

## SCHOLARLY CONTROVERSY

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### Race and the CIO: The Possibilities for Racial Egalitarianism During the 1930s and 1940s

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Assessments of the commitment of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO, 1935–55) to racial equality, and of the degree to which individual CIO unions defended the interests of African-American and other minority workers in practice, have undergone immense change. During the 1930s and 1940s, many individuals and groups who supported racial equality, including W. E. B. Du Bois, considered the CIO the leading organization in the struggle for Black freedom. Today, many people, including Herbert Hill, consider the CIO unions of the 1930s and 1940s barely better than the racially discriminatory American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions that excluded African-American workers from union membership and employment. In this latter rendition, CIO unions, even during their prime, were merely another vehicle for maintaining white employment, white possession of more desirable jobs, and other white privileges, their differences from AFL unions largely due to the industrial milieu in which the CIO operated. Thus, the CIO unions were themselves a major obstacle to African-American advancement—part of the problem, not part of the solution.

The truth, as is often the case, is more complex. In this essay, I identify what I believe are the most important issues concerning the CIO's racial policies, sketch the historiographic disputes, and indicate in what direction the answers lie. I examine how racially egalitarian the CIO and its various components actually were; the determinants of how egalitarian a union was; what caused many CIO unions and the CIO as a whole to retreat from their early commitments to racial egalitarianism; and the unrealized possibilities for egalitarian, interracial unionism in the United States.

#### *How racially egalitarian was the CIO?*

Traditional, mainstream industrial-relations and labor-history literature hardly refers to this question.<sup>1</sup> One may look more fruitfully at the rich tradition which focuses specifically on African-American labor, a tradition largely ignored during its heyday by mainstream labor historians and industrial-relations writers. Du Bois, Charles Wesley, and Lorenzo Greene and Carter Woodson, for example, documented the condition of Black

labor in the United States and the many unions that played an important role in denying employment and promotional opportunities to African-American workers.<sup>2</sup> The classic pre-CIO work is that of Sterling Spero and Abram Harris, which analyzed both the exclusionary, oppressive role of the AFL and the degree to which the United Mine Workers, other unions, and a number of left-wing groups were, or were not, more racially egalitarian than the majority of AFL unions.<sup>3</sup>

Those writing in this tradition naturally turned their attention to the CIO in the 1930s and 1940s. While not without their criticisms, these writers were remarkably positive in their evaluations of CIO racial practices. Du Bois, for example, states:

Probably the greatest and most effective effort toward interracial understanding among the working masses has come about through the trade unions. . . . As a result [of the organization of the CIO in 1935], numbers of men like those in the steel and automotive industries have been thrown together, black and white, as fellow workers striving for the same objects. There has been on this account an astonishing spread of interracial tolerance and understanding. Probably no movement in the last 30 years has been so successful in softening race prejudice among the masses.<sup>4</sup>

Horace Cayton and George Mitchell, Herbert Northrup, and Robert Weaver, while unrelenting in their criticism of many AFL and some CIO unions, echo Du Bois in their evaluation of CIO racial practices.<sup>5</sup>

Writers in this tradition have assumed that there is a racially egalitarian logic to industrial unionism. Herbert Gutman and Spero and Harris, to take several seminal, quite perceptive labor historians, have argued that there is a certain inevitability to egalitarian unionism when African-American workers make up substantial portions of the work force and when the union has a "broad social philosophy."<sup>6</sup> The logic of successful industrial unionism requires the organization of inclusive, solidaristic unions when the industries are composed of low-skilled, racially and ethnically heterogeneous work forces. To ignore this logic is to plant the seeds of failure before the journey is begun. I will discuss later the degree to which these structural determinants have proven necessary or sufficient for the formation of racially egalitarian unions.

Highly critical evaluations of industrial unions emerged in full force in the 1960s. The most across-the-board rejection of the positive perspective may be found in the work of Herbert Hill. His work, filled with scathing criticism and exposure of supposedly egalitarian unions, provides a dramatic wake-up call for those who complacently accept the older, established wisdom on the CIO. Hill argues that even the most "racially progressive" industrial unions inevitably have become white job-control organizations. These unions often espoused egalitarian rhetoric for purposes of expediency when Blacks had substantial percentages in an indus-

try, particularly during early periods of new organizing. After becoming established, however, the unions used their organizations to lock African-American workers out of access to superior jobs. Hill argues there were few exceptions, including unions with left-wing leadership.<sup>7</sup>

Hill and many others assume that the central reasons for racial inequalities in the workplace and within the labor market are the advantages that white workers gain from such arrangements and the racist attitudes that they express. Thus, the natural expectation one would have for all-white or racially integrated labor unions (presumably overwhelmingly African-American and other minority organizations would be an exception) is that they would be discriminatory.<sup>8</sup>

My argument will be that each of the two major alternative theories—the one that concentrates on the logic of industrial unionism and the other that emphasizes the racial attitudes of white workers—identifies an important aspect of reality. Yet, as a comprehensive argument or even combined with the other, each theory is inadequate. To get to the root of things, we must recognize that there is now and was during the 1930s and 1940s a range of racial practices by unions. We are best advised to follow Herbert Northrup's admonition that "dynamic elements . . . prevent any clear-cut classification of American labor unions according to their racial policies."<sup>9</sup> One must disaggregate union practice—and not merely by union and industry. One must look at the percentage of African-American workers in a union, an industry, an area; take into account the locale, especially the percentage of workers in the South; and distinguish between the attitudes and practices of local officers, the international union, and rank-and-file members. Finally, one must look at the historical development of particular unions, for some unions improved their racial policies, while the policies of others deteriorated. Only by considering all these factors can one make a considered judgment. Although I will refer here to racial practices of CIO unions in all parts of the country, my focus will be on the South, for it was in the South that racial discrimination arguably was harshest; the system of white supremacy was most rigidly entrenched in law, custom, and social practice; and the commitment to egalitarianism was most severely tested.

### *Early interracial labor organization*

Interracial labor struggles, organization, and varying degrees of egalitarian practice existed in the United States in isolated, atypical instances long before the rise of the CIO. A characteristic of all these early cases was a significant proportion of African-American laborers, whose joint organization with whites in some fashion or another was seen as a prerequisite for obtaining bargaining leverage against employers. Yet the racial mix of the potential constituency, while seemingly a necessary condition, was never sufficient by itself to insure that interracial organization would be at-

tempted, since only in rare circumstances was it even tried. Nor was successful interracial organization sufficient to insure minimal success, because the weight and wrath of challenged white supremacy, in addition to normal opposition to unions, usually was enough to crush such struggles. Nevertheless, this heritage was not without its influence during the 1930s.

Black and white farmers and the rural poor in the South united and struggled together briefly during Reconstruction (circa 1866–76) and the Populist era (circa 1888–96). Both efforts were defeated by a combination of racist hysteria, intense economic and social pressure against individuals in the movements, voter fraud, physical intimidation, violence, and murder, leaving the lower classes cowed and defeated. White supremacist hegemony reemerged, more dominant than ever. The reaction to Reconstruction and Populism in the South made clear that whatever the compelling logic of lower-class, interracial organization in the abstract, the likely consequences in practice would be harsh indeed. Nevertheless, interracial working-class movements continued to emerge in the South.

Recent scholarship has uncovered extensive organization of Black and white workers in the South by the Knights of Labor during the 1880s and 1890s. Melton McLaurin describes not merely joint organization, but integrated struggles against segregation and successful political activities.<sup>10</sup> Peter Rachleff's study of Richmond in the 1880s and 1890s shows the strength of solidaristic interracial unions, and the rise of Black political power and influence, as well as the occasional forthright stands of the Knights on racial issues.<sup>11</sup> At the 1886 Knights convention, for example, held in Richmond, the capital of the old Confederacy, national leaders successfully insisted that the city's theaters and hotels accept African-American delegates, causing a stir throughout the South. In 1886, in the Fourth Congressional District of North Carolina, made up of the eight counties centered in the Raleigh-Durham area, state master-workman John Nichols, a pro-Union abolitionist printer and outspoken supporter of the Knights' liberal racial policies, was elected to Congress.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, the policies of the Knights were highly contradictory, but their activities in Richmond and elsewhere—especially their commitment to integrated unions—often necessitated a frontal challenge to white supremacy.

Varying degrees of interracial unity also were achieved by New Orleans waterfront workers from the end of the Civil War in 1865 until the crushing of union organization in the Crescent City in the 1920s.<sup>13</sup> Tens of thousands of African-American and white woodworkers in Louisiana and Texas, organized by the Brotherhood of Timberworkers and affiliated for a while with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), also achieved impressive solidarity and organization between 1910 and 1913.<sup>14</sup> And the mine workers, discussed below, were committed to interracial organizing in the Deep South from the 1890s on. These cases were atypical, although it is unclear to what extent more was possible had there been additional energy and commitment directed toward such attempts.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to these exceptional cases, most craft unions were openly racist, excluding Black members either formally or by custom. Many AFL unions with industrial jurisdictions, in the North and the South, even where a so-called logic of industrial unionism dictated that they organize African-American workers, rejected interracial unionism, thus giving up on successful industrial organization from the start. Unions that found it necessary to accept Black members because of their high percentage in a trade, as in longshore and many of the trowel trades in the South, for example, generally organized them into separate locals and gave them inferior status. Primarily northern industrial campaigns under AFL auspices in steel (1919) and meatpacking (1917–22) failed in good part because of their inability to convince African-American workers that their interests would be served by AFL unions. Prior to the 1930s, the AFL and independent railroad unions, with several important exceptions, only varied in the degree and forms of implementation of extreme racist practices. Even the socialists within the AFL were hardly any different. Despite the antiracism of some left socialists at this time and even occasionally that of a few socialists on the right, the range of socialist principles varied by and large from the outright racism of Victor Berger to the benign neglect of Eugene Debs.<sup>16</sup>

#### *The CIO break with AFL racial practices*

From its beginning in 1935, the CIO espoused racially egalitarian rhetoric. The question naturally arises: To what degree did this espousal represent a break from AFL racial policies? Or was it merely a continuation of these practices in a new industrial setting, in which white workers—who could not control the labor market for themselves in unskilled industrial workplaces without enlisting the support of their fellow Black workers—made the necessary opportunistic overtures? To answer this question one must first look at the roots of the egalitarian stance in the CIO. Aside from structural imperatives, the impetus for egalitarianism in the CIO came from two sources. The first, and initially defining source, was that of the ex-AFL unions that came to form the CIO, primarily the 600,000-member United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), as well as the needle-trades unions centered in New York City, particularly the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. The second source was the left organizations, especially the Communist party, whose members were central, and in many cases the only important, organizers in most of the key unorganized industrial sectors (auto, longshore, steel, electrical, maritime, and tobacco, among others). Secondary were a small number of other leftists, most of them associated with A. J. Muste or with the left wing of the Socialist party, the latter group including Highlander Folk School director Myles Horton and the leaders of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union.

