

CHAPTER SIX  
COMMUNISTS AND ANTI-COMMUNISTS IN THE UNITED  
ELECTRICAL, RADIO, AND MACHINE WORKERS OF AMERICA

[Monsignor Charles Owen] Rice: Oh, sure, the destruction of the UE was tragic for the labor movement. . . . We exaggerated the communist threat out of all proportion . . . so far as the day-to-day conduct of the union was concerned, communism had no effect. In other words, it didn't have a bad effect. The only thing the communist party got out of that business was that it got jobs for its people, as organizers; it expanded itself somewhat and the papers and the meetings carried the communist political line with regard to Hitler and all the rest of them. That was very little that the communists got out of it for building some of the best unions in the United States. . . .

Interviewer: The charges against the UE members who are supposedly communists were always based on the support of the foreign policy line . . .

Rice: Sure, we couldn't find any—I mean, we'd look and look we couldn't—we examined it with a fine tooth comb to try to find things wrong with them other than that. The indictment was very weak.

As we have seen, the anti-Communist campaigns in the UAW and NMU were led by men who took great care to identify themselves with some section of the political left. Reuther forged a partial alliance with the socialist-influenced opposition to the no-strike pledge and won the support of both major Trotskyist parties in his campaign for the UAW presidency in 1946. Curran adopted an anti-imperialist political stance, and rallied a broad coalition of ex-Communists, Trotskyists, and Shactmanites (as well as conservatives) against Communists. The identification of anti-Communists with the political left obscured some of the political differences between anti-Communists and the Communist-influenced sections of the CIO.

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<sup>1</sup>Monsignor Charles Owen Rice, Oral History Interview, Pennsylvania State University, October 18, 1967, April 5, 1968, pp. 13-14. Capitalization as in original.

In the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE), the anti-Communist campaign was led by James B. Carey, a former UE president and the Secretary-Treasurer of the national CIO. Carey saw himself as the defender of CIO orthodoxy, rather than as a rank and file insurgent. He made no serious attempt to win the kind of splinter left-wing support which provided the victory margins and much of the tactical leadership in the Curran and Reuther campaigns. Nor did he make more than a token attempt to prove himself a more militant or competent union leader than the incumbent officials. Instead, Carey introduced political issues and fought against the political positions of the UE leadership. The political perspectives of the anti-Communists and that section of the CIO which was influenced by the Communist Party were put forward with unusual clarity in the UE.

## I

The origins of UE encouraged the growth of decentralization and local control. Unlike the steel and textile industries, where the unions evolved from tightly controlled and highly centralized organizing committees, or the automobile and rubber industries, where the unions were formed primarily from federal locals affiliated with the AFL, the UE was a coalition of functioning groupings of organized workers. At the outset, none of these groupings had organized more than a tiny percentage of their industries, but each existed prior to the formation of the UE. Each of the three national officers of the union emerged from a different sector of UE's jurisdiction. President James B. Carey had been the leader of a group of federal AFL locals in the

radio industry. Secretary-Treasurer Julius Emspak had worked in one of the largest of a group of independent locals in the electrical industry, and Director of Organization James Matles had brought a sizable group of machinists into UE.<sup>1</sup>

James Carey's rise in the labor movement had been mercurial. In June, 1933, the Philco corporation had set up an employee representation plan in its large Philadelphia plant. Several workers, including Carey and future UE vice-president Harry Block, organized a group to challenge the company union. When the corporation ordered workers to work ten hours a day to make up for the fourth of July holiday, skilled workers walked off their jobs. Carey's group helped to pull the other workers out. Three days later, the company signed an agreement granting the eight hour day, forty hour week, with time and a half for overtime, seniority rights and a grievance procedure, and a union shop. The local received a charter from the AFL, and elected Carey as president. He was twenty-one years old.

On December 28, 1933, a group of AFL federal locals and independent unions formed the Radio and Allied Trades National Labor Council with Carey as president. This group pressed for an industrial charter from the AFL, but the AFL denied the request because of the presence of independent unions in the group. At a conference called one year later, the independent unions were excluded from formal

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, material on the formation of the UE was derived from Galenson, CIO Challenge, 239-45, and Ronald L. Filippelli, "The United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America, 1933-1949: The Struggle for Control," (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1970), 1-45. Filippelli's dissertation is far superior to any other published history of UE.

participation, although a working relationship was maintained, and another application for an AFL charter was submitted. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the IAM raised jurisdictional objections. The charter, despite several additional applications, was never granted. Finally, the federal locals joined with the independent electrical unions to form the United Electrical and Radio Workers of America. Carey was elected president, and Julius Emspak of the independent local at General Electric in Schenectady, New York, secretary-treasurer.

Emspak had been born in Schenectady, and his father had worked in the GE plant there. With a loan from Gerald Swope, president of GE, Emspak attended Union College in Schenectady and graduated with Phi Beta Kappa honors. He went on to Brown University, but found graduate study unsatisfying and left after a year. Unable to find a job on a newspaper (his first choice) and in debt, he went to work in the RCA plant in Camden, New Jersey. After a short time at RCA, Emspak left to work in the GE plant in Schenectady, where he worked closely with William Trumbull, the president of the semi-secret union local and a leader of the independent electrical unions. When the independent unions merged with the federal locals, Trumbull or Albert Coulthard, a union pioneer in the large GE plant at Lynn, Massachusetts, were logical choices for secretary-treasurer. Coulthard did not want to leave Lynn, and Trumbull thought that Emspak's education uniquely qualified him for the post. With the support of the two most respected unionists in the electrical industry, Emspak easily became secretary-treasurer.

The third of the major UE officers came to the union by a more circuitous route. James Matles, a Rumanian immigrant, had worked in a New York machine shop which he organized into the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union, affiliated with the Trade Union Unity League. As Matles recalled, "we were left alone here because the orientation of the Steel and Metal Workers was to try to organize the steel industry . . . and as as we were concerned here, in New York and in Brooklyn and in some of these areas, with no basic steel industry, [we] were kind of an adjunct."<sup>1</sup> The machine shops joined the Federation of Metal and Allied Unions, still affiliated with the TUUL and under Matles' leadership. After the abolition of the TUUL, these machinists sought affiliation with the IAM. One problem was that a number of workers active in Matles' organization had been left-wingers expelled from the IAM in the 1920's.<sup>2</sup> These workers were supposed to be barred for life. When Matles mentioned this to IAM president Arthur W. Wharton, Wharton replied, "if you look the other way, we'll look tne other way, and let's forget it."<sup>3</sup> The left-wing machinists planned to transform the IAM. They believed that, as Matles later explained, "if we could get the Machinists Union to accept us as we are, including skilled and unskilled, men and women, Negro

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<sup>1</sup>James Matles, Oral History Interview, May 6, 1968, Pennsylvania State University, 3-4. In this interview, Matles probably underestimated his political agreement with the TUUL and the Communist Party. This point is discussed further later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup>See the chapter on the machinists in Schneider, Workers' Party.

<sup>3</sup>Matles interview, 14.

and white, on an industrial basis, the way we were organized, with a right to go out and launch an organizing campaign with our own forces in the Machinists Union, along similar lines, then . . . we felt that we could convert the Machinists Union into an industrial organization."<sup>1</sup>

These plans proved unsuccessful. At the 1936 IAM convention, held after the expulsion of the unions affiliated with the Committee for Industrial Organization from the AFL, the left proposed elimination of the IAM secret ritual restricting membership to whites. This ritual had been waived for the locals which had come into the IAM with Matles, and Wharton had promised to support a resolution eliminating it completely. When the resolution came up, however, Wharton reversed his position, and the left-wing delegates were shouted down and defeated. Following the convention, Wharton sent out a directive which indicated the wide gulf separating his conception of unionism from that of the left-wing machinists. It is worth quoting at length:

Since the Supreme Court decision upholding the Wagner Labor Act many employers now realize that it is the Law of our Country and they are prepared to deal with labor organizations. These employers have expressed a preference to deal with AFL organizations rather than Lewis, Hillman, Dubinsky, Howard and their gang of sluggers, communists, radicals and soap box artists, professional bums, expelled members of labor unions, outright scabs and the Jewish organizations with all their red affiliates.

