

A Look at Labor
The Union Hiring Hall

By A. C. Tuohy
The National Labor Relations Board is rarely sarcastic. Like a court, its opinions and decisions are usually phrased in dull legal language. Recently, however, it has this to say of the Taft-Hartley Act:

"It is our duty to administer the law as written, not to pass on the wisdom of its provisions."
The occasion for this observation was the decision of the Board outlawing the hiring hall on the Great Lakes. The Board ruled that the hiring hall was a form of the closed shop. Therefore, the maritime hiring hall must be abolished.

THE HIRING HALL is a device whereby men are assigned to ships from a list of available men which is hung in the union hall. When a man lands in port, he signs up with the union for another sailing. At the time of signing he is placed at the bottom of the list.

As jobs become available he moves up the list until he himself gets to the top. When that occurs, he is assigned to the next available job.

This system of hiring was a godsend to dockmen and merchant seamen. It stopped a few men from selling jobs to the highest bidder. In bygone days, and even today, longshoremen's jobs and seamen's vacancies were filled only after graft had been paid to some boss steward or some union official or some company representative.

As a result of the control of the maritime jobs by a few, corruption, graft, and gangsterism rode riot on American piers. The murders and violence on the docks that sometimes received headlines were not merely the outgrowth of drunkenness and debauchery. Frequently, it was the result of warfare between gangs over which group would control the waterfront.

The hiring hall did away with a lot of this corruption because it provided jobs on an objective basis rather than on favoritism. The hiring hall was restricted to union members, of course, but no serious objection has been raised to this.

The employees had no objection. They found the hiring hall an ideal place for securing a large body of men in a hurry. Men were always available for sailing because the union knew who were the men looking for

Labor Day Plea
Joint Action for 'Common Good'
Urged on Employers and Workers

(Here is the text of the 1948 Labor Day Statement issued by the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference under direction of the Rev. Raymond A. McGowan.)

On November 14, 1947 the Bishops of the United States in their celebrated Statement on Secularism summarized the Christian view of economic life as follows:
"The Christian view of economic life supports the demand for organization of management, labor, agriculture and professions under government encouragement but not control, in joint effort to avoid social conflict and to promote cooperation for the common good."

Economic life, then, is to be organized. This is the first of the principles of Christian social ethics. But the second principle, as stated by the American Bishops, is even more important. Economic life is to be organized for a purpose, namely, "in joint effort to avoid social conflict and to promote cooperation for the common good."
IN OTHER YEARS the Social Action Department of NCCW, in its annual Labor Day Statement, has emphasized both of these principles but has concentrated for the most part on their application to the American labor movement — its rights and its needs, its duties and its opportunities and its function in the reconstruction of the social order.

This emphasis, we are convinced, was wholesome, for it cannot be repeated too often or too emphatically that the Church founded by Christ Himself a workingman champions the right of labor to organize. Indeed it looks upon the widespread organization of workers as an absolutely necessary prerequisite to the establishment of industrial peace and economic justice.

This year in keeping with the spirit of the occasion our emphasis in this Labor Day Statement again is on the problems of organized labor and the principles governing it.

At the same time, however, we deem it appropriate to broaden the scope of our Labor Day Statement and to direct a special appeal to employers as well as to workers and to employer's associations as well as to unions.

We appeal to both groups to become more conscious than ever before of the primary purpose of their respective organizations as stated in their charters: "to avoid social conflict and to promote cooperation for the common good" — and we urge them to cooperate unselfishly among themselves and with the government to hasten the reestablishment of a better and a more Christian social order.

IN THE FIRST PLACE, therefore, we again encourage the labor movement to organize the unorganized workers of the United States. On the occasion of its national holiday, we congratulate the labor movement on its accomplishments and ask our Divine Lord to protect it and to bless its activities during the coming year.

The American labor movement has its faults and imperfections of course, but there is reason to believe that its members and its leaders for the most part, are themselves even more conscious of these defects than are its unfriendly critics.

There is reason to believe, too, that these defects, e. g. Communist infiltration are being remedied from within the movement itself more rapidly and more effectively than they could be remedied by punitive legislation.

In general it would be fair to say that there is at least as much if not more, of the spirit of self-criticism and self-reform within the labor movement as there is within parallel organizations of employers and professional people.

