congressional hearings on racketeering were important in determining how the public viewed labor at the moment, but COPE did not believe that they would play a major role in shaping future electoral outcomes. This view may have been correct, as evidenced by labor’s electoral success in the 1958 elections.

Even so, the AFL-CIO’s political arm also distributed material to the mainstream press through its biweekly “Political Memo.” Items like McClellan Committee member and AFL-CIO opponent Senator Barry Goldwater’s $60,000 testimonial dinner made their way from COPE’s newsletter into Associated Press articles. COPE leaders hoped that such news tidbits would help to discredit the proceedings of the McClellan Committee in the public mind and advance labor’s reputation as a public interest group opposed to special interests in Congress. Like Meany and other AFL-CIO officers, COPE materials tended to leave thorough discussion of the revelations themselves to the side. Instead, they tried to damage the reputations of the

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86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
Committee’s participants, representing them as hacks serving their big business supporters at the expense of the American people.

In addition to pursuing this type of indirect outreach to the public, COPE encouraged union members to spread labor’s message to the general public. The department developed a series of film strips and pamphlets that could be shown and distributed to progressive audiences beyond organized labor, in conjunction with a local speaker armed with a series of illustrative charts. A PAC-produced 1958 film strip entitled “Everyone Gives to Political Action,” distributed by union officers on the local level, was typical. It contrasted the business lobby with that of labor, claiming that Americans were forced to “pay high prices and high taxes at Big Business’s behest.”88 In the film strip’s telling, organized labor stood against such interests, representing both workers and a general public hurt by Big Business’s assault on the American standard of living. In one frame, the narration manual instructed the speaker to emphasize organized labor’s program for “mass purchasing power and full employment” against “the big business program of lower taxes for business, trickle-down benefits, and unemployment.”89

A 1959 film voiced similar themes. It quoted a Fortune Magazine article charging that the “hottest extracurricular activity of many corporate managements today is not golf, but a more complex game – politics.” In contrast to corporate campaigns to extract money from the public in the form of high taxes and high prices, the film claimed that COPE is “nobody’s Trojan horse.” The organization “works to no purpose which does not serve the welfare of all the people,” the film argued.90 Such PAC material did not explicitly mention revelations of corruption in the ranks of labor. However, by suggesting that labor was on the side of the

88 T.E. Dudley, memorandum to Dick Dashiell, August 8, 1958; CIO PAC Papers, Box 12, Fol. 20; WSU.
89 “Everyone Gives to Political Action,” film strip narration, frame 29, p. 9; CIO PAC Papers, Box 12, Fol. 20; WSU.
90 Guy Nunn, draft of script for COPE film or TV program #1, January 6, 1959; UAW Political Action and Citizenship Department – Roy Reuther Papers, Box 12, Fol. 20; WSU.
ordinary consumer and taxpayer and opposed to a unified and self-interested Big Business lobby, these COPE films fought the image of the selfish labor mogul that the McClellan hearings promoted.

Just how effective this AFL-CIO campaign was in influencing public attitudes toward unions remained a question of debate. COPE was vastly outspent by industry groups trying to influence voting behavior and public attitudes on labor. In 1956, COPE raised and spent just under $1,000,000, contributing to a total of around $2,000,000 spent by labor groups. The top one hundred military contractors alone outspent COPE, while the DuPont family gave more to the Republican Party in 1956 than the UAW received in political contributions from all of its members in the same year.\(^91\)

In the weeks leading up to the 1958 Congressional elections and right-to-work state ballot initiatives, *Business Week* reported that COPE spent just $450,000 and had trouble collecting voluntary contributions of $1 per union member. Meanwhile, NAM and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce mounted their “most intensive political campaign ever.”\(^92\)

Despite these discrepancies in funding, the AFL-CIO did quite well in the 1958 election.\(^93\) This fact perhaps demonstrated that funding was less important than public opinion toward unions (which still was overwhelmingly favorable in 1958) or other factors, such as effective get-out-the-vote strategies.

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\(^91\) Gore Senate Committee Report, qtd. in memo from Harry Kranz to Walter P. Reuther, February 24, 1958; Walter Reuther Papers, Box 420, Fol. 5; WSU.

\(^92\) “Labor Goes on Political Defensive,” *Business Week*, October 18, 1958; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 421, Fol. 9; WSU.

\(^93\) California voters soundly defeated a right-to-work ballot initiative, along with the anti-union Republican gubernatorial candidate William Knowland. There were other labor victories in the states, including Ohio. The historian David Stebenne quotes a study indicating that “78 percent of those union voters calling themselves working class voted Democratic, up from 64 percent in 1956. The figures for those labeling themselves middle class were 77 percent and 57 percent, respectively. Among union households, the percentage voting Democratic rose from 62 percent in 1956 to 78 percent in 1958.” See David Stebenne, *Arthur J. Goldberg: New Deal Liberal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 452.
The success of COPE leadership’s decision to reach out to a larger public, as opposed to union members alone, is difficult to assess. On the one hand, it was precisely unions’ greater foray into politics that drove the confounding of criminal behavior and ordinary union activity during the McClellan Committee’s hearings. This prompted Goldwater to speak of a conspiracy of unfettered union monopoly power. But on the other hand, some critics charged that this perceived power was a mirage. Dick Bruner, a former Packinghouse Workers’ official in Iowa, penned *Harper’s Magazine* article in 1958 arguing that Goldwater’s perceptions of union political strength were “just plain laughable.” Bruner saw COPE’s growing turn toward literature and film production, as well as supplier of information to the mainstream media, as detracting from the agency’s central mission of developing an effective political operation in the field. But it was also this turn that COPE leaders believed would allow the organization to influence the attitudes of ordinary Americans, not just its own membership. The McClellan Committee revelations were one of a number of factors (including the merger and the results of the 1956 election) influencing COPE’s turn toward implementing a more robust public relations effort.

COPE’s attempts to reach the general public showed the reason that the AFL-CIO’s leadership was so concerned about the McClellan hearings’ influence on public attitudes toward unions; they had the power to produce disastrous legislative outcomes for organized labor. This was a message that the AFL-CIO’s top leaders drove home throughout the hearings. After Congress passed the Landrum-Griffin bill, AFL-CIO Vice-President James B. Carey chastised lawmakers who had supported the legislation. In individualized letters, Carey condemned Landrum-Griffin supporters for showing that they were “less interested in individual rights and

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94 Dick Bruner, qtd. in the *Chicago American*, “How Strong Are the Bosses?,” editorial, August 12, 1958; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 31; WSU.
democracy than in property rights and the concentration of power in the hands of big business.”

Carey acknowledged that union members’ presence in many Congressional districts was weak, but pledged to unite all “working men and women” to “take appropriate action at the ballot box.”

The release of Carey’s letter was a major public relations blunder for the AFL-CIO. It had the effect of making organized labor appear to be an undemocratic and threatening group - too big, too powerful, and interested in promoting its own interest above that of the general public. For example, in a NAM-publicized quotation, an Idaho Representative called Carey’s letter “a cheap effort at intimidation.” He wrote to Carey, “I have no intention of taking orders from you or anybody else.”

