

Labor as a Community Force

Labor Acts for a Better Community

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The figures are startling. In 1941, fewer than one hundred CIO representatives were on the boards of the many thousands of American voluntary social welfare and health agencies. Today the number has increased about a hundredfold.

Never before in the history of our country has so sharp a change taken place in the composition of the boards of community agencies. Never before has a new group been brought into participation so quickly and so completely.

What does this mean? Is it an effort of power-hungry trade union leaders to establish control over American life? Or is it simply the recognition of a group which says, in effect, "You're spending some of our money, and we want to see how you spend it"?

Why are unions, whose traditional concern has been wages, hours, working conditions and, more recently, political action, extending their interest into the voluntary social welfare field?

Unquestionably, unions still spend most of their time and energy dealing with wages, hours, and working conditions. These, after all, are the reasons for a union's existence. No matter what other activities a union may undertake, it has no excuse for functioning unless it protects the workers in the shop.

Before the New Deal, most unions thought this was their whole job. They took an active interest in legislation and community problems only when the community, or the law, interfered with or aided these "normal" union activities.

However, it was inevitable that unions should go further. The basic purpose of the union movement is to provide a better life for workers and their families. Wages and hours are important fundamentals—but so are the kinds of housing available to workers, the prices they must pay for necessities of life, the quality of education provided for their children, the condition of the community water and sewer systems, the facilities for supporting the families of those unable to work, and innumerable other problems. Therefore, unions in their direct concern with the well-being of industrial workers, must show interest in these problems and in the public and private agencies which seek to solve them.

To some extent the collective bargaining contract can be broadened to meet a part of the workers' social needs. Health and accident insurance has been greatly

When Labor Joins in Making Policy

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To the uninitiated, the idea of labor representatives participating in policy making for community social services might call to mind a picture somewhat resembling the bargaining table in the more highly publicized labor disputes. The mental picture envisioned would probably show labor as "aggressive," "radical," "self-seeking," "demanding," or even "arrogant." Those who are familiar with the procedures of negotiations during collective bargaining might feel that labor representatives would come "instructed" to policy-making meetings.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Labor wants to be part of a group, to act with fellow citizens as democratic equals in promoting and maintaining programs that benefit the entire community. Officials of organized labor recently collaborated with the Labor-Employee Participation Department of Community Chests and Councils in preparing a statement on board membership and labor. The statement, which has now been adopted officially by Community Chests and Councils of America, makes it clear that the board member from labor "is expected to consider the problems presented to the board of which he is a member and to register his opinion and take responsibility on all issues which may arise."

Labor believes that its representatives should be, and most cases are, in a position to speak authoritatively about the point of view of the community's workers and their families. Labor's function in policy making groups derives from its ability to speak for this large group of working people, who in turn constitute one of the largest groups of users of the services which health and welfare agencies operate. Beyond this, labor has no ax to grind as it participates in community planning and policy making. Because the labor movement has grown out of the efforts of a large group of people who instinctively know and accept the interdependent nature of our society, labor representatives come to this job with profound interest in the general welfare of the whole community.

Where a truly representative and democratic board is involved, it is not easy to point out a particular policy or program which has come into being because of the efforts of any one board member. Thus, labor's contribution in policy making groups can hardly be singled out of the changes and developments which have come through joint thinking of a diversified group acting to-

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extended through collective bargaining. Witness, too, the current drive for retirement of payments as a part of the labor agreement. Then too, the federal government has been called upon to provide social insurance, to aid in housing, to help control the major economic forces which determine whether or not there will be jobs. State and local governments have responsibilities in education, in health services and in many other seemingly mundane affairs which have a direct impact on how well people live.

But unions are more and more coming to realize the important role that voluntary social agencies can play in building better communities—and thus in helping workers achieve a better life.

At one time, certain forces kept unions and social agencies apart. Labor had to learn to overcome the antagonism of workers to the "Lady Bountiful" approach; the feeling that accepting help from a social agency was a disgrace; the suspicion that social agencies were run by the "respectable" people of the community; the resentment of contributions demanded from workers by employers.