Any attempt to evaluate the racial practices of the CIO as a whole, its component unions, and various fractions within it must be multidimensional and systematic, not merely anecdotal. Six criteria seem pertinent in this regard.

First is the degree of union access itself. The independent railroad and many AFL craft unions totally excluded Blacks and other minorities. These unions served to control jobs for whites (or a particular white ethnic group), denying representation and jobs to all others, enforcing their claims by job actions, contracts, state licensing and apprenticeship requirements, and even occasionally (as was the case in the early 1930s with the railroad unions) by murder. Other unions accepted Black members but put them in inferior, subordinate, separate Black locals. A further level of access was the degree to which Black workers occupied leadership and paid staff positions within a formally open, interracial union—and at what levels. The mine workers, for example, had numerous African-American local officials and even a number of district staff and organizers, but almost no Blacks in national positions or on national staff.

Second, one wants to know the degree to which a union defended the rights of employed Black workers. Equal pay for equal work was the most elementary principle, doing away with differentials by race or gender for the same type of job. Even with equal pay for equal work, however, equal rights often were denied. A higher-level principle demanded equal access to upgrading, especially to the most skilled and desirable jobs, which were often designated informally as the province of white males. These first two criteria involved defending the formal rights of already-employed African-American workers.

Third is the discrimination in the hiring and job-placement process. In many industries, Blacks were excluded from hiring (as in textile or electrical), or, when hired, they were sent to the worst areas and jobs (foundry work in many industries, or coke plants in steel). With only department seniority—with no plant-wide bidding on open jobs—African-American workers usually were frozen out from the better jobs from the beginning. This type of discrimination was difficult to challenge successfully, since attacks against it confronted basic issues of management rights, of which the right to hire is central.

Fourth was the degree to which a union supported or took the lead in civil rights activities. In the South especially, the more egalitarian industrial unions mobilized their members for antilynching legislation, the abolition of the poll tax, and the right to vote for African Americans.

Fifth, how extensive was egalitarian education and the involvement of workers, particularly whites, in the struggles for equality both inside and outside the workplace?

Sixth and finally, the union may be judged by the extent to which social equality was practiced among members and their families in union social affairs.

Some qualifications in applying these standards must be made for time and place. Unions which held integrated meetings and had any Black officers at all in the Deep South in the 1930s were often taking far more audacious steps and presenting greater challenges to the system of white supremacy than many unions in the 1960s that had these characteristics and took highly visible, public civil rights stances but did little to combat discrimination at the workplace.

With these criteria in mind, let us turn our initial attention to the UMWA influence on CIO racial policy. We then shall look at several other mainstream CIO unions, which also had substantial percentages of African-American workers.

### *The United Mine Workers of America*

Coal mining during the 1930s was a highly competitive, labor-intensive industry. Its work force was extremely heterogeneous, both ethnically and racially, although this varied a good deal by region.<sup>17</sup> There were only small differentials in pay, skill, and general occupational status; to the extent these existed, however, Black workers were underrepresented at the top. Coal miners generally lived in highly controlled, repressive, isolated company towns. During strikes, there was often widespread violence and occasionally massive attempts to use strikebreakers, sometimes of a different racial or ethnic group from the strikers. Coal miners the world over always have had a great propensity to strike;<sup>18</sup> U.S. coal fields were no exception. These characteristics make coal mining in this country the archetypical case in which the logic of industrial unionism should have made labor organization interracial and egalitarian.

Before the turn of the century, the defeat of large-scale miners' struggles had made clear both to broad cross sections of miners and to the leadership of their union that successful organization required intense solidarity, especially across racial and ethnic lines.<sup>19</sup> It also required great physical risks and exceptional militancy. Some have argued that building unions in such circumstances requires a pragmatic—some might say opportunistic—commitment to include all workers and to make a minimal show of concern for the grievances of all groups. It is, as Stanley Greenberg notes, a “plausible scenario,” but one that is far from inevitable.<sup>20</sup> The rejection of white-only unions put workers, particularly in the South, but not only there, in open opposition to the whole system of white supremacy, and hence to key economic interests in the South, the mores of the community, and in many places, the unrestricted power of the state. In the face of such opposition, many unions, despite the “logical” requirements of organization, chose other strategies. The Amalgamated Association in iron and steel, the International Association of Machinists in many industries, the International Longshoremens' Association (ILA) in southern longshore, and the Mechanics Educational Society of America in auto all chose

racially exclusionary strategies, while the International Woodworkers of America (IWA), after a right-wing leadership seized control of the union in 1940 with the active aid of the CIO national office, abandoned any attempt to organize its largely southern Black constituency.

By contrast, the UMWA, from the time of its founding, acted upon a decision, whatever its flaws and defects, which put it into conflict with many aspects of the system of white supremacy. Unlike certain left-led unions that were organized later, the UMWA did not start with a commitment to an all-around struggle for racial equality or with an analysis of the importance of this struggle for class solidarity and consciousness. Rather, starting from a commitment to organize all workers equally, the UMWA was led to challenge white supremacy in important ways and to fight for certain interests of its African-American members. In Alabama, union members fought against the poll tax. They engaged in extensive voter-registration efforts, first registering white miners, then mobilizing them in large numbers to assist in the registration of their African-American co-workers. The union held integrated meetings and social activities, often in places where these were illegal.<sup>21</sup> Despite the racist attitudes of many white miners, especially in the northern coal fields, and the hesitancy of some national leaders, the early UMWA, with its many Black officials, staff, and organizers, was unique in the AFL.<sup>22</sup> At a time when virtually all middle-class African-American organizations were antiunion, one National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) fieldworker who visited Birmingham in 1922 was extremely impressed by the number of Black UMWA organizers, the lack of salary differentials vis-à-vis their white counterparts, and the general egalitarian atmosphere of union meetings.<sup>23</sup> The UMWA fought for the destruction of racially based pay differentials in the South, and maintained a principled, determined opposition to the Ku Klux Klan at the local and national levels.<sup>24</sup> The national office of the UMWA from the beginning espoused a rhetoric of racial equality. John L. Lewis himself was an outspoken advocate of civil rights, often promoting Black leadership. The UMWA continued its antidiscriminatory practices during the 1930s even after they had successfully organized virtually all of the nation's coal miners, including those in the South. Wherever they were located, highly mobilized Black and white coal miners were the shock troops in other interracial organizing efforts.

The accomplishments of the UMWA, especially in the South, are impressive. Despite the many defects of the UMWA at both the local and national levels with respect to its racial policies, Black coal miners left no doubt how they tallied the balance sheet. As Ronald Lewis argues, "Whatever local discrimination blacks encountered in their dealings with white miners, in the context of southern society the UMWA was the most progressive force in their lives."<sup>25</sup> African-American UMWA coal miners were the most steadfast and committed of unionists. They refused to scab and were involved in many of the most heroic and violent battles waged by the



union, including the armed march of thousands of Appalachian coal miners on Blair Mountain.<sup>26</sup> Their contributions were duly recognized by their white union compatriots.

In spite of—or alongside—the racially egalitarian thrust of the UMWA, there was a continuing thread of antiegalitarianism in many levels of the union. A number of the defects of the UMWA with regard to its racial policies have been described by Hill.<sup>27</sup> The UMWA paper at times printed racist jokes. Attitudes toward African-American strike breakers were both harsher than those toward white ones and totally out of proportion to their numbers in comparison to non-Blacks, reflecting the general racism of society.<sup>28</sup>

The UMWA was highly variegated, with a range of racial practices by district and leaders, even under the Lewis regime. Many of the worst attitudes and practices, including the exclusion of Black union miners from jobs by white unionists, took place in the overwhelmingly white northern fields.<sup>29</sup> A number of the officials who were to become central to the CIO leadership in the late 1930s and in the 1940s were among those who were least firm on racial issues. Van Bittner, later a vice president of the United Steel Workers and the head of the CIO's Operation Dixie (the CIO's post-World War II campaign to organize the South), is a case in point. Bittner's appeal to Black miners in Alabama during a 1908 strike there smacks of racial insensitivity at best; he warned that if they did not support the strike the union would abandon them forever, letting them "live in slavery the rest of their days."<sup>30</sup> At the 1924 UMWA convention, Bittner tried to weaken the union's anti-Klan position in an attempt to appease racist whites, particularly in the northern fields. The overwhelming majority of white delegates, as well as the small number of Black delegates, vehemently rejected the committee proposal advocated by Bittner.<sup>31</sup> UMWA Vice President Philip Murray (later steel workers and CIO president) himself rooted in the northern fields, denounced interracial "mingling" during a 1928 strike in Pennsylvania, attacking African-American strikebreakers in highly racist terms.<sup>32</sup> Although the halo of racial egalitarianism hung over all ex-UMWA officials for a long time, it is clear that Phillip Murray, Van Bittner, and Adolph Germer, to name merely some of the more prominent ex-UMWA CIO officials, were among the least committed, ranking other more conservative concerns more highly, even before the anticommunist purges of the late 1940s. Their attitudes were in sharp contrast not only to those of Black miners and officials, but to those of more "progressive" white miners and officials as well, especially those on the left.