NAM’s Chief Administrative Officer, Charles R. Sligh, Jr., contrasted NAM with the AFL-CIO in public appearances. On the ABC radio program, “The Voice of NAM,” Sligh claimed that his organization “made no threats, pounded no desks, exerted no pressure” of the type exercised by union lobbyists. “We don’t publish black lists of Congressmen who fail to vote the way we think we should,” Sligh continued. The press also had a field day critiquing Carey’s letter. An editorial in the Burlington, Vermont Free Press was typical. It compared Carey and Hoffa under the headline, “Carey Also Thinks with Muscles.”

This type of treatment of organized labor in the nation’s newspapers diminished the AFL-CIO’s efforts to portray itself as a force for the public good and undermined media descriptions of AFL-CIO officers as unlike the corrupt union bosses of the Teamsters. But however poorly

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95 James B. Carey, letter to Congressmen who voted for Landrum-Griffin, August 18, 1959; NAM Papers, Series VII, Box 129, General – August-September 1959 Fol.; Hagley.
96 Representave Hamer H. Budge (R-ID), qtd. in National Industrial Relations Reporter Supplement (published by NAM), August 21, 1959; Series VII, Box 129, General – August-September 1959 Fol.; Hagley.
conceived was Carey’s letter, the basic idea that organized labor would make its presence felt through a combination of worker and public support for labor in politics was the defining AFL-CIO message during the McClellan hearings.

This message was best delivered by Meany and other AFL-CIO officers regarded as “labor statesmen” in the press, alongside the institutional machinery of COPE and the Legislative Department, not through the marginalized Public Relations Department. Many newspapers echoed the *Fort Wayne News-Sentinel’s* praise of Meany’s “high concept of patriotism and personal honesty,” even as it worried that not all union leaders shared Meany’s unassailable character.99 The AFL-CIO tried to capitalize on such views by deploying Meany as the primary spokesman for the labor federation.

Meany was uniquely suited for this role. The plain-spoken plumber from the Bronx had been away from his trade for decades before assuming the AFL-CIO presidency with the merger in 1955, and, unlike his rival, Walter Reuther, he had never led an international union or assumed responsibility for collective bargaining. But Meany’s lack of formal education, New York accent, blunt comments to the media and conservatism around anticomunism established him as a no-nonsense, practical, reasonable and sharp labor spokesperson. As a former labor lobbyist in New York State, Meany saw the potential of political action and recognized that favorable public opinion was key to labor achieving its legislative goals.100 In later years, Meany

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99 “If All Labor Leaders Were Like Mr. Meany,” editorial, *Fort Wayne News-Sentinel*, November 12, 1958; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 31; WSU.

100 Several biographers have contrasted Meany’s embrace of political action and bureaucracy with Walter Reuther and others’ desire to commit more resources to organizing workers. Robert Zieger explains that while Meany’s “stress on political action paid off in power and influence for the AFL-CIO,” “the percentage of workers organized dropped substantially during Meany’s tenure.” See Robert Zieger, “George Meany: Labor’s Organization Man”, in Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, *Labor Leaders in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 336 and 341. Reuther expressed his personal frustration with Meany’s approach in 1966: “The AFL-CIO lacks the social vision, the dynamic thrust, the crusading spirit that should characterize the progressive, modern labor movement.” Qtd. in Nelson Lichtenstein, “Walter Reuther and the Rise of Labor-Liberalism,” in Dubofsky and Van Tine, *Labor Leaders in America*, 298. According to many observers, Reuther was committed to political action, but
explained that his intolerance for the Teamsters’ corruption derived from a fear that the public would equate inaction as support for criminal activity. “It would be a bad situation inside the movement and in the view of public opinion generally. If that happened, I felt we would get really stringent legislation,” he told an admiring biographer.101

As head of the AFL-CIO, Meany saw an opportunity to reshape the image of American labor in the eyes of the public. That involved using his position to force the Executive Council to oust corrupt entities from the AFL-CIO’s ranks, sometimes threatening other Council members in the process. It also involved positioning himself as the spokesmen of American labor in legislative sessions and in statements to the press. By the time Congressional inquiries began in 1957, George Meany had only served as chief executive of a major labor federation for less than five years, but he had nearly a decade of experience managing the AFL’s day-to-day affairs under William Green—a man described by his own biographer as “a weak, unimaginative, and ineffectual peacemaker within the labor movement,” who became a mere “figurehead” in the last years of his life.102

As such, Meany knew how to quietly contain and control personalities within the ranks of the AFL-CIO’s leadership, as well as how to use the AFL-CIO presidency as a bully pulpit in selling labor to the public in the interest of legislative change. As one scholar explained, “Meany, better than anyone else, appreciated both the limits and possibilities inherent in executive office in the world of American labor.” He was, at heart, an “organization man.”103

his confrontational leadership style developed as head of the United Auto Workers made him less interested in pursuing the behind-the-scenes negotiations and compromise necessary for success in the legislative process. See, for example, Paul Hall’s reflections in Robinson, George Meany and His Times, 271-2.

101 Qtd. in Robinson, George Meany and His Times, 216.
A *Time* obituary was more direct: “Meany was, in fact, a crafty manipulator of the strong-willed men who fought for influence in labor's biggest house.”\(^{104}\) Unable to achieve the upper hand against Meany, personalities as big as John Lewis and Walter Reuther took their unions out of the labor federations that Meany managed. The famous characterizations of Meany as “crusty” and “dour” concealed the AFL-CIO President’s remarkable ability to impose his will on some of the looming figures of the American labor movement. As a remembrance put it, Meany was, quite simply, “American labor’s most dominant and durable leader.”\(^{105}\) He was, “labor’s iron man,” outlasting and outsmarting his competition.\(^{106}\)

There were also structural elements at work in Meany’s dominance, though. With the exact tally of the Executive Council’s votes kept secret, Meany was able to provide cover to wavering Council members on the question of expulsion and the resulting loss of per capita taxes to the Federation. Furthermore, the original fault lines between the old AFL and CIO unions never fully healed, creating hardened factions on the Executive Council, despite the presence of a separate Industrial Union Department. As someone who originally hailed from the building trades and who was not always aligned with the Democratic Party, Meany was able to commandeer sometimes grudging support from the Council’s more conservative factions. His commitment to anticommunism was beyond reproach, and Meany’s reluctance to embrace a full civil rights program endeared him to conservatives.

Furthermore, Meany’s personal demeanor – “a burly man and an inveterate smoker of big cigars” who “at times [wore] the pearl gray vest associated in the public mind with businessmen of the 1890’s,” as a contemporary article put it – allowed Meany to be taken seriously by union

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\(^{105}\) Ibid.
presidents older than he. While a fierce combatant of the Teamsters’ number two man, Jimmy Hoffa, Meany presented a similar image to the infamous Hoffa in one notable respect. Like Meany, Hoffa was seen as a no-nonsense throwback who told it like it was. Even as he admitted egregious behaviors, “which might not exactly read like Sunday school stuff,” before Congress, old-time labor union leaders could not help but respect Hoffa’s “open-faced, sugar-coated candor” and open defiance – qualities that made him a “TV star” in the McClellan hearings. But unlike Meany, Hoffa positioned himself as an authentic folk hero of the rank-and-file, representing their interests against an entrenched Washington bureaucracy. Hoffa frequently drew on his status as a beloved leader of the Teamsters’ rank and file to oppose AFL-CIO policy on corruption, which he characterized as “creat[ing] a substantial threat to liberty and the strength of the union.” In contrast to Meany and Hoffa’s appeal to union old-timers and penchant for backroom deals, or Hoffa’s insistence that he represented union democracy, Reuther’s persistent and public calls for restraint in the AFL-CIO’s gatherings in Palm Beach, for example, were resented by older members of the Council. Even if they remained distrustful of Meany, Council members often backed him as a lesser evil.

