

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE SPLIT IN THE CIO, 1945-1950

According to Earl Browder, the Communist position in the CIO "was the basis of the Communist advances in all other fields." Although Communists did not control the CIO, their role in building it won them what Browder called "citizenship" in the labor movement.¹ Citizenship is an awkward word in this context. What Browder meant was that Communists gained a certain legitimacy and respectability which allowed them to work in the labor movement and other liberal and reform movements. The drive against Communists accompanying the cold war was directed against that legitimacy and respectability rather than against Communist power. For anti-Communist activity to be effective, it would have to take root in the very organizations that Communists had endeavored to build.² As the "basis of the Communist advances," the CIO was perhaps the most crucial of these organizations. The nature of the anti-Communist movement in the CIO, the response of Communists and their supporters to the attack, and the consequences of the anti-Communist victory for the CIO and

¹Earl Browder, "The American Communist Party in the Thirties," Rita James Simon, ed., As We Saw the Thirties: Essays on the Social and Political Movements of a Decade (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 232, 233.

²David Shannon has noted that the primary reason for the ineffectiveness of conservative anti-Communism was that "the conservative anti-Communists were in no position to do any infighting against Communists; they could only swing at them from afar." David A. Shannon, The Decline of American Communism: A History of the Communist Party Since 1945 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1959), 123-24.

and American society generally will be explored in this chapter.

I

The CIO itself had been expelled from a national labor federation in 1935 and charges of Communist domination had played a prominent role in that expulsion.¹ John P. Frey, president of the AFL Metal Trades Department, spent three days before the House Committee on Un-American Activities developing the thesis that the CIO was run by Communists. Frey's testimony was not at all haphazard; he presented a list of 283 men and women, with a brief biographical sketch of each person. Frey has, in fact, the dubious distinction of establishing the format for the next several decades of the House Committee on Un-American Activities as "a libel-proof forum for charges of subversion against named individuals without cross-examination and for no legislative purpose."²

In a sense, the CIO was vulnerable to those charges because there were Communists working as CIO organizers. Herbert March, for example, had been the leader of the Young Communist League and an organizer for the TUUL union in the packinghouse industry before becoming the Chicago district director for the CIO Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee.³ William Z. Foster estimated that

¹Richard O. Boyer and Herbert M. Morais, Labor's Untold Story (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1955), 290-97; Galenson, CIO Challenge, 3-74.

²Frank J. Donner, The Un-Americans (New York: Ballantine Books, 1961), 13.

³Transcript of interview with Herbert March, November 16,

sixty Communist organizers had served on the staff of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee.¹ For some of these Communists, the changes in their lives were dramatic. One activist recalled that "people who had been unemployed, giving leadership to unemployed workers and demonstrations of unemployed workers, in a period of a few months, a year or two at the most, found themselves at the head of huge labor organizations with contracts, with per capita coming in regularly, vast sums of money, [and] vast full-paid, full-time people on their staffs."² In addition, workers who had been fired, black-listed, and defeated in struggles against employers found themselves in the center of an organizing campaign which appeared on the verge of forcing corporate giants to recognize independent, militant workers' organizations. At the heart of both of these groups were workers committed to the left and particularly to the Communist Party.

The CIO adopted a rather complicated strategy to deal with the issue of Communist participation. First, they argued that the issue was irrelevant and, more important, that it was used by employers to weaken the union movement. Walter Reuther's statement was typical:

Many years ago in this country, when the bosses wanted to keep the workers from forming a strong union, they started scares of

1970, Roosevelt University. See also Lynd and Lynd, Rank and File, 69-71.

¹Foster, History, 349.

²Transcript of Interview with Ernest DeMaio, November 16, 1970, February 23, 1971. Roosevelt University.

kinds. One scare the bosses raised was the Catholics against the Protestants. . . .

Now the bosses are trying a new stunt. They are raising a new scare: the red scare. They pay stools to go whispering around that so-and-so—usually a militant union leader—is a red.

What the bosses really mean, however, is not that a leader is a red. They mean they don't like him because he is a loyal, dependable union man, a fighter who helps his union brothers. . . .

No union man worthy of the name will play the bosses' game. Some may do so through ignorance. But those who peddle the red scare and know what they are doing are dangerous enemies of the union.¹

The second component of the CIO's strategy flowed from the argument that the Communist issue was irrelevant and injected into union politics primarily by employers to disrupt unionization. CIO leaders encouraged, and sometimes demanded, that Communists deny their party affiliation. As Len DeCaux, editor of the CIO News from its inception until 1947, noted somewhat cynically:

A rule of the game was that the communist player should not proclaim his communism. That way the respectable, if caught at it, could say with shocked innocence, "Good gracious, we never knew he was a Communist."

DeCaux indicated that the refusal of Communists to identify themselves was partially due to the "legal and extra-legal penalties on Communists" in the United States, but he added perceptively:

Some camouflage was necessary as communists moved into battle for progressive causes. It was expected, if not demanded, by the allies they battled alongside.²

At first glance, the tacit understanding between Communists and the CIO leadership appeared to benefit the party. Party members were in the center of the class struggle, leading thousands of

¹Quoted in Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 75-76.

²DeCaux, Labor Radical, 245-46. Emphasis added.

workers, with the opportunity to build strong bases in numerous locals and districts. The problem was that it became increasingly difficult to build those bases around communist politics. More and more, Communists emphasized their ability as trade union leaders, while arguing that their precise political affiliations were irrelevant.

At the founding convention of the CIO, delegates, perhaps remembering their own expulsion from the AFL, established the firm guarantee of union autonomy. The CIO constitution established the structure of the federation only. The chairman of the committee that drafted the constitution asserted that in the event of a conflict between the constitution of the CIO and the constitution of a member union "that part of the constitution of that particular organization as applied to its own members would govern and not this [the CIO's] constitution."¹ A firm guarantee of autonomy for each affiliate and a definite coolness toward anti-Communism characterized the CIO until the post-war period.

II

Union autonomy and opposition to anti-Communism were early casualties of the anti-Communist movement in the CIO. At the CIO convention of 1946, anti-Communism was endorsed and the autonomy of CIO regional Industrial Union Councils was severely infringed.

¹Quoted in the American Communications Association, On the Record: A Statement of the American Communications Association Presented to the CIO "Trial" Committee (New York: Progressive Printing Company, no date), 11-12. A copy of this pamphlet was sent to the author by the American Communications Association.

Oddly enough, Communists voted for both resolutions.¹

Central to understanding the Communist capitulation is the ambiguous conduct of CIO President Philip Murray. Before the convention, Murray had given no indication of any shift in his position against anti-Communism. Occasionally, Murray would attack the Communists, but these attacks were almost invariably part of a general attack on outsiders "whether they be Communists, Socialists, or any other group." At the UE convention of 1946, Murray praised the UE leadership for their "splendid support . . . for all national policies [of the CIO]."² A writer for the right-wing Labor Leader, published by the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, indicated the dissatisfaction of anti-Communists with Murray's conduct:

Those of us who like and admire Phil Murray . . . have frequently been hard pressed to defend him against his critics.

There are those who don't like his keeping Lee Pressman. . . .

And then they say, what about this Len DeCaux [who slants] CIO publicity toward the Party Line and toward every CP-controlled union in the CIO? What about that?

But before you can block that old haymaker, they double you up with a short left to the breadbasket. And finally, they say, what about this convention last week of the United Electrical Workers in Milwaukee, where Murray cut the ground out from under an anti-CP caucus by getting up and telling the delegates what wonderful guys their pro-CP officers were? Is Phil Murray for the CPs or against them?

That one puts you out for the count.³

It was the background which gave Murray the ability to outmaneuver the left-wing at the 1946 convention.

Without consulting either the right or the left wing, Murray

¹Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 49, 56.

²Ibid., 38, 129.

³Labor Leader, September 20, 1946.

appointed a committee composed of six members of the executive board to answer "the allegations contained in the newsprints and disseminated throughout the land that this organization of yours and mine, this great, big, mighty, trade union movement, was Communistically dominated." Murray appointed three left-wingers and three right-wingers and, with his aid, they unanimously agreed on a resolution containing the statement that the CIO delegates "resent and reject efforts of the Communist Party or any other political party and their adherents to interfere in the affairs of the CIO."