In the end, the UMWA failed its ultimate test. As the industry began automating heavily after World War II, the union did not defend the interests of its African-American members. When their manual jobs were eliminated in greater proportion than those of whites, the union did not demand that they have priority in gaining newly created jobs over recently hired,

lower-seniority white employees. By not making mine-wide and company-wide seniority rights central to its demands, and by not believing that it had a responsibility to fight the many racially discriminatory policies of the companies in changing their work forces as employers eliminated manual jobs and added new machine jobs, the UMWA completely abandoned its Black members, allowing them to be driven out of the industry.<sup>33</sup> Miners won mine-wide seniority in the late 1940s, but by the time they had won company-wide seniority in many districts in the 1960s, most Black workers were already gone.<sup>34</sup>

### *Steel*

The campaign to organize steel in the 1930s was a direct outgrowth of the activities of the UMWA. UMWA and CIO President John L. Lewis saw the organization of steel as critical to the stability of the miners' union. Thus, he gave it the highest priority within the CIO, assigning hundreds of organizers, numerous high-ranking UMWA officials, and a large budget to the task; Lewis and his lieutenants also assumed day-to-day, hands-on control. As a result, the initial activities of the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee (SWOC) seemed infused with the same racial idealism as that associated with the UMWA.<sup>35</sup>

Steel had higher wage and more extreme occupational differentials than coal mining; job hierarchies were stratified ethnically, but even more so racially. Still, the multiethnic, multiracial nature of the work force, especially in the steel centers of Pittsburgh, Chicago, and Birmingham, seemed to require both an interracial and egalitarian approach. To facilitate such a campaign and the building of racially egalitarian unionism, the SWOC developed an alliance with the left-wing National Negro Congress (NNC), which made special appeals to African-American workers.<sup>36</sup> John L. Lewis also directly enlisted the support of the Communist party, which, according to William Z. Foster, contributed sixty of the initial two hundred organizers, a number of whom were Black. Without these alliances and the many African-American organizers, most with left-wing affiliations, it is doubtful that the SWOC campaign would have been successful. As a conscious part of its interracial strategy, there were many racially egalitarian activities that characterized the initial SWOC organizing in many places.

In some situations, white workers instinctively recognized that antiracist demands were at the root of strong solidaristic unions. White steelworkers joined with their Black comrades in their own "civil rights revolution" in the late 1930s in newly organized steel towns lining the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio rivers, desegregating everything in sight, from restaurants and department stores to movie theaters and swimming pools.<sup>37</sup> Thus, even in the North, even when there were not large percentages of African-American workers, many white industrial unionists saw the

fight for racial equality as a key to their own struggles for justice, dignity, and a living wage. Parallel accounts emerge from other steel centers. Unlike the UMWA, however, this racially egalitarian thrust was to disappear quickly as a defining characteristic of the union once organization was completed. Here and there, battles against discrimination did burst forward after the steel industry had been organized. Invariably led by Black workers, these struggles usually received at best only minimal, reluctant support from the leadership and had little resonance within the union.<sup>38</sup>

The reasons for this outcome are only partly explained by the racial hierarchy of wages and jobs and the associated entrenched racial privileges of an important segment of white workers. Equally important was the stifling of rank-and-file organizations, militancy, and democratic control of the union by the highly bureaucratic Murray leadership. The establishment of the first contract with U.S. Steel without the kind of struggle that took place in the auto, longshore, meatpacking, and other industries allowed CIO-appointed United Steel Workers of America (USWA) President Philip Murray to assert top-down control, appoint all officials, and stifle opportunities for democratic rank-and-file influence. This too was an important legacy of the UMWA, as nonelected former Lewis supporters controlled all the top positions in the new steelworkers' union. Communist and other leftist organizers, their services now unnecessary, were quickly removed. No longer needing to mobilize all segments of the work force to engage in successful struggle against the company, demands that were designed specifically to enlist the support of African-American workers dropped in priority. Privileges of white workers were frozen, and highly discriminatory job-classification systems were strengthened by the acceptance of departmental, rather than plant-wide priority. These discriminatory provisions, contractually codified by the union, were successfully challenged in court during the 1970s; one of the most important cases was the consent decree at the Sparrows Point, Maryland, Bethlehem Steel plant, which forced the union and the company to pay aggrieved Black workers millions of dollars in pay equity.

The USWA's nonegalitarian stance became firmly solidified in 1949 and 1950 with its destruction of Mine Mill. In destroying this largely Black union, the USWA made racist, anticommunist appeals to white workers, attacking African-American workers, their leaders, and their white supporters. (The Mine Mill case is discussed in more detail below.)

### *Auto*

Some of the same impulses that led to the abandonment of egalitarianism by the USWA existed in the United Auto Workers (UAW), although the situation was not nearly so extreme for a number of reasons. First, there was more initial rank-and-file democracy in the UAW. The union had strong locals and a history of struggle, necessitated by the more prolonged

battle to establish and maintain the union. Second, while communist influence—with the exception of certain indigenous Black members like Hosea Hudson in Birmingham and in isolated locals in Little Steel—was eliminated quickly in the USWA, in the UAW communist influence and pressure for racial equality had a longer history. Third, the social-democratic Reuther group was more committed in principle to racial equality than the relatively conservative group of leaders who were placed in the leadership of the USWA. As a result, the Reuther group's tolerance for overtly racist behavior was much lower than that of the steel leadership group.

Still, in the factional struggles in the auto union during the 1930s and 1940s, Black workers tended in large majority to support the Communist-led caucuses. Reuther had his strongest base of support among privileged, white, skilled workers, who were not moved to take the lead or support struggles for racial equality, to say the least. Thus, the Reuther leadership had little motivation to advance the cause of Black workers in the shop. For example, at Local 6 UAW, a large Chicago-area construction equipment plant of the International Harvester Company (IHC), where a strong communist-led left opposition existed in the post-World War II period, racial equality was an issue pushed by the left caucus and largely opposed by the pro-administration Reuther caucus. When the plant reopened for civilian production in 1946 (during the war it had been a Buick engine plant), Black workers initially were confined to janitorial jobs, mostly below the shop floor, cleaning the washrooms. The left caucus, which had the allegiance of the majority of Black workers, led the successful fight to open machining and assembly-line jobs to Black workers. The nearby left-wing Farm Equipment Workers Union (FE) local at IHC's Tractor Works in Chicago, which had a better civil rights record and a far more aggressive stance on such issues, won complete plant-wide seniority for job bidding and layoffs at an early time. Local 6, despite UAW rhetoric, never won or fought for full plant-wide seniority.<sup>39</sup>

It is important to note that the establishment of racially egalitarian unions was not easy, even with the best of intentions and efforts. The discriminatory hiring and job placement and the racially circumscribed opportunities for upward mobility in industrial workplaces were not primarily a consequence of the activities and attitudes of white workers. Rather, this discrimination was part of the general system of white supremacy promulgated and reinforced by large agricultural interests in the South, whose desire and need for cheap agricultural labor required poor, powerless Black labor and racial hierarchies that kept African Americans on the bottom and Blacks and whites divided. Southern plantation owners had political power and influence, not merely in the black-belt areas of the South which they dominated economically, but in the rest of the South as well, and even in the politics of the country as a whole.<sup>40</sup> This system, backed by economic and political power, legal and illegal repression, and

much public opinion, could not always be confronted head on, although it is easy to see that the reticence of racial conservatives mainly was an excuse for inaction rather than a measured analysis of reality. There often was very strong resistance from white workers to demands for racial equality; this resistance was real, but its permanence is often exaggerated. With these caveats, it is instructive to look at several left-led unions to see whether their commitment and behavior differed from that of the UMWA and the more mainstream CIO unions.

### **Left-Led Unions**

#### *Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers*

The International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers of America (referred to as Mine Mill) had its roots in the left-wing Western Federation of Miners, a mainstay of the Industrial Workers of the World at the time of the IWW's founding in 1905. Such a tradition, it should be noted, did not necessarily lead to egalitarian practice, or even to a commitment to the organization of African-American workers. One organization that had IWW roots, the Sailors International Union–Sailors Union of the Pacific (SIU–SUP), is a case in point. SIU–SUP's syndicalism, while rooted in IWW tradition, developed an all-white, eventually racist, job-control orientation. The right wing of the International Woodworkers of America in the Northwest also had its roots in the IWW, but its syndicalism emphasized local control, turning it toward provincialism, anticommunism, and abandonment of the South and that region's largely African-American woodworkers. Mine Mill's tradition was less provincial. At the time of the union's revitalization, there was an active minority of communists committed to interracial unionism and the vigorous organization of African-American workers. This influence was particularly strong among the overwhelmingly Black metal miners in the Birmingham area. The communists, a distinct minority in 1934, and highly critical of both the local and international Mine Mill leadership, gained dominant influence in the union after Reid Robinson was elected president in 1936; elected as a noncommunist, he quickly gravitated toward communist politics after his election.