The federation structure could also sometimes work against Meany in his effort to control the behaviors of those who operated the member unions that comprised the AFL-CIO. The liberal radio and television commentator, Jack Jurey was not alone in highlighting the strong

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108 On Hoffa’s public image, see especially Russell, Out of the Jungle.
110 “Platform Endorsed by James R. Hoffa in Campaign for Teamster Presidency, as Circulated by Hoffa Supporters – Official Text,” distributed September 30 to October 5, 1957; Walter Reuther Papers, Box 304, Fol. 13; WSU.
111 The structure of the AFL-CIO was more centralized than the AFL had been, but decentralized in comparison to the CIO. Meany’s trump card in policing corruption in members union was expulsion. He exercised no ability to remove corrupt leaders from unions, even if he could orchestrate their removal from the Executive Council. Individual unions had other means of removing corrupt individuals operating at the local level. For example, Reuther’s UAW sometimes imposed trusteeship on locals, effectively temporarily suspending leaders. The Steelworkers’ national leadership was able to remove corrupt individuals operating at the local level directly.
leadership Meany displayed, even in the face of structural impediments. In a 1958 broadcast, Jurey argued that while Meany “has done a good deal to discipline and discredit Hoffa, Dave Beck and a number of other leaders of similar misguided talents,” the AFL-CIO’s structural “weaknesses” left Meany “with nothing much more than moral authority.”

Meany, too, emphasized his organization’s “moral responsibility,” even as he insisted that “the AFL-CIO has no legal responsibility to curb corruption.” But the fact remained that in both Jurey’s telling and Meany’s own presence in reporting the AFL-CIO’s position, Meany, not the Executive Council or other AFL-CIO officers, was the face of the organization. He remained credible, even in the midst of Congress’ corruption probe.

The way that leadership positions were assigned in the merged AFL-CIO demonstrated the old AFL’s retention of power in the new organization and gave Meany more authority than Reuther or Carey. During the crisis of the McClellan hearings, Meany made it clear that he planned to exercise as much control over the direction of the labor federation as the AFL-CIO constitution would allow. At the 1957 AFL-CIO convention, Meany fought back against union officials who believed that the organization should either treat corruption as an internal matter or did not have the authority to police its affiliated unions. He defended his approach, telling delegates, “A great deal of stress has been placed on the terrible crime of allowing this matter to become public. If that is a crime, then I to some extent am responsible for that.” Meany also pledged to continue this tack as the hearings progressed. The phrasing of Meany’s convention remarks was unusual. Meany tended to describe his positions as official AFL-CIO policy. He

\[112\] Jack Jurey, Comment over WTOP-Washington, September 6, 1958; UAW Political Action and Citizenship Department – Roy Reuther Papers, Box 12, Fol. 12; WSU.

\[113\] George Meany, interview, *Dun’s Review and Modern Industry*, April 1959; Walter Reuther Papers, Box 301, Fol. 9; WSU.

most often used the term “we” in conversations with reporters and in written speeches, smoothing over disagreements within the Executive Council and larger convention. But this very fact of Meany’s tendency to speak for all of the organization showed Meany’s power within the AFL-CIO.

Contemporary observers commented that Meany was unlike his predecessors in either the AFL or the CIO. In a 1959 speech before the NAM’s Congress of American Industry, famed labor columnist Victor Riesel contrasted Meany with Phil Murray, who learned he had issued a statement only after it was released by his staff, or William Green, who fell asleep in War Labor Advisory sessions with the President of the United States. “This does not happen in the AFL-CIO today,” Riesel contended. “In the AFL-CIO, George Meany is the leader.”

Union leaders also acknowledged Meany’s power within the AFL-CIO. At the 1957 convention, the Plumbers’ Union president praised Meany’s “bold and courageous leadership” in quelling disputes between Reuther’s IUD and the Building and Trades Department, as well as in responding to the threat of the McClellan hearings, and called Meany “our architect.” Union members sometimes offered this kind of hyperbolic praise to Green and Murray during their tenures at the AFL and CIO, respectively, but it was unusual for either to be cited for something like Meany’s stance during the McClellan hearings – a political position taken or political victory achieved by a labor federation; during Green and Murray’s time as union leaders, union members’ convention remarks presented such interaction with Congressmen as the responsibility and achievement of COPE, CIO-PAC, or individual union heads. This recognition of the changed leadership model in the merged AFL-CIO, as well as Meany’s strong hand internally

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allowed Meany to assume a role as the primary shaper and messenger of AFL-CIO outreach to the public during the Congressional hearings of the late 1950s.

This reliance on Meany as the key communicator to the general public was also a function of the structure of the Congressional proceedings. The AFL-CIO tried to counteract images of unscrupulous labor “bosses” like Beck and Hoffa with Meany – a man never accused of presiding over a corrupt union and without Reuther’s baggage of personal leftist politics and overreach in union negotiations and political involvement. Meany voluntarily appeared before the McClellan Committee on a number of occasions. He also delivered speeches to the general public over network radio on paid airtime, appeared on AFL-CIO sponsored roundtable radio discussions like “Labor Answers Your Questions,” and was often quoted in the press.

Meany’s availability to the press furthered his stellar reputation among reporters. This accessibility was one factor that fed the perception, held by the Baltimore Archdiocese’s paper, the Catholic Review, that even though racketeers sometimes led unions, “there are also the George Meanys – the dedicated servants of the unions who have grown with the labor movement and will see it through this current crisis.”

117 Reuther repeatedly volunteered to appear before the McClellan Committee after he was accused by middleman Nathan Shefferman of illegally buying goods at low cost in exchange for not intimidating employers. Reuther insisted that his testimony be public, as were most of the hearings. But Goldwater and other Committee members tried to ensure that the hearings were conducted behind closed doors. Shefferman’s accusations, alongside allegations that Reuther had once been sympathetic to Communist Russia, as well as industry charges that UAW contracts drove up prices for consumers and that the UAW was too involved politically made Reuther a less desirable figure to represent the AFL-CIO publicly than Meany. Many media outlets held the position of the editorial page of the conservative Dallas Morning News: “The point overlooked is that no one distrusts American labor, organized or unorganized. There is distrust of some union labor leadership. There is distrust of Walter Reuther, not of George Meany. Meany can be trusted not to go the road of socialism. Walter Reuther is a socialist.” See “Reuther Socialism is Target of Opposition,” editorial, Dallas Morning News, November 2, 1958; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 31; WSU. The New York Daily News made a similar claim. Citing Reuther’s “Socialist-slanted political ambitions,” the paper concluded that “Reuther is more dangerous by far…than a Beck’s or a Hoffa’s misuse of union money, bad though that is.” See “Good Work, Senator, But—,” editorial, New York Daily News, October 12, 1957; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 31; WSU.