Although Murray did say that the CIO "was not and must not be Communist-controlled and inspired," the thrust of his speech was clearly conciliatory. He minimized the repudiation of the Communist Party by noting that the CIO "will not tolerate interference from not only the Communist Party, remember, but other political parties." He also stressed unity by reminding the delegates that the anti-Communist resolution was adopted by the executive board "without a single, solitary, dissenting voice or vote." Murray told the delegates that he had received "a great many communications which, in substance, suggested that this organization of ours should indulge itself in the extravagances of repressive legislation," but he indicated that he was "definitely opposed to any form of repression in this movement of ours."¹

¹Congress of Industrial Organizations, Proceedings of the Eighth Constitutional Convention (Atlantic City, 1946), 111-13; see also Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 47; Shannon, Decline of American Communism, 49; New York Times, November 18, 1946.

In spite of Murray's reassurances, two Communists from the National Maritime Union opposed the motion, but they withdrew their opposition after conferring with other Communists.¹ In an editorial entitled "A Rebuff to Reaction" the Daily Worker noted that "despite the unjustified implication that the Communist Party was interfering in the CIO, there could be no question . . . as to where the priority lay—the unity of the CIO behind the progressive economic and social program outlined by Murray in his report to the convention—this was the central thing." Because of the compelling need for unity in the CIO, "there can be no doubt of the correctness of the actions of the Communists and all 'lefts' in the convention or of their agreement to vote for the statement after they succeeded in eliminating all the major damage that the right wing sought to include in it."² In his history of the party, Foster failed to even mention the resolution. Instead, he stated that "at its 1946 convention, the CIO actively opposed the tendencies toward Soviet-baiting, militarization, and war."³

The only open expression of discord at the convention was the complaints of the right wing on the slate of vice-presidents.⁴ Far

¹Shannon, Decline of American Communism, 50. The Communists who first opposed the motion were Joseph Stack and Howard MacKenzie. Stack later claimed that MacKenzie changed his vote without his permission. Sixth NMU Proceedings, 984.

²Daily Worker, November 20, 1946.

³Foster, History, 490.

⁴Murray supported R. J. Thomas over O. A. Knight for the vice-presidency created by Reid Robinson's resignation. The right-wing objected to this decision. Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 50-53.

more important, however, was the resolution on Industrial Union Councils demanding that state and local councils restrict themselves to state and local issues except for those national issues and organizations approved by the national CIO. Councils were forbidden to make statements conflicting with CIO policy or to make contributions to organizations not approved by the CIO. It could be argued that the resolution did not involve the issue of union autonomy since individual unions retained the right to make any statements or contribute to any organization. But the purpose was clearly to limit dissent, and Murray's confused arguments in behalf of the resolution reflected his general uneasiness. To the press he made the unconvincing complaint that strangers would sneak into council meetings armed with "destructive propaganda" in the form of statements "not in conformity with national CIO policy." In his report to the convention, Murray indicated that he was particularly disturbed by those "public statements" which concerned themselves with "developments in distant foreign lands." The resolution was clearly related to the cold war and Communist opposition to American foreign policy, but Communists did not fight against or even criticize the resolution.¹

The right-wing, unlike the Communists, was unsatisfied by the convention. Chester Wright's Labor Letter, close to the CIO right wing, called the resolutions a paper victory and complained that Murray had "muzzled" the delegates.² The Trotskyist party led by

¹Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 55-56.

²Chester Wright's Labor Letter, November 23, 1946.

Max Shactman was even more opposed to Murray's action. In an article on the CIO convention, the Workers Party complained that "timidity characterized Murray's handling of the Stalinist menace."¹ Murray's reassurances and the unsatisfied anger of the opponents of the Communists make Communist approval of the decision not to oppose the resolutions more understandable, but probably more important was the party's conception of the united front. Communists rejected as reactionary nonsense any suggestion that their goals were different from those of the CIO's leadership. Communists instead sought to build up first Lewis and then Murray as protection against the CIO right wing, and were, as a result, largely dependent upon them.²

Shortly after the convention, John Brophy, director of Industrial Union Councils for the national CIO, sent a letter to all councils ordering them to drop all association with the National Negro Congress and informing them that "the organization with which we work very closely and successfully is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, on whose executive board is

¹"The CIO Convention," New International, XIII (January 1947), 8.

²Communist support for Murray is generally seen as a clever tactic. This passage from an anti-Communist book is typical: "Communist strategy was simple. The 'Left' flattered Murray, praising him as the indispensable leader who alone could hold together the divergent tendencies in the CIO and appealing to that unsophisticated side of him—the side that went back to early struggles in mining towns—which believed that all good unionists could find a common basis of action through sheer good will." Howe and Coser, American Communist Party, 464. The results suggest that it was actually a poor tactic.

President Philip Murray. "¹ In January of 1947, the CIO executive board released a list of thirty-six approved national organizations, and instructed councils to limit their support to those organizations.² The list had a clear right-wing bias: despite the inclusion of numerous relief agencies, the CIO refused to include the relief agencies of two of the most stricken countries in the war, Yugoslavia and Poland.³ But perhaps the best way to characterize the list is to point out that the CIO had decided that the American Legion was worthy of labor's support, but that the National Negro Congress was not.

III

The struggle within the CIO was influenced and in turned influenced a struggle within American liberalism generally. Controversies over American foreign policy, the intentions of the Soviet Union, and the possibility of cooperation with Communists in progressive movements raged throughout the liberal community in the postwar period. That debate increasingly intruded on the CIO. Ultimately, the CIO was forced to choose between two varieties of liberalism.

The extreme virulence of anti-Communist liberalism was reflected in an editorial published in the left-wing journal, Partisan Review. Communists were briefly dismissed as "outright foreign

¹Quoted in Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 56.

²The entire list was published in the New York Times, January 9, 1947.

³This point was made by Art Preis, Labor's Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1964), 336.

agents." Even more dangerous were many liberals who were guilty of "a campaign of concealment, misrepresentation, and deception in the interests of a foreign power." The Partisan Review analysis rested on two assumptions. The first was that there was no possibility of revolution in the United States, and the second was that the major threat to freedom came from Communist expansion. It was important for radicals to use "the contradiction between Russia and the Western powers." Partisan Review was critical of the State Department, but their criticism was that the United States was not aggressive enough in the struggle against the Soviet Union.¹

While the quasi-Trotskyists in Partisan Review were able to envision a might alliance with the State Department based on mutual anti-Soviet politics, the less ideological liberals saw no reason to break up the alliance of progressives that characterized the New Deal and the war years. In September, 1946, a Conference of Progressives, attended by approximately three hundred delegates from thirty-five states, was held in Chicago. Signers of the call included C. B. Baldwin, Elmer Benson, Frank Kingdon, and Clark

¹For the attack on liberals, see the Editors [William Phillips and Philip Rahv], "The Liberal Fifth Column," Partisan Review, XIII (Summer 1946), 279-93. Their basic political assumptions can be found in another editorial, "The Politics of Illusion," ibid., (November-December 1946), 612, 618. The similarity of Partisan Review's rhetoric with the speeches of Senator Joseph McCarthy is striking. It is not merely that both were anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. More significantly, both were fond of conspiratorial rhetoric and both spoke darkly of the treason of liberals. For a discussion of Partisan Review's relationship to cold war intellectuals, see James Burkhart Gilbert, Writers and Partisans: A History of Literary Radicalism in America (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968), 253-82.