AT LONGER, we repudiate as ill-advised and discriminatory the efforts of those who, not content with the disruptive efforts of the Taft-Hartley Act, are clamoring for further restrictions on the labor movement.

We call attention in particular to the baneful influence of certain types of punitive legislation at the state level which are calculated to foster rather than diminish industrial strife and which are designed whether fully or not, to "stop" the labor movement rather than to reform it.

In addition we recommend that the Taft-Hartley Act itself be reconsidered by the Congress of the United States, and that the cumbersome and obstructive provisions concerning the labor movement itself be eliminated. At the same time its socially beneficial features should be retained.

A year today we expressed the judgment that the Taft-Hartley Act "is an inadequate and shortsighted approach to the very complicated problem of industrial relations."

Former Polish General Tells Of Tears at Mass in Moscow

London—(C.P.)—"I remember the first Mass I attended in Moscow... Although I am known as a hard man, I had a lump in my throat and tears appeared in my eyes."
Thus writes General W. Anders, former Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army, in his memoirs, which are expected to be published soon under the title, "Without the Final Chapter, General Anders writes:

"I was not ashamed of this (the tears) because all the soldiers, who had often looked death in the face, were weeping too. Then I remembered a scene which happened when I was in prison, when the NKVD (Russian secret police) found a medal of Our Lady on me and the NKVD man took it away and trampled it under his feet!"

The author, who also commanded Polish forces in Great Britain and Italy, declares that "one of the remarkable characteristics of all the people was their greater emphasis on religion, regardless of where they came from."

"THIS DID NOT surprise me at all," he continues, "because I felt the same. We had great faith in Divine Providence which had saved us almost miraculously when we seemed doomed to a slow and horrible death."

Describing a conversation he had with a high Russian official about the building of the huge Moscow-Volgograd Canal, General Anders says that when he asked whether it was true that a very large number of workers died on this job, the Russian replied brightly:

"What do people matter? They die, and new ones are born. But the canal will last for centuries."

China Priest Starts Work With Relatives

Kiang, Shensi, China—(C.P.)—Twenty years ago the Rev. Bernardino Ferruti, O.F.M., converted a Chinese boy, Joseph Kun. Until that baptism took place, the Kun family had been non-Christian. A few weeks ago Father Ferruti knelt for the blessing of the same boy, now ordained.

Father Kun's first solemn Mass was accompanied by great local rejoicing. He has begun his ministry by baptizing several of his relatives.



POPE PIUS XII
"The time has come . . ."

is a tremendous force for good in the economic and social life of the nation. If it is to continue to be such and if it is to live up to the added responsibilities which its very numbers impose upon it, its members, every last one of them, must voluntarily assume their full measure of responsibility for the soundness of its directives and programs.

Regular attendance at union meetings is the very minimum to be expected of every worker who holds a union card. Catholic trade unionists are reminded moreover, of their further obligation to become instructed in the principles of Christian social ethics and, in cooperation with other men of good will, to work in and through their respective unions for the Christian reconstruction of the social order.

American employers and management representatives are called upon in turn to take the same intelligent interest in the affairs of their own organizations and trade associations that workers are expected to take in the affairs of their unions.

Catholic employers and management representatives are reminded that they, too, even as Catholic workers, are obliged to ground themselves in the principles of Christian social teaching and to make every effort to apply these principles to the social order in and through their respective organizations.

We rejoice in the fact that employers are banded together in such great numbers in their own appropriate organizations. Such organizations are as indispensable in their own way as the unions are to the reconstruction of the social order.

The time has come, however, to insist more emphatically upon the obligation of employers and union members alike to see to it that their respective organizations carry out their proper function in the economic order.

At the present time employers' associations and unions, for whatever reasons, are preoccupied too much with the protection of their own interests and too little with their obligation "to promote cooperation for the common good."

It is not our purpose at present to apportion the blame for this unfortunate state of affairs. The

record indicates, however, that segments of the organized labor movement which at long last are coming into their own after having fought so desperately for their very right of existence have repeatedly invited American industry to discuss with them the establishment of an Industry Council system.

Unfortunately their overtures in this direction have been ignored and in some instances openly rebuffed or caricatured irresponsibly as socialistic or worse.