118 “Labor Still Has Clean Hands,” editorial, The Catholic Review [Baltimore Archdiocese], March 22, 1957; George Higgins Papers, Box 148, Fol. 9; CUA.
criticize those within his own organization publicly, and Bronx accent endeared him to a press corps that disparaged organized labor’s trend toward bureaucratic Public Relations Departments, college-educated leaders seemingly out-of-touch with the rank-and-file, and robust political operations. The *Montgomery Advertiser* highlighted Walter Reuther as representative of a “new type labor union magnate” who had much in common with a “$50,000 corporation executive,” but the editorial was notably silent on how Meany fit into this analysis of union leadership.\(^{119}\)

The press’s willingness to embrace Meany, as well as the personality and strategic differences between Meany and his CIO counterparts, Reuther and Carey, caused internal division about whom to deploy for press engagements. NAM’s “spies” reported that M.S. Novik, the AFL-CIO’s chief radio consultant, urged Meany to discourage press appearances by Carey and Reuther in the summer of 1957.\(^{120}\) Meany reportedly did “not press too hard” against others’ appearances on television and radio. But the fact that Washington broadcasters and industry group officials perceived such tension over who was to control the AFL-CIO’s message – and that Meany was viewed as the best conduit for delivering this message – showed the high political stakes of media appearances by labor officials as well as the rise of Meany’s star as a communicator to the public via the press.

Higher-ups in the AFL-CIO came to view public relations as too important to be left in the hands of the Public Relations Department. Meany – and other AFL-CIO officials – controlled the organization’s outreach to the public during the McClellan Committee hearings. They felt that the price of leaving this task to the Public Relations Department was the further


tarnishing of labor’s reputation in the eyes of the public and, more importantly, the passage of punitive labor legislation as a result of this sullied image.

The Message to the Public

Once Meany began to recognize the seriousness of the allegations against the leaders of the Teamsters and other unions plagued by corruption and the prominence these revelations would receive in the media, he embraced two primary messages. Like the Public Relations Department-developed pamphlets enumerating the Ethical Practices Code, Meany emphasized labor’s effectiveness in cleaning up corruption within its own ranks and appealed to the public’s sense of fairness in not imposing punitive rules on a group that was overwhelmingly honest. Meany also demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with the McClellan Committee and embrace some legislative reform, making himself appear reasonable in the public eye.

At nearly every juncture throughout the McClellan hearings, Meany promoted his organization’s efforts to rid itself of racketeers, and to promote clean unionism, even at considerable organizational risk. At the 1957 AFL-CIO convention that expelled the Teamsters, Meany’s speech concentrated on the vast machinery the labor federation had developed to combat abuses. He spoke of the “high principles” set forth in the AFL-CIO constitution, the development of the Ethical Practices Code, and the work of the Ethical Practices Committee. He also emphasized the AFL-CIO’s power to police its affiliates. In a June 1957 speech before the IUD, Meany asserted that the AFL-CIO constitution “invaded, to some extent at least, the autonomy of affiliated unions,” allowing the national organization to exercise control when

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international unions were delinquent in their duties to crack down on abuses. Meany argued that, buttressed by constitutional directives, the AFL-CIO’s decision to remove the powerful Teamsters was the logical outcome of the AFL-CIO’s original commitment to clean unionism, not a knee-jerk reaction to the crisis presented by Congress’ investigation of labor racketeering. Of course the fact that the Executive Council did not take steps to break with the Teamsters until the McClellan hearings were well underway belied Meany’s logic.

Still, the fact that the AFL-CIO had developed some of the infrastructure for cracking down on corruption before the crisis made Meany’s argument easier. It also helped that, even with the removal of the Teamsters and other unions judged to be led by corrupt officials, an overwhelming majority of unions remained in the AFL-CIO. In his 1957 convention speech, Meany pledged to turn the “99 percent” of upstanding AFL-CIO-affiliated union members and leaders into 100 percent. Meany and his colleagues hoped that this appeal to fairness would ward off the possibility of repressive labor legislation indiscriminately applied to the honest whole.

Meany and other AFL-CIO officials also began to voice support for some legislative reforms as the racketeering revelations mounted and it became clear that some labor legislation was inevitable. David Dubinsky, the long-term president of the ILGWU – routinely praised as one of the AFL-CIO’s cleanest unions – publicly announced the importance of Congressional

122 George Meany, qtd. in “Meany on ‘Autonomy’ Limitation,” John Herling’s Labor Letter, June 15, 1957; Walter Reuther Papers, Box 301, Fol. 5; WSU. Meany’s insistence that the AFL-CIO could counteract corruption among its affiliated unions was a departure from the past, cultivated in response to the McClellan hearings. A few months into the merged federation in 1956, Meany told a CBS-TV news panel that in the absence of investigative infrastructure, the AFL-CIO relied on member unions to regulate themselves. When asked specifically about how he planned to handle corruption in Beck’s Teamsters, Meany pled poverty. “We do not have an FBI. We do not have an investigating department. We don’t have that kind of money. The job of cleaning these things up is in the hands of the international union. They are supposed to watch these things,” Meany replied. See George Meany, CBS-TV, qtd. in Fletcher Knebel and Clark Mollenhoff, “Can Big Labor Clean House?,” Look Magazine, March 6, 1956; John A. Fitch Papers, Box 32, Fol. 1; WHS.
committee hearings in exposing illegal behavior in the labor movement. In a June 1957 speech before the UAW convention, Dubinsky explained that labor had been unable “to detect, to expose and eliminate this evil” on its own. “It is only when the attack was made by the government and the government conducted the investigation that we were able to learn of it,” Dubinsky told convention delegates and reporters. Meany also publicly stated that “What is going on [at the McClellan hearings] is good for labor.”

This support for modest reforms furthered the media’s coverage of Meany as a labor statesman and was designed to make the AFL-CIO appear reasonable, even working against its personal interest for the greater good. But this embrace of legislative reform took time. In the first few months of the Congressional investigation, Meany and other top AFL-CIO leaders hesitated to embrace government action to prevent future abuses. Meany continued to push the welfare and pension disclosure acts that his organization had promoted for years, but he insisted that additional legislation was unneeded. “We are able to clean up what’s found,” Meany told reporters in August 1957. “[W]e will resist any attempts to enact restrictive labor legislation that would affect the whole labor movement because of the sins of the few.”

By using the qualifier

123 Dubinsky marked his twenty-fifth anniversary as head of the ILGWU in 1957, as the McClellan hearings hit their stride. A few right-wingers like the newspaper columnist Westbrook Pegler, criticized Dubinsky for allowing and encouraging corruption in the ILGWU. But most commentators contrasted Dubinsky’s leadership favorably with that of the disgraced Dave Beck. However, because Dubinsky had served so long as union president, commentators sometimes found themselves downplaying democracy in the ILGWU. For example, Edward P. Morgan, a radio personality on a program sponsored by the AFL-CIO described Dubinsky’s time leading the ILGWU as “something of a reign too, but that of a constitutional monarch with the interests of his whole kingdom, not of his own castle, as his guiding principle.” Such formulations implicitly and perhaps unwittingly made a case for increased regulation of unions. After all, it was Dubinsky’s choice to “be stern, if not dictatorial, but with unselfish, even self-sacrificing, objectives.” He compared favorably to Dave Beck but another long-standing president of a union like the ILGWU might have turned out differently. See Edward P. Morgan, radio broadcast, June 14, 1957; Edward P. Morgan Papers, Box 79, Fol. 6; WHS.