Metal mining in the Birmingham, Alabama area, like coal mining there, was done by a work force whose pay and occupation classifications were not highly differentiated. In the early 1930s, eighty percent of this work force was Black. Pay lines, mine cars, and work areas were integrated and had both Black and white foremen, although integrated crews and whites working for Black foremen were eliminated by the companies after Mine Mill became established.<sup>41</sup> From the beginning of organizing in 1933, Mine Mill had far greater support from Black workers than from white,

although at certain times, such as during 1938, when Mine Mill won reinstatement of all 160 workers fired in a 1936 strike, there was also significant white support. In part because of the preponderance of Black workers, but also because of the growing role of communists (many of whom were Black), Mine Mill from the outset had “an air of civil rights activism.”<sup>42</sup>

Mine Mill not only fought in the workplace for better working conditions and racial egalitarianism, but it campaigned actively in the community. Along with Alabama miners and steelworkers, Mine Mill members engaged extensively in voter registration and in campaigns against the poll tax and lynching, giving these unions the character of broad-based social movements as well as workplace organizations. Robin D. G. Kelley claims that “more blacks were elected to leadership positions within Mine Mill than any other CIO union, and its policy of racial egalitarianism remained unmatched,” although he gives no figures or comparative measures.<sup>44</sup> Even after the defeat of Mine Mill in workplace representation elections in the Birmingham area in 1949 and 1950, the union continued to be heavily involved in civil rights activity. In Bessemer, large numbers of Mine Mill members joined the NAACP chapter, taking it over and carrying out an aggressive set of civil rights activities throughout the early 1950s.<sup>45</sup>

Mine Mill made a strategic mistake in not attempting to challenge more vigorously the change in hiring policy of Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad (TCI, the largest mine and steel company in the Birmingham area). After Mine Mill’s 1938 National Labor Relations Board victory, white workers joined the union in large numbers. TCI then attempted to divide the work force. Whereas they had previously hired mostly Black workers, after 1938 they predominantly began hiring whites. The company also gave better jobs to those workers who did not join Mine Mill.<sup>46</sup>

The successful attempt of the steelworkers in 1949 and 1950 to take over Alabama Mine Mill locals relied on overtly racist appeals to white workers. A CIO representative who told an all-white meeting of Mine Mill members that they would have to accept Blacks when they joined the USWA was quickly replaced by one who promised all-white locals in the steelworkers’ union. Just before the 1949 TCI election between the steelworkers and Mine Mill, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) staged a large rally in support of the steelworkers. Despite the early antiracism of the SWOC, the leadership of the union, led by CIO president Philip Murray, barely complained. In demagogic fashion, the steelworkers attempted to hide their activities by accusing Mine Mill of fomenting racism and further claiming that this overwhelmingly Black local union with its Black leadership was itself allied with the KKK.<sup>47</sup> The steelworkers, in tactics reminiscent of the KKK during Reconstruction and in the counterattack on the Populist movement, attempted to isolate Black workers by physically attacking the small number of whites who remained loyal to Mine Mill. In at least one instance, at the Muscoda Local 123 in Bessemer, Black Mine Mill members rallied armed contingents from the Black community to successfully defend

their white union brothers from steelworker-led assaults.<sup>48</sup> These racist activities and assaults by the steelworkers were among many events that moved the CIO as a whole from an incipient antiracism to acquiescence to, if not open support for, discrimination against Black workers.

One could argue, of course, that the structure of metal-mining employment and the high percentage of African-American workers in the Birmingham area led Mine Mill initially to interracial, egalitarian unionism, and that the reaction of the increasing percentage of white workers to union policies was also inevitable. Such an analysis, however, while containing an important grain of truth, would belittle two important factors. The first is the conscious choices of alternative leadership groups. Communist-led Mine Mill chose to emphasize demands for racial equality, appealing directly to the interests of African-American workers. The conservative Murray leadership was willing to make racist appeals to white workers and abandon the interests of Black workers to defeat the communists. Both leadership groups made conscious choices which were not predetermined. Second, the victory of the Murray leadership was not preordained either. They only won during the high point of Cold War anticommunism, supported by local and regional white supremacists in the South, "Dixiecrat" politicians, the CIO national office, the might of the federal government, and USWA violence against Mine Mill members and officials. And even then, the critical elections were close. The significance of structural factors and the racial attitudes of white workers cannot be assessed without taking account of these decisive components.

#### *Food, Tobacco, and Agricultural Workers Union (FTA)*

The FTA, unlike Mine Mill, USWA, UMWA, and the UAW, was an almost totally southern union. It was led and staffed by communists from its inception. In 1937, John L. Lewis appointed the highly energetic, recently fired economics instructor and open communist Donald Henderson to form the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), the forerunner of the FTA (which became the name of the union in 1944). FTA's membership was initially overwhelmingly Black, with two main bases of support. The first was in the Mississippi delta, emanating from the union's strongholds in the Memphis area, and made up of workers in cotton compress plants, cottonseed plants, feed mills, and wholesale grocers.<sup>49</sup> The second stronghold was in the tobacco processing plants of Virginia and North Carolina. In both places, the union had strong Black leadership. The most important local in Memphis, Local 19, was led by a Black man, John Mack Dyson, also a FTA executive board member. The anchor of FTA strength in tobacco was Winston-Salem, North Carolina Local 22 with its over 10,000 members in the R. J. Reynolds plant there. The national union helped train and promote Moranda Smith, a Black female leader of the local, to become the

director of the Southeast region.<sup>50</sup> FTA was especially notable for its many Black women officials and organizers, a striking anomaly within the CIO.<sup>51</sup>

In both main areas of FTA strength, conditions were inhospitable to unionism. As Herbert Northrup argues, "In few industries have conditions been so unfavorable as in the tobacco industry."<sup>52</sup> CIO activity began there in 1937, when 400 African-American women stemmers walked out at the I. N. Vaughan Company in Richmond. Shunned by the AFL's Tobacco Workers International Union, the women finally gained support from the Southern Negro Youth Congress, a communist-led youth section of the NNC. "Within forty-eight hours the strikers had secured wage increases, a forty-hour week, and union recognition. . . . What is even more remarkable is that the strikers were considered absolutely unorganizable before they walked out."<sup>53</sup> Other victories followed, with the tobacco workers eventually affiliating with the UCAPAWA, CIO.

FTA organizing of tobacco workers had many of the characteristics of a "crusade," with civil rights struggles occupying a central place. The union had extensive educational activities involving both Black and white workers, including a large library for members of Local 22. They also held a wide array of integrated social and athletic affairs, including picnics involving thousands of workers.<sup>54</sup> Local 22 was a center of oppositional cultural and political activity. Paul Robeson appeared frequently in support of strikes and major events. FTA members also received entertainment and encouragement from Zephilia Horton, Woody Guthrie, and Pete Seeger. The union attempted to gain civil rights and greater political power in Winston-Salem, and in North Carolina generally, by extensive voter-registration campaigns and by supporting "pro-labor" candidates. Hundreds of FTA members also poured into the Winston-Salem NAACP, turning it into a large branch with over 1,000 members militantly committed to civil rights actions.<sup>55</sup> A correspondent for the Black newspaper the *Pittsburgh Courier* wrote in June of 1944: "I was aware of a growing solidarity and intelligent mass action that will mean a New Day in the South. One cannot visit Winston-Salem and mingle with the thousands of workers without sensing a revolution in thought and action. If there is a 'New' Negro, he is to be found in the ranks of the labor movement."<sup>56</sup>

In Memphis, the UCAPAWA began organizing large numbers of Black workers who also previously were thought to be unorganizable. CIO organizers quickly found that African-American workers generally were far more ready to join and become active in industrial unions than white workers, particularly in the South. This often led moderate CIO leaders, like Van Bittner and others, to refrain from organizing Black workers first, for fear of alienating whites, whom they believed would not join largely Black organizations. The communist-led UCAPAWA, however, had no such hesitation and began building an overwhelmingly Black membership in Memphis. The militancy of Local 19 and its almost unbroken string of



organizing successes stimulated the organization of white workers in both integrated workplaces and in those that were overwhelmingly white<sup>57</sup>—thus showing that the fears of racially conservative CIO leaders were, at the very least, exaggerated. The differences in racial practices between alternative CIO leadership groups are placed in sharp contrast in Memphis.

Conservative Memphis CIO director W. A. Copeland, who owed his position largely to national CIO leader and Murray ally John Brophy, opposed integrated meetings of Black and white workers and expressed special venom for FTA's racial policies.<sup>58</sup> Black workers, led by UCAPAWA Local 19, engaged in militant actions during World War II, in defiance of no-strike pledges. They wanted not merely wage increases but the elimination of racially discriminatory wage scales and job-classification systems like those at the Buckeye Company, which, to take one instance, "kept blacks in the lowest positions in the plant, forcing them to do the same work as whites for half the pay."<sup>59</sup> These activities were opposed by more conservative Tennessee CIO leaders like Copeland and Forrest Dickenson. Copeland and fellow Memphis Newspaper Guild leader Pete Swim did little to attempt to overcome the racism of white workers, and opposed virtually all civil rights activities of local unions. Swim fought national CIO directives to combat racial discrimination; Copeland criticized FTA Local 19 for hiring a Black office secretary, opposed the use of Blacks as negotiators, and denounced "racial mixing" of whites and Blacks at CIO union parties. Copeland also insisted on calling Blacks by their first names while addressing whites as "Mr.," "Mrs.," or "Miss." He and other conservatives attacked the proposal of white moderate state CIO director Paul Christopher to hold integrated CIO meetings at the Highlander Folk School in the spring of 1945.<sup>60</sup> Yet it was these extremely anticommunist and racially conservative southern CIO leaders whom the national CIO office was to promote and back in Operation Dixie and in the battle to purge leftists. Racist leaders were supported by the CIO national office, not so much because the CIO national leaders agreed completely with their racial attitudes, but because the desire to eliminate communist influence and to achieve respectability among business leaders and national political elites far outweighed their commitments to building interracial solidarity or even to building a dynamic growing labor movement—a legacy for which today's dwindling union organizations are still paying dearly.

The expulsion of FTA from the CIO in 1950 and the attacks on its locals were to parallel the attack on Mine Mill. Tobacco unionism was crushed when the CIO onslaught against FTA led to the complete destruction of unionism at the Winston-Salem Reynolds plant. The CIO's racism there was to haunt it in the future. In 1956, when the newly merged AFL-CIO made a major effort to organize that plant, it lost the election because Black workers refused to support the AFL-CIO tobacco union.<sup>61</sup> In the early 1950s Local 19 was destroyed in Memphis. Antiracist white communists also were expelled from the union movement. These actions, com-

bined with the activities of southern Dixiecrats and segregationists, effectively ended the upsurge of working-class civil rights activity in the South during the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>62</sup>

*United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA)*

The UPWA operated in an industry with a racially and ethnically highly differentiated work force, ranging from all white, largely Protestant, areas, including the radical Hormel plant in Austin, Minnesota, to the heavily African-American and white Eastern European labor forces in Chicago, the center of the meatpacking industry. As a whole, however, the meatpacking industry had a white majority.