Foreman for the National Citizens Political Action Committee, Harold Ickes and Jo Davidson for the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions, Philip Murray and Jack Kroll for the CIO Political Action Committee, James Patton of the National Farmers Union, and Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The conference passed resolutions endorsing a liberal domestic program and "a swift return to the progressive global thinking of Franklin Roosevelt." The foreign policy section of the adopted platform reflected intense liberal dissatisfaction with Truman's policies. A continuations committee was elected and a second conference planned. At the second conference, over the objections of the few Communists within the two groups, the National Citizens Political Action Committee merged with the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions to form the Progressive Citizens of America (PCA). Although the PCA was led by non-Communists, it soon became a major target of anti-Communist liberals.¹

The major challenge to the PCA came from what began as a small group of rather isolated and bitter anti-Communists called the Union for Democratic Action (UDA). During the Second World War, members of UDA were, in the words of one of their most important

¹For the conference of progressives and the founding of the PCA, see Norman D. Markowitz, The Rise and Fall of the Peoples' Century: Henry A. Wallace and American Liberalism, 1941-1948 (New York: Free Press, 1973), 200-230; Alonzo L. Hamby, Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 147-68; Curtis D. MacDougall, Gideon's Army, Vol. I: The Components of the Decision (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1965), 102-20.

leaders, James Loeb, jr., "almost the pariahs of the liberal movement" because they "refused to participate in so many 'worthy causes' that we knew were run by Communists."¹ But when UDA called a conference to form a liberal organization which would reject "any association with Communists or sympathizers with Communism in the United States," they were able to form a new organization, the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), which had a wider basis of support. Important anti-Communist CIO leaders like Walter Reuther and James Carey quickly joined the ADA.² Indeed, both the ADA and the CIO right-wing needed each other. ADA leaders knew that their organization needed labor support to prosper, and anti-Communist CIO leaders favored an anti-Communist liberal organization outside the CIO.

At the February, 1947 meeting of the CIO executive board, the board refused to add either the ADA or the PCA to its list of acceptable political organizations. Its statement indicated that the CIO "deplored the division in the liberal movement" which amounted to a criticism of the ADA, which had labored long and hard to create that division.³

ADA responded with a forthright statement:

While we disagree with the CIO's action, we dissent even more from the publicly stated purpose of the action: to achieve unity of the two proscribed organizations. . . . The CIO's appeal to the liberal movement to drop its differences and unite can only be based on the theory that unity with Communists is possible. ADA flatly rejects this

¹Quoted in Clifton Brock, Americans for Democratic Action: Its Role in National Affairs (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1962), 49.

²MacDougall, Gideon's Army, I, 121-22.

³Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 103.

theory.¹

The eclipse of the Truman Doctrine by the Marshall Plan as the chief foreign policy issue dividing liberals found the ADA in a more tenable position.² Still, at the close of 1947, ADA was still no more than half the size of the PCA.

The issue that ensured the ascendancy of the ADA was not the Marshall Plan, however, but the third party candidacy of Henry Wallace. Although Communists were not the first to call for a third party alternative to Truman in the presidential elections of 1948, nor the last to leave the Progressive Party once it was organized, the Progressive Party was widely believed to be a Communist front.³ At the January, 1948 meeting, the CIO executive board attacked the formation of the third party. Albert Fitzgerald objected the resolution and argued that each union should decide between Wallace and Truman. Harry Bridges offered to support Truman if the Missouri Democrat could win a CIO-conducted referendum of the CIO membership.

¹Quoted in Brock, ADA, 60.

²Markowitz, Peoples' Century, 244-50.

³For non-Communist, pre-Progressive Party sentiment for a third party, see Brock, ADA, 69, and Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, 78. For a discussion of the radicals who remained in the Progressive Party after Communists had "retreated into the Democratic Party in the early fifties" see Michael Munk, "The Guardian from Old to New Left," Radical America, II (March-April 1968), 27-28. For a picture of the Progressive Party as a Communist front, see Shannon, Decline of American Communism, 113-82; Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign: The Truman Victory of 1948 (New York: New American Library, 1968), 141-62; David J. Saposs, Communism in American Politics (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1960), 119-95. More balanced and, in my judgment, more persuasive accounts are available in Markowitz, Peoples' Century, 202-11, 284-95, passim.; Karl M. Schmidt, Henry A. Wallace: Quixotic Crusade 1948 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1960), 252-79.

Otherwise, Bridges stated, he would support the candidate endorsed by the ILWU membership. Abram Flaxner, of the State, County, and Municipal Workers Union, and John Clark, of the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers Union, abstained on the resolution attacking the third party. No referendum was conducted, and the CIO, by attacking the Progressive Party, indicated its tacit support for Truman.¹

Following the CIO board meeting, Murray sent a letter to industrial union councils announcing that opposition to a third party and support for the Marshall Plan were now CIO policy, "and our councils, as well as our regional directors and field representatives should be governed by this policy."² Jack Kroll, director of the CIO Political Action Committee, stated that "no officer or member of PAC is to support, by public comment or otherwise, any candidate who is not endorsed by PAC."³ A similar statement was made by John Brophy in a letter to all industrial union councils:

It is the obligation of all councils to take a forthright stand in support of National CIO policies on these issues [the Progressive Party and the Marshall Plan]. No evasion or compromise on this are possible.⁴

The Left made a strong effort to compromise. The Newark Industrial Union Council (IUC) fired an official who was working for the Wallace campaign and informed Brophy that "in the interests of unity they would not force a decision on the council at this time .

¹New York Times, January 23, 1948.

²Murray's letter, dated January 27, 1948, is quoted in Emspak, "Breakup of CIO," 236-37.

³CIO News, February 22, 1948, quoted ibid., 238.

⁴Brophy's letter, dated March 8, 1948, is quoted ibid.

although the majority were for Wallace." The San Francisco IUC decided to "take no action pro or con upon the questions which remain at issue among the international unions of the CIO with respect to the presidential campaign, Wallace or Truman, or the issue of a third major political party, or the Marshall Plan." Those questions would be left to the "affiliated locals and their members" which had "the autonomous right to decide these issues in their own best judgment." Brophy informed the council that their statement "cannot be regarded as being in harmony with national CIO policy." The CIO, Brophy stressed, "is opposed to the formation of a third party in 1948, and favors the Marshall Plan." Therefore, "any statement, by an industrial union council which takes a compromise position in these points is in conflict with CIO policy and in violation of rule 8 governing councils."

The CIO maintained that none of these measures violated the basic principles of union autonomy upon which the CIO was founded. Brophy distinguished between individual unions and the councils. As he put it, "CIO councils are subsidiary organizations of National CIO which issues their certificates of affiliation."¹ In practice, however, it was impossible to maintain the autonomy of individual unions when the autonomy of the councils was abridged. To instruct a body composed of locals in a particular district that it must vote to endorse a particular policy or candidate is certainly to limit, if not eliminate, that local's autonomy. Moreover, local unions which failed to support

¹The exchange between Brophy and the councils is taken from Emspak, "Breakup of CIO," 238-40.

the Marshall Plan and the Democratic Party were often excluded from the councils.¹ In the most recent and extensive study of the split within the CIO, Emspak concluded that the decision to compel unions to support Truman marked the beginning of the virtual subordination of the CIO to the Democratic Party and the end of union autonomy in the federation.²

IV

The Communist decision to support a third party put tremendous pressure on those unionists whom Joseph Starobin has called the party's "influentials." To understand the strains created by this decision, it is necessary to examine the position of the influentials vis a vis the trade union movement and the Communist Party. Starobin's analysis provides the best starting point for such an examination.

There were, Starobin noted, two varieties of Communists within the CIO: "those [Communist Party] members who were known as such, never denied it, and were largely involved in the inner functioning of the Party," and those "who lived in a political limbo, who blurred their political affiliation, and did not participate in the Party's structure except on a semiclandestine level." It is possible to apply these distinctions to people discussed in earlier chapters. In the United Automobile Workers, for example, Nat Ganley was an open, avowed Communist, while Wyndham Mortimer was not. Both,

¹Emspak, "Breakup of CIO,"

²Ibid., 253-54. This subordination was not new, although the bureaucratic enforcement was.

however, were party members.¹ Increasingly, open party membership was restricted to people who openly spoke for the party, like Ruth Young in the UE and Nat Ganley in the UAW, and those who were known as Communists in the pre-CIO period, like Ben Gold of the furriers.

