

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE UNITED STATES

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION

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ONE TIME SPECIAL DEPUTY OF THE INSURANCE COMMISSION OF
PENNSYLVANIA IN CHARGE OF WORKMEN'S
COMPENSATION INSURANCE

AND A SUPPLEMENT

BY

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THE UNITED STATES**

The main reason for teaching, to me, is to open the students' minds to the possibility of questioning the fundamentals of current thinking. I want to turn out men who cannot be led naively by current judgments but who will subject these judgments to tests based on the validity of their underlying assumptions—in short, socially sophisticated, thinking men.

R. F. H.

PREFACE

The book here presented is the result of an effort to reproduce as faithfully as possible the notes and lectures on Trade Unionism used by Robert F. Hoxie during his last year of teaching in the University of Chicago, and to combine them with some of his chapters previously published.

This material had been prepared by him without thought of publication in this form. Only lack of time prevented the reorganization of it and much rewriting before it was again used in the classroom when in the fall of 1915 he resumed teaching after a year of study and investigation of the relations of labor and scientific management. In view of these facts it was a question whether the notes could be published without injustice to one in whom the love of thoroughness and perfection was a ruling passion. But doubt on this point was set at rest by those to whom a first copy of the manuscript was submitted, who were unanimously of the opinion that notwithstanding its incompleteness and the fact that its author would have made great changes before embodying any portion of it in the book on Trade Unionism, to which he looked forward as the main work of coming years, there was in the notes value which altogether justified their publication.

Largely owing to the method of study and teaching which Mr. Downey, in the Introduction, has described and to the nature of the social laboratory which Trade Unionism offers, it has not been possible to use all the notes, nor to present without gaps the systematic treatment of the subject and its whole foundation of evidence which the class received and which a reader of the completed text would

have had. Nevertheless, no attempt has been made to fill in the gaps by introducing material worked out by another hand.

The work of preparing the manuscript for the printer has consisted mainly in bringing the material together into chapters, using for this purpose the author's course outline and titles. There were many pages in the form of speaker's notes. Where these were full enough to be used they were drawn together by a word, or, rarely, a sentence for the sake of clearness and form. The major portion of the book, however, is a word for word transcription.

Certain omissions were necessary. It was found impossible to use in Chapter IV some of the historical notes which had been gathered for the verification of the hypothesis of functional types in Chapter III. Some notes concerning men and situations in the union movement it was necessary to omit as of a nature too intimate or personal for publication; also those on the discussion of the current events of unionism, of little importance in themselves. As far as possible, repetitions due to pedagogical requirements have been left out, but in several cases, such as in the reconsideration of the functional group theory in "Social Control" after its statement in the "Problem," or the statement of the classical economic theory of society first in "Employers' Associations," and again in "Social Control," the restatement has been too closely interwoven with the fabric of the chapter to be dispensed with.

On the other hand there have been some additions to the material of the Trade Union course proper. Preceding the work on Trade Unions in 1915, Mr. Hoxie gave a course on Labor Conditions and Problems, which served as an introduction for the trade union work. From the notes on this course have been included the discussion of social theories found in the chapter on "Social Control." A course on Scientific Management and Labor Welfare in the spring of 1916 carried forward the consideration of the theory

of unionism and the attitude of organized labor into the field of "the latest phase of capitalistic industrial development," and showed the program of unionism in action. For this purpose the lecture on the "Economic Program" was written. The ground of the remaining notes on this course was covered by Mr. Hoxie's last articles, "Scientific Management and Labor Welfare," *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. XXIV, pp. 833-854, and "Why Organized Labor Opposes Scientific Management," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. XXXII, pp. 62-85. These have been used as Chapters XII and XIII.

In Chapter VI, for the notes on the Industrial Workers of the World and Syndicalism, have been substituted "The Truth About the I. W. W.," *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. XXI, pp. 785-797, and a portion of a discussion of Mr. J. G. Brooks' paper on Syndicalism before the American Economic Association, *American Economic Review Supplement*, IV, no. 1, 136-144. The last part of this chapter, the discussion of revolutionary unionism, is one of three lectures delivered in the spring of 1914 at the University of Michigan. Chapters II and III, "General Character and Types," and "The Essence of Unionism and the Interpretation of Union Types," are from the *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. XXII, pp. 201-217, 464-487, and were the first articles of the projected series on "Trade Unionism in the United States," begun in 1914. Finally, there have been added "Notes on Method." The first of these, "Historical Method vs. Historical Narrative," *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. XIV., pp. 568-572, was uniformly used in the consideration of the method to be followed in the study of unionism. Mr. Hoxie's own writing was a "practical application of the methods outlined in it," and he evidently regarded it, Professor Hamilton thinks (*Journal of Political Economy*, vol. XXIV, p. 878), "as the first article of his trade union series."