The failure to organize the more recently hired African-American workers in Chicago had proven central to the defeat of the 1917–22 union organizing campaign.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, “crusading on the race issue” by the CIO-established Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee (PWOC) during the late 1930s was the key, according to David Brody, in the successful organization of packinghouse workers in Chicago.<sup>64</sup> The struggle to forge interracial unity took place over many years and was long and tortuous. The groundwork was laid, according to the seminal works of Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz, by the extensive interracial organizing of the unemployed by communists in Chicago and other cities. This interracial unity and sensitivity to the mutual concerns of various groups was forged, sometimes in opposition to, and often in the face of, the obtuseness of many mainstream CIO leaders, including Van Bittner, the first appointed head of the PWOC.<sup>65</sup> Bittner’s role was to foreshadow his insensitivity on questions of race and his repressive, bureaucratic orientation—two factors that would quickly doom Operation Dixie.

The UPWA was in certain ways more successful in building stable, interracial, egalitarian, antiracist unionism than any other CIO affiliate. Its success, compared to other left unions, was based on several factors. First, unlike the experience of Mine Mill, the racial composition of the meatpacking industry became increasingly Black during World War II, as white workers left to find more desirable jobs. Thus, the strong civil rights stand of the union, supported initially by numerous whites, gained greater strength after the 1930s, both from the increased number of African Americans and from the growing contingent of Hispanic packinghouse workers. Second, although communists played a central role in the union, especially in Chicago, they did not dominate its national leadership. UPWA president Ralph Helstein was a noncommunist radical who had the respect of all factions in the union, including conservatives. Helstein sheltered and appreciated the communists and was himself highly committed to civil rights. The union thus escaped expulsion from the CIO, but it did not completely change its character like other CIO unions that purged their left-wing leaders.

Unlike in FTA and Mine Mill, African Americans remained a minority in UPWA, although a large one; they were, however, strategically placed as a majority on the all-important killing floors. Nevertheless, UPWA shared many of the antiracist commitments and activities of these other two unions. Although Chicago was a racist, highly segregated city, white supremacy was not as all-encompassing there as it was in Memphis or Birmingham.<sup>66</sup> From the beginning, union committees and executive boards were racially and ethnically integrated.<sup>67</sup> In 1938, a key to the organization of the large Armour plant, with its high percentage of Black workers, was the successful union demand to remove the stars on the time cards of Blacks, which easily identified them as the first to be laid off.<sup>67</sup> The union had a broad range of fully integrated social activities in Chicago, including baseball, basketball, and bowling leagues; child care and recreation facilities; dances; and picnics.<sup>69</sup> Along Ashland Avenue, in the heart of the meatpacking district, groups of white and Black workers desegregated all the formerly whites-only taverns. The first contracts in Chicago contained language guaranteeing that Black workers be hired at least in proportion to their percentage in the Chicago population.<sup>70</sup> The 1944 UPWA convention gave up the air-conditioned comfort of an Omaha hotel that refused to house Black members to meet in a sweltering union hall. During the war, the union led successful job actions to integrate formerly all-white departments; after the war it forced the hiring of Blacks in sales and supervisory positions.<sup>71</sup> By 1952, the UPWA had obtained the desegregation of facilities in all its southern plants.<sup>72</sup>

The active and enthusiastic militancy of African-American workers had a direct, positive impact on southern white workers. African-American Chicago Armour workers proved to be the key to abolishing the lower wage differentials for largely white southern workers. Like the FTA in Winston-Salem, UPWA members joined and energized the NAACP. According to Michael Honey, UPWA was a major union supporter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and other civil rights organizations and activities in the South during the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>73</sup> Unlike the UAW, which contributed money to Martin Luther King from its treasury with little publicity or education among members, UPWA mobilized members for activity and education, soliciting contributions in all its locals. Its increasingly aggressive stance on civil rights issues in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s energized its Black and Hispanic members but led to diminished activity in the union from white members, although the union continued to receive tacit support from the overwhelming majority of the whole membership.<sup>74</sup> It is tempting to speculate that white workers might have continued their high level of activity within the union (as they did at the FE's civil-rights-oriented Chicago IHC Tractor Works local) if other larger unions had chosen the path of the relatively small UPWA.

Clearly, in all three unions—FTA, Mine Mill, and UPWA—the egalitarian policies of the union were a result not only of the stance of the union

leadership, but of the active involvement and pressure from the high percentages of African-American workers in these unions. It is reasonable to examine further the commitment and activities of those left unions with only small percentages of African-American workers.

*United Electrical Workers (UE)*

The UE, for good reason, has been a favorite target for those critical of the Communist party's racial policies in unions. Until its removal from the CIO in 1949, UE was a stable union with a successful organization of its major jurisdictions. In addition, a skilled communist leadership enjoyed consistent support from a majority of the membership. Herbert Hill uses the UE as his example to substantiate the following assertion: "Those industrial unions with a predominantly white membership that were controlled for many years by leaders loyal to the Communist Party were substantially no different in their racial practices than other labor organizations."<sup>75</sup> Hill gives examples of UE indifference to discriminatory hiring practices at the Allen-Bradley plant in Milwaukee, represented by UE Local 1111 since 1937. He also cites a case of the left-wing International Longshoreman's Union's (ILWU) battles against discrimination charges over ILWU practices in Portland, Oregon.<sup>76</sup> Donald Critchlow also discusses weaknesses in the UE's commitment to fighting discrimination during World War II. He compares UE unfavorably to the largely white, communist-led National Maritime Union (NME), which Critchlow feels was far more consistent in its fight for egalitarianism. Although the electrical industry was only several percent Black, Critchlow argues that UE districts in the New York–New Jersey and St. Louis areas were exceptions to the UE national organization. New York UE Local 1225 developed a program to combat discrimination in hiring, which yielded a significant increase in the number of Blacks in the electrical industry there.<sup>74</sup> Critchlow attributes this activity in New York and St. Louis to the higher percentages of Black workers in the electrical industry there, although in New York, the figure was probably never much over ten percent. Critchlow claims that the UE national office never gave much support to or publicized the efforts of these districts, despite UE lip service to antidiscrimination and its official involvement in a host of civil rights activities.

Ronald Schatz, in a more sympathetic account of the UE, confirms both the lack of aggressiveness of UE leaders on issues of discrimination as well as their inability to counter management discrimination and the racial prejudices of their white members.<sup>78</sup> Mark McCulloch, on the other hand, claims that the UE was miles ahead of the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), the CIO union set up to replace the UE. The UE, McCulloch claims, had successfully fought for the job rights of already-employed Black and women workers. One of the keys to this struggle was the winning and maintaining of plant-wide seniority for job bidding and

layoffs. Throughout the 1950s, the UE successfully struggled to retain plant-wide seniority, while the IUE retreated to department seniority, locking women and minority workers into inferior job and promotion paths, thus replicating the discriminatory practices supported by the USWA in the steel industry.<sup>79</sup> Still, the UE leadership does not appear to have been nearly as aggressive or committed to racial egalitarianism as their rhetoric suggested or as the left leaderships of a number of other unions.

### *National Maritime Union*

Critchlow finds NMU racial practices during World War II much different from those of the UE. The NMU was a communist-led union with no more than ten percent Black membership. The union was formed in 1937, as militant workers broke from the segregated International Seaman's Union (ISU). The unified Black and white sitdowns that formed the union, according to Critchlow, became a part of the union's tradition. The union elected a Black secretary-treasurer and had large numbers of Black delegates at conventions.<sup>80</sup> The NMU cautiously but steadfastly struggled for the full rights of Blacks on ships. They did this even in the face of racist appeals to white workers by the Sailor's International Union-Sailor's Union of the Pacific (SIU-SUP), a syndicalist union supported by the third-camp Workers party, whose virulent anticommunism led them to support an overtly racist union against the communist-led NMU. The NMU conducted education campaigns on the role of Blacks in the industry and reported extensively on civil rights activities. Its education department, headed by Leo Huberman, widely publicized successful struggles for integration and carried on a steady stream of educational activities through its newspapers, pamphlets, books, organized discussions on ships, and in-port lectures. The communist-led Inland Boat division of the NMU, representing a 100 percent white constituency on the southern Mississippi River, not only agitated around civil rights issues but successfully mobilized its membership to support the struggles of overwhelmingly Black longshoremen in Memphis and other southern river ports. The inland boat workers opposed the poll tax and lynching and even expelled a member for stirring up racial prejudice. During this period, however, they did not attempt to change the racist hiring practices of the inland boat companies.<sup>81</sup> The NMU began to break down the racial division of labor on ocean vessels during the war and in the Deep South on river vessels after the war, but this activity came to a complete halt when anticommunists gained control of the NMU and purged the communists in the late 1940s.<sup>82</sup>

### *Local 1199*

As a final case, consider the activities of New York Local 1199. During the anticommunist purges, 1199 was expelled from the Retail, Wholesale, and

Department Store Union (RWDSU). At that time, it was mainly an all-white organization of Jewish druggists in New York City under communist leadership. According to Honey, 1199 was the only labor organization besides the UPWA that both gave money to SCLC and mobilized its membership actively in support of civil rights.<sup>83</sup> In the early 1960s, 1199's hundreds of members were a fixture at major civil rights rallies along the East Coast. During the 1960s, this small union successfully organized low-paid, overwhelmingly Black hospital workers in the New York City area, growing into a union with tens of thousands of members. Without minimizing the deficiencies of certain left-led unions, and their wide range of commitments and activities, it is clear, contrary to Hill's assertions, that the racial practices of many were decisively more egalitarian than those of the best nonleft CIO unions, which in turn were themselves different from some of the least-egalitarian unions.<sup>84</sup>