"No deliberate conspiracy was involved" in the creation of this group of semi-secret party members. Instead, "Communists had taken the line of least resistance." A "gap had arisen between their ability to gain leadership positions in huge organizations and their ability to build within those organizations a solid corps of left-wingers." In short, "it had proved easier to become a leader of masses than to build a mass base." This situation could only get worse. The ease with which Communists became trade union leaders reinforced a reluctance to risk that leadership by open advocacy of the Communist Party. At the same time, the unwillingness of men and women who had won respect as trade union leaders to "build the party" severely hindered the creation of that "solid corps of left-wingers" necessary for open party advocacy. In the late 1930s, these problems probably seemed remote compared to the party's success in providing leadership in major, working class organizations. By the mid and late 1940s, however, the years of failing to build the party, and obscuring political allegiances, had taken its toll. While the

¹Mortimer often denied and never publicly acknowledged his party membership. In his autobiography, he never admits to being a Communist. In an oral history interview, however, he states that he was a Communist. Wyndham Mortimer, "Reflections of a Labor Organizer," (Oral History Interview, University of California at Los Angeles, 1967), 136-37, 150.

individual Communists had consolidated their organizational position within the CIO, their political position, as a result of their defensive and deliberately obscure political stance, had deteriorated.

Although sympathetic to the decision, Starobin noted that the abolition of "party fractions"¹ widened the gap between "union members in the Party and secretly affiliated leaders":

Until the caucuses were abolished, all Communists . . . would map out strategy and tactics together, and a common discipline would be binding on everyone no matter what their echelon or particular task. The American Communists were seeking to break away from this Leninist form, suitable to quasi-military purposes; their object was to obviate the suspicion of conspiracy, and to give their influentials leeway to behave as organizational leaders with no strings attached to a hidden center. Yet this very dissolution of fractions operated to remove the influentials from the discipline of Communist rank and file in their organizations.

The ties of the influentials to the party became more and more tenuous. Lacking contact with the Communist rank and file in their unions and seeing outside Communist leaders rarely, these people gradually became more like sympathizers and friends than party members. It appears highly likely that many of these individuals were party members before 1936 and highly unlikely that many remained Communists by 1956. Yet there would be no public break, since they would change from a relatively vocal Communists, to a secretly-affiliated one, to a nonmember almost imperceptively. It has been

¹The abolition of party fractions, which were groups of Communists in particular organizations which met regularly to formulate policy, is described by Foster in a passage quoted on page 233 of this dissertation.

²This analysis follows Starobin, American Communism In Crisis, 38-41, but there is a difference of emphasis. Readers are urged to read Starobin's analysis in its entirety.

fashionable to say that those individuals were Communists in all but name; actually, they were, despite their private conceptions of themselves, no longer Communists in any sense of the word. They were not hostile to the party. After all, the party had tacitly encouraged their separation from its active ranks, and party leaders and the party press still spoke highly of them. Moreover, they continued to be influenced by the political training they had received in or around the Communist movement, and they still viewed the world from a perspective friendly to the Soviet Union. But their major concern was with the union in which they held office.

The onset of the cold war in the labor movement placed these men and women in an extraordinarily difficult position. On the one hand, they were faced by an aggressive attempt of the CIO leadership to tie labor solidly to the Democratic Party, enlist on the American side in the cold war, and severely limit the autonomy of CIO affiliates. All of their political instincts and ideas, quite aside from positions taken by the Communist movement, led them to oppose this program. On the other hand, they were fearful of a split with the CIO leadership and went to great lengths to avoid a confrontation. Their final posture was somewhat of a compromise. They defended the right of unionists to refuse to follow the CIO line and fought as undemocratic and violations of the CIO constitution those measures taken to enforce the CIO line. At the same time, they gave only mild support to the Progressive Party. As Curtis MacDougall noted, "most of the avowed Progressives among union officials at all levels merely sat on their hands, doing little or nothing to line up their mass membership as

participants in the movement."¹ In this way, the influentials sought to combat an increasingly repressive atmosphere inside the CIO while keeping the possibility of reconciliation open. This strategy, as we shall see, was not successful.

V

On November 22, 1948, the CIO convention opened in a mood of triumphant optimism—the CIO, most of the delegates believed, had saved the country despite overwhelming odds. Liberal Democrats were particularly elated as the Democratic Party had captured the presidency without the help of either the conservative Dixiecrats or the Wallace progressives. Harry Truman would certainly divest the Southern traitors to the Democratic Party of their iron grip over Congress, and the liberal and working class movements would similarly punish the supporters of Henry Wallace. It was, as Arthur Schlesinger, jr. would say, a clear triumph for the vital center.²

The political action resolution summed up the majority feeling. It hailed the "results of the November 1948 election as a great victory for the American people and a complete vindication of the wisdom, soundness and foresight of the policy of the national CIO in this election." The resolution also noted that "a third party at this time would serve only to split and divide the forces of progress and serve the

¹ Quoted in Starobin, American Communism in Crisis, 179.

² Brock, ADA, 104; Eric F. Coldman, Rendezvous With Destiny: A History of Modern American Reform (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 327-30. This liberal triumph, of course, was followed by the McCarthy period for which it helped to set the stage.

interests of reaction." The CIO's argument that a third party would "divide the forces of progress" is precisely the argument Communists had made against redbaiting. Similarly, the left-wing unions argued that the resolution linked the CIO to the Democratic Party, but they had been fervent supporters of the Democratic Party throughout most of the Roosevelt years.¹

In any case, no arguments could compete with the feeling that the resolution merely ratified the CIO's most impressive electoral accomplishment. As Jacob Potofsky, of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, gloated:

Victory is sweet.

Who more than the CIO has brought out the vote? Who more than the CIO has made its contribution to this campaign? The CIO has done a splendid job. The issues were clear-cut, the campaign was a CIO program. The strategy and direction was perfect.

Murray's speech to the convention was equally effusive:

I know something about the tortures to which I was subjected for some four or five months prior to the November election. . . .

I thought of you. I thought of the millions whom you are privileged and honored to represent. . . . I thought of my country. I thought of my God. And I made my decision. . . .

Now it is over, and I still believe that we saved America, we saved men, and we saved women, we saved children. And we helped save the world.²

Murray's hostility toward the left wing was clear even before the convention of 1948 began. When Donald Henderson, of the Food, Tobacco, and Agricultural Workers, complained that his union was being raided, Murray retorted that "there would be no reason for the

¹Congress of Industrial Organizations, Proceedings of the Tenth Constitutional Convention (Portland, 1948), 264, 280, 287, 295-96.

²Ibid., 283, 302-303.

raiding if the unions which were under the control of Communists were instead democratically run."¹ At the executive board meeting preceeding the convention, Joseph Curran and Michael Quill, former adherents of the left, charged that the New York City Industrial Union Council was guilty of supporting Wallace, opposing the Marshall Plan, and failing to support a fare increase for the subway. This latter offense was said to be "part and parcel of an overall plan dictated by the Communist Party to embarrass Mayor O'Dwyer . . . and to enhance the program of the Communist Party."² The delegates from the large, Communist-influenced unions, still anxious to avoid a split, voted with the majority to revoke the council's charter.³

Despite the conciliatory attitude of the large left-wing unions, the CIO convention of 1948 marked the first time that left-wing unionists openly opposed the CIO leadership in a convention. Significantly, the opposition came from the small, left-wing unions. While "expressing concurrence with many sections" of the CIO's officers report, Donald Henderson introduced a minority report which defended Wallace and attacked union raiding.⁴ The CIO right-wingers emphasized two points in their speeches: Communist participation in the labor movement was not desirable, and the leaders of the small

¹New York Times, November 19, 1948.

²Ibid., November 18, 21, 1948.

³Shannon, Decline of American Communism, 214-15. See also John Williamson, "Two Conventions of Labor: The Situation in the Trade Union Movement," Political Affairs, XXVIII (January 1949), 35.

⁴Tenth CIO Proceedings, 157-58.

left-wing unions were incompetent.¹ The New York Times reported that the vehemence of Murray's reply to Henderson shocked even the right-wing.² Yet he, too, wished to avoid a complete split and was, at this point, reluctant to consider expulsions. When cries of "take a walk" greeted the denunciation of Henderson, Murray replied testily, "No one is suggesting that anybody take a walk. Now let's just behave."³

The left-wing was decisively defeated at the convention. After the defeat of the first minority report, Murray ruled that no other minority reports could be introduced unless the majority report was first defeated.⁴ At the insistence of Reuther, the convention ordered the Farm Equipment Workers to merge with the UAW, despite FE's desire to merge with UE. The convention also empowered the executive board to set up organizing committees to raid the smaller, left-wing unions.⁵ The foreign policy resolution was also a repudiation of the left; it was described admirably by an enthusiastic supporter:

There is no pussyfooting in this resolution. There are no weasel words. . . . We say to the Soviets, "If you want peace, cooperate

¹Tenth CIO Proceedings, 159-67, 170, 175-77. This charge was not well-founded. The United Office and Professional Workers of America, for example, had organized the major insurance companies of the United States.

