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LABOR AND POLITICS IN THE 1930's

(TITLE)

BY

Charles E. Gillespie

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INTRODUCTION

Today, American labor is recognized as a part of the greatest productive machine the world has ever known. The present status of labor, however, developed only within the past thirty years. In this general survey of labor in the 1930's the many barriers and obstacles experienced in the growth of organized labor will be discussed.

In the history of the United States periods of great change have emerged. New conditions and attitudes take root and break long established precedents. The political, economic and social instability of the 1930's made it possible for labor to assume a new status. Labor's new position in the 1930's was due mainly to government legislation condoning and protecting union activities. The New Deal's program for recovery from the depression was sympathetic to labor's problems. Since the Democratic Party sponsored the New Deal many laborers and labor leaders identified themselves with this political party. During the depression decade a cordial relationship existed between labor and the Democratic Party. This can be seen by reviewing campaign funds, elections, and campaign speeches of the decade. To understand labor's progress in the 1930's, a review of the history of labor in the 1920's is necessary.

LABOR AND POLITICS IN THE 1930's

An appropriate epigraph for labor in the 1920's is: Its goals and principles were drowned in a sea of prosperity and irresponsibility. The prosperity of the 1920's, the aloofness of the American Federation of Labor, the red scare, and the anti-union strength of the employers made labor's gains during the period insignificant. Unemployment was not a serious problem until 1929.

During the prosperous twenties working conditions and long hours were the notable complaints. Unfair labor practices by employers were most evident among the unorganized industrial workers, such as steel and textile workers. The skilled workers represented by the A.F.L. fared well, caring little for their counterpart in the mass production industries. Prosperity overwhelmed labor during this period. Unions became less aggressive and reluctant to organize. Union membership dropped from over five million in 1920 to a little over three million in 1929.¹ Relations between industry and labor were definitely becoming more cordial. This can be illustrated by the following list of strikes and lockouts

¹Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Crisis of the Old Order (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), pp. 111-112.

during the 1920's as compiled by the U. S. Department of Labor:

1920 - 3,291	1923 - 1,553	1926 - 1,032
1921 - 2,381	1924 - 1,240	1927 - 734
1922 - 2,381	1925 - 1,300	1928 - 629 ₂

Labor was involved in some political activity during the 1920's. Its most interesting affiliation was with La Follette's Progressive Party during the election of 1924. Gompers and the A.F.L. endorsed the Progressive Party. The endorsement of La Follette is unusual since it was a tenet of Gompers not to become dependent on any one party.³ La Follette's Party received support from the Railroad Brotherhoods. Support came from the Brotherhoods due to a plank in La Follette's platform advocating the abolition of the injunction and government ownership of the railroads.⁴ The radical labor element, consisting primarily of foreigners, also endorsed La Follette.⁵ Even though labor did endorse the La Follette-Wheeler ticket most laborers did not give active support to the ticket. Local issues and alliances

²Cal Lewis, "Labor Bewitched," The North American Review, CCXLII (Autumn, 1936), p. 25.

³William English Walling, "Labor's Attitude Toward A Third Party," Current History, XXI (October, 1924), p. 40.

⁴Edward G. Lowry, "La Follette's Own Platform," World's Work, XLVIII (September, 1924), p. 515.

⁵Stephen Frost, "La Follette's Mixed Army," Outlook, CXXXVIII (October 29, 1924), p. 322.

were more important to the rank and file and local leaders. Other factors which indicate lack of labor unity was John L. Lewis' support of President Coolidge, and George Berry's (head of the Printing Pressman) support of the Democratic nominee, John W. Davis. Labor's failure to deliver the vote was a factor in La Follette's defeat.

During the period of the 1920's A.F.L. membership declined from 4,078,068 in 1920 to 2,865,978 in 1924. The United Mine Workers had the greatest decline in membership in the early 1920's. Coal was an ailing industry, failing to share in the country's prosperity, because of competition from new sources of power. Consequently, mine owners cut production costs by depriving miners of a fair wage. Though the U.M.W. had the greatest loss of membership, it still remained the largest union in the A.F.L. Extensive use of the black-list and yellow-dog contract also caused union membership to drop.⁶ The only notable legislation in labor's favor during the 1920's was the Railway Labor Act of 1926. This Act recognized the bargaining rights of the several brotherhoods. It also forbade discrimination against unionists. The Act set up a Board of Mediation to handle disputes and to act as arbitrator.⁷

⁶"Where Election Leaves Labor," Literary Digest, LXXXIII (November 29, 1924), pp. 9-10.