### *Structural Factors*

What can we reasonably conclude from this brief summary of certain aspects of CIO experience? Structural characteristics play an important role in laying the basis for interracial unionism. Low-skilled work forces with high percentages of African-American workers – especially where they have crucial leverage within the labor process – are more likely to be organized on an interracial basis into unions that have varying degrees of commitment to racial egalitarianism. While these structural features would seem to be necessary prerequisites, there are some notable exceptions: largely white work forces organized by interracial unions with strong commitments to racial equality. The NMU, FE, the communist-led Fur and Leather Workers Union, and the early 1199 are cases in point. However necessary structural prerequisites may be generally, it is absolutely clear that they are never sufficient. Rather, the structural factors represent only the greater degree of potential for racially egalitarian unions. Unions such as the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers and the SIU–SUP adopted openly racist stances, insuring their ultimate failure.<sup>85</sup> The ILGWU, starting as a racially progressive union, became more discriminatory as its membership became more nonwhite and its increasingly isolated white leaders strove to maintain complete control.<sup>86</sup> The IWA under right-wing leadership abandoned organizing the largely Black, low-paid southern woodworkers, despite the potential they showed for organization. Other unions, including the steelworkers, organized interracial and had rhetorical commitments to civil rights yet still found ways to continue and even deepen discriminatory practices. Thus, while acknowledging the importance of the racial and ethnic composition of a work force, the skill level of jobs, the nature of job hierarchies, and the character of the labor process in an industry, we must reject the thesis that these characteristics determine the degree of racial egalitarianism of a union.

What is clear, however, is that in a number of industries—because of the numerical and strategic weight of the African-American component of the labor force—successful industrial organization was impossible unless it was interracial and had at least an initial egalitarian stance. Ford could not have been organized by the UAW without extensive efforts to appeal to the interests of Black workers.<sup>87</sup> Such a policy was also necessary in steel. In places where CIO unions were not able to make this appeal convincingly to Black workers, they sometimes failed to establish a union. Such was the case in New Orleans in 1937, when white organizers from the left-wing ILWU, insensitive to the concerns of Black waterfront workers, were unable to win these workers in competition with the AFL's ILA.<sup>88</sup> Such was also the case with a number of campaigns in the South in the post-World War II period.<sup>89</sup>

There is a good deal of evidence that workers with special privileges, especially in more skilled and higher-paying jobs, tend to defend these privileges and exclude access to them by other workers. Where the privileges are in part or whole racially based, racial exclusion plays an important role. One might begin looking at the history of American craft unionism, including the driving of African-American workers out of skilled construction trades and railroad jobs. One can also focus on the numerous industrial settings, from the exclusion of card carrying African-American miners from union jobs in the northern fields by white union miners to the exclusion of Black workers from docks in the Northwest by ILWU longshoremen. One could note the perpetuation of racial job hierarchies in steel or the World War II “hate strikes” in auto where white workers protested the upgrading of African-American workers to jobs to which they were entitled. As important as these antiegalitarian activities were, they were only part of the picture. Unions such as the UPWA, Mine Mill, FTA, NMU, FE, and even the UMWA, among others, engaged in significant racially egalitarian struggles on behalf of their African-American members.

Even where racial privileges existed to significant degrees, there always was a tradeoff as to what could be achieved by white workers using exclusive strategies and what could be achieved by a broad, inclusive, solidaristic stance. The existence of a racial division of labor in industrial settings was rarely a result primarily of the activities of white workers and their unions.<sup>90</sup> The system of white supremacy was designed and enforced to serve other interests for which the wages and working conditions of even the most privileged white workers were not the highest priority. Thus, in the late 1960s and 1970s, when large employers decided to break the power of the construction unions via the Business Roundtable organization, the whiteness of the employees was little help.<sup>91</sup> For many white industrial workers, the benefits of successful solidarity, even on a day-to-day level, often outweighed the benefits of racial exclusion and division. In the long run, antiegalitarianism was a losing strategy for almost all workers. These contradictory factors meant that for most white workers, racial attitudes

and stances toward solidarity and racially egalitarian unions were variables, not pre-given, immutable constants. Under certain sets of circumstances, these attitudes had a high degree of variance.

There is much evidence that solidaristic interracial struggle helped mitigate racist attitudes among white workers and at times led them to support and even join the battles of African-American workers for equality. Many accounts of early organizing in steel suggest as much. Cayton and Mitchell assert: "One of the most striking phases of the entire SWOC's [*sic*] campaign was the extent to which the union had been able to modify racial prejudice within the ranks of white laborers."<sup>92</sup> Many observers give anecdotes and general descriptions, as well as personal testimonies from white workers themselves, to support such claims. There were also numerous cases in which white workers reacted against the egalitarian concerns of their fellow Black workers, often in opposition to the antidiscriminatory stances of their union leadership. Examples abound in almost every union. Bruce Nelson's account of the Mobile shipyards during World War II suggests some of the difficulties in gaining minimal equity for Black workers in the face of white worker intransigence.<sup>93</sup> Even in the Fort Worth meat packinghouses, the UPWA often was forced to move slowly and in a round-about fashion because of the resistance of many white workers.<sup>94</sup>

Although white workers were more likely to support the demands of Black workers when they fit in with broadly accepted job rights and union principles, the circumstances in which white workers would be fully supportive and those in which they would break ranks were not always easily predictable in advance. Dramatic changes and reverses often took place. Solidarity sometimes was achieved in places where there previously had been anti-Black riots; such was the case in New Orleans after the race riots of 1893, in a number of coal fields,<sup>95</sup> and in Chicago after the 1919 riots. Sometimes the changes took place abruptly when white and Black workers struggled together or when impressive Black orators spoke to white audiences. It is also clear that those unions that were most successful in converting white workers had interracial leaderships committed in principle to full equality for Black workers.

The limits to egalitarian unionism and to full solidarity of white workers with Blacks are in many cases clear from the historical record. While it would seem at first glance that egalitarian unionism was more easily approached in those unions where Blacks were a substantial percentage of the work force (e.g., coal and metal mining in the South) and had clear leverage in the work process (as in meatpacking), there are industries with high percentages of African-American workers where whites opposed the elementary demands of Blacks to the detriment of their unions and other such industries where organizing never took place. Solidarity was harder to achieve during periods of social conflict and racial competition (as in Mobile during World War II), and during periods of intense anticommunism (during the 1939–41 period, and during the McCarthy era). It was perhaps



easier to achieve during World War II (especially in places like Memphis and Gadston, Alabama) when the racist antagonism of local authorities was held in check by antifascist ideology and federal fair-practice commitments enforced by government contracts. But even these factors were not always decisive.

Herbert Hill's model—that interracialism was a purely opportunistic strategy, designed to better defend the privileges of white workers—seems at first glance applicable to certain unions. But the racial practices of even these unions must be looked at historically so we can understand why they developed the way they did. From organizations with various degrees of commitment to egalitarian unionism, the UAW and the UMWA evolved into unions that tacitly accepted discriminatory practices that hurt their Black members. The steelworkers accepted discriminatory practices, particularly in terms of white access to better job lines, by failing to attain broad seniority rights for all workers. Significantly, these unions were under right-wing CIO leadership. Left-wing unions with large African-American constituencies and more extensive minority leadership behaved differently from those with more conservative leaders. Thus, Hill's model seems ill-suited to describe the practice and evolution of the FTA, Mine Mill, and the UPWA. A number of left-led unions with largely white memberships, including the NMU, FE, 1199, and the Fur and Leather Workers Union, not only were decisively different from nonleft white unions but were more egalitarian in many ways than even those nonleft unions with substantial minority memberships. Because it refuses to accept the important differences that alternative leadership groups made on various union racial policies and because it does not examine their historical development, Hill's model ultimately fails to give us a comprehensive understanding of the racial dynamics of even the most inegalitarian industrial unions.

### *The role of leadership*

The strongest proponents of and the motor force for egalitarian unionism were organized African-American workers. Yet a large percentage of Black workers in a union was almost never sufficient, particularly to create solidaristic attitudes by white workers. In general, as the cases we have examined so far suggest, it was left-led unions, usually with integrated leaderships, that proved a necessary ingredient for the development of interracial solidarity and egalitarian unionism. Left-wing unions, organizers, officials, and cadre in general were more committed in principle and practice to racial egalitarianism than nonleftists.

The first reason for this had to do with principles. Leftists in general were committed to solidaristic organizing. They tended to believe that only such a movement would lead to socialism and radical social change. Thus, leftists usually favored the broadest forms of job rights, since narrow conceptions like departmental seniority invariably proved divisive. They tend-

ed to think that this solidarity also required identification with and support for the most oppressed segments of the population, at home and abroad. African Americans and other minorities clearly were included in this latter category. Communists, in addition, saw the "Negro Question" as central to their strategy in the United States: African Americans were more potentially revolutionary than other segments of the population; the struggle for civil rights had a revolutionary galvanizing potential for the whole population; the support of white workers for this struggle was *the* key to their development of class consciousness.<sup>96</sup> Thus, communists in general showed more interest in organizing African-American workers (although there were exceptions, as the UE and ILWU demonstrate), as their efforts in metal mining, coal, steel, tobacco, auto, farm and construction equipment, and other industries suggest. They tended to have and to promote more extensive Black leadership, organizers, and the general involvement of nonwhite workers, than did nonleft leaders, even in unions like Fur and Leather and the NMU, where there were not large percentages of African-American workers.

Conservative leaders tended to be far more committed to bureaucratic control and anticommunism than to antiracism. Left unions thus tended to push egalitarian measures in situations where conservatives balked. As in the NMU, leftists often widely publicized successful attempts at fighting discrimination and believed that membership should be actively educated and won to antiracism. Because of their antiracist stance, left leaderships and organizers were more proportionately Black than were nonleft leaderships. In most unions they also had the disproportionate support of Black members. Thus, in the struggle against communists in industrial unions in the late 1940s, nonleft leaders usually relied upon the more privileged, mostly white, often racist segments of the unions. This proved to be the case not only in the struggle against Mine Mill, FTA, and the NMU, but also in steel, rubber, and auto.