²New York Times, November 23, 1948.

³Tenth CIO Proceedings, 164.

⁴New York Times, November 26, 1948.

⁵Charles A. Madison, American Labor Leaders: Personalities and Forces in the Labor Movement (New York: Frederic Ungar Publishing Company, 1950), 397; Tenth CIO Proceedings, 212, 177.

with the United States of America." That is what we say and that is what we mean, and that is what they will finally have to do.¹

The right-wing victory was incomplete because the left-wing still retained their strength in a number of CIO affiliates. Before the year was over, CIO secretary-treasurer and titular leader of the UE right-wing James Carey outlined plans for the expulsion of trade unions from the CIO. Carey indicated that the small left-wing unions would be expelled outright, and that the larger unions would be taken over from within by anti-Communist groups. Carey named UE as one in which "the CIO expects its anti-Communist policy to infiltrate into the locals to bring about the election of right-wing officials."²

VI

The most dramatic and important aspect of the split in the CIO was not the convention debate, but rather the decision, made well before the convention began, of the CIO's largest affiliate to launch a series of raids against the CIO's third largest affiliate. On March 23, 1948, Charles Kerrigan of the UAW announced that the UAW had chartered a new local to enroll "dissident members of the UE."³ Julius Emspak immediately protested to both the CIO and the UAW.⁴ The CIO did not openly endorse raiding. Murray forwarded UE's

¹Tenth CIO Proceedings, 231.

²Wisconsin State Journal, quoted in ACA, On the Record, 26-27.

³New York Times, March 24, 1948.

⁴Julius Emspak to Philip Murray, March 23, 1948; Julius Emspak to Walter Reuther, March 23, 1948, DeMaio Papers.

letter to Reuther, noting that "if the statements made by Brother Emspak are correct, certainly a meeting of the representatives of both organizations should be arranged."¹ Reuther, however, refused to meet with the UE. Instead, he hinted darkly about "Mr. Emspak's political connections" and labeled him a "conspirator."² More important, the UAW adopted a statement of policy which defended and denied raiding at the same time:

The UAW-CIO will not involve itself in raid activities nor in efforts to create dissension within the ranks of unions whose national leadership defy and violate the democratic decisions of the National CIO. There are cases, however, in which rank and file members of such unions are in open revolt against their international leaders because those leaders are in defiance of National CIO policy.

When such rank and file members express overwhelmingly their desire to free themselves of their leadership by legal means, and if necessary by withdrawing from CIO entirely in order to affiliate with a national organization other than CIO, the International Executive Board of the UAW-CIO will issue charters to them, in order to protect the position of the National CIO, and in order that these workers may enjoy membership in a CIO union whose national leadership is loyal to National CIO basic policy.³

This carefully worded defense of raiding is particularly significant since it occurred prior to the 1948 convention. An example of the UAW policy in action was the raid on the Farm Equipment Workers in June 1948.

At the Caterpillar Tractor works, the corporation refused to sign a contract with the Farm Equipment Workers since FE had not filed

¹Julius Emspak to Philip Murray, March 16, 1948; Philip Murray to Julius Emspak, March 18, 1948; Philip Murray to Walter Reuther, March 18, 1948, DeMaio Papers.

²Walter Reuther to Philip Murray, March 30, 1948, DeMaio Papers.

³Statement of UAW-CIO Executive Board, March 30, 1948, DeMaio Papers.

non-Communist affidavits as required by the Taft-Hartley Act. FE, faced with a company refusal to bargain, went out on strike, and the UAW sent numerous organizers into the area to urge workers to return to work, leave FE, and join the UAW.¹ The left-wing unionists bitterly protested against what they regarded as the UAW's violation of the most elementary principles of trade union solidarity. In a response to these protests, R. J. Thomas, speaking for the national CIO, noted that "there are other problems aside from raiding which I am quite sure cause as much dissension within the CIO as that problem." Thomas referred to the refusal of the left-wing unionists to fall in line behind the CIO support of Harry Truman and the Marshall Plan. "If that problem were solved," Thomas concluded, "I am quite sure that all raiding and jurisdictional problems would solve themselves."²

As the 1948 CIO convention approached, left-wing unionists continued to demand that the CIO curb raiding.³ The UAW reiterated its

¹Emspak, "Breakup of CIO," 179; Fountain, Union Guy, 213-21; FE News, June, 1948. This episode is discussed earlier in this dissertation on pages 283-84.

²R. J. Thomas to Clyde J. Casper, July 27, 1948, Ganley Papers.

³Michael A. Jimenez to John J. Maurillo, November 2, 1948; Stanley Sanscrainte to Philip Murray, November 17, 1948; Harold Buck to Philip Murray, November 8, 1948; Dorothy Wynne to Philip Murray, November 17, 1948; Sheridan J. Creekmore to Philip Murray, November 11, 1948; James Durkin to Walter P. Reuther, November 10, 1948; C. H. Benward to Philip Murray, November 9, 1948; E. J. O'Brien to Philip Murray, November 11, 1948; Leland Austin to Philip Murray, November 12, 1948; Stanley L. Loney to Philip Murray, August 11, 1948; Carey Papers. See also James McLeish, "An Open Letter to UAW Members," April 5, 1948, DeMaio Papers.

policy of granting charters to "members of CIO unions threatening to leave their International Unions because of the failure of their International Officers to give them the necessary protection under the law or because of their failure to follow democratically adopted policies of the CIO."¹ No resolution condemning raiding was adopted by the CIO at the 1948 convention. Following the convention, the UAW openly announced that it planned to destroy FE, although FE remained a CIO affiliate.² Prior to the CIO's next convention in 1949, UE charged that there had been 456 attempted raids on UE shops. Raiding, then, began while left-wing unions were affiliated members of the CIO in good standing. They would not, however, remain in the CIO long.

VII

The basis for the expulsions of the left-wing unions was laid at the 1949 convention of the CIO. A constitutional amendment was adopted barring any member of the Communist Party or any unionist "who consistently pursues policies and activities directed toward the

¹Edward F. Gray, Sub-Regional Director, UAW, to All UAW-CIO and UE Local Unions in the Western New York Area, November 22, 1948. The "failure of their International Officers to give them the necessary protection under the law" referred to the refusal of the UE officers to sign the Taft-Hartley non-Communist affidavits.

²United Automobile Worker, February, 1949. The UAW stated that it would "unite all farm equipment workers" by showing that FE deviated from CIO policy. This went beyond earlier statements in which the UAW had claimed that it acted only to prevent dissatisfied workers from leaving the CIO. Here the UAW is announcing a major organizing campaign directed at workers already belonging to a CIO union, and admitting that it will actively seek to foment dissatisfaction with the FE leadership by politically attacking that leadership.

³Emspak, "Breakup of CIO," 318.

achievement of the program or the purposes of the Communist Party" from membership in the CIO executive board.¹ Harry Bridges indicated that the ILWU would not be intimidated by the amendment or the CIO's campaign against the left:

In 1937 our union became affiliated with this organization when it was already a going concern. We already had a Union; we already had our contracts. . . . We had our ways of doing things and those ways of doing things have brought results to our organization. We don't intend to change. . . .

Let me, with all due respect, speak to the officers of National CIO. I am not afraid of the ILWU's ability to stand alone if need be.²

In their arguments against the amendment, left-wing speakers made three major points: first, that the resolution violated the right of individual unions to elect their executive board representatives, second, that the unions called Communist-dominated were in fact both militant and internally democratic, and third, that it was important to maintain political diversity in the CIO.³

Some speakers conceded these points, but still defended the anti-Communist amendment. Joseph Curran, ex-Communist president of the NMU, admitted that the ILWU and the Furriers Union were democratically run unions which had won good wages, hours, and working conditions for their members, but he also argued that those unions should be punished for failing to support the national policies of the CIO.⁴ Other right-wing speakers attacked Bridges for his

¹Congress of Industrial Organizations, *Proceedings of the Eleventh Constitutional Convention* (Cleveland, 1949), 240.