These obstacles were not entirely imaginary. Many social agencies were indeed run by respectable people, who quite obviously shuddered at unionism. Required contributions were customary in many firms.

But today strong forces draw unions and social work together. The united effort of the war relief drives broke down old suspicions and made it possible for these forces to exert their full effort.



Simpson Studio

Paterson, N. J. CIO leaders "inspect"
the Memorial Day Nursery

After all, unions too, are voluntary organizations whose continued existence is dependent upon the performance of a socially necessary service. In view of this they cannot help but acknowledge the important role which voluntary agencies play in a democratic society.

Then, too, as unions have broadened their horizons they have recognized all workers are first and foremost citizens of a community. Their concerns are community concerns—the high school basketball team, the

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gether for a common purpose. Indeed, in the opinion of labor leaders, such singling-out would not be desirable even if it were possible.

Recently in a Pacific Coast city where the AFL has some seventy-five appointments on boards and committees of social agencies, all taking an active part in policy making, an AFL official made a statement to the effect that claims for initiation of policy were not in the best interest of the AFL. The important thing, he stressed, was that "we receive cooperation from the committees on which AFL members serve, and that when we have strenuous objections to a particular phase of work, we have not met with opposition."

Perhaps the most important effect of increased labor participation in policy making has been the interchange and consequent modifying of attitude, both on the part of the traditional board and committee members, most of whom represent givers but not users of the services, and on the part of the labor members who represent that group who are both givers and users. Board members, whose daily lives were somewhat remote from those of low-income workers, have come to have a better understanding of the needs and problems of workers. Labor members, who felt that those whom they represented were not getting adequate services, have come to understand for instance, the relationship between public and private agencies, particularly the limited relief-giving function of the private agency.

Organized labor, because of its own experience and convictions, has been influential in the establishment of "referral centers" and "central information bureaus" in many cities. This effort was made in behalf of a genuine need. Too often a person in need of service lost valuable time, suffered additional misfortune, or became the victim of grave misunderstanding because he lacked the proper information as to the proper agency to which to go. Before the war ended, the AFL's Labor League for Human Rights had set the pattern for such referral services within labor organizations. The work of these services was realized on a broader basis in many communities at the time that servicemen were being released from the armed forces. Organized labor continues to insist that they are a necessary function which should have the support of community chests and councils.

In one large midwestern city, because of rather general community resistance, a committee representing all groups of organized labor was formed to promote the establishment of such a center. After a good deal of controversy, the center was finally established, given a budget and made an agency of the chest. The new referral agency now continues to render a valuable service to all people in the community and is increasing in popularity.

In another city, labor representatives concluded, from evidence given by many workers in the unions, that there was need for a broader and more decentralized referral service where applicants for service could receive more individual attention in more ac-

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condition of the streets, their children's recreational opportunities, the adequacy of fire protection. Their well-being as everyone else's depends in large measure upon the kind of community in which they live. A good community for everyone is a good community for union members. Their children go to community schools; their cars drive over the community streets; they are served by community health or recreation facilities. But while the union can move by itself to improve conditions in the shops, it can only move as a part of the entire citizenry to improve community conditions.

Until workers were organized, little opportunity was available for them to participate effectively in solving community problems. The union has removed them from the second class citizenship which had been their lot, and given them a voice with which to express their needs and hopes.

This has been sharply illustrated in the textile industry. Textile mills, for the most part, are outside the major population centers. Union members live in small and medium sized towns, in New England, the Middle Atlantic states or the Southeast. Most often these are one-industry communities although there are, of course, exceptions.

In the past these communities have been dominated by the mills. The fact that the workers lived on the "wrong side of the tracks" was impressed upon them in every aspect of community life. The communities were run by the bosses for the benefit of the bosses. Even if the town was a "good" one in the material sense, its affairs were conducted in such a fashion as to stifle any real democratic development.