BE THAT AS IT MAY, we earnestly call upon labor and management to let bygones be bygones and to work together more generously than ever before "in joint effort to avoid social conflict and to promote cooperation for the common good."

In default of this free cooperation, the Bishops remind us in their Statement on Secularism, "public authority is finally involved to maintain a measure of economic order, but it frequently exceeds the just limits of its power to direct economic activity to the common good."

In summary, therefore, we are recommending again, as in our Labor Day Statement of 1946 and 1947, the establishment of an Industry Council system, with added emphasis this year on the responsibility of labor and management alike to work toward this end within their own unions and trade associations.

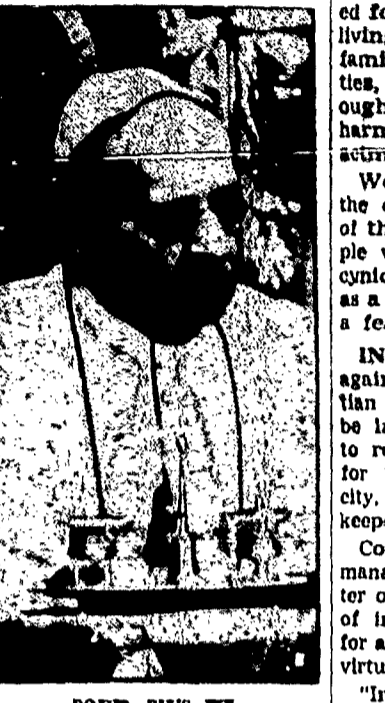
The underlying philosophy of such a system and the arguments in favor of its being established as rapidly as possible have been stated as follows by Our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII:

"The time has come to repudiate empty phrases and to attempt to organize the forces of the people on a new basis; to raise them above the distinction between employers and . . . workers, and to realize that higher unity which is a bond between all those who cooperate in production, formed by their solidarity in the duty of working together for the common good and filling together the needs of the community. If this solidarity is extended to all branches of production, it becomes the foundation for a better economic system. It will lead the working classes to obtain honestly their share of responsibility in the direction of the national economy. Thus, thanks to such harmonious coordination and cooperation, thanks to this closer unity of labor with the other elements of economic life, the worker will receive, as a result of his activity, a secure remuneration, sufficient to meet his needs and those of his family, with spiritual satisfaction and a powerful incentive towards self-improvement."

This "closer unity of labor with the other elements of economic life" cannot and should not be imposed from the top by the government.

Nevertheless the government is charged with the responsibility of encouraging organized labor and organized management as well as the other organized groups in economic activity to move as rapidly as possible in the direction of an Industry Council system.

"FIRST AND FOREMOST," says Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *On Reconstructing the Social Order*, "the State and every good citizen ought to look to and strive toward this end that conflict between the hostile classes be abolished and harmonious cooperation of the industries and Professions be encouraged and promoted. The social policy of the State, therefore, must devote itself to the reestablishment of the Industries and Professions. In actual fact, human society for the reason that it is founded on classes with divergent aims and hence opposed to one another and therefore inclined to enmity"



POPE PIUS XI
... abolish hostile classes

live industries or professions and for the general economic welfare of the nation as a whole.

The details of such a system obviously cannot be outlined in advance. They will have to be worked out patiently and cooperatively by the parties directly involved in the economic process, and one industry will naturally differ from another in many respects.

It cannot be denied that the task will be a very difficult one. But where there is a will there is a way.

At the present time in the United States apparently it is the will that is lacking. We are still, to too great an extent, a nation of individualists unable or unwilling to understand in all its fulness and in all its implications what the American Bishops had in mind when they said in their November Statement that "economic enterprise is a . . . social function in which owner, manager, and workingman cooperate for the common good."

BUT "THE TIME HAS COME to repudiate empty phrases," including the empty phrases of individualism on the one hand and those of collectivism on the other.

"Surely it ought to be plain today," the American Bishops tell us very pointedly, "that there is no remedy for our economic evils in a return either to nineteenth century individualism or to experiments in Marxism."

We are called upon to establish a new system of "economic collaboration in the spirit of genuine democracy."

We must add that there are certain economic and social abuses which cannot wait upon the full-blown reconstruction of

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