While the body of the trade union notes is a growth of

several years, the larger part of the book is the product of the last two or three. Chapters XI to XIV inclusive are the work of 1915-1916. Chapters II, III, IV, and part of Chapter VI were written in 1914. The notes themselves were reorganized and partly rewritten in 1913.

In the preparation of these notes and lectures for publication many have borne a part. For encouragement and for varied assistance most cordial thanks are due to several of the author's friends, to officers of the University, to his colleagues in the department of Economics and his students. Professors Henry W. Stuart, Walton H. Hamilton, Harry A. Millis and Mr. E. H. Downey have given the manuscript careful reading and offered valuable advice; Professor Addison W. Moore has given helpful suggestions on the chapter on "Employers' Associations," and Mr. John P. Frey on "Present Union Groups," and "Leaders and the Rank and File;" Miss Leona M. Powell, Mr. Dwight Sanderson, Miss Frieda Miller, and Miss Mollie Ray Carroll, former students, have been consulted on some points. Miss Powell's class notes have been used for reference throughout the work and Miss Carroll has coöperated in the preparation of "The Trade Union Program."

Especial and grateful acknowledgment must be made of the generous assistance and helpful advice in the work of editing given by Professor John R. Commons, who has also read the manuscript in its final form, and by Professor Alvin S. Johnson, who has assisted in the revision of the proof.

Permission to use material already in print has been kindly granted by the editors of the *Journal of Political Economy*, of the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and of the *American Economic Review*.

LUCY B. HOXIE.
NATHAN FINE.

PREFATORY NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The years since the publication of this book have left much unaccounted for in its pages. In response to numerous requests that it be enlarged to take account of the developments of the post-war period, Professor Mollie Ray Carroll, Chairman of the Social Science Department of Goucher College, has added a supplement indicating the main tendencies of the period, together with an extensive bibliography in the compilation of which Miss Laura D. Thompson, Librarian of the U. S. Department of Labor Library, has generously aided.

It is hoped that this additional material, which the publishers agree is, in the circumstances, the only form of revision to which the text could properly be subjected, will maintain the proved usefulness of the book for the purpose for which it was written.

LUCY B. HOXIE

INTRODUCTION¹

Like all social movements which excite the hopes and fears of men, trade unionism has more often been the object of passionate denunciation or defense than of scientific inquiry. It is not simply that unionism counts some three million adherents in the United States alone and directly affects the wages and working conditions of perhaps an equal number who stand outside its official membership; nor simply that it interferes with the profits of employers and with their assumed right to manage business enterprises in their own way; it touches intimately the life and work of millions of families; it is able to create profound disturbances in that intricate web of economic relationships wherein the tissue of business life consists, amounting upon occasion to a dramatic interruption in the flow of goods and services without which no modern community can subsist; more than all else, it calls in question some of the most fundamental presuppositions of present day law and order. For ours is, in great part, a business man's government, and our codes of law embody the business man's rules of the game. The business man's right to employ or discharge whom he will, to fix the rate and mode of payment and the hours and conditions of work at his own discretion, to set industry in motion or break off the productive process whenever he sees his own advantage in so doing, and without responsibility for the livelihood of the industrial population—these rights are involved in the legal

¹ The extent of the writer's indebtedness to Professors Hoxie and Veblen, in respect to general standpoint and even phraseology, will be obvious to all.

conceptions of private property and free enterprise; they are recognized by the common law and the constitution; in support of them the business man can appeal to the courts, the police and even the military arm of the state. A challenge to these prerogatives of business enterprise is in some sort a challenge to the existing social organization; by traversing them unionism moves the passionate opposition, not alone of those whose pecuniary interests are directly at stake, but of social groups who are only remotely affected and whose attachment to the capitalistic system derives mainly from tradition. Disinterestedness in such a question is not the same thing as the absence of bias; the received institutions of any society are so charged with emotional content that an impartial view of them can only be attained by those who are acquainted with institutional history. Hence we see, not alone the thoughtless multitude, but lawyers and clergymen, economists and social workers, take sides for or against unionism accordingly as their training and associations have given them more of the wage earner's or of the business man's point of view.¹

Even those who are able to dissociate themselves from class prejudices and from the fundamental assumptions of the existing social order find it no easy matter to ascertain so much as the objective facts of unionism. The American labor movement has a history of above one hundred years. It is diffused through thousands of local units and presents a bewildering variety of structure, policies, aims and ideals. The original sources of information, personal and documentary, union and anti-union, are fragmental, contradictory, widely scattered, often difficult of access, nearly always strongly partisan, sometimes even willfully misleading. Much of the record—and that by no means the least important part—was never committed to paper; most of what has been preserved consists of ephemeral