²Ibid., 252, 255.

³Ibid., 252-57, 240-42, 243-45.

⁴Ibid., 258.

wartime suggestion of a postwar no-strike pledge,¹ and argued that it was "scabbing in the ballot box" to vote for any candidate besides Truman.² Sensitive to charges that the CIO was trying to impose political orthodoxy on its members, Reuther tried to distinguish between "sincere difference of opinion and the kind of obstructionism and sabotage carried on by the Communist minority." Repeatedly, right-wing speakers argued that Communists were under orders from Moscow, that they never criticized the Soviet Union, and that, therefore, they could not represent honest dissent.³

The rhetoric of the anti-Communists was as significant as their arguments. George Baldanzi of the Textile Workers was critical of the Communists for using what Baldanzi delicately referred to as "dirty, stinking language." Murray accused left-wing delegates of "lying out of the pits of their dirty bellies."⁴ In another resolution, the convention voted to expel the United Electrical Workers, which had, for all practical purposes, already withdrawn, and urged rank and file UE members to "walk out of the shadows of Communist conspiracy, double-talk, division and betrayal, into the sunlight of democracy to be enjoyed in the CIO." A new electrical union was chartered to compete with the expelled UE.⁵

¹Eleventh CIO Proceedings, 260, 268, 279-80.

²Ibid., 268, 273-74.

³Ibid., 267-68, 261, 272-74, 275-78.

⁴Ibid., 307, 327.

⁵Ibid., 302-27, 483-89.

CIO conventions generally conclude with a routine ceremony: each union places a name in nomination, there is a voice vote, and the nominee is always elected. The finale of the 1949 convention was more dramatic. The right-wing unions were polled first, and their nominees placed on the executive board without any opposition. Each nominee of a left-wing union was challenged by a right-wing delegate as ineligible under the constitutional amendment, and Murray ruled that the unchallenged executive board members, the right-wingers, would decide if the left-wingers were eligible.¹ There was little doubt about the decision of the executive board, and CIO officials eliminated the smallest trace of uncertainty by subsequent statements. Murray announced that the CIO would set up investigating committees to try the left-wing unions, adding that the unions were "through."² Curran told NMU members that the accused unions would be given a fair hearing—and then removed from the CIO.³

VIII

At their hearings, the left-wing unions were charged with the same offense: their policies were said to be "consistently directed to the achievement of the program or purposes of the Communist Party rather than the objectives and policies set forth in the constitution of

¹Eleventh CIO Proceedings, 501-505.

²New York Times, November 29, 1949.

³Pilot, November 17, 1949.

the CIO. "¹ CIO investigators compiled reports showing similarities between the positions of the accused unions and the Communist Party on various issues over time. Both, according to the reports, supported President Roosevelt before the Russo-German non-aggression pact, then denounced him as a war-monger after the pact, and finally pressed for war against Germany after the invasion of the Soviet Union.² During the Second World War, both pressed for a second front and urged cooperation with employers in order to win the war.³ In the post-war period, both supported the Progressive Party, and opposed the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.⁴

The accused unions presented five arguments in response to these charges. First, they invoked the principle of union autonomy and argued that their political resolutions were none of the CIO's business. Second, they noted that political agreement characterized the CIO until the post-war period, and argued that the CIO leadership had abandoned traditional CIO policies and ideology. Third, they noted that none of the positions which they took in any way contradicted the objectives and policies of the CIO constitution. Fourth, they challenged the legality of the CIO's 1949 convention on a number

¹Congress of Industrial Organizations, Official Reports on the Expulsion of Communist-Dominated Organizations from the CIO (Washington: CIO Publications, 1954), 12, 24, 34, 56, 70, 84, 99, 116.

²Ibid., 14-15, 26-27, 41-42, 62-63, 76-78, 91-94, 106-109, 117-18.

³Ibid., 15, 27, 28, 37, 59, 63, 73, 78, 88, 104, 107-108, 118.

⁴Ibid., 15, 29, 65, 79, 95-96, 109, 119.

of procedural and substantive grounds. Fifth, and most important, they argued that since their unions were democratic, their policies reflected the will of the membership and not the control of the Communist Party or any other outside group.¹

The reports recommending expulsion generally ignored these arguments. Most of the arguments were dismissed because they had appeared in the Daily Worker and thus "the union's defense in the main confirmed its Communist character."² Even when the arguments were mentioned, they were not seriously analyzed:

Bridges also asserted as a defense . . . that ILWU's policies have reflected the will of the membership. The committee rejects this assertion. The committee members are fully acquainted with the devices employed by Communist minorities to impose their policies upon organizations. We reject any suggestion that American workers would knowingly permit their union to be used to further the needs of a foreign police state.³

Unfortunately, the "devices employed by Communist minorities" were never described or discussed. Generally, the reports rested on the assumption that Communists opposed the objectives of the CIO because the CIO "is dedicated to advancing the cause of liberty" while the Communist Party "would use power to exploit the people for the benefit of alien loyalties."⁴

An examination of the committee report on the ILWU and the transcript of the committee's hearings reveals serious shortcomings

¹ACA, On the Record, 5-20, 36-39, 29-32, 35-36.

²CIO Expulsion Reports,

³Ibid., 114.

⁴Ibid., 13, 25, 39-40, 61, 102.

in the CIO's case. The committee report on the ILWU complained that the union's "defense consisted largely of attacks upon the CIO and upon the committee, and of lies, evasions, and irrelevancies." The ILWU, according to the report, accused the committee of being "biased" and a "kangaroo court." There was considerable truth in the ILWU's charge. One of the authors of the committee's report recently revealed that "the committee's decision to recommend expulsion was so certain that I began to work on the writing of it while the trial was still in progress."¹

The prosecution in the ILWU hearing was organized by William Steinberg, president of the American Radio Association. Prosecution witnesses fell into two categories: CIO-paid researchers who presented evidence of similarities between the position positions of the Communist Party and the accused unions, and former Communists whose testimony was designed to prove that Bridges belonged to the Communist Party. The ex-Communists, Michael Quill and Hedley Stone, were not particularly convincing. Quill testified that the Communist Party directed strategy for the left-wing unions at the

¹CIO Expulsion Reports, 113; Paul Jacobs, The State of the Unions (New York: Antheneum, 1963), 90. Jacobs recently noted that "the explanation for the discrepancy [between the two statements] is that I participated in the writing of the official report as an employee of the CIO with some grave doubts about my role. That role is not one of which I am very proud; and undoubtedly, I should have resigned or refused to carry out the task assigned to me. The explanation rests partially there and in the fact that many anti-Communist radicals felt so betrayed by the subservience of the Communist unions to the Soviet Union that we allowed ourselves to be used by the right-wing in the trade unions whose attacks on the Communists had a completely different motivation than did ours." Paul Jacobs to the author, December 12, 1967.

CIO convention in 1946 by issuing orders at a series of close meetings which Bridges attended. Bridges quickly refuted the charge:¹

Q. [Bridges] Was it your impression that all the people at the meeting were Communists?

A. [Quill] Yes.

Q. Including yourself?

A. That's right. . . .

Q. You couldn't be mistaken of the place of the convention? It couldn't have been Detroit or some other place?

A. No, it so happens, Harry, that the convention was really at Atlantic City.

Q. And you couldn't be mistaken?

A. No.

Q. Don't you know that I didn't attend the Atlantic City convention? We had a strike on the Pacific Coast at that time and all during the convention I was on the Pacific Coast every single day and we have official records to prove that.

After that, Quill was more cautious:

Q. Any other meetings prior to that time of that nature that I attended and you attended?

A. Not that I remember.

Quill's effort was not the last attempt to prove Bridges a Communist, but it was typical. Finally, after several unsuccessful attempts, Steinberg retreated on the issue. He told the committee

¹An extremely misleading account of the cross-examination of Quill by Bridges is provided in Shannon, Decline of American Communism, 138-39:

Bridges himself was soon given the opportunity to cross-examine Quill. The result was real drama, Quill insisting in his Irish brogue upon the veracity of his testimony, and Bridges, curiously never directly denying it, playing innocent and trying to get Quill to contradict himself."