Leaders, of course, often were constrained by their constituencies in terms of what they could advocate. Racially conservative white leaders occasionally were forced by African-American workers into egalitarian activity. Leftists often were inhibited by racially conservative white workers; this even happened in the UPWA. Yet leaders also made decisive choices, including the degree to which they wanted to "crusade on the race issue" in order to organize, develop, and empower African-American constituencies that would become a force for racial egalitarianism in their own right. There were, in short, a wide range of choices that distinguished many left unions and factions from nonleftists.

Conservative-led unions and conservative leadership invariably were inadequate to the task of developing racial egalitarianism because of their attitudes and commitments relative to a series of other, but ultimately related questions. In most instances, the forging of strong interracial bonds was accomplished via shop struggles. Where Black and white workers

struggled together over common grievances, white workers were more likely not merely to appreciate the value of their Black compatriots but to join with them in active opposition to the myriad forms and instances of racial discrimination. Frequent shopfloor activity tended to be the province of the left for various reasons. Conservative leaders preferred stable, top-down organization which discouraged democratic control.<sup>97</sup> They also preferred closer cooperative relations with companies. Left unions, which believed in the organization of workers for broad class goals, were more highly committed to the mobilization and involvement of workers in day-to-day struggles. The NMU and the UPWA saw frequent job actions as important for maintaining their organizations, as did the FE, and the UAW before the ascendancy of the Reuther leadership. While job actions and union democracy did not insure interracial solidarity (sometimes they have been the province of racist unions), they provided a necessary ingredient. When Phillip Murray decided that racism had gone too far in locals in the southern district of the steelworkers, he ordered the removal of all Jim Crow signs without attempting to organize and educate white steelworkers. Much to his surprise, his initiative drew resistance and had to be withdrawn.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, by bureaucratic inclination; by lesser commitment to egalitarian principles; by their anticommunist stances; by their consequent lack of support among Black workers; and by building their strongest bases of support among the whiter, most conservative, more privileged elements in their unions and industries, nonleft unions and leaderships were almost preordained to abandon the struggle for racial equality and to become part of the problem rather than part of the solution. In contrast, the left unions, particularly UPWA, Mine Mill, FTA, NMU, and FE, tended to be more inclusive and egalitarian, providing the seeds both for interracial solidarity and civil rights struggles.

### *Conclusion*

The development of broad, interracial working-class support for egalitarian demands might have substantially transformed the politics of the United States and made the achievement of those demands more likely. There were the beginnings of such a movement in the 1930s and 1940s among the UMWA and certain left unions in the CIO. These beginnings were rightly, although perhaps overoptimistically, touted by scholars, civil rights activists and organizations, and Black newspapers during this period, many of whom had been highly critical of interracial unionism in the past. The history of the CIO during the 1930s and 1940s suggests that the achievement of interracial working-class solidarity and racial egalitarianism in unions is a difficult task. The crushing of left-wing unionism, however, destroyed whatever possibilities existed for racially egalitarian unionism; congealed the CIO in a bureaucratic, conservative mold; and laid the basis

for the long, continuous decline in American union strength which continues to this day.

## NOTES

1. Despite often copious and informative material, Walter Galenson (*The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935-1941* [Cambridge, Mass., 1960]) and Raymond Walsh (*C.I.O.: Industrial Unionism in Action* [New York, 1937]), for example, are most notable for the absence of any discussions of racial discrimination. Sumner Slichter seems to feel that all unions (including those in the AFL) were making "progress" and that "in nearly all instances the influence of the national officers of unions is thrown against discrimination." Introduction to Herbert R. Northrup, *Organized Labor and the Negro* (New York, 1944), xii. Though such assessments do great violence to the facts, they should not surprise us, since, as Herbert Hill quite accurately notes, "although racial issues were and are a crucial factor in American labor history, racist practices of labor organizations were either ignored or justified by dubious rationalizations in most of the important studies of that history, particularly in those works based in concept on the Commons-Taft tradition." "Black Labor and Affirmative Action: An Historical Perspective," in *The Question of Discrimination*, ed. Steven Shulman and William Darity, Jr. (Middletown, Conn., 1989), 216. In this context, it is worth noting the deep racism of many industrial relations practitioners trained by this school, especially William Leiserson, who was to become head of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and later head of the Industrial Relations Research Association. Northrup, 58-59.

2. See W. E. B. Du Bois and Augustus G. Dill, eds., *The Negro American Artisan* (Atlanta, 1912); Charles H. Wesley, *Negro Labor in the United States, 1850-1925* (New York, 1927); and Lorenzo J. Greene and Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro Wage Earner* (Washington, D.C., 1930). For further specifics, see also F. E. Wolfe, *Admission to American Trade Unions* (Baltimore, 1912) pp. 112-34; Ira De A. Reid, *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions* (New York, 1930); and Northrup, *Organized Labor and the Negro*.

3. Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker* (New York, 1931).

4. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Race Relations in the United States, 1917-1947," *Phylon* IX (Third Quarter 1948):234-47.

5. See Horace R. Cayton and George S. Mitchell, *Black Workers and the New Unions* (Westport, Conn., 1939); Northrup, *Organized Labor and the Negro*; and especially Robert C. Weaver, *Negro Labor* (New York, 1946), 219-20. In fact, one could compile a very thick book of optimistic predictions from the African-American press, civil rights activists, and scholars, especially during the late 1940s.

6. Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker*, 347; Herbert G. Gutman, "The Negro and the United Mine Workers of America. The Career and Letters of Richard L. Davis and Something of Their Meaning: 1890-1900," in *The Negro and the American Labor Movement*, ed. Julius Jacobson (Garden City, N.Y., 1968).

7. Hill, "Black Labor and Affirmative Action," 245-48. For similar arguments, see Robert J. Norrell, "Caste in Steel: Jim Crow Careers in Birmingham, Alabama," *Journal of American History* 73 (1986); idem, "Labor Trouble: George Wallace and Union Politics in Alabama," in *Organized Labor in the Twentieth Century South*, ed. Robert H. Zieger (Knoxville, 1991); and Alan Draper, "A Sisyphian Ordeal: Labor Educators, Race Relations and Southern Workers, 1956-1966," *Labor Studies Journal* 16 (Winter 1991). Unlike Hill, who indicts both white workers and union leaders, both Draper and Norrell put their main emphasis on the former.

8. For references to this literature, see Michael Goldfield, "Class, Race, and Politics in the United States," *Research in Political Economy* 12 (1990): 89, 120.

9. Northrup, *Organized Labor and the Negro*, 1.

10. Melton A. McLaurin, *The Knights of Labor in the South* (Westport, Conn., 1978).

11. Peter Rachleff, *Black Labor in Richmond, 1865-1890* (Urbana and Chicago, 1989).

12. McLaurin, *Knights of Labor in the South*, 82-84.

13. David P. Bennetts, "Black and White Workers: New Orleans, 1880-1900" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1972); Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race,*

*Labor, and Unionism, 1892–1923* (Albany, N.Y., 1988); Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class and Politics, 1863–1923* (New York, 1991).

14. See James R. Green, “The Brotherhood of Timberworkers, 1910–1913: A Radical Response to Industrial Capitalism in the Southern U.S.A.,” *Past and Present* 60 (1973):161–200; Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All* (New York, 1969), 209–20; and Philip S. Foner, *The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905–1917* (New York, 1965), 233–57.

15. Dubofsky even suggests that much more such organization was possible for those who were audacious enough to try. *We Shall Be All*, 209.

16. See Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker*, for an informed discussion.

17. As Ronald Lewis’s comprehensive work points out, the composition and racial dynamics of the overwhelmingly white coal fields of Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana were quite different from those of the majority Black coal areas of Alabama and from the more racially and ethnically diverse fields of Appalachia—especially southwest West Virginia—making generalizations with respect to race difficult for the union and industry as a whole. There are literally hundreds of highly informative books and articles on mineworker unionism and on the coal industry. Ronald L. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America: Race, Class, and Community Conflict, 1780–1980* (Lexington, Ky.: 1987). For recent controversies, see Gutman, “The Negro and the UMW”; Stephen Brier, “The Career of Richard Davis Reconsidered: Unpublished Correspondence from the *National Labor Tribune*,” *Labor History* 21 (Summer 1980); Herbert Hill, “Myth-Making as Labor History: Herbert Gutman and the United Mine Workers of America,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 2 (Winter 1988): 132–200; idem, “Black Labor and Affirmative Action”; the rejoinders to Hill in *The International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 2 (Spring 1989). Joe W. Trotter, Jr., *Coal, Class and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915–32* (Chicago, 1990); David A. Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880–1922* (Urbana and Chicago, 1981); and Judith Stein, “Southern Workers in International Unions, 1936–1951,” in Zieger, *Organized Labor in the Twentieth Century South*; Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker*; Cayton and Mitchell, *Black Workers*; Philip Taft, *Organizing Dixie: Alabama Workers in the Industrial Era* (Westport, Conn.: 1981); and the pathbreaking work on Black workers in coal by Paul Nyden, *Black Coal Miners in the United States* (New York, 1974) are all highly informative. For an insightful review critical of recent work by both Trotter and Corbin, see Stein. For extensive references and an overview, especially about the career of John L. Lewis, see Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, *John L. Lewis* (New York, 1977).

18. Clark Kerr and Abraham Siegel, “The Interindustry Propensity to Strike – An International Comparison,” in *Industrial Conflict*, ed. Arthur Kornhauser, et al. (New York, 1954), 189–212.

19. The UMW was founded in 1890 as a result of a merger of Knights of Labor National Assembly 135 and the National Federation of Miners and Mine Laborers. From the beginning it was explicitly committed to racial egalitarianism. See Lewis, *Black Coal Miners*, 137; Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker*, 355.