We have conferred with several such employers and arranged for conferences later when we get the plants organized. The purpose of this is to direct all officers and all representatives to contact employers in your locality as a preliminary to organizing the shops and factories.

We have not hesitated to tell the employers we have met, that the best manner in which to deal with us is on the closed shop basis, because we are then in a position where we can require the members to observe the provisions of any agreement entered into, this with our

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<sup>1</sup>Matles interview, 13.

well-known policy of living up to agreements gives the employer the benefits he is entitled to receive from contracts with our organization and it also places us in a position to prevent sitdowns, sporadic disturbances, slowdowns, and other communistic CIO tactics of disruption and disorganization.<sup>1</sup>

Upon receiving this directive, Matles resigned his position in the IAM and took the locals he had brought into the IAM over the UE. UE changed its name to add machine workers to its jurisdiction, established the office of director of organization as one of the national offices, and elected Matles to the position. Carey, Matles, and Empsak remained the three top UE officials until 1941.

## II

Carey's first conflict with his fellow officers, and the union's General Executive Board (GEB), occurred over the issue of a male secretary. As Carey later explained it, he wanted a male secretary because he was "accustomed to using shop language." In addition, he "lacked confidence in the kind of secretary that would be supplied by the United Office and Professional Workers," a left-wing CIO union.<sup>2</sup> For these reasons, Carey proposed that "the general president be authorized to secure a competent male secretary to assist in expediting the work of this office."<sup>3</sup> Carey appeared to want more than a

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<sup>1</sup>James J. Matles and James Higgins, Them And Us: Struggles of a Rank and File Union (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 48-49.

<sup>2</sup>Hearings Before a Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, 80th Cong., 2d Sess., 1948, pp. 25, 27.

<sup>3</sup>James B. Carey to Harry Block, November 25, 1940, quoted ibid., 27.

mere secretary. Emspak replied that Carey's employment of a secretary was a routine matter which did not require any action by the GEB unless "a change in policy" was involved.<sup>1</sup> Harry Block, a long-time associate of Carey, was sceptical. He told Carey that he had "no objections to the employing of competent help by any executive officer" but insisted that "the secretary, male or female, regardless of salary, shall not be an assistant to the president and decide or interpret policies of the international union."<sup>2</sup> Emspak and Block, then, feared that Carey planned to make his male secretary some sort of assistant president who would run the union during Carey's long absences from day to day union affairs.

More important than the secretary issue was a constitutional question which involved the issues of local autonomy and political rights for Communist electrical workers. On February 15, 1941, a UE local wrote Carey asking if a provision in the local's constitution barring Communists, Nazis, and Fascists from union office conflicted with the national UE constitution. Carey replied that nothing in the UE constitution prevented locals from setting up qualifications for local union office. The constitution clearly prohibited locals from barring Communists from membership, Carey admitted, but it said nothing about office-holding. Emspak noted that the preamble to the UE constitution pledged to organize all workers regardless of political belief, and claimed that the constitution would be violated if the rights of UE members were restricted because of their political beliefs.

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<sup>1</sup>Emspak to GEB, November 30, 1940, quoted ibid. ,

<sup>2</sup>Block to Carey, November 20 [sic], 1940, quoted ibid. , 28.



The constitution, Emspak insisted, made no provision for "class B" or second class members; all workers had the right to participate fully in the political life of the union. A statement embracing Emspak's interpretation of the constitution was adopted by the GEB.<sup>1</sup> Carey choose to take the issue to the 1941 convention. When the resolutions committee reported out a resolution which rejected "outside influence" in the union and asserted that anyone who committed acts against the union or the nation "can have no place whatever either as a member or officer of this union," Carey and others objected to the refusal of the committee to condemn specifically the Communist Party.<sup>2</sup>

In the debate, Albert Fitzgerald, one of UE's vice-presidents and a leader of the large GE local at Lynn, Massachusetts, stated, "I don't defend Communism, I am not a Communist, [and] I don't like Communists." Moreover, there "is nothing to be proud of about the Communist Party, there is a lot to be ashamed of about it." And yet, Fitzgerald insisted, "we should be very much concerned in this organization to see to it that people don't split up the labor movement by applying labels to other people."<sup>3</sup> Fitzgerald ran against Carey for the presidency of UE, winning by 635 to 539, and Matles and

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<sup>1</sup>The best statement of Carey's position is contained ibid., 29-30; for a discussion of the Emspak position, see Matles and Higgins, Them And Us, 131-32.

<sup>2</sup>United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, Proceedings of the Seventh International Convention (Camden, N. J., 1941), 77, 82, 99-100.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 84-85.

Emspak were re-elected to their positions without opposition. In a show of unity, Carey nominated Emspak for secretary-treasurer, and Matles urged that Carey be endorsed for re-election as CIO secretary-treasurer.<sup>1</sup>

Most accounts of the UE convention describe the elimination of Carey as a Communist coup;<sup>2</sup> Julius Emspak recalled, however, that Communists were opposed to a move against Carey:

And it may surprise many to learn that the Communist Party was opposed—to the extent that we could determine the Communist Party's position—to the elimination of Carey as president. The theory behind it, as well as I can remember, was that now that the Soviet Union was invaded, it was time to get unity in the whole labor movement, to support this new phase of the war. Of course, those of us in UE who had lived with the situation for the last two years did not agree with the Communist position. . . .

Now all Communists, or known Communists, at the convention did not act the same on this issue. While the Communist Party apparently felt that it was unwise for this kind of development to come, the fact remains that the individual Communists at the time had differing opinions too.<sup>3</sup>

Once non-Communists made the decision to oppose Carey, however, Communists could hardly support him, since one of Carey's major arguments was that local unions should be allowed to bar Communists from office. As a student of labor relations at General Electric noted, Carey was opposed "by a number of anti-Communists who resented his cavalier handling of people, and his lack of attention to his union job."<sup>4</sup> The new president, Fitzgerald, was no radical. After his

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<sup>1</sup>Seventh UE Proceedings, 111-13; Galenson, CIO Challenge, 265.

<sup>2</sup>Kampelman, CP vs CIO, 124; Galenson, CIO Challenge, 265.

<sup>3</sup>The Reminiscences of Julius Emspak, Columbia University, Oral History Program, 1960, p. 272.

<sup>4</sup>Herbert R. Northrup, Boulwarism (Ann Arbor: Bureau of Industrial Relations, University of Michigan, 1964), 42-43.

election, press reports referred to him as a Communist. It was, Fitzgerald later recalled, "my first introduction to Communism," and "I went into my room, and I said, 'My God! Why did I get myself into this mess?'"<sup>1</sup>

### III

The factional dissension within UE was not limited to national conventions. Increasingly, within larger locals, slates committed to the UE leadership, generally referred to as "left-wing" or "pro-UE," contended with slates opposed to the leadership, which were usually described as "right-wing," "anti-Communist," or "pro-American." One of the most hotly contested locals was local 601, the large East Pittsburgh Westinghouse plant, where the right-wing worked closely with one of the most controversial figures in the dispute, Father Charles Owen Rice. A leader of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU), Rice took an active role in the controversy over the firing of a probationary employee, Joe Baron, and in the local elections in 1941.