126 George Meany, qtd. in John Vandercook, ABC radio broadcast, August 12, 1957; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 23, Vol. 60; WHS.
“restrictive,” Meany allowed the possibility that his organization was willing to support some legislation. But the qualifier also gave Meany a way to oppose any labor bill that came before Congress in 1957. In 1958, Meany stated that the AFL-CIO would give “thoughtful consideration” to every proposed labor reform measure, but he warned that he had “serious objections” to many of the bills Congressmen were preparing to introduce.\(^{127}\) Meany tried to walk the fine line between seeming open to labor reform but opposing the specific measures included in proposed remedies for union racketeering.

Meany argued that the government should play a role, but as an enforcer of already-existing laws against bribery, theft, intimidation, obstruction and violence, not in developing new laws specifically designed to target unions.\(^{128}\) Meany worried that such legislation would give an outsized role to a government that was potentially hostile to unions. Labor’s opponents could use the “big brother” capabilities of government to deprive citizens of their right to organize democratically.\(^{129}\) In fact, the AFL-CIO argued that the country did not need repressive labor legislation in the first place. In 1958, Meany complained to the American Bar Association that, “There doesn’t seem to be a district attorney in the country interested in these instances of trade union corruption.”\(^{130}\) Meany and his colleagues – including those in the AFL-CIO’s public relations group – suggested that Congress could pass all the restrictive legislation it wanted, but it would do little to deter the elements of organized labor that already exhibited illegal behavior.

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\(^{127}\) George Meany, qtd. in John Vandercook, ABC radio broadcast, January 23, 1958; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 23, Vol. 61; WHS.

\(^{128}\) Both union leaders and those opposed to organized labor’s interests argued that local law enforcement should have more control over policing labor’s abuses. Southern Democrats frequently resorted to states’ rights arguments in pushing right-to-work as a solution to what they perceived as the unbridled union power that led to corruption. They also rejected proposals that gave increased powers to combat corruption to the U.S. Department of Labor. AFL-CIO leaders did not embrace such states’ rights arguments, but they did often state that no legislation was necessary because law enforcement could respond to localized situations on the ground.

\(^{129}\) George Meany, qtd. in John Vandercook, ABC radio broadcast, January 23, 1958; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 23, Vol. 61; WHS.

\(^{130}\) George Meany, qtd. in “Look Who’s Calling the Cops,” editorial, *Note from Industry*, published by NAM, September 30, 1958; NAM Papers, Series I, Box 107, Public Information Division Memos, July-December 1958 Fol.; Hagley.
If they were passed, such laws had the potential to “become a mockery if district attorneys and grand juries [did] not fortify [their] meaning with indictments and prosecutions for wrong-doing,” an AFL-CIO radio commentator told listeners in 1959. 131 Indeed, if Congress were to pass repressive legislation making it more difficult to organize workers, curtailing political strength, and undermining union security, the Dave Becks, Jimmy Hoffas and Johnny Dios might rise to the top, at the expense of law-abiding union officials like those that dominated the AFL-CIO. In his public statements, Meany was adamant that “the real problem of corruption is the failure of the law enforcement authorities to act.” 132

Despite their hope that the McClellan Committee would play the role of fact-finding commission rather than legislator of reform measures, over the course of 1957 and 1958, Meany and other AFL-CIO officials came to accept that some government legislative action was inevitable, and – if developed in accordance with the wishes of organized labor – even desirable. As the AFL-CIO lobbyist, Andrew J. Biemiller, explained, “Meany thought McClellan was an antilabor nut…But he had a hell of a lot of nasty material, so we had to walk carefully with him. You don’t mess around with people who can kill you.” 133 One way of treading lightly was to embrace modest reform. This shift was partially a response to media pressure for government action. But it was also caused by a number of other factors.

As the hearings progressed, AFL-CIO leaders recognized that they could change the frame of reference for the legislative debate by advocating for reform inclusive of business, as well as unions. The Congressional investigatory committee was charged with examining management abuses, but nearly all of their efforts focused on labor’s wrongs. AFL-CIO officials

131 Edward P. Morgan, radio broadcast, June 15, 1959; Edward P. Morgan Papers, Box 82, Fol. 2; WHS.
132 George Meany, qtd. in Dun’s Review and Modern Industry, April 1959; Walter P. Reuther Papers, Box 301, Fol. 9; WSU.
133 Qtd. in Goulden, Meany, 235.
elected to publicize this discrepancy in the Committee’s attentions, while urging that fair rules be applied to both labor and business. Labor leaders hoped that this strategy could lessen the severity of the proposals and win the AFL-CIO points with the public. Publicly, William Schnitzler, the AFL-CIO’s Secretary Treasurer, upheld an image of the unbiased labor statesman acting in the public interest. Schnitzler dismissed the liberal columnist Murray Kempton’s suggestion that “the sins of labor leaders were as nothing besides the sins of corporations.” “I don’t give a damn what a corporation does. That doesn’t justify a union representative taking a three-cent stamp,” Schnitzler declared.134 Meany also acknowledged the sins of many of his fellow trade unionists, but he was direct in telling the Senate Labor Subcommittee that, “For every crooked trade union leader engaged in the unsavory task of ‘selling out’ the workers, there is a crooked businessman.”135 Meany told Senators that if they were to implement any new reporting requirements for unions, businesses must also be compelled to participate.

Many commentators also highlighted this message. In a 1957 cartoon for the Washington Post, famed liberal cartoonist Herblock raised the possibility of the Committee’s investigation of business alongside labor (Figure 4-5).136 In a nod to the prevalence of cold war weaponry in the 1950s, the cartoon featured two missiles directed at two different windows. The cartoonist labeled the lower level window, “Racketeering in Labor,” and showed the destruction caused by the initial missile. The second missile was aimed directly at the upper tier window, “Connivances in Business,” but had not yet hit the two overweight, bald, cigar-smoking businessmen housed inside. “You think it’s really one of those two-stage jobs?,” one

134 Murray Kempton and William Schnitzler in the New York Post, qtd. by Edward P. Morgan, radio broadcast, March 27, 1957; Edward P. Morgan Papers, Box 79, Fol. 3; WHS.
135 George Meany, qtd. in John Vandercook, ABC radio broadcast, March 27, 1958; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 23, Vol. 61; WHS.
136 Herblock, “‘You Think It’s Really One of Those Two-Stage Jobs?,’” editorial cartoon, Washington Post, 1957, exact date unknown; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Box 1, Miscellaneous Cartoons Fol.; WSU.
businessman nervously asked the other. By arranging the business corruption window above the labor corruption window and in depicting business elements in a human form resembling Dave Beck, Herblock implied that business was more responsible than unions for criminal behavior in labor-business dealings.

In 1957, Herblock, other liberal editorialists, and labor officials were still optimistic that the McClellan Committee would launch a full-scale inquiry into business abuses. But the Committee dragged the Teamsters investigation over much of the year, winning high television ratings and public support in the process. Industry groups also applied great pressure to the members of the Committee to concentrate solely on the actions of business-labor middlemen, not on business abuses directly.