Today the situation has changed, not only in textile areas, but also in the auto and steel towns, and everywhere else where unions have become strong. The difference is perhaps best illustrated in the change in community chest solicitation. Contributions once forced by plant management have been replaced by voluntary giving organized through the union on a democratic basis. Nevertheless, contributions are substantially greater.

In view of the changes, unions face two responsibilities. They cannot neglect their increased opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the cities and towns in which their members live. Today organized labor wants unionized communities to be different from others because they are better ones in which to live, not only because there is a union hall on Main Street.

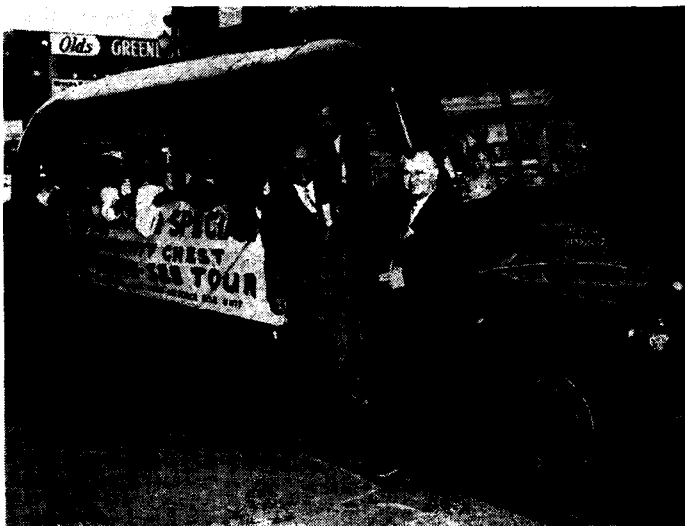
Therefore, we in the labor movement are beginning to recognize that our efforts must be integrated into the total community effort, and not separated from it. They cannot do the job alone.

Through such integration we can develop close ties with voluntary social agencies. We are experts in collective bargaining, in labor-management relations, and do not hesitate to maintain that we know more about such relationships than any other group in society. By the same token, we realize that we have much to learn about the organization of the community and about the

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cessible places. The pattern in this large city had been to have intake and referral centered in a few agencies, but with the evidence brought in by labor representatives, the pattern was altered to fit the needs of the citizens in this community.

The experience of becoming an active participant in joint fund raising and joint planning has been an exceedingly beneficial one to labor. In the days before organized labor was a part of this community enterprise, labor groups were constantly plagued by the



"Howdy" L. Williams

Kansas City, Mo. AFL representatives inaugurate the new Come-and-See-Bus

many appeals to give to a multiplicity of small agencies. Getting interested in the community chest program was an answer to this problem, but it was only the beginning. The idea of planning jointly for the total community and operating the health and welfare program as economically and efficiently as possible appealed to labor, and it has taken the principles so to heart that recently, rather than being called "radical," organized labor was referred to by a community leader in one city as "a major community influence on the conservative side." The remark was made in reference to labor representatives' wariness about admitting new agencies to the chest and council until it is definitely shown that there is a new need to be served and that agencies are actually doing the jobs assigned to them.

Another aspect of community planning which labor has taken to heart is the need for new agencies to meet the standards set up by community chests and councils. In an eastern city, a woman who had been a staunch and devoted friend to the labor movement, started a home for the aged and applied for admission to the community chest. Naturally, the labor representatives supported her request, but when it was pointed out that the institution was substandard in its safety provisions as well as some of its health services, labor representatives withdrew their support temporarily, and went to their old friend. Through their influence with her the necessary changes were made,

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various specialized techniques in the solution of community problems. This can be accomplished by looking to the voluntary agencies, which are composed for the most part of civic-minded individuals from every walk of life, for assistance in this orientation.

To such collaboration unions are able to bring a democratic spirit and a specialized knowledge of workers' needs. In most instances union officials perhaps better than professional social workers, are able to tell whether a community service, voluntary or public, is serving the purposes for which it is intended. Workers have confidence in their unions. They speak frankly to their union leaders about their problems. Their leaders' direct contact with large groups can bring to social planning a realism more effective than an excellent questionnaire.