Baron had been active in the movement to organize the steel industry, and had served as the first president of local 1237 of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC). In 1941, he left the Tin Plant Mill, where he had worked for fourteen years, and took a job in the Westinghouse plant in East Pittsburgh. After he had been working

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<sup>1</sup>United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, Proceedings of the Eleventh International Convention (Cleveland, 1946), 104.

a short time, the company fired him for his participation in a radical demonstration after working hours. Although Baron had not worked long enough to be eligible for UE membership, UE leaders pressed for his reinstatement, because they viewed the rationale for his firing as intrinsically unjust and an extremely dangerous precedent.<sup>1</sup> UE national officers assisted local leaders in the negotiations with Westinghouse and pressed for Baron's re-employment and a company statement that "outside activities" would not affect the status of regular employees.<sup>2</sup>

Father Rice saw the issue differently. As he noted in the ACTU newspaper, "I entered openly into the situation when a Communist-controlled clique in [local] 601 attempted to force the Westinghouse company to rehire a notorious fellow traveller who had worked for the company only ten days, was not a member of the union, and had been working in a division handling defense orders."<sup>3</sup> Local leaders called for a meeting to discuss the Baron case. One proposal, apparently, was to waive the probationary period and bring Baron into the union as an indication of the local's strong support for his rehiring. Rice actively worked against the proposal. In a letter to parish priests

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<sup>1</sup> A company official was quoted in the local's newspaper as saying that "any serious problem concerning a regular employee resulting from outside activities which affects the prestige of the company will be considered with due regard for the employee's length of service." Union Generator (East Pittsburgh, Pa.), February, 1941.

<sup>2</sup> A transcript of those negotiations is available in Father Charles Rice Papers, Pennsylvania State University.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Michael Harrington, "Catholics in the Labor Movement," Labor History, I (Spring, 1960), 240.

written several months after the case, Rice noted:

Several months ago I appealed to the priests of your district for aid in combatting the Communists in local 601 Westinghouse. You all responded nobly. It was the Joe Baron case. Baron was rejected for membership in local 601 and the Communists received a stunning defeat.<sup>1</sup>

The local was divided on Rice's activity. The local newspaper reported that a statement requesting "that Father Rice refrain from further interference in the internal affairs of Local No. 601" was signed by "the shop stewards of three divisions of Local No. 601 representing approximately 5,000 workers." In the same issue, however, the local president noted that the "few stewards" who "condemn Father Rice . . . will live to learn their mistake."<sup>2</sup>

As the local 601 elections approached, Rice wrote a letter which he urged Catholic priests to read during religious services. The letter called on Catholic workers to elect the "American Progressive" slate of delegates and to throw out the current leadership. The letter characterized the local leadership as men and women who "were for the Communists who shot down the priests and sisters in Spain."<sup>3</sup> The American Progressive Ticket, in a leaflet entitled "Save the Union," argued that "to serve God, country and union we must clear out the Communistic forces that have 'dug themselves' in our union."<sup>4</sup> Another leaflet issued prior to the elections stated "the burning issue"

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<sup>1</sup> Reverend Charles Owen Rice to Dear Father, August 6, 1941, Rice Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Union Generator, March, 1941.

<sup>3</sup> Statement by Father Charles Rice, August 7, 1941, Rice Papers.

<sup>4</sup> Leaflet in Rice Papers.

as "Communism or Americanism," addressed a series of accusatory and somewhat melodramatic questions to candidates on the leftwing slate, and misquoted Lenin.<sup>1</sup>

The local leadership, a coalition which included Communists, does not appear to have made any effort to specifically defend the Communist Party. Instead, it labelled the leaflets of the American Progressive Ticket divisive and factional, and called for greater unity around a two-point program of support of national defense and American foreign policy and in protection of the "interest, wages, and welfare of our members against the uncertainties of a war economy." A Unity Pledge, signed by every local officer and executive board member and hundreds of section stewards, stated, "We therefore pledge (individually and collectively) to do everything in our power in the present local elections and throughout the National Emergency to build the Unity and strength of local 601 around the above program and reject all internal factional fights or disruption from outsiders." In a unanimous resolution, the "Executive Board roundly condemns the issuance of all such factional material and calls on the membership to repudiate all factionalism."<sup>2</sup>

Communists, then, were taking a position remarkably similar to that of the right-wing Socialists in the ILGWU. They condemned "outside interference" in the union, called for unity around the

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<sup>1</sup>"To the Loyal Workers of Local 601, UERMWA," Leaflet, December, 1941, Rice Papers. "Miss Darin . . . tell us about those meeting [sic] you have attended . . . Was Loretta Paul, alias Vera Parker, present?" The term "Bourgeoisie" in a statement by Lenin was defined as "middle class workers."

<sup>2</sup>Union Generator, November, 1941.

program of the leadership, and labelled opponents as disruptive and factional. There were, of course, important differences: the opposition, as we shall see, never constituted a majority of the union's members, and there were no massive expulsions. Nevertheless, the political position which Communists were endorsing was fundamentally conservative. What did it matter, for example, if Father Rice was an insider or an outsider? He had considerable support inside the local and, in any case, Communists conferred with people outside of the union. Was not the real issue whether Rice's program, or that of the Communists, was good or bad, not whether it emanated from inside or outside of the local? Communists probably believed that they were turning around the charge of outsider which was often levelled at them by showing that it was the anti-Communists who had the strongest ties with forces outside of the union. In fact, they were building the notion that outside influence should be purged from the union.

At the 1942 convention, a number of proposals were presented urging that Communists be denied the right to hold union office. The resolutions committee urged that the motions be rejected. The emphasis, if not the actual position, of Fitzgerald had changed somewhat, as his speech reveals:

I am not going to say again this year what I think of Communism because I said it last year and said I would not repeat it. But I am going to say this: I'll defend a man's right to be a Communist if he wants to be one. . . .

I think it [Communism] is a fake issue.

It is an issue that is being raised to disrupt and wreck organizations.

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<sup>1</sup>United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, Proceedings of the Eighth International Convention (Cleveland, 1942), 208-209, 230.

Although Fitzgerald still opposed Communism, he apparently no longer believed that he should spend time denouncing it publicly. The anti-Communist motions were all defeated, and there were no serious attempts to pass anti-Communist resolutions until after the war.

#### IV

On August 11, 1946, right-wing UE leaders met in Pittsburgh and formed UE Members for Democratic Action (UE-MDA). UE leaders took the offensive against UE-MDA in a lengthy resolution on "red-baiting" introduced at the UE convention of 1946. The resolution accused anti-Communists of favoring "divisions, witchhunts, and purges" rather than the "principle of unity and democracy within our own ranks." In place of "aggressive struggle to improve our conditions," anti-Communists would substitute "aggressive struggles by one section of the membership against another." This "disunity can only help employers to slash wages, institute a speed-up, and deprive our members of their hard-won gains." The resolution asserted that the "membership controls this union and will continue . . . to defeat every effort to bring it under the control of any group, whether it be political, religious, fraternal, or any other." Finally, the resolution indicated that all workers in the industry, regardless of "craft, age, sex, nationality, race, creed, or political belief" would be organized and guaranteed "all rights and privileges of membership including the right to hold any position in the union."<sup>1</sup> Anti-Communists introduced

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<sup>1</sup>Eleventh UE Proceedings, 80.



a counter-resolution urging the UE to "work for a greater and better America" and to reject "strange foreign doctrines."<sup>1</sup>

Dave Davis began his speech on the resolution by saying that he was proud to be a member of the Communist Party, but that Communism was "not the issue." Instead the issue was "why are we afraid to let those members decide whether they want to have a Communist as business agent?"<sup>2</sup> Another Communist pointed out that Senator Herbert Lehman had recently been called a Communist and noted that to many anti-Communists "anyone who does not agree with the [Chicago Tribune] is a Communist."<sup>3</sup> The first argument is solely civil libertarian and would apply to a fascist or Ku Klux Klan member as well as a Communist. The second argument suggests that anti-Communism is bad because non-Communists are sometimes mis-labeled Communists. Communists did not argue that it was in the interests of the ruling class to promote anti-Communism in order to isolate the Communist Party from the working class; instead, anti-Communism was seen solely as a tactic to weaken the liberal and labor movements by introducing dissension and division into them. Communists rarely sought to explain why the party was singled out for attack. The Daily Worker went so far as to say that "redbaiting is not an anti-Communist movement at all," but "an anti-democracy movement in disguise."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Eleventh UE Proceedings, 81.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>4</sup>Daily Worker, November 18, 1946.