Furthermore, the Little Rock school integration crisis of the fall of 1957 pushed McClellan, an Arkansas Democrat, further into the fold of the Southern Democrat-Republican coalition in Congress. McClellan vehemently opposed federal intervention in Little Rock, alongside Committee colleague Barry Goldwater, among others. Herblock lamented McClellan’s inconsistency in a fall 1957 cartoon (Figure 4-6). It depicted McClellan holding a sign reading, “We must uphold law and order – in labor unions, that is,” while fleeing the dispute between Uncle Sam and Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus. By the time Eisenhower sent federal troops to Little Rock, liberals and labor officials recognized that the McClellan Committee was not going to pursue offenders in business as aggressively as those in unions. This resulted in Meany and other AFL-CIO leaders highlighting the discrepancy in public forums, rather than simply calling for reform measures that could be applied to both labor and

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137 Herblock, “The Arkansas Traveler,” editorial cartoon, *Washington Post*, Fall 1957, exact date unknown; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Box 1, Miscellaneous Cartoons Fol.; WSU.
business. Labor ally Senator McNamara’s decision to resign from the Committee in 1958 in protest of the unbalanced nature of the investigation furthered labor’s case.

At the same time, the AFL-CIO could not so easily dismiss the Committee’s exposure of the Teamsters as corrupt, even if it questioned Congress’ lack of balance. Support for moderate labor legislation kept the AFL-CIO involved in the process and prevented it from appearing obstructionist to a public that had avidly watched the McClellan proceedings unfold on television. Meany was also spurred to call for some labor reform publicly as it became clear that the AFL-CIO’s own internal housecleaning was not enough to eliminate corruption in the labor movement.

Editorialists like Herblock initially believed that the AFL-CIO had succeeded in isolating corrupt elements. A fall 1957 cartoon showed a Teamsters’ truck driven by Jimmy Hoffa perched on an AFL-CIO controlled tree trunk (Figure 4-7). Unable to move, the passenger asked the driver, “Sure you got everything under control, Jimmy?” Earlier that year, the AFL-CIO strengthened its ethical practices codes, instituted a prohibition on union officials using the Fifth Amendment to cover up bad behavior, and, most impressively, expelled the powerful Teamsters union. But though Dave Beck had been pushed out, Jimmy Hoffa’s Teamsters remained both powerful and corrupt as 1958 began, despite Herblock’s earlier belief that the AFL-CIO dictated the fortunes of the IBT.

Many press commentators supported the AFL-CIO’s decision to expel the Teamsters, but grew concerned that more than a half a year after the ouster, Life could still fill “two solid pages

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138 Herblock, “‘Sure you got everything under control, Jimmy?’” editorial cartoon, Washington Post, Fall 1957, exact date unknown; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Box 1, Miscellaneous Cartoons Fol.; WSU.
of small ‘mug shots’ of police characters and hoodlums high in the Hoffa hierarchy.”

By early 1959, the New York Times reported that there was “a growing conviction in the upper echelons of labor that the ouster method of correction used against James R. Hoffa and the Teamsters ha[d] proved a failure.” Union membership statistics confirmed the strength of the Teamsters even after their removal from the AFL-CIO. While the UAW and the Steelworkers – two of the largest unions in the AFL-CIO – lost members during the 1958 recession, the Teamsters steadily gained new members. The Teamsters’ strength challenged the supremacy of the AFL-CIO. As a result, AFL-CIO leaders began to view moderate Congressional action as a solution to the organizing success and continued control maintained by the Teamsters after their removal.

Calling for legislative reform publicly was both a public relations maneuver and a way of shoring up strength in the field. Meany’s speeches, testimony and comments to the press about racketeering were designed to promote a favorable impression of the AFL-CIO and organized labor, more generally, in the public imagination as a means to encouraging legislative reform on labor’s terms. Public relations were not the end game, but a means to an end.

Conclusion

The AFL-CIO’s expansive vision of public relations and its promotion of unions as a force for the public good during the McClellan hearings had unanticipated long-term consequences for the federation and the fortunes of organized labor, more generally. On the one hand, Meany was successful in promoting himself as a trusted labor statesman representative of

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139 “Labor’s Crossroads,” editorial, Peoria Journal Star, August 19, 1958; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 31; WSU.
union members and the AFL-CIO as a responsible organization, in contrast to the criminal
elements on parade before Congress – an image that lasted through much of the next decade and
was challenged by Meany’s political stances on black power and the Vietnam War, not by the
AFL-CIO’s stance on corruption.

On the other hand, AFL-CIO officials’ insistence that they could effectively control all
their affiliates without government intervention furthered the perception that labor unions had
grown too big, too fast and were now merely bureaucratic machines. By 1958, even a previous
winner of the Sidney Hillman Prize offered this critique of “big labor.” In a cartoon for the St.
Louis Post-Dispatch, Daniel R. Fitzpatrick portrayed Big Labor and Big Business as possessing
even strength (Figure 4-8). Their tug-of-war resulted in the carnage of buildings presumably
representing the great middle – the general public whose interest was neither represented by
labor nor by business. The AFL-CIO’s officers had successfully distanced themselves from
corruption in the eyes of the press and the public, but they had lost the public as a champion.

Instead, the AFL-CIO’s public response to the Congressional inquiry showed the
organization’s political muscle. In the political realm, the AFL-CIO was somewhat successful
between 1957 and 1959, especially given the severity of the substantiated allegations leveled
against unions. Labor did well in the Congressional and state elections in 1958. And for all of
Meany’s objections that Landrum-Griffin was “a blunderbuss that would inflict grievous harm
on all unions,” the reality was that Landrum-Griffin was hardly a second Taft-Hartley.143

Unions had other legislative successes as well. Organized labor was able to stop all but
one attempt to implement right-to-work legislation in the states in 1958. At the national level,

142 Daniel R. Fitzpatrick, [no title], originally appearing in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, reprinted in the Madison
Capital Times, July 28, 1958; UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 31; WSU.
143 George Meany, qtd. John Vandercook, ABC radio broadcast, August 6, 1959; Harry W. Flannery Papers, Box 24,
Vol. 62; WHS. See also, “No Labor Law Suits Leadership,” editorial, Hutchinson, Kansas News, August 11, 1959;
UAW Public Relations Department – Frank Winn Papers, Scrapbook Vol. 32; WSU.
the AFL-CIO successfully fended off more extreme labor reforms – including the full force of Goldwater and Knowland’s so-called “Bill of Rights” for union members and a proposal for a national right-to-work law. In 1960, John F. Kennedy, the Massachusetts Senator who had championed the AFL-CIO’s interests in the form of the Kennedy-Ives and Kennedy-Ervin bills, assumed the presidency, putting a friend of labor in the White House. With union membership rates still strong, the AFL-CIO had much reason for optimism as the 1960s began. In the coming decades, membership rolls would decline and labor would increase its political outreach to an expansive public – a process that became more sophisticated and established during the labor racketeering hearings of the late 1950s.
Conclusion

So far, the twenty-first century has not been kind to organized labor. As of 2012, one in nine American workers belongs to a union, and less than seven percent of those employed in the private sector are unionized.¹ At their height in the mid-1950s, unions counted nearly one in three workers as members.² Today a handful of states are home to the vast majority of the nation’s 14.4 million unionized workers, but even states with historically strong union movements – Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Indiana among them – have seen a legislative tide against organized labor in the form of right-to-work laws and assaults on public sector workers. Even where such laws have been repealed or blocked and supportive legislators recalled, labor remains on the defensive. Its few attempts to enshrine labor’s rights – a proposal to prevent right-to-work legislation in Michigan, for example – have been unsuccessful. At the federal level, the card-check bill whose passage labor leaders hoped that President Barack Obama’s election would hasten, failed. And without a party change in Congress, it seems destined to remain on the backburner. Though the President’s recess appointments to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) at first made that body more sympathetic to labor, these gains were threatened by court rulings that the appointments were unconstitutional. And while the Supreme Court ruling in the Citizens United case at first seemed to empower unions in political spending, businesses and their allies quickly took the upper hand in the political contributions arms race.