20. Stanely B. Greenberg, *Race and State in Capitalist Development* (New Haven, 1980), 294.

21. Cayton and Mitchell, *Black Workers*, 323; Lewis, *Black Coal Miners*, 46, 54–55; F. Ray Marshall, *The Negro and Organized Labor* (New York, 1965), 97.

22. Nyden, *Black Coal Miners*, 2; Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker*, 355–56.

23. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners*, 63.

24. *Ibid.*, 47; Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker*, 371; Northrup, *Organized Labor and the Negro*, 165.

25. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners*, 64. Further evidence is presented in the testimonies of Black miners surveyed by Cayton and Mitchell, *Black Workers*, 201; and Spero and Harris, 375–76.

26. Lewis, 49, 94, 104, 164; Spero and Harris, 376.

27. See especially Hill, “Myth-making as Labor History.”

28. Nyden, *Black Coal Miners*, 23–28; Lewis, *Black Coal Miners*, 81, 86.

29. Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker*, 361; Lewis, 101–06.

30. Quoted in Spero and Harris, 361.

31. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners*, 106.

32. *Ibid.*, 117–18.

33. Nyden, *Black Coal Miners*, 10, 17–19; Northrup, *Organized Labor and the Negro*,

171; Northrup, et al., *Negro Employment in Southern Industry* (Philadelphia, 1970), 15, 33, 37; Lewis, *Black Coal Miners*, 170–76.

34. Nyden, 19.

35. Note, for example, the extremely positive early evaluation by Cayton and Mitchell, *Black Workers*, 224.

36. *Ibid.*, 205.

37. Eric Leif Davin, “The Littlest New Deal: SWOC Takes Power in Steeltown, A Possibility of Radicalism in the Late 1930s” (unpublished paper, 1989), 30–31.

38. For opposite evaluations of the progress of the union and its commitment to racial egalitarianism in Birmingham during the 1940s and 1950s, see Norrell, “Labor Trouble”; and Stein, “Southern Workers in International Unions.”

39. In the 1970s the proadministration Local 6 president put out a racist leaflet in the plant, calling some African-American local union officials “fugitives from the watermelon patch,” enraging not merely the over 1,000 Black workers, but large numbers of Hispanic and white workers as well. When the local Fair Practices Committee unanimously filed charges for the local president’s impeachment, over 500 workers attended a union meeting demanding his removal; it was the Region 4 UAW office that rose to the president’s defense (leaflets and material from Local 6 in author’s possession). This was the same regional leadership that marched with Jesse Jackson and Operation Push in Chicago.

40. V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York, 1949); W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York, 1935); Greenberg, *Race and State in Capitalist Development*; Jack M. Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington, 1987); and E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People* (New York, 1960).

41. Horace Huntley, “Iron Ore Miners and Mine Mill in Alabama: 1933–1952” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1977), 20–26.

42. Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill, 1990), 66, 145.

43. *Ibid.*, 147, 151.

44. *Ibid.*, 145. It is important to note in this context that Mine Mill’s record with regard to Chicano workers in the Southwest was equally egalitarian, despite the difficulties that it had in facing recalcitrant employers there. See Cletus Daniel, *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness* (Austin, 1992).

45. Huntley, “Iron Ore Miners and Mine Mill in Alabama,” 215–218.

46. The new hiring policy was “the subject of a heated debate” in 1941 at the Wenonah local. The issue was raised by a rank and filer, who expressed the concerns of other Black miners that so few Blacks were being hired. One proposal was that the union demand that the company hire equal numbers of Blacks and whites. The Black vice president of the local opposed this suggestion, much to the pleasure of the white newcomers and the chagrin of Black miners. Although the vice president was subsequently voted out of office, attempts to get the company to change its hiring policies failed. *Ibid.*, 96–98.

47. *Ibid.*, 110, 162, 189.

48. *Ibid.*, 208–09.

49. Karl Korstad, “Black and White Together: Organizing in the South with the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural & Allied Workers Union (FTA–CIO), 1942–1952,” in *The CIO’s Left-Led Unions*, ed. Steve Rosszurm (New Brunswick, N.J., 1992), 76; Michael Honey, “Labor and Civil Rights in the South: The Industrial Labor Movement and Black Workers in Memphis, 1929–1945” (Ph.D. diss., Northern Illinois University, 1988).

50. Korstad, 86.

51. Robert R. Korstad, “Daybreak of Freedom: Tobacco Workers and the CIO, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1943–1950” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1987), xvii, 5.

52. Herbert R. Northrup, “The Tobacco Workers International Union,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 56 (August 1942):606.

53. *Ibid.*, 616–17.

54. Korstad, “Daybreak of Freedom,” 201–02, 208.

55. *Ibid.*, 219–30.

56. *Ibid.*, 230.

57. Honey, “Labor and Civil Rights in the South,” 261, 379; Lucy Randolph Mason letter to CIO Organization Director Allan S. Haywood, October 5, 1940, quoted in *ibid.*, 379.

58. Korstad, "Black and White Together," 76; Operation Dixie papers, Duke University Labor Archives, 1945–1950, passim.
59. Honey, "Labor and Civil Rights in the South," 500.
60. *Ibid.*, 527–30.
61. Ray F. Marshall, *Labor in the South* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 172.
62. For a parallel argument, see Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History* 75 (December 1988).
63. David Brody, *The Butcher Workman: A Study of Unionization* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 88; Eric B. Halpern, "'Black and White Unite and Fight': Race and Labor in Meatpacking, 1904–1948" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1989), 257.
64. Brody, 176.
65. Rick Halpern, "Interracial Unionism in the Southwest: Fort Worth's Packinghouse Workers, 1937–1954," in Zieger, *Organized Labor in the Twentieth Century South*, 163; Roger Horowitz, "The Path Not Taken: A Social History of Industrial Unionism in Meatpacking, 1920–1960" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1990), 440–48.
66. Leroi Jones, *Blues People* (New York, 1963), 96, 106, makes this point compellingly in his discussion of the wider social space in Chicago in the 1920s, allowing for the flourishing of jazz there.
67. Halpern, "Black and White Unite and Fight," 338.
68. Brody, *Butcher Workman*, 176; Halpern, 365.
69. Halpern, 383.
70. Brody, *Butcher Workman*, 176.
71. Halpern, "Black and White Unite and Fight," 509, 507, 534.
72. Horowitz, "The Path Not Taken," 642.
73. Michael Honey, "Coalition and Conflict: Martin Luther King, Civil Rights, and the American Labor Movement" (unpublished manuscript, 1992).
74. Halpern, "Interracial Unionism in the Southwest," 158–59.
75. Hill, "Black Labor and Affirmative Action," 245.
76. Nancy Quam-Wickham argues that during the 1940s the ILWU was insensitive to racial issues despite the ideological commitments of the union's leaders. Eventually, but much later, she argues, the union evolved in a more racially egalitarian direction, in part because of the stance of the leadership. "Who Controls the Hiring Hall? The Struggle for Job Control in the ILWU During World War II," in Rosswurm, *CIO's Left-Led Unions*.
77. Donald T. Critchlow, "Communist Unions and Racism: A Comparative Study of the Responses of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers and the National Maritime Union to the Black Question During World War II," *Labor History* 17 (Spring 1976):237; Robert C. Weaver, *Negro Labor* (New York, 1946), 221.
78. Ronald W. Schatz, *The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1923–60* (Chicago, 1983), 127–31.
79. Mark McCulloch, "The Shop-Floor Dimension of Union Rivalry: The Case of Westinghouse in the 1950s," in Rosswurm, *CIO's Left-Led Unions*, 193–99.
80. Critchlow, "Communist Unions and Racism," 238.
81. Honey, "Labor and Civil Rights in the South," 254, 292, et passim.
82. *Ibid.*, 343.
83. Honey, "Coalition and Conflict."
84. Such an assessment is supported by virtually all fair-minded observers. For example, Ray Marshall, who believed that the expulsion of communists and left-led unions was extremely positive for the CIO, still acknowledged that the Communist party was an important force for racial equality in the CIO. *Labor in the South*, 350; *Negro and Organized Labor*, 36, 46.
85. Cayton and Mitchell, *Black Workers*, 81.
86. Robert Laurentz, "Racial Conflict in the New York City Garment Industry, 1933–1980" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 1980). Northrup, writing in 1944, cites the ILGWU as one of the most racially egalitarian of unions. *Organized Labor and the Negro*, 128. Hill documents their degeneration into narrow bigotry. "Myth-Making as Labor History."
87. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* (New York, 1979).
88. Bruce Nelson, "Class and Race in the Crescent City: The ILWU, from San Francisco to New Orleans," in Rosswurm, *CIO's Left-Led Unions*; Marshall, *Labor in the South*, 210.

89. As Gavin Wright notes with respect to patterns of discrimination, unions “were largely peripheral to the industrial story in the South.” *Old South, New South* (New York, 1986), 181.

90. Marshall, *Labor in the South*, 272, 281; Michael Goldfield, *Race, Class, and the Nature of American Politics: The Failure of the CIO's Operation Dixie* (forthcoming).

91. Michael Goldfield, *The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States* (Chicago, 1987), 110, 191, 192.

92. Cayton and Mitchell, *Black Workers*, 212.

93. Bruce Nelson, “Mobile During World War II: Organized Labor and the Struggle for Black Equality in a ‘City That’s Been Taken by Storm’” (unpublished manuscript, 1991).

94. See Brody, *Butcher Workman*, 176.

95. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners*, 87–88.

96. Michael Goldfield, “Decline of the Communist Party and the Black Question in the U.S.: Harry Haywood’s *Black Bolshevik*,” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 12 (1980):44–63.

97. Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, “Insurgency, Radicalism, and Democracy in America’s Industrial Unions” (Working Paper #215, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Los Angeles, 1991).

98. Norrell, “Labor Trouble,” 256–57.