The defeat of the right wing at the 1946 convention did not end the internal struggle within UE locals. Although right-wingers were unable to attain national office, they were successful in some locals. These offices provided important opportunities for the right-wing. If they proved themselves to be capable, militant leaders, their chances for national office would be improved. All too often, however, local UE-MDA leaders discredited their movement.

In a GE local in Bridgeport, Connecticut, for example, a right-wing leadership expelled twenty-six local members without a trial on charges of Communist Party membership or pro-Communism.<sup>1</sup> At a membership meeting in February, 1947, the right wing had won passage of a motion stating "that this membership empower the officers of the Local to suspend, or expel, in accordance with the National CIO Policy and our Local Constitution and By-Laws, a Communist or member who supports the doctrine of Communism."<sup>2</sup> The officers promptly dispatched letters to twenty-six UE members

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<sup>1</sup> Although this was one of the more controversial disputes in UE locals, there is little disagreement about the basic facts involved. The position of the right-wing local leadership is stated fully in a four page bulletin mailed to all stewards by Joseph Julianelle, business agent, and Michael Berescik, local president, and included as part of a letter, Joseph Julianelle to Philip Murray, February 27, 1947, James B. Carey Papers, ALHUA. A report on the dispute for national CIO is contained in Edward McCrone to Allan S. Haywood, February 21, 1947, Carey Papers. Debate on a district level can be found in the Minutes of District Council 2, April 11 and 12, 1947, June 21, 1947, and July 18 and 19, 1947. The activities of the UE national leadership can be found in the Minutes of the General Executive Board, February 10 and 11, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Julianelle to Oliver Arsenault, February 4, 1947, included in GEB Minutes, February 10 and 11, 1947. (For the full citation of this document and others in the discussion of this case, see the preceding footnote.)

informing them of their expulsion from the local.<sup>1</sup> No trial was provided. The local leadership, however, insisted that they "expelled only those who openly admitted at different times that they were members of the Communist Party."<sup>2</sup> One of the expelled members, herself a Communist, stated that most of the other twenty-five were not Communists.<sup>3</sup> Most, however, had been active officers in the union prior to the right-wing victory, many were still shop stewards or division representatives, and it was likely that they would oppose the new leadership.<sup>4</sup>

In a unanimous decision, the UE GEB branded the expulsions unconstitutional in view of the preamble and article four of the UE constitution.<sup>5</sup> Even Carey, who had argued that locals could deny the right to hold office to Communists, had stated that it would be unconstitutional to bar Communists from membership in the union.<sup>6</sup> The GEB then proceeded to revoke the charter of the local union and to send international representative Albert Smith to work with the District Council and the membership of the local "in order to protect

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<sup>1</sup>For statements from two of the expelled local members, see the statements of Oliver Arsenault and Josephine Williard, Attachments I and II, DC #2 Minutes, April 11 and 12, 1947.

<sup>2</sup>Edward McCrone to Allan Haywood, February 21, 1947; see also DC #2 Minutes, June 21, 1947, pp. 4-5.

<sup>3</sup>Williard statement.

<sup>4</sup>Julius Emspak to All UE Locals, General Executive Board, and International Staff, February 10, 1947, Ernest DeMaio Papers, Chicago Historical Society; UE News, February 15, 1947.

<sup>5</sup>GEB Minutes, February 10 and 11, 1947.

<sup>6</sup>See above.

the membership rights, contract rights, and jobs of all UE members at that plant. "<sup>1</sup>

The local leadership went to court to secure an injunction prohibiting the international from taking over the functions of the local. At the same time, business agent Julianelle raised the possibility of seceding from the UE. In a bulletin issued to stewards, Julianelle stated that if the administration's actions mean "that Communists and Fellow Travellers can be member [sic] of Local 203 then the will of the International exceeds that of the local membership and we must seriously consider whether we wish to remain within the UE. "<sup>2</sup> In a letter to Philip Murray, Julianelle threatened to take his local out of UE. He noted that local members are "determined to stay within the UE-CIO without Communist members," but "they will not, at all costs, tolerate a condition whereby the expelled Communists and Communist supporters are to be returned to our Local with full membership rights. "<sup>3</sup>

The court order forestalling an executive board seizure of the local was later amended to mandate the local to restore membership rights to the expelled workers since they had been expelled without following the local's constitutional procedures. <sup>4</sup> The local leadership

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<sup>1</sup>GEB Minutes, February 10 and 11, 1947.

<sup>2</sup>Julianelle to Murray, February 27, 1947, Carey Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Julianelle to Murray, March 10, 1947, Carey Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Julianelle stated that "we called a special meeting of our membership . . . we were instructed to expel known Communists . . . We considered that sort of a trial." The local constitution, however, stated that no member could be expelled without trial. DC #2 Minutes, June 21, 1947, pp. 4-5.

sent out notices of reinstatement to the expelled workers. They were not, however, restored to full membership. In response to questions from Albert Smith, Julianelle refused to say whether the expelled members would be allowed to resume their positions as union stewards.<sup>1</sup>

Julianelle's query to Murray about joining another CIO union raises the tangled questions of secession and raiding which plagued both UE leaders and the opposition. The attitude of the right-wing leaders toward secession is not entirely clear. In early 1947, UE leaders learned that a UE-MDA group was trying to take local 411 out of UE and into the UAW or the USW. Charges were brought against Harry Block, UE-MDA chairman, for encouraging the attempted secession. Block denied the charge, and an investigating committee in District One backed him up.<sup>2</sup> Block claimed that "in the area where the UE Members for Democratic Action have put forward a campaign of fighting within the UE-CIO, the movement to secede was successfully stopped."<sup>3</sup> This formulation tacitly admits that UE-MDA leaders did not always put forward a program of staying within UE. National UE-MDA leaders almost certainly opposed secession, since it hindered their efforts to win a majority of the union.

Yet while it was in the interests of national UE-MDA leaders to oppose secession, it was often in the interests of local UE-MDA

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<sup>1</sup>DC #2 Minutes, June 21, 1947.

<sup>2</sup>Filippelli, "United Electrical Workers," 155-56.

<sup>3</sup>Harry Block to Philip Murray, October 15, 1948, Carey Papers.

leaders to secede. In the UAW or USW, for example, right-wing local leaders would enjoy the support of the union's national officers, and would be able to label left-wing opponents as Communists and deprive them of the right to hold office. In most cases, they would be able to raise their own salaries.<sup>1</sup> National UE-MDA leaders, then, had a difficult time restraining local right-wing leaders from secession. While they certainly did not foment secession, they may well have been guilty of the charge of "concealing the plots of their secessionist supporters."<sup>2</sup> UE-MDA leaders undoubtedly regarded secessionists as allies who had adopted an incorrect tactic, not as traitors to the union who should be reported to the GEB.

Following the convention of 1946, UE-MDA established a newspaper, the Real UE, to publicize its position to union members. Their leaders, however, James Click, Harry Block, and Bart Enright, were defeated decisively at the convention of 1947.<sup>4</sup> More significant than the lop-sided victories were two resolutions which threatened to limit internal democracy within UE. One was a constitutional amendment allowing the executive board to suspend local affiliates, and the other

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<sup>1</sup>The UE constitution provided that no UE official could be paid more than the highest salary paid to skilled workers in the shop. The 1972 UE constitution, for example, set a ceiling of less than \$15,000 on the national officers' salaries. Matles and Higgins, Them And Us, 11.

<sup>2</sup>This charge appeared in a resolution passed at the 1947 UE convention quoted later in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup>Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 129.

<sup>4</sup>United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, Proceedings of the Twelfth International Convention (Boston, 1947), 176, 182, 188.

was a resolution ordering UE-MDA, which it referred to as the Carey-Block faction, to dissolve.