This passage introduces a page and a half from the transcript in which Quill firmly sticks to his story. The quotation from the transcript begins on page 66, two pages after Bridges had refuted one of Quill's major charges. It is a totally dishonest presentation of the testimony, designed to obscure the fundamental inability of the CIO to present convincing evidence on Bridges' party membership. No one reading Shannon's account would know that the CIO was forced to drop its attempt to prove Bridges a Communist and claim that party membership was irrelevant to the case.

that "all these questions as to whether or not a guy was actually a Communist Party member or whether he paid dues, or was other things, have no bearing on the case."¹ Even if Bridges were not a Communist, he could be following the party's line. But the problem with this new formulation was that the party line was being defined as whatever a party liner did. When Bridges mentioned his opposition to a resolution endorsing Wallace at a regional CIO meeting, Quill replied that it merely showed that Bridges had to "side-track and retreat a little bit and not be so bold in pushing the Communist Party platform."² Indeed, virtually any behavior could be motivated by Communist concerns, as Steinberg indicated:

A. [Steinberg] Now you may have cases in your own organization where a local, despite your recommendation, refuses to go along or they may have abstained . . . but that doesn't change the fact that the national office tried to the best of their ability to peddle the Communist Party line . . .

Q. [Bridges] Would you have complaints against a union that referred the matter to a secret ballot for decision?

A. As I said before, if a referring of a particular political matter to the rank and file was done with a strong recommendations that emanated from the Communist Party, yes, I would find fault with that.³

The focus of the committee's inquiry dictated its findings.

Steinberg noted that the committee was limiting its attention to "deviations of the ILWU from CIO policy only when those deviations

¹Hearings Before the Committee to Investigate Charges Against the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (Microfilm copy, University of California at Berkeley), 64, 86, 613. Note that the attempts to prove Bridges a Communist Party member occur early in the hearings, and the statement that the issue is not relevant comes near the end, after unsuccessful attempts to prove membership.

²Ibid., 521, 523.

³Ibid., 562.

were dictated by the Communist Party."¹ The CIO employee used as an expert witness testified that he had not studied the ILWU's organizing record and was not interested in how the policies of the union were determined.² This limited focus probably did more to undermine an objective verdict than the occasional outright distortions which marred the report.³ Refusing to investigate whether decisions actually reflected the will of the membership and looking only at the deviations from CIO policy that paralleled the Communist Party's position made the findings of the committees obvious from the beginning.⁴ All the committees recommended expulsion, and the 1950 CIO convention concurred.

IX

The extraordinary difficulties which faced the left-wing unions after the expulsions are perhaps best illustrated by an examination of the destruction of the National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards (MCS). This union retained the allegiance of its members, but a potent combination of AFL and CIO raiding and government and employer hostility literally forced the union out of existence.

¹"Hearings . . . ILWU," 562.

²Ibid., 447-48, 455.

³The CIO was forced to use a letter to the editor in a publication of one department of one division of a single local as an official ILWU position. Ibid., 351-60; CIO Expulsion Reports, 106.

⁴For a different view on the validity of these reports, see Kampelman, CP vs. CIO, 167-222; Taft, Labor Unions, 22-30; Saposs, Communism in American Unions, 175-88. Kampelman, in particular, relied heavily on these reports.

Both the NMU and the AFL's Seafarers International Union (SIU) tried to raid the MCS without much success. Neither union had much to offer MCS workers. The NMU had recently expelled thousands of NMU members opposed to Curran on charges of Communist allegiance.¹ Many of the most popular MCS leaders were close to the Communist Party, and MCS workers were strongly opposed to an anti-Communist purge. The SIU was, if anything, less attractive. It was a racist union. No Negroes, Chinese, or Japanese had ever been allowed in the SIU's major division, the Sailors Union of the Pacific (SUP). Indeed, the SIU had been cited as one of the most discriminatory unions in the entire nation during the Second World War by the Fair Employment Practices Committee.² SIU leader

¹See chapter five, pages 313-19.

²A Trotskyist organizer, Stanley Weir, has written about the racism in the SIU, and his comments reveal a great deal about the racism within the American Trotskyist movement as well as the SIU:

At a point midway in the campaign SUP men began to appear at work who were giving Jim Crow messages to the seamen we were trying to win over. Our opponent was the National Maritime Union (NMU). Their organizers were pre-occupied with winning the war, Russia, and maintaining labor's no-strike pledge into the post-war period, rather than improving conditions for seamen in the here and now. We had been doing a good job by openly comparing our contracts with those of the NMU. I could prove to anyone who was white that we had the best union because we had the best contract.

Trotskyists, then, would work for a union which barred blacks and which openly organized around racism against a Communist-led union which fought racism. After the war, Weir reported, the SIU continued to be racist. It stated that "this union does not checkerboard ships, because checkerboarding causes racial friction." Checkerboarding referred to admitting blacks into the union. Alice and Staughton Lynd, Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working Class Organizers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 187-89. For more on SIU racism, see Jane Cassels Record, "Ideologies and Trade Union Leadership: The Case of Harry Bridges and Harry Lundeberg," (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1954), 153-54.

Harry Lundeberg promised that the newly formed stewards division (SIU-MCS) would be free of discrimination, but did not offer to allow blacks into any of the other divisions of the union. More than half of the MCS workers would be ineligible to join the SIU in any division except the SIU-MCS because of the SIU's racist policies. As one black worker put it, why should blacks want to leave the MCS, which had a strong anti-discrimination program, to join "an outfit where we'll be associating with unions that don't even let Negroes belong?"¹

MCS faced a series of court challenges. Union members who had been suspended for strike-breaking or supporting the NMU brought suit against the union and won. In one case, ninety-five members were awarded close to half a million dollars. MCS president Hugh Bryson was indicted for perjury after filing a Taft-Hartley non-Communist affidavit. Two years later, he was convicted and sentenced to five years in jail. Court cases, then, exhausted the union's treasury and deprived it of its president.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) then went into action against the union. The NLRB nullified the contract between MCS and the Pacific Maritime Association, thus destroying the union hiring hall, and ordered that a new collective bargaining election be held. The MCS leaders realized that they could not maintain their union, and urged the ILWU to set up a stewards division so MCS members would not have to choose between the racist SIU and the undemocratic, anti-Communist NMU. The NLRB, however, barred

¹Jane C. Record, "Rise and Fall of a Maritime Union," Industrial and Labor Relations Review, IX (October 1956), 92.

the ILWU from the ballot. As was generally the case when unions were barred from the ballot, workers had to vote for no union to retain the proscribed union. Two-thirds of the workers voted for no union, and it seemed as if the NLRB had failed in its attempt to force MCS workers into the SIU or NMU. One final NLRB ruling, however, ended the MCS attempt to enter the ILWU. The NLRB ruled that the collective bargaining unit would include deck seamen and firemen as well as cooks and stewards. Since the first two groups (all white) were represented by the SIU, the SIU could win a majority despite the opposition of the stewards. Although stewards supported the ILWU, the SIU carried the election.¹

The government-CIO combination proved effective against the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers (Mine, Mill). The Justice Department brought a series of prosecutions against important leaders of the union. The first to be indicted was Maurice Travis, who had served as president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer of the union. Travis was tried and convicted three times, but each time a higher court voided the conviction. By the end of the third trial, Travis had retired from the union. In a separate case, fourteen union leaders were indicted for conspiracy to defraud the government by signing false, non-Communist affidavits. Three officials pled nolo contendere, two had their cases dismissed, and nine were convicted. These convictions were reversed on appeal. Seven of the officials were re-tried. Six officials, including Travis,

¹Record, "Rise and Fall," 91.

secretary-treasurer Irving Dichter, and union president Albert Skinner, were convicted and sentenced to three years in prison and fined two thousand dollars. These convictions were appealed. As of 1968, the government had not succeeded in jailing any Mine Mill leaders, but repeated trials had provided a considerable drain on the union's resources. In addition, the Subversive Activities Control Board ruled that Mine Mill was a "Communist infiltrated" organization and therefore could not represent workers before the NLRB.¹

While fighting government attacks, Mine Mill was also faced by a series of raids by CIO and AFL unions. Between 1950 and 1964, for example, no less than twenty-eight different unions engaged in 186 raiding attempts.² The raids, particularly in the South, were not polite affairs. Even before Mine Mill had been expelled from the CIO, local officials of the United Steel Workers attempted to raid Mine Mill locals in Alabama. Just as Travis was about to go on the radio to defend Mine Mill against the USW, several steel worker officials, led by Nick Zonarich, worked him over. As a result of the beating, Travis lost one of his eyes.³ In 1952, after numerous Mine Mill organizers had been beaten up and had their cars turned over, a group of Mine Mill organizers began to carry arms. A gun battle

¹ O'Brien, "Communist-Dominated Unions," 198n.