What accounts for this decline in the fortunes of unorganized labor? Was the turn inevitable? And when did it take place? These questions have consumed historians for decades.

Some cite unions’ failure to organize workers in growing sectors, inadequate leadership,

inattention or hostility to new types of workers, and a turn toward accommodation with employers as the primary culprits.³ Others credit external pressures – the offshoring of American union manufacturing jobs, the movement of jobs from areas of union strength to right-to-work states, governmental fiscal policy, suburbanization and atomization of society, the rise of conservatism, gerrymandering and a loss of union influence in politics, the turn toward a “sharing” economy, and the failure of liberal groups to ally in meaningful ways – as responsible for unions’ loss of influence in the twenty-first century.⁴ Some argue that, even at the height of its membership in the mid-1950s, the writing was already on the wall for the American labor movement. Most works see a constellation of these factors as responsible for labor’s decline.⁵

These are important questions and the answers are complex. Yet focusing on what killed the unions or whether and how they might rise again obscures another important narrative. This dissertation shows that unions in the postwar period did not suffer a slow decline, complacent in their negotiations with business. Instead, they actively sought out the public and attempted to shape the political discourse of the day, using public opinion as a bargaining chip in their efforts to establish influence beyond collective bargaining and voter turnout. This lens suggests that New Left-inspired criticism of the American labor movement may be misguided. That union leaders’ political vision reflected the cold war liberalism of the day should not be seen as a sign


of failure, but rather as a strategic, pragmatic and authentic effort to represent organized labor and the public alike. Public outreach was not a consequence of deradicalization so much as a reflection of union leaders’ desire to remain relevant and influential. Labor’s outreach to the non-unionized public in the 1940s and 1950s was a political and legislative strategy, a bet on the future of organized labor not only as a collective bargaining agent, but as a voice for all workers and their families, regardless of union affiliation.

The late 1940s and 1950s saw significant changes for American labor unions. Major American institutions – government, business and labor – became much bigger as consolidations, large-scale projects, and increased responsibility became the norm. Professionalization and bureaucracy accompanied this shift, as did a growing sense of the public as customer and consumer of institutions’ wares. Government expanded its role in the lives of ordinary Americans through the GI Bill, a new, vastly expanded highway system, and other projects. Business and labor increased their public presence through lobbying initiatives, press appearances and direct advertising to the public. With an expanded media landscape – including the advent of television – and new public relations techniques, unions and business fought over the public with the aim of influencing governmental policy.

The legacy of labor’s turn toward the public is still with us today. Labor leaders no longer have the same name recognition that they did during the period covered in this study, and labor unions are more likely to promote workers over officials as spokespeople. Weaker than they once were, unions are more willing to present themselves as members of diverse coalitions. But labor’s public relations efforts continue. As in the past, these projects reflect labor’s quest to serve members and non-members as the most significant liberal force in America. The range of
union-supported policies – immigration reform, higher minimum wages, and voters’ rights, to name a few – reflect this goal.

As many unions increasingly operate from a position of weakness at the negotiating table, unions’ clout remains tied to politics – an area where support from the public is key. And gaining that support hinges on unions convincing the liberal public that unions make their world a better place in numerous ways. The industrial peace argument of the postwar period has largely disappeared. But as in the past, organized labor’s arguments center on the ability of unions to improve the quality of life for all Americans. In their efforts to defeat right-to-work legislation in recent years, unions have emphasized their ability to set better working conditions and higher wage standards for all workers, regardless of union affiliation, for example. As in the past, labor unions present unionized workers as neighbors, friends and valued members of the community in contrast to impersonal and monied business interests. In particular, recent campaigns to support public sector workers – especially female teachers and nurses – have emphasized these themes. As in the past, unions see themselves as public interest groups with an ever enlarging natural constituency, albeit with a declining membership. On issues such as the extension of unemployment insurance and health care, unions present themselves as a voice of morality, championing the little guy.

To be sure, at times, labor unions still make their presence felt as deciding forces in elections in places where labor is strong, delivering the 2008 Nevada primary victory to President Obama, for example. These sorts of successful voter turnout efforts harken back to an earlier era of political organizing, even as phone banks and social media campaigns are new. But today unions’ efforts to sway public opinion and generate liberal support are far more powerful than union member shows of strength that often do not result in significant legislative change.
Thus, the spectacle of fast food workers demanding a living wage and the right to organize, or President Obama’s embrace of a minimum wage increase as a signature issue represent the legacy of unions’ outreach to the public in the late 1940s and 1950s far more than the union political machine capable of committing an ever-dwindling number of union votes to political candidates with dubious commitments to labor.

Like their predecessors from more than a half century ago, today’s union leaders see public relations as a means to a political end: achieving legislative victories favorable to unions and their larger social agenda. Whether unions are able to do so without a larger base of committed members willing to evangelize on their behalf is an open question. If we are to judge by the lack of legislative, political, and judicial success that unions have had in recent years, prospects seem gloomy. But perhaps the fallout from the Great Recession will encourage a stronger connection between the working public, union members, and the labor movement. Organized labor’s public relations efforts may well prove to be the basis for its relevance in the political arena in years to come.
Appendix 1: Tables

Table 2-1: Expelled Union Membership (Absolute and Percentage of CIO Membership)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Expulsion</th>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Membership at Time of Expulsion (Previous Year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/1949</td>
<td>United Electrical Workers</td>
<td>499,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1949</td>
<td>Farm Equipment Union</td>
<td>43,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1950</td>
<td>Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers</td>
<td>74,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1950</td>
<td>Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers</td>
<td>22,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1950</td>
<td>United Public Workers</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1950</td>
<td>Office and Professional Workers</td>
<td>31,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/1950</td>
<td>American Communications Association</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/1950</td>
<td>Fur and Leather Workers</td>
<td>55,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1950</td>
<td>Longshoremen Union</td>
<td>62,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1950</td>
<td>Fishermen and Allied Workers</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1950</td>
<td>Marine Cooks and Stewards</td>
<td>6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>828,700</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of CIO Members in Expelled Unions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Membership at Time of Expulsion (Previous Year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total CIO Membership (1949)</td>
<td><strong>828,700</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of CIO Members in Expelled Unions</td>
<td><strong>19.2%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages calculated based on figures from Leo Troy, *Trade Union Membership, 1897-1962* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1965), Table 5 (p. 8) and Table A-2 (pp. A-20 to A-27).
Table 2-2: Memberships of Expelled Unions, 1949-1955 (in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Electrical Workers</td>
<td>222.6</td>
<td>221.6</td>
<td>215.0</td>
<td>202.8</td>
<td>181.7</td>
<td>132.7</td>
<td>-40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Equipment Union</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>+5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Public Workers</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>Dissolved 1953</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office and Professional Workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Communications Association</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>-30.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fur and Leather Workers</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>-3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>merged with Amalgamated Butchers and Meat Cutters, 1955</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longshoremen Union</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>-10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishermen and Allied Workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>merged with the Longshoremen Union, 1950</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Cooks and Stewards</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Dissolved, 1955</td>
<td>-100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2-3: Memberships of Selected CIO Alternatives to Purged Unions, 1950-1954 (in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union</th>
<th>1949</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1952</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1954</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Clothing Workers</td>
<td>282.5</td>
<td>274.5</td>
<td>294.8</td>
<td>274.6</td>
<td>288.0</td>
<td>273.7</td>
<td>-3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewery Workers</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>+15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas and Chemical Workers</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>+52.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government and Civic Workers</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>+162%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>231.4</td>
<td>265.7</td>
<td>282.2</td>
<td>+282%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packinghouse Workers</td>
<td>102.9</td>
<td>101.8</td>
<td>109.6</td>
<td>116.7</td>
<td>137.9</td>
<td>138.4</td>
<td>+34.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-1: Results of Rival Union Proceedings Originating from Petitions Filed with the NLRB, January 1, 1951 to December 31, 1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Cases</th>
<th>Per Cent of Cases</th>
<th>No. of Employees</th>
<th>Per Cent of Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1246</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>366,470</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petitioner Won</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>62,504</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized union won</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>186,808</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No union won</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3401</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No election</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>113,757</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AFL Petitioners</strong></td>
<td>542</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>155,127</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petitioner Won</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35,307</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized union won</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>76,250</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No union won</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No election</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>43,307</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIO Petitioners</strong></td>
<td>704</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>211,343</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petitioner won</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27,197</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized union won</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>110,558</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No union won</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3,138</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No election</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>70,450</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reprinted from NLRB records; CIO Washington Office Papers, Box 21, Fol. 15; WSU.
Table 3-2: Impact of No-Raiding Agreement