Emspak defended the resolution granting the executive board the power to suspend a local. He pointed out that the amendment did not allow the executive board to appoint an administrator of the local or to interfere with the conduct of local affairs. At present, Emspak noted, all the GEB could do was revoke the charter of a local union, thereby expelling it. The amendment was "an attempt to avoid the development of drastic action . . . revocation, and to make it possible for the Board to work on a situation if it has to, to try to correct it without going to the extreme of revoking a charter."<sup>1</sup>

More serious, in terms of its implications for UE democracy, was the resolution on UE-MDA. More than seventy local unions had submitted resolutions against UE-MDA. The majority resolution from the resolutions committee charged that the Carey-Block faction had "no program other than redbaiting and disruption, and no purpose save to capture for outsiders the control of the union." In addition, the faction was accused of "concealing the plots of their secessionist supporters" and agreeing to speed-up while permitting "employers to make a mockery out of seniority." Supporters of the faction asked why it was being singled out for criticism when no resolution had ever demanded that Communists dissolve their caucus.<sup>2</sup> In their speeches,

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<sup>1</sup>Twelfth UE Proceedings, 312-33.

<sup>2</sup>Actually, there was no Communist caucus. Communists were members of the caucuses in local unions which supported the national UE leadership, but had no independent caucus.

they argued that their democratic rights were being violated. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 3,825 to 596.<sup>1</sup>

Although both groups were certainly object to the comparison, the resolution put UE-MDA in a situation similar to that faced by the TUEL in the ILGWU.<sup>2</sup> Both groups were accused of being dominated by outsiders. Certainly, the ACTU played an important role in the UE-MDA. The UE-MDA, in fact, was formed at a convention held on the same day in the same city as an ACTU convention. No outside Communist leaders played as direct or as extensive a role in the opposition in the garment unions as Father Rice did in the right-wing opposition in the electrical union. In a Catholic newspaper, Rice urged workers to "give me your union's name and your local number and I will tell you where you union stands" on the issue of Communism, and "how to proceed to clean out the Reds, if you have them in your local or international."<sup>3</sup> Rice accompanied right-wing leaders when they testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities.<sup>4</sup> But while he was an important right-wing strategist and activist, he was not out to capture the union for himself. He worked with a rank and file group inside the union. The question of "outside dominance" was as irrelevant in UE as it was in the ILGWU.

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<sup>1</sup>Twelfth UE Proceedings, 129, 130, 131, 135, 141, 157. See also Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 132; Preis, Labor's Giant Step, 339.

<sup>2</sup>See chapter two.

<sup>3</sup>Our Sunday Visitor, April 17, 1949. A copy of the column is in Rice Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Daily Compass, November 28, 1949, Rice Papers.



Despite the resolution, UE leaders never resorted to mass expulsions of UE-MDA members or leaders. At no time, for example, was the entire executive board of a local removed from office. Individual UE-MDA members were expelled from UE, but such cases were rare.<sup>1</sup> At no time was the reinstatement of expelled members a major demand of UE-MDA. Nevertheless, the resolution was, on its face, undemocratic. It was, perhaps, to the leadership's discredit that they had proposed it; it was to their credit, certainly, that they never invoked it.

V

Political debate at the UE conventions of 1948 and 1949 centered around general political questions as well as matters internal to UE and the labor movement. The major political questions were the 1948 presidential election and the post-war foreign policy of the United States. Equally important was the debate over resolutions dealing with raiding by other CIO unions and secession by UE locals, possible administrative measures to prevent secession, UE collective bargaining policy, and the conduct of Carey before a congressional committee. Virtually all of these topics were covered by majority and minority reports from convention committees. Since these resolutions constituted the public position of both factions, each side

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<sup>1</sup>Some of the expelled UE-MDA leaders were James and Viola Pascoe, Al Fineman, and John Duffy. See the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the General Executive Board, August 10 and 11, 1949. The UE national office has agreed to provide material on these expulsions, but as yet no documents have arrived.

took considerable care in presenting its views. The result is a revealing, if overly formal, view of the politics of the two factions.

The majority report on the presidential elections of 1948 rejected "the old parties' claim to an exclusive joint jurisdiction over political expression in this country." It made no endorsement, but it supported the right of every member, local, or district "to work for . . . the Progressive Party or any other political party." The resolution went on to condemn "the despicable attempts that are being made to substitute redbaiting for democratic and open discussion of the issues of the presidential campaign by the American people." A minority resolution introduced by Carey noted that the "National CIO-PAC [Political Action Committee], through democratic majority decision of its members, in which officers of UE participated, took a strong position against the formation of any third party in 1948" and urged that UE support the CIO decision.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking in favor of the majority report, Fitzgerald argued that the issue was not so much whether Truman or Wallace should be elected president of the United States,<sup>2</sup> but "what is the best thing that this Convention can do to maintain the maximum degree of unity within the organization." Since both UE and CIO were sharply divided, "no action that we could take here today on the endorsement of a candidate could have any other possible effect on this organization than

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<sup>1</sup>United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Convention (New York, 1948), 65-66.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Wallace's campaign for the presidency, and its effect on the CIO left-wing, is discussed in the following chapter.

to split it wide open and weaken it in the coming year."<sup>1</sup> Block replied that "if this convention had never passed a single resolution endorsing any political candidate for any political party, the chair would have been right in its arguments of free political thinking for every individual member." But since UE had endorsed candidates for president in the past, there was no reason why it should not endorse a candidate this year. Moreover, Block insisted that activity in support of Wallace by prominent UE officials amounted to a de facto endorsement.<sup>2</sup> In a roll call vote, the majority resolution was passed by a vote of 3510 to 911.<sup>3</sup>

More heated was the discussion on a resolution entitled "Exposure of James B. Carey." The resolution was perhaps the most ambitious attempt to link Carey's opposition activity to outright anti-union work. The resolution charged that when Carey testified before a right-wing congressional committee, he joined the reactionary congressmen "in defaming the UE, added to their slanders of his Union, and lied under oath to do so." In addition, he "invited industry to refuse to deal with the UE, to the detriment of the wages and conditions of the 570,000 workers under UE contract."<sup>4</sup> The resolution did not urge that Carey be expelled, only exposed, "so that all working people with whom he may have dealings may know of his acts, and

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<sup>1</sup>Thirteenth UE Proceedings, 75-76.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 79-82.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 93.

know also what judgment his own Union, which knows him best, has formed of him."

The most serious charge was that Carey had lied under oath in order to defame the union. This charge is worth examining in detail. It rested primarily on Carey's statement that employers had collaborated with UE leaders to eliminate anti-Communist workers from the industry. The committee members, generally friendly to business, were surprised by Carey's statement and asked him to substantiate it:

Mr. Kersten. You also stated in your letter something about employers who would rather do business with Communists than with legitimate trade union leaders. . . . Do you have any facts as a background to that statement of yours in the letter?

Mr. Carey. I have considerable experience, sir, which grows out of factual situations.

Mr. Kersten. Without being too lengthy, can you give us the high lights of any such thing?

Mr. Carey. Well, a Communist shop steward can not be very aggressive in processing a grievance. If the employer has information that indicates that the shop steward or local officer or any other officer of a union is a Communist, the employer finds that fellow is awfully easy to get along with, because he has to make compromises to protect his position to serve what I consider another interest. We have had experiences of anti-Communists being discharged, such as Bart Enright, discharged by the Westinghouse Company immediately after the last convention of the UE.

Mr. Kersten. You mean last year?

Mr. Carey. Yes, sir. Bart Enright was a candidate against James Matles. He returned to his plant and was discharged. . . . We have other situations of active anti-Communists being discharged.

Mr. Kersten. Before you leave that situation, let me understand you correctly. . . . A man by the name of Bart Enright, member of the UE, ran against Mr. Matles, and . . . was defeated. . . . When he got back to his job, his job was gone; is that correct?

Mr. Carey. That is correct.