² Edward Keith Dix, "A Study of Collective Bargaining in the Nonferrous Metals Industry," (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1967), 270.

³ The CIO responded to the beating by adopting a resolution attacking Mine Mill for its criticisms of the USW and assigning five seceding Mine Mill locals to the USW. Emspak, "Breakup of CIO," 304-305, 300.

broke out between organizers in the two unions. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt. Later, the home of one of Mine Mill's organizers was bombed. A black organizer for Mine Mill, now an official for the USW, recalled that the thrust of the USW campaign in Alabama was that it was a "white man's union."¹ Mine Mill was not defeated by the raids. Of the 72,866 workers involved in raiding elections, only 16,955 were lost to other unions.² Like the trials, however, the raids constituted an enormous drain on the union's resources. Finally, Mine Mill merged with its old antagonist, the USW.³

X

A number of commentators have suggested that the CIO, like the trade union movement generally, was inherently conservative. If one accepts this view, the expulsions of the left-wing unions become fairly insignificant. Either the expulsions were inevitable, since the conservative labor movement could not tolerate the alien strain of radicalism, or they were meaningless, since the conservative nature of the trade union as an institution caused Communist leaders to behave as conservatively as other unionists. While these two views are somewhat contradictory, both would agree that the expulsions did not

¹Ashbury Howard, Oral History Interview, Pennsylvania State University, 4-8. Howard's interview is part of the oral history collection in steel unionism at Pennsylvania State University.

²Dix, "Collective Bargaining," 272.

³Robert S. Keitel, "The Merger of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers Into the United Steel Workers of America," Labor History, XV (Winter 1974), 36-43.

significantly alter the character of the CIO. At most, the expulsions confirmed the conservative direction which the CIO had charted in the early organizing campaigns and the war years. This view grossly underestimates the enormous impact of the expulsions on virtually every aspect of the CIO.¹

First, as Paul Jacobs, an anti-Communist partisan within the CIO, accurately observed, "an inevitable consequence of the expulsions was to bring all serious political debate inside the CIO to a standstill." After the expulsions, "unions could be counted on to give automatic approval to any action undertaken by the government in its struggle with world Communism."² Moreover, the CIO pioneered the approach later used by Senator Joseph McCarthy: it cited a list of political positions with which it disagreed, noted that the positions were held by Communists, and argued that those CIO members who

¹The commentators referred to in this paragraph represent an enormously diverse group. Only a few of the relevant books and articles can be cited here.

Those who see the CIO's early years as conservative include David Brody, who basically approves of the CIO's conservatism, and Ronald Radosh, who deplors it. David Brody, "The Emergence of Mass Production Unionism," in John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner, and Everett Walters, eds., Change and Continuity in Twentieth Century America (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 221-62; Ronald Radosh, "The Corporate Ideology of American Labor Leaders from Gompers to Hillman," Studies on the Left, VI (November-December 1966), 85-86.

For analyses stressing the role of the trade union as a conservative institution, see Aronowitz, False Promises, 214-62, and James Weinstein, "A Reply," Radical America, II (January-February 1968), 53-54.

A different view is advanced by Nelson Lichtenstein who argues that the willingness of the CIO leadership to suppress rank and file insurgency and rely solely on the government during the Second World War shaped the postwar character of the CIO. See above, page 273n.

²Jacobs, State of the Unions, 263.

adhered to those positions were Communists, Communist dupes, or fellow travellers who had no right to remain in the CIO.¹

Second, the major focus of the CIO's organizing efforts shifted dramatically after the expulsions. No longer was the CIO's priority organizing the unorganized. Now its program could be described as reorganizing the organized or, as Frank Emspak would have it, disorganizing the organized.² In any case, the major effort was directed toward raiding the memberships of those unions expelled from the CIO rather than in bringing unionization to new workers. This shift in organizing priorities affected the CIO's political perspective. Operation Dixie, the highly publicized Southern organizing campaign, was given token support, except in Birmingham, where the USW attempted to raid Mine Mill. Since Mine Mill had won the firm allegiance of black workers through an aggressive struggle against racist pay differentials,³ the USW sought to build a base of support

¹The major difference between right-wing, anti-Communists like Joseph McCarthy and Richard Nixon, and left-wing, anti-Communists like the CIO and ADA leaders, lay in the issues they choose, not the fundamental method. To ADA and CIO leaders, support for Wallace and opposition to the Marshall Plan were telltale signs of a Communist dupe; to Nixon and McCarthy, support for the recognition of China and opposition to aspects of the internal security program were the key issues. Brock, ADA, 150.

²Emspak, "Breakup of CIO," 258.

³A black Mine Mill activist recalled that he was not interested in Travis' politics, but "as for what he had done for the workers, I could back him." He found little reason to hate Communists: "I've never known a Communist in the labor movement to bomb a worker's home. I've never known a Communist in the labor movement to mob a man outside a city hall, lynch him, castrate him, and everything else, even shoot him on sight. . . . It's the good white man who does that, you see. So, why am I going to go out and fight somebody who doesn't do the things that the good white folks have done." Howard, Oral History interview, 8, 19.

among white workers by stating that the USW was a "white man's union."¹ In addition to capitulating to racism, the CIO supported repressive, anti-Communist agencies which they had previously condemned as anti-labor.²

Third, since Communists were the largest, best organized, and most politically sophisticated group of potential and actual opponents of the CIO leadership, their elimination provided those leaders with an opportunity to purge all dissenters. Even anti-Communist activists were not safe. Although anti-Communist leftists, often ex-Communists or people associated with small, Marxist splinter parties, played key roles in the victories of Reuther and Curran, those individuals either abandoned their radical politics or were removed from office. In the NMU, for example, men like Charles Keith and David Drummond, who had belonged to the Communist Party, fought in Spain, and still considered themselves leftists, were crucial in securing Curran's victory over the Communists, but were later expelled from the union.

Fourth, the absence of a well-organized opposition meant that contracts which probably could not have been approved with an active left-wing were now approved. The most obvious examples are the long-term contracts which Reuther negotiated in 1950.³ No CIO

¹For the general collapse of the CIO's southern organizing drive and the conflict between the USW and Mine Mill, see Emspak, "Breakup of CIO," 298-301, 304-305.

²Ibid., 344-45.

³For a full discussion of that contract, and the implications of long-term contracts in general, see chapter four, pages 298-302.

union signed long-term contracts before the expulsions. Even during the Second World War, none of the left-wing unions signed company security clauses like the GM clauses. No union signed a clause which gave the company the right to fire a shop steward if he interfered with production as the Ford contract did.¹ Perhaps the left would not have been able to prevent these or similar contracts. It can not be denied, however, that the presence of a left-wing minority in right-led CIO unions, and the existence of left-led unions posed a major barrier to the sort of contracts which became common in the postwar period.

Following the expulsions, the CIO News proudly stated, "to put it bluntly—and factually—the CIO in a year has broken the back of the Communist Party in the United States."² There was some truth to the CIO's boast. The elimination of Communist leadership in the working class movement was a crucial component of the post-war anti-Communist offensive. But the Communist Party was not the sole victim of the expulsions; the CIO also suffered. The campaign to organize the south and the struggle against Taft-Hartley were two casualties of the expulsions. Those who suffered most, however, were the workers. The expulsion of UE meant that General Electric could deal with numerous unions rather than one large, united union.³ Black maritime workers in the MCS were forced to join a racist union. Automobile workers suffered under the five year contracts

¹Emspak, "Breakup of CIO," 366-67.

²CIO News, November 20, 1950.

³Emspak, "Breakup of CIO," 340-61.

which Reuther negotiated. Workers, then, paid the price for breaking the back of the Communist Party. That price included a more repressive union structure, the absence of an organized and militant opposition, and, most important, the deterioration of working conditions on the shop floor.