Number of Union Members Affected by Raiding by AFL and CIO Unions, 1953-1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1954-55</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>204,457</td>
<td>51,066</td>
<td>-153,391</td>
<td>-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFL v. CIO</td>
<td>58,017</td>
<td>25,188</td>
<td>-32,829</td>
<td>-56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIO v. AFL</td>
<td>146,440</td>
<td>25,878</td>
<td>-120,562</td>
<td>-82.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Cases of Raiding Filed by AFL and CIO Unions, 1953-1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1954-55</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>-197</td>
<td>-41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFL v. CIO</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>-119</td>
<td>-48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIO v. AFL</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>-78</td>
<td>-33.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reprinted from Memo from George Brown to Meany, “RE: Impact of AFL-CIO No-Raiding Agreement,” October 21, 1955; George Meany Papers, Box 62, Fol. 27; GMMA.
Appendix 2: Figures

Figure 1-1
Figure 1-2
Figure 1.3
Burris Jenkins, Jr., “‘Heavy, Heavy Hangs—’”, *New York Journal American*, June 19, 1947
Figure 1-4
Author Unknown, “Yet the Other Boys Seem to Thrive on It,”
*New York World-Telegram*, May 29, 1947
Figure 1-5
Figure 1-6
“A Free America cannot exist without Free Labor”. AFL advertisement in various newspapers, spring 1947
Figure 1-7
“Industry-Wide Bargaining or Chaos?”, AFL advertisement in various newspapers, spring 1947
Figure 1-8
CIO News, April 14, 1947
Figure 1-9

CIO News, April 14, 1947
"Maybe I'm not a Union Member...

Now it seems like the whole thing is getting ready to wind up soon again. The bosses and the courts are all set to hold the working people—your fellow workers—over the heads of the unions. And we're supposed to accept it without a fight.

I remember back in the 30's when the unions were pressing hard for better wages, better hours, better working conditions, and better relief for the workers. The bosses were fighting this all the time. But now they say it's too good for the workers. They're fighting the workers just as much as before.

Here's what to do about it: Get down and work in your own factories and industries. Write to your congressmen and senators. Let your friends and neighbors know. Work with the unions and small businesses to get the things a union should do. It's not too late!"
Figure 1-11
CIO News, April 14, 1947
Figure 1-12
“CANCELLED…by Slave Labor Legislation!”, AFL advertisement in various newspapers, spring 1947
Figure 1-13
“DANGER”, AFL advertisement in various newspapers, spring 1947
Figure 1-14
“*If You Work for a Living...ACT NOW!*, AFL advertisement in various newspapers, spring 1947
Figure 1-15
“Is this true…Senator Taft?”, AFL advertisement in various newspapers, spring 1947
Figure 1-16

*CIO News*, May 26, 1947
"The price of MONOPOLY comes out of your pocket,"
NAM advertisement in various newspapers, spring 1947
Industry-wide Bargaining is no bargain for you

Which do you favor:

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING — where employers and workers who know each other and understand each other’s needs adjust their differences around the local bargaining table...

INDUSTRY-WIDE BARGAINING — where national union heads and representatives of employers, none of whom can be classified with widely varying local conditions, meet and deal only in broad national interests.

Under industry-wide bargaining:

EMPLOYER may represent an “enlightened” boss, he is expected to be an educated man, well-informed with local working conditions at his plant. Often, he is himself a member of the union or a close associate of its officers. His personal interest is not involved.

EMPLOYER may be a man with no sympathy for a trade union, he may be an employer who does not respect the workers and the unions. He deals with a union only as it is necessary to him and his business.

Then, industry-wide bargaining may show significant power into the hands of the few. The power to control the wellbeing of the many. It gives to union leaders the power to make decisions that are of vital importance to the lives of millions.

In the interests of all — the public, labor, and industry — the National Association of Manufacturers believes that industry-wide bargaining should be prohibited because it is necessary to the American way of life.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS

For a Better Tomorrow for Everybody

Figure 1-18

“Industry-wide Bargaining is no bargain for you.” NAM advertisement in various newspapers, spring 1947
Figure 2-1
Henry Wallace for President Leaflet, 1948
Len De Caux Papers, Box 10, Fol. 8; WSU.
Figure 2-2
Author Unknown, *Detroit Free Press*, May 21, 1949
Figure 2.3
Coak, CIO News, February 2, 1948
Figure 2-4
Coak, CIO News, September 13, 1948
Figure 2-5
Coak, CIO News, September 6, 1948
Figure 4-1
Figure 4-2
Ed Holland, *Chicago Tribune*, March 10, 1959
Figure 4-3
(reprinted in the *Providence Journal*)
Figure 4-4
Bruce Russell, *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1959
(reprinted in the *Providence Journal*)
Figure 4-5
Herbert Lawrence Block, *Washington Post*, 1957, exact date unknown
Figure 4-6
Herbert Lawrence Block, *Washington Post*, Fall 1957, exact date unknown
Figure 4-7
Herbert Lawrence Block, *Washington Post*, Fall 1957, exact date unknown.
Figure 4-8
(reprinted in the *Madison Capital Times*)
**Bibliography**

### Archival Depositories

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<td>GMMA</td>
<td>George Meany Memorial Archives, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagley</td>
<td>Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYPL</td>
<td>New York Public Library</td>
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<td>NYU</td>
<td>Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York City, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSU</td>
<td>Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-Mich</td>
<td>University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan</td>
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<td>WHS</td>
<td>State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin</td>
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- AFL Papers, WHS
- John Brophy Papers, CUA
- William Cahn Papers, WSU
- CIO Papers, CUA
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