Asked if he knew of other instances of "cooperation with Communists" by employers, Carey replied that "Sam Basmajian was discharged in the RCA plant" primarily because "he was vigorously anti-Communist and associated with the UE Members for Democratic Action." Later in the hearing Carey repeated his charge that Basmajian was fired for

anti-Communist activity, and the following exchange took place:

Mr. Kersten. I can see where it is probably even more dangerous where there is cooperation between management and the Communists. Mr. Carey. Mr. Chairman, you recently had a stoppage of work of 6,500 people in Essington, Pa. Two men were discharged for security reasons. Those two men happened to be two anti-Communists, and for that matter—

Mr. Kearns. What are their names, if you know? That is the kind of information we want here.<sup>1</sup>

Carey's charges, then, were that on at least three separate occasions, anti-Communists were fired. In two of those three cases, the anti-Communists were fired precisely because they were anti-Communists as a result of collaboration between Communist union leaders and RCA and Westinghouse. According to Carey, RCA and Westinghouse fired anti-Communists, because they found it easier to get along with Communists. Making those charges before a committee hostile to UE was fairly easy, but now Carey had to defend them at a UE convention. Each of the three firings was discussed in detail during the debate.

The president of Enright's local, who had voted with Carey's caucus on the resolutions dealing with American foreign policy and the presidential election of 1948, stated that Enright's erratic attendance record was the cause of his dismissal. The local's grievance committee tried to get him rehired, but had no success.<sup>2</sup>

Matles summed up the Enright case:

On April 13, 1947, five months before the 1947 convention, Enright received his first warning notice from the company for absenteeism and tardiness. The notice warned him if there wasn't

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<sup>1</sup>Hearings Before a Special Subcommittee of the House Committee on Education and Labor, 11-12, 41-42.

<sup>2</sup>Thirteenth UE Proceedings, 106.

considerable improvement he would be subject to immediate discharge.

On June 16, 1947, the company attempted to fire Enright because of his absenteeism and tardiness becoming worse instead of better.

During the eight week period from April 13 to June 16, and that is prior to our convention, Enright was absent without leave or permission nine full days, four half days, eighteen times late for periods of one and two hours at a time.

A committee headed by Scanlon, the man who was president of that local and whom Enright opposed on the grounds that he was a red, made the company rescind their discharge action and Enright received a one week disciplinary furlough with further warning that any more absenteeism and tardiness would result in his immediate dismissal.

On October 24th Enright was fired because his absenteeism did not improve, and the leadership of the local was then in the hands of opponents of the national administration of the union. This committee got the grievance and exhausted the local grievance procedure in attempting to get Enright reinstated, without success.

The local membership voted to close out the grievance at the expiration of the third step and refused to appeal the case to the national level of the union.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the convention, then, Enright had been fired for his poor attendance record, but union pressure, apparently by a left-wing leadership, was able to get him reinstated. Despite this erratic attendance record, Enright left work to attend the UE convention although he was not an elected delegate. This final week-long absence was the last straw for Westinghouse.<sup>2</sup>

In the second case to which Carey had alluded, the worker in question had not been fired. John Leto, president of the local to which Basmajian belonged, read a series of eight letters between the

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<sup>1</sup>Thirteenth UE Proceedings, 110-11.

<sup>2</sup>In an interview, Harry Block made an interesting comment about the Enright case. He argued that "if a local was pro-UE administration and a local was anti-UE administration, they [the UE administration] would trade one grievance for the other." This would make "one group of officers look good" and "the other group of officers look bad." According to Block, "Bart Enright's dismissal fell in that category. Any others would be difficult to pinpoint." But it was the local leadership which closed out the grievance. Harry Block, Oral History Interview, p. 51.

local and the personnel division of the company which revealed that Basmajian had not been fired, but was on a leave of absence at his request. The local leadership, although opposed to Basmajian politically, took great care to ensure that the company respected his leave. It allowed him to extend the leave, and made the company state in writing that the job he formerly held would be available on his return.<sup>1</sup>

In the third case, even Carey did not seriously contend that the men had been fired for anti-Communist activity, although his testimony might have left that impression. Westinghouse first fired Frank Carner, a design engineer who the Navy had claimed was a "poor security risk." Local leaders demanded that the company rehire Carner, and worked with Carner on an appeal before the military board. The appeal was difficult to prepare, since no specific charges had been made. Less than two weeks after Carner was fired, Herb Lewin, a sheet metal worker, was hustled out of the plant by two security guards, handed a letter branding him a poor security risk, and told that he would have to clear himself before he could be reinstated. Within an hour, the local executive board met and decided that "we can't let them get away with it." An emergency meeting was called for two o'clock on a baseball field within the plant gates. All production halted. The several thousand workers unanimously voted to inform the company that the firings were a violation of the contract and to walk off their jobs if the two men were not rehired. Carner

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<sup>1</sup>Thirteenth UE Proceedings,

and Lewin were Trotskyists. Although they were, as Carey indicated, anti-Communists, their firings had nothing to do with any anti-Communist activity on their part.<sup>1</sup>

In each of the three cases which Carey had mentioned, there was no evidence to back up his extremely serious charge that there was an alliance between corporate officials and Communists to eliminate anti-Communists. The most damaging part of the resolution—the assertion that Carey lied to discredit the union—had been substantiated in the debate. The resolution was adopted overwhelmingly; Carey did not even request a roll call vote.<sup>2</sup>

The final controversial issue came in the closing moments of the convention. A majority resolution, critical of the Marshall Plan, was countered by a minority resolution which supported the plan. The majority resolution indicated support for a program of European recovery which was directly aimed at improving living standards, administered by the United Nations, and in which interference in the political and economic affairs of the nations aided, was excluded. In addition, the resolution urged that "profits should be taken out of such an aid program by the reestablishment of the excess profits tax" and called upon the United States to work for disarmament. The minority report called for the extension of "our free political system . . . to the peoples of other lands," and gave its full support to "the European Recovery Program as an instrument toward world

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<sup>1</sup>Matles and Higgins, *Them And Us*, 174-79; see also Labor

<sup>2</sup>Thirteenth UE Proceedings, 114.



peace and security." The majority resolution carried by a vote of 2958 to 1301.<sup>1</sup>

At the UE convention the following year, the leadership introduced a strong resolution entitled "Against Raiding and Dictatorship in the CIO." Although the supporters of the resolution disclaimed any intention to leave the CIO, the thrust of the resolution was that UE's connection with CIO was no longer of much help to the union. In the first place, CIO affiliates had conducted 456 raids on UE shops between April, 1948, and July, 1949. One would expect CIO leaders to discourage, if not prohibit, raiding of one CIO affiliate by another, but these raids were usually with the assistance of individuals on the CIO payroll. In the second place, CIO no longer allowed its affiliates a free hand in political action. It was not as though UE needed CIO financial assistance. Quite the contrary. UE had been organized without financial assistance from the CIO and had contributed 2,750,000 dollars to the CIO in per capita tax and voluntary contributions. The resolution authorized the national officers to demand that the CIO cease all raiding and that charges be filed against any CIO official involved in raiding activities. Until these demands were met, UE was to withhold per capita tax payments to CIO.

The minority presented a report calling for support of CIO policy. The report admitted that some raiding had taken place, but it blamed UE leaders for the raids. "Failure on the part of the present UE national officers to support and carry out the program and policies of the national CIO," the minority charged, "has provided fertile

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<sup>1</sup>Thirteenth UE Proceedings, 189-90, 204.

ground for the raiding tactics of other organizations." The minority saw the majority resolution as a blank check for the national officers to leave the CIO. Leaving the CIO, Fitzgerald admitted just prior to the vote, was a distinct possibility. "We want to stay in the CIO," he insisted, "but the only way that we'll stay inside the CIO is if we be permitted to have the same autonomy, and the same dignity that our own local unions enjoy and that the members of our organization enjoy." The majority resolution passed by a vote of 2393 to 1477.<sup>1</sup>

A constitutional amendment which granted the executive board the right to hear cases involving charges of secession was submitted to the convention. The amendment restricted local autonomy, a principle which UE members took seriously, but there seemed a need to allow the executive board to act quickly to thwart attempts at secession. A member of the constitution committee who had opposed the resolution in committee made the following speech on the floor of the convention:

I was going to take the floor originally because in the Constitution Committee I bitterly fought what I thought was a dangerous trend in the American labor movement and in there I pointed out how John L. Lewis . . . appoints 26 regional directors . . . and neither did I like the way that Reuther in the UAW has expelled from membership those that opposed him in the recent UAW convention. . . . Neither do I like what happened last week . . . in the National Maritime Union when they barred communists from being members. . . .