While unions know the importance of government action in certain fields, they also recognize the role of the voluntary agency in filling the gaps not met by public agencies. These include experimentation; development of public acceptance for new ideas and services; exploring areas of common agreement which are of interest and importance to the entire community; and providing a whole host of health, welfare and educational activities.

Current examples of cooperation between unions and social agencies are too many and too common for detailing here. Evidence that the collaboration has been a creative one for both the unions and the agencies involved can be found in the growth of union counseling; the increasing use of labor liaison personnel attached to community chests or councils of social agencies; the development of new services as the result of union requests.

These and other examples indicate that the motives of union participation in community affairs are essentially unselfish. The record shows that unions have sought neither control nor special advantage. We, in organized labor, will benefit only as the community benefits and only to the extent that we contribute to the well-being of the community as a whole.

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and the institution was admitted. In the opinion of a council official of the city, "organized labor did an outstanding job in this instance and the new agency is doing a worthwhile job."

The earnestness with which organized labor works to encourage genuine participation with and for those whom it represents is seen in the experience in another city. An industrial dispute in a particular plant was reflected in the community chest campaign, traditionally conducted by the management, resulting in a low record of per capita giving. At the suggestion of AFL officials, a meeting of labor and management was called. Following this, the workers invited foremen, job stewards and management to meet with them and discuss the chest campaign. Here it was decided to depart from custom and to conduct the campaign jointly. As a consequence, there was an increase of 92.7 percent in participation and 105 percent in subscription over the previous year on the part of both management and labor.

Finally, a very healthy result of having broadened the base of representation on service agency boards and committees by inviting labor to participate has been the acceleration of a trend away from a conception of the social agency as a dispenser of charity. Chest agencies were, not so many years ago, regarded by many people as the spiritual successors of Lady Bountiful; too few thought of them as agencies providing real service in the fields of health, welfare and recreation.

Labor has been able to help, through its influence in policy making as well as its efforts at interpretation, in changing this attitude and changing the anachronistic aspects of community service which perpetuated it. The citizens of most communities now recognize that these agencies are doing a commendable year-round service quietly and effectively, without stigmatizing those whom they aid. Labor is proud to have had a part in working for a community climate in which it can truly be said that "Everybody Benefits—Everybody Gives."

Chest Within the Chest

The question of how best to solicit contributions from industrial plant employees will stand high on the list of community chest problems this fall. Management is frankly restive at the thought of a return to the big bang-up plant campaigns of the war years. Labor groups, too, are feeling the effects of a campaign fag. Everywhere the protest is against "too many campaigns," and the call is for "something to be done" about federating national appeals into one effort. In the

absence of this kind of federation, more and more big companies have taken the matter into their own hands and are setting up their own campaign federation, outside the chest. They are called by such names as "The Blank Corporation Employees Welfare (or Civic or Community Services) Fund." Such funds are supported by a regular deduction from each worker's earnings, from which all employee contributions are made to chests or to independent agencies. The Three C's

has just made a study of three specific plans of this kind—namely, those in Bridgeport, Conn., Canton, Ohio, and of the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation of Pittsburgh and elsewhere, pointing up their good and bad features. Among the former are these:

1. The complete federation of major appeals into one money raising operation, within employee groups.

2. The elimination of repeated costly

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Why We Give

LILIAN BRANDT and THOMAS DEVINE

Motives for giving are rarely found "free" in the chemical sense like free oxygen. One is reinforced by another or inhibited by another, and our decisions spring from the interplay of many conflicting forces.

Thus it would not be easy for any one of us, even with the most candid intentions, to set down accurately the reasons why we have given our support to this or that organization, and why we have given a particular amount. Intellectual and esthetic feeling, as well as social and religious considerations, are involved.

Nonetheless, informal observations of ourselves and other human beings yield clues to the major motives for giving.