¹ For illustrations see the various pamphlets of the National Manufacturers' Association.

pamphlets and news items, commonly of a propagandist character. To sift out the significant facts from this mass of *ex parte* evidence, to distinguish the typical from the exceptional, and to arrange the whole in just order and proportion, is a task which the combined labor of many scholars has not sufficed to accomplish. Least of all has the obscurity been cleared away from that elusive mass of beliefs, sentiments, ideals and aspirations touching economic relationships which go to make up the social philosophy of unionism and which account for much of its significance to unionists themselves and to society at large.

Yet it is not enough to obtain a dispassionate view or even to ascertain the objective facts. Fruitful understanding of any social movement depends not alone upon knowledge of the features peculiar to it, but upon the ability to relate those features to social phenomena of a more general character, to disentangle the relevant circumstances out of which the particular movement arose, to set forth the efficient causes which shaped its growth and to show what it is becoming under the influence of forces which are currently at work within it or which impinge upon it. For group action is conditioned by group thought and group thought depends in turn upon group experience, so that any useful study of a social movement, more particularly of a class movement, necessarily becomes a genetic inquiry into group psychology. Such an inquiry, however, is at once confronted by all those obstacles which derive from the present rudimentary state of social science. The student of unionism, of political parties or of business enterprise, must make use of many generalizations which have yet to be established—among them the origin and functioning of social classes, the rôle of class conflict in the life of communities and the relative weight of heredity and choice, of tradition and personal experience, and of economics and general social environment in determining institutional growth and decay. Where so little can be taken as securely given, the

labor of research is multiplied many fold, for the investigator of each special field must needs formulate even the general social theories in terms of which the phenomena under his immediate observation are to be interpreted.

For all these reasons the making of many books has afforded comparatively little insight into the nature and causes of American trade unionism. Those who know most about the subject can scarcely be expected to furnish a detached view or to interpret the concrete facts in terms of social science at large. Of those who have surveyed the movement from without, many have been disqualified by want of knowledge or trammelled by narrowing preconceptions. Some have poured forth a flood of pious sentiment, often effective as homiletics but not particularly illuminating; some have given a purely economic interpretation and been thereby constrained to ignore important elements of their problem; others have thought it sufficient to show that certain trade union activities do not jump with orthodox economic theory or with received notions of property and free contract. Others, still, have thought to achieve a purely objective treatment by eschewing all interpretation. The result of this last endeavor is a mass of narrative and descriptive literature, useful enough as the raw material of scientific inquiry, but, in its present form, valueless as a basis for social action. Few, out of patient research, have brought forth even a partial interpretation in causal terms. Among this elect number Professor Hoxie will hold a high and secure place.

To the baffling subject with which his best work is so closely identified, Professor Hoxie brought a very exceptional equipment. Trained originally in the straitest sect of cloister economics, he had the good fortune to escape its influence before his teachers had succeeded in dulling his appetite for reality. In the net result, indeed, he profited even from the metaphysicians, for they did but sharpen a keenly analytic mind upon the subtleties of marginal utili-

tarianism. Falling next under the potent spell of Thorstein Veblen, he acquired the genetic standpoint, a wide acquaintance with cultural history and an abiding interest in institutional development. After this varied apprenticeship he devoted himself for the space of more than ten years to an intensive study of American trade unionism. The literature of the subject, propagandist and scientific, union and anti-union, he made his own; but it was the living movement that chiefly held his interest. By painstaking analysis of documentary sources, by persistent attendance at union and employers' meetings, by personal interviews with scores of union and employers' leaders, above all by long continued and intimate contact with unionists of many types, he strove to ascertain the objective facts of unionism, to explain the causes which have shaped the movement and which are progressively changing it, to determine its drift, and to define its meaning for the community life of which it is a part. In the course of this study he was led into many fields of inquiry—wage theory, socialism, pragmatic philosophy, social psychology, employers' associations and scientific management. But unionism remained always his central problem; to it he returned with fresh zest after each excursus, and upon it all his other studies were made to bear.