I don't want my opposition to what I felt was undemocratic procedure to be interpreted as any agreement on my part with the activities carried on by these right-wings of the past year, and I think it is a contemptible thing when these publicity hounds have to go to Henry Luce and the lousy Life magazine . . .

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<sup>1</sup>United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, Proceedings of the Fourteenth International Convention (Cleveland, 1949).

I still don't like the proposition in its present form but I think it is much weaker and much more reasonable than it was as originally introduced by the GEB.

The resolution passed by a vote of 2360 to 1486.<sup>2</sup>

Before the convention concluded, right-wing delegates caucused and issued a statement charging that the convention was packed. The caucus elected ten delegates to meet with the officers of the CIO and "to attend the CIO convention and to determine the best way to provide a CIO international union in the electrical industry free from the domination of the Communist Party."<sup>3</sup> The Carey-Block faction, in other words, had made its last attempt to defeat the UE leadership by appealing to UE members. It now planned to ask the CIO to expel UE and to establish a dual union in the electrical industry. In a

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<sup>1</sup>Fourteenth UE Proceedings, 220-21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 225.

<sup>3</sup>The entire right-wing statement is quoted in "Tentative Draft Report on UE Convention," Carey Papers. The statement can be found on pages 8-10, and documentation for the charge that the convention was packed can be found on the first two pages. Although anti-Communist scholars have accepted this charge without question (see Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 138), there are fundamental weaknesses in the right-wing argument. First, the right-wing ignored the most obvious interference with the expressed wishes of UE members: the exclusion of the Canadian delegates. Immigration officials refused to allow the Canadian delegates to enter the country. Even if one accepted all of the claims of the right-wing, the leadership would still have obtained a comfortable majority had the Canadians been allowed to attend. Second, the right-wing claims can not be accepted since they rest on questionable assumptions. In one large local, for example, it is simply assumed that the local would have been instructed to vote right-wing if the leadership had scheduled a meeting for instructions prior to the convention. It is also assumed that all delegates who voted right-wing were so instructed. Finally, it is assumed that membership meetings were more democratic than local delegate elections. In some locals, for example, a slate could be elected on a platform of support for the leadership, while the right-wing could win a small majority at a union meeting to instruct the slate to vote right-wing.

statement adopted the final day of the convention, the delegates noted that the Carey group had tried "to prevent UE from strengthening itself against raiding and secession," and condemned the group as "disrupters and traitors who are acting as puppets for outside forces who wish to destroy democratic industrial unionism in the United States."<sup>1</sup>

The decision of the UE right-wing to form a new union was probably reached prior to the convention. In his important doctoral dissertation, Frank Emspak, son of the UE secretary-treasurer, pointed out that Murray met with representatives from UE-MDA during the week of September 5, 1949 to assess the strength of the right-wing and suggested that the decision to form a new union was probably made at this meeting.<sup>2</sup> In any case, the right-wing would never have announced that it was forming a new union without first clearing the proposal with CIO leaders. The announcement that the right-wing would form a new union and seek a CIO charter meant that CIO leaders would seek the expulsion of UE at the 1949 convention of the CIO. UE leaders, however, ceased payment of per capita taxes prior to the CIO convention, thereby withdrawing from the CIO.<sup>3</sup>

## VI

Before assessing the significance of the internal controversy

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<sup>1</sup>Fourteenth UE Proceedings, 228.

<sup>2</sup>Frank Emspak, "The Breakup of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), 1945-1950," (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972), 323-24.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 327; Nathan Spero to author, October 5, 1965.

in the UE, the interesting and, in some cases surprising, subsequent histories of some of the major figures should be noted.

James B. Carey finally became president of a union of electrical workers when the CIO chartered the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE).<sup>1</sup> Carey became the union's first president and he remained in office until 1965 when he was forced to resign because his lieutenants had failed to count some 25,000 votes cast for his opponent in the IUE elections. Carey, then, became the only man in American labor history to be voted out of the presidency of two different unions by the members. As a penalty for electoral fraud, Carey was forced to retire with an annual stipend of \$12,500, and Reuther hosted a testimonial dinner for him after the resignation.<sup>2</sup>

Father Rice, the main strategist of the Carey group, has changed his mind about UE. He now believes that the destruction of UE was tragic, that the Communist threat was "exaggerated out of all proportion," and that UE leaders are excellent trade-unionists. Rice recently spoke at a UE convention where he apologized for his earlier behavior.

But the most interesting and surprising subsequent history was not that of any individual, but rather that of the Communists. Four district council presidents of UE, thirty staff members, and a number of business agents, all of whom were members of or friendly

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<sup>1</sup>UE partisans nicknamed the IUE "Imitation UE."

<sup>2</sup>New York Times, April 6, 7, 8, November 17, 1965.

<sup>3</sup>See the quotation from Rice's oral history interview which begins this chapter.

to the Communist Party, in 1955 succeeded in pulling fifty thousand workers out of UE and into strongly anti-Communist unions. The Communist Party approved the move. Two factors influenced the timing of the decision. The first was the merger of the AFL and the CIO, and the desire of party leaders to return to the "mainstream of labor." The second was the decision of the Subversive Activities Control Board to charge UE with being "Communist-dominated." The decision reflected the fear of party leaders that UE would be unable to withstand the government attack or survive outside the newly merged AFL-CIO.<sup>1</sup> In addition, however, the decision revealed a turn away from radicalism and militancy. No longer did the party seek to lead the working class movement. Instead, Communist trade unionists sought only minor positions in unions led by Walter Reuther and James Carey.

In spite of the rationale of those who left UE, one delegate to the UE convention in 1956 suggested, there was really only one reason to leave UE and join IUE:

To join the IUE meant to get McCarthy off your back. To join the IUE meant that the Un-American Committee would not give you a subpoena. To join the IUE meant that the Massachusetts Communist Commission would make you a hero instead of a villain.

What angered and shocked this delegate was the role which the party had played in the "second secession":

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<sup>1</sup>Matles and Higgins, Them And Us, 229-31; Emspak, "Break-up of CIO," 353-55; Stanley Aronowitz, False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), 348-50. Yet another view on the second secession is contained in Sigal, Going Away, 378-30.

No only did all those newspapers and magazines knock hell out of us [UE] but most of the time the only place you could buy a daily newspaper that would make you feel a little different, something that said it isn't so, was the Daily Worker. To be sure, a few weeks ago I picked up the Daily Worker, a newspaper which I had read religiously for over twenty years, and in reading one of my favorite columns . . . find [the columnist] says he does not blame the members of the UE for leaving this organization.<sup>1</sup>

And yet, despite bitterness toward the party, there was no red-baiting. No delegate complained of "party directives" or argued that those who left were following "their masters in Moscow." No one proposed that Communists be made ineligible for membership in the union or be denied the right to hold office. No even even suggested that workers should oppose Communist candidates in future elections. The individuals were harshly criticized (although even here many delegates went out of their way to praise their former contribution to the union) and no one defended the party's role. At the same time, delegates consciously avoided the anti-Communist formulas which the UE right-wing had used.