Sympathy for Suffering

The fundamental, primitive and probably instinctive, desire to relieve physical suffering is still no doubt the most general and the strongest of all motives. When an earthquake or a fire or a flood destroys lives and property, money pours in—sometimes much more than is needed. A shabbily dressed man with a deformed hand or other handicap can collect more than a day's pay in a few hours of begging, and this in spite of his professional air or laws against mendicancy.

Here then is the basis for most campaign pictures or human interest stories. There is a limit, however, to the effectiveness of even the most inspired devices for stimulating the imagination. Tragic photographs of starved children and skeleton babies fail nowadays to bring the response which could have been counted on a few years ago. This may be partly because the more we have learned about the needs of the war-ravaged countries, the more overwhelming they have seemed. Even with the utmost ingenuity in indicating what a small contribution will do, the individual donor loses his sense of responsibility, and unconsciously assumes a mental attitude not unlike that with which we face a cataclysm of nature. When horrors become commonplace they cease to arouse sympathy and emotions become fatigued, like the

frog's muscle in an experiment. Larger doses of stimulation must be applied until the point is reached at which it is impossible to excite any response.

Desire for Divine Approval

The belief that gifts are acceptable to God and even constitute a claim for reward after death is still an active factor in the minds of many. How far society should recognize such motives was legally questioned a number of years ago. A woman who left her entire fortune to charities explained that she did this because she was convinced that her future welfare demanded it. The court, however, on the appeal of the family, set aside the will on the grounds that she had been suffering from a delusion. More are influenced by the general teachings of religion which have established in their minds the conception of charity as a virtue.

To Meet Expectations

Desire for social esteem—or its negative aspect—are undoubtedly factors. To contribute may be "the thing to do." It is not only in the imagination

The century was very young when Lilian Brandt's first articles appeared in *Charities*, forerunner of *The Survey*. Many of her early contributions to research, writing, and teaching were when *social work* was growing out of *constructive philanthropy*.

In 1920, Miss Brandt wrote an important little book, "How Much Shall I Give?" The analysis on these pages of "why we give" stems largely from one chapter of that valuable text book. It is written following consultation with Miss Brandt who retired a little over a year ago.

Her answer to the question which titles her book follows:

"A man can afford, and ought, to contribute . . . such a part of his income as his *informed intelligence*, guided by a sincere concern for the *common welfare*, dictates; and this amount he can afford, and ought, to give, 'even though he be the poorest man in Israel.'"

The words "informed intelligence" provide the key to sound social work support—a basic challenge to agencies and to citizens.

of the cynic that a woman ambitious for social advancement may subscribe generously to some cause simply because asked to do so by a woman of social standing who could further her ambitions. On the other hand, merchants may contribute as a form of goodwill advertising.

Aside, however, from the desire to secure social or business advantage, everybody wants to do "what is expected of him"—by his immediate associates and by society in general; and to the extent that he senses what those expectations are, he tries to meet them if only to escape importunity or a disagreeable reputation. He defers to the social conscience—or social judgment or taste, whichever it may be—and his individual taste or judgment or conscience is influenced by it, just as his own in turn helps to determine that of his community. Tags, buttons, feathers, and solicitation in the open—whether by individual beggars or on behalf of organizations—are all methods of exerting the force of public opinion, and imitation to lead people to do what others are doing. True it may be only a pseudo public opinion which is exerted—not so much the common judgment as what ex-president Hadley of Yale once called the "common lack of judgment"—the result of a tissue of slogans which may or may not be true, but which at any rate owe their influence not to their own merit, nor to a discriminating acceptance of them by the public, but merely to the hypnosis produced by sufficient reiteration.

As this is a central principle in all campaigns or drives for funds it is a challenge to the integrity and sound planning of objectives on the part of their organizers.

From a Sense of Belonging

The recognition of interdependence was part of pioneer life. Without special awareness it was unconsciously accepted on the farm and in the small community. With urbanization, industrialization, and stalwart individualism, the sense of belonging diminished for a time. War, the labor movement, and neighborhood developments are a