To expound Professor Hoxie's trade union views at length, or attempt a detailed appraisal, would far overpass the reasonable limits of an introduction. It may be worth while, however, to indicate his outlook and the main results to which it led him. It has already been said that he approached his subject from the genetic standpoint, by which is meant that he aimed at a reasoned explanation of trade unionism in terms of the efficient causes which have made the movement what it is, and is becoming. Seen from this point of view a union is not so much an outward organization as a like-minded group. The effectual bond which unites a body of wageworkers is not a constitution and

by-laws, a set of officers and a treasury, but a consciousness of common needs and aims, a common outlook on life, and a common program for the betterment of their lot. To employ Professor Hoxie's terminology, the essence of unionism is a social philosophy—an interpretation of the social facts and relationships which impinge upon the group in question, and a solution of the practical problems which these present. The interpretation may be wide or narrow, explicitly formulated or implicit and ill defined; the program may concern itself solely with conditions of employment or it may look to the economic and political regeneration of society. Some social philosophy, however, more or less consistent and far-reaching, and some generally accepted scheme of policies and methods, are the *sine qua non* of common action.

This method of approach led Professor Hoxie to a conception of unionism which differs in important respects from the views current in the schools. Others have copiously illustrated the structural details and the narrative history of union organizations, have set forth the environmental, more especially the economic, factors which have contributed to union growth and decay, and have told us much of the social creeds which unions impose upon their members, but they have had little to say of the human materials out of which unions are formed or of the manifold influences which go to shape trade union beliefs, ideals and aspirations. Professor Hoxie early focused his attention upon union functioning and the habits of thought which determine union action. Viewed in this way, he found unionism to be not a single social movement, but an imperfect fusion of several, no one of which can be adequately accounted for in purely economic terms. Shortly expressed, his analysis of unionism is characterized by emphasis upon function, the distinction of fundamental types and a pluralistic causal interpretation.

From a functional standpoint, Professor Hoxie distin-

guishes five types of unionism (not to mention sub-variants) which differ among themselves in aims, methods, and attitude toward existing institutions. *Business unionism*, accepting the wage system as it is, seeks the best obtainable terms of employment for its own membership. Its method is collective bargaining supplemented by mutual insurance and occasional resort to strikes; its outlook is that of the craft or trade, its aims are somewhat narrowly economic. The railway brotherhoods furnish the stock illustration, though the type is dominant in the American Federation of Labor as well. *Uplift unionism* accepts, along with the wage system, the whole existing social order. Its mission is the diffusion of leisure-class culture and *bourgeois* virtues among the workers. Mutual insurance is its main function and homiletics its preoccupation. There is no representative of the pure type—unless the Woman's Trade Union League be accepted as such—but there is a strong infusion of uplift idealism in most unions that are dominated by the business animus. *Revolutionary unionism* avowedly aims at the overthrow of the extant socio-economic order by and for the working class. Its two variants—socialistic and quasi-anarchistic—are sufficiently represented by the Detroit and Chicago organizations of the I. W. W.¹ *Predatory unionism* practices secret, rather than open, violence. It is lawless, and in so far anarchistic, but it professes no far-reaching philosophy, nor does it aim at anything beyond the immediate economic advantage of its own membership. When this ruthless policy is a counsel of despair, the continuation of a bitter struggle which has gone against the union and the practical answer to a policy of extermination on the part of employers,

¹ Professor Hoxie cites the Western Federation of Miners as a socialistic union. But though the official program of this union is a synopsis of the Communist Manifesto, its actual methods in later years are more nearly of the ordinary business type.

Professor Hoxie terms the resultant subspecies *guerrilla unionism*. The dynamiting career of the Structural Iron Workers is a familiar example. When, on the other hand, predation is deliberately adopted for the aggrandizement of a narrow ring, he applies the more opprobrious epithet of *hold-up unionism*. The term is not altogether happy. Cunning characterizes the type still more than force; its most brilliant successes have been gained by illicit alliance with monopoly-seeking employers. "Skinny" Madden and "Sam" Parks are the beaux ideal of the type. It is fair to add that predatory unionism, in both its forms, is more picturesque than significant. *Dependent unionism* appears in two forms: that which relies upon the support of unionists outside the group concerned and that which is created by employers for ends of their own. Some "label" unions are at least partially dependent in the former sense; all "yellow" unions are wholly dependent in the latter sense.

Manifestly we have here to do with something more than variants from a single norm. These are so many distinct and conflicting social philosophies in terms of the special needs and problems of wageworkers. Each offers an interpretation of existing law and order and a plan of united action for the attainment of more tolerable conditions of life; each is held by large numbers of wageworkers who carry on an active propaganda for the conversion of their fellows, and each aspires to possess the field.¹ These functional varieties, then, are true union types, as distinct as the industrial and craft forms of organization and far more significant.

No functional type, it must be owned, is precisely represented by any concrete union, past or present; which comes to saying that no union is altogether homogeneous in respect to aims, policies, and attitude. Rival types coex-

¹ This statement needs some qualification. The predatory type has shown little tendency to proselytize, and the propaganda of "yellow" unionism is carried on by the employers.