The secession placed the Justice Department in a difficult position: many of the men and women the department had labeled Communists were no longer members of the union.<sup>2</sup> The charges were finally dropped. Government officials, however, continued to harass UE leaders. Both Matles and Emspak were cited for contempt by a New York Federal Grand Jury for failing to answer certain questions, but the charges were later dismissed. Both,

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<sup>1</sup>United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America, Proceedings of the Twenty-first Convention (New York, 1956), 37-38.

<sup>2</sup>F. S. O'Brien, "The 'Communist-Dominated' Unions in the United States Since 1950," Labor History, IX (Fall 1968), 203-204.

however, faced additional government prosecution. Matles had his citizenship revoked, and an attempt was made to deport him. Emspak was convicted of contempt of congress for failing to answer questions before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Both UE leaders won their cases on appeals to the Supreme Court, but the toll was still great.<sup>1</sup> As Fitzgerald recalled at the UE convention of 1968:

Emspak and Jim [Matles] and myself were called before all kinds of Committees of Congress—Kersten Committee, McCarthy Committee, the UnAmerican Committee, and all of the others, badgered and harassed, investigated and investigated, trailed by FBI and everybody else, but they couldn't get anything against us. We still walked the streets as free men, we still held our jobs in this Union, but mark my words, it contributed to sending Julius Emspak to an early grave.

## VII

The preceding examination of the UE permits us to explore three important questions. The first question deals with the right-wing opposition, the second with the workers in the industry, and the third with the left-wing leadership. First, what accounted for the failure of the right-wing opposition? Second, what was the effect on the workers in the electrical industry of the expulsion of UE and the formation of the IUE? Third, in what sense, if at all, can UE be considered a Communist-led union? The first two questions can be answered quickly and easily; the third is more difficult.

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<sup>1</sup>O'Brien, "Communist-Dominated Unions," 203-204.

<sup>2</sup>"A Little Bit of UE History You Should Know," (New York: UE pamphlet, 1968), 8. The pamphlet reprinted speeches by Fitzgerald and Matles from the Thirty-third UE Convention in 1968.



The anti-Communist opposition leaders were never able to convince the UE rank and file that the anti-Communists could provide a competent and militant leadership for UE. There were several reasons for this. First, virtually all students of the UE agree that the left-wing leadership was considerably more competent and certainly more militant than the anti-Communist opposition.<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that the right-wing erred in concentrating solely on political rather than trade union issues, but right-wing leaders actually could find little wrong with the trade union policies of the left-wing officials. Second, right-wingers in the leadership of local unions helped to discredit the right-wing cause. The expulsion of alleged Communists by the right-wing leaders of the Bridgeport local and the complicity of right-wing local leaders in secession plots angered many rank and file workers. Third, Carey's leadership, particularly, could not inspire confidence. He had lied before a congressional investigating committee in order to discredit UE, he was known as an incompetent administrator, and he was a poor negotiator. Carey's defeat in 1941 was not at the hands of the Communists, who opposed a move against Carey, but at the hands of anti-Communists who resented Carey's lack of attention to his union job. Later, Carey was also removed from the presidency by IUE workers, becoming the first individual to be defeated for re-election as union president by two unions.

Electrical workers suffered from the division in their industry.

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<sup>1</sup>See particularly the anti-Communist accounts by Taft, Labor Unions, 24, 31, and Northrup, Boulwarism, 41-47.

<sup>2</sup>Harrington, "Catholics in Labor Movement," 262-63; Rice's statement is quoted on page 329 of this dissertation.

In 1949, UE represented the majority of production workers in the electrical industry. By 1953, IUE and UE together represented less than half of those workers. At GE, for example, the corporation dealt with 80 separate unions. UE and IUE together, a quarter century after the split, have not been able to amass the number of members which UE had in 1949. Unions representing electrical workers did not even set up joint bargaining committees until 1970. At the same time, the employers were on the offensive. In Chicago, for example, the Stewart Warner Company, the Sunbeam Company, and the Foote Brothers Company discharged 500 UE officers and stewards on the same day. The NLRB later upheld these discharges on the grounds that companies had a right to discharge those workers whose loyalty they doubted. Other electrical unions, rather than standing beside the discharged UE activists, used the opportunity to raid UE. Because of disunity and weakness, unions representing electrical workers were unable to make even the gains which right-wing unions in auto and steel had achieved.<sup>1</sup>

UE was not a Communist-dominated union, at least in the way its critics have charged. In testimony before a congressional committee, Matles was described as "not an American by any reasonable definition . . . [but] a Hungarian-born alien Communist," and Emspak was called "the top labor union commissar of the Communist Party in the United States." Fitzgerald was dismissed as "a front

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<sup>1</sup>The most extensive discussion of the effect of the split on the workers in the electrical industry is in Emspak, "Breakup of CIO," 340-61, particularly 355-58. For corporation support of IUE, see ibid., 349-51.

man."<sup>1</sup> The view of Fitzgerald as a mindless dupe of secret party members Matles and Emspak is prevalent among UE's opponents. Dwight MacDonald, for example, described Fitzgerald as "the mouth-piece of comrades Matles and Emspak."<sup>2</sup> According to the anti-Communist view of UE, the political initiative came from the Communist Party, and was transmitted to agents Matles and Emspak who then duped Fitzgerald. Only then was the policy submitted to the membership for approval. This view distorts the actual political roles of all three of UE's top officials.

It can not be said with any certainty that either Matles or Emspak belonged to the Communist Party. Both could be classified, however, as party influentials in the sense in which Joseph Starobin used that term.<sup>3</sup> They were in a political limbo, sympathetic to the Communist Party but not openly pro-Communist. If they participated formally in the Party's structure it was on a semiclandestine level. Matles probably belonged to the party during the years he organized for the TUUL, and probably severed his ties as he became more active in UE.<sup>4</sup> Emspak has been charged with participating secretly in the

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Education and Labor, Hearings Before a Special Subcommittee on the Investigation of Communist Infiltration of UERMWA, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1948), 168, 176, 83.

<sup>2</sup>Dwight MacDonald, "The Wallace Campaign: An Autopsy," Politics, V (Summer 1948), 180.

<sup>3</sup>Starobin, American Communism in Crisis, 39-41. For a fuller discussion of this concept, see chapter seven,

<sup>4</sup>See the Daily Worker, March 21, 1934, for an article by Matles on the TUUL union, the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union. At the time of the article, Matles was probably in the CP.

party under the code name of "Comrade Juniper." The government, despite considerable effort, has been unable to prove these charges. Fitzgerald was never in or close to the party, but he believed that it sometimes played a progressive role. In an oral history interview, he outlined his ideas about the Communists and their allies:

I don't think that you can make any progress in the unions or in the country or any place else, unless you've got a left that's struggling like hell for certain kinds of programs. I think we were in a position and I think the CIO was in a position to take the good points and use them to the advantage of the people, and discard the points that we disagreed with, and I never, at any time, saw them as a threat to either the UE or the CIO.<sup>1</sup>

In his unpublished doctoral dissertation on the UE, the first full-length study of that union, Ronald Filippelli assessed the importance of the Communist issue as follows:

It is clear that the United States Government has been unable to prove any link between the UE leadership and the Communist Party of the United States, let alone of the Soviet Union. But even if it had, whether or not the UE leaders were communists seems academic in light of all the reams of testimony given on UE to both government and union investigating committees, which contain not one concrete fact which indicates any way in which the rank and file members of the UE suffered because of actions taken by their leaders as a result of their political convictions. Finally, there is absolutely no evidence to indicate that any leader advocated or any UE member took action detrimental to the security of the United States.

"The great tragedy of the struggle," Filippelli concluded, "lies in the shambles into which unionism in the electrical manufacturing industry has fallen."<sup>2</sup> And it was the actions of the anti-Communists, not the Communists, which created that disunity.

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Fitzgerald, Oral History Interview, Pennsylvania State University, May 7, 1968, p. 30. For some of his differences with the party, see Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 137.

<sup>2</sup>Filippelli, "United Electrical Workers," 234-35.