⁷Herbert Harris, American Labor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), p. 262.

With the start of the depression labor along with the rest of mankind lingered in misery. Markets dwindled, prosperity fled, and there were legions of unemployed. During the days of depression a change of attitude is seen in A.F.L. President, William Green. Prior to the depression, Green received most of his support in the A.F.L. from the United Mine Workers of which he was a member. During the depression the U.M.W. lost many of their members and much of their prominence in the A.F.L. Consequently, Green began to court the favor of the craft unions.⁸ The absence of an unemployment compensation plan added to labor's misery during the depression. President Hoover's principal weapon against the depression was the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. The R.F.C. did not help labor directly because its main function was to aid business and stabilize banking.⁹

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed some very interesting information on unemployment plans operating in the country during the early 1930's. In 1931 there were seventy-nine unemployment benefit plans operating that affected 226,000 workers. There were fifteen company plans, sixteen joint agreement plans between trade unions and employers, and

⁸Edward Levinson, Labor On The March (New York: University Books, 1937), p. 7.

⁹Schlesinger, Jr., The Crisis of the Old Order, p. 236.

forty-eight trade union plans maintained solely by labor organizations. In 1931 there were no compulsory insurance plans in the United States. There were approximately thirty-five million wage earners in America in 1931. The scarcity of unemployment compensation plans is evident when the thirty-five million wage earners are compared to the 226,000 covered by unemployment plans.¹⁰

Although the workers suffered, the A.F.L.'s attitude towards unemployment insurance was negative. William Green, at the 1931 A.F.L. Convention, denounced anything resembling the dole. Green feared unions would lose some of their rights. Green's fear was true to the Gompers' tradition of voluntarism.¹¹ During the 1932 A.F.L. Convention at Cincinnati John L. Lewis endorsed unemployment insurance. As might be expected the old guard of the A.F.L. opposed the proposal. The old guard believed any such plan would make the union too dependent on government.¹²

Prior to the New Deal, labor's greatest advance in the 1930's was the Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932. This Act outlawed

¹⁰"Unemployment Benefit Plans Now Operating in the United States," Congressional Digest, X (August, 1931), p. 200

¹¹"Organized Labor Spurns the Dole," Literary Digest, CXI (October 31, 1931), p. 10.

¹²Levinson, Labor On The March, p. 49.

the yellow-dog contract and restricted the use of federal anti-labor injunctions. The use of injunctions had been outrageous. Here is an example of how unreasonable the use of injunctions were:

An injunction issued in Iowa in 1930 enjoined the defendants from communicating verbally or in written form or in any other manner, that there was a strike at a certain mill or that there was a controversy over wages, or that the complainant was unfair to organized union labor. The injunction prohibited an employee from mentioning even to his wife any of the said examples. If the employee spoke publicly of employer injustices, he could be put in contempt of court.¹³

The 1932 Presidential campaign found Hoover defending his business oriented programs and solemnly stating the country was on the path to recovery. Roosevelt in his speeches emphasized the need for direct relief and advocated unemployment insurance, and he referred to the "forgotten man" many times. However, there was nothing in Roosevelt's immediate program for labor except a promise to put people to work. The A.F.L. was neutral during the campaign except for the endorsement of friends of labor among the Congressional candidates. In summing up the election of 1932, the only valid conclusion that can be made is undoubtedly many laborers, disenchanted with the Hoover administration, voted for Roosevelt.

¹³"Labor's Anti-Injunction Victory," Literary Digest, CXII (March 26, 1932), p. 13.

After Roosevelt's inauguration the Black-Connery Bill was labor's hope among the tons of legislation then being considered by Congress. The bill's objective was to spread work by establishing a thirty-hour week. Roosevelt opposed the bill, because he was searching for a broadly based program which would also include some provisions for business recovery. The comprehensive plan that Roosevelt sought would eventually be the National Industrial Recovery Act.¹⁴

The passage of the N.I.R.A. in June, 1933, gave labor a definite boost. Certain sections of this Act gave labor organizing rights, collective bargaining rights, fixed minimum wages, and maximum hours.¹⁵

Section 7a gave labor new life. Its main provisions read as follows:

"Sec. 7 (a). Every code of fair competition, agreement, and license approved, prescribed, or issued under this title shall contain the following conditions: (1) That employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and shall be free from the interference, restraint, or coercion of employers of labor, or their agents, in the designation of such representatives or in self-organization or in other concerted activities

¹⁴Foster Rhea Dulles, Labor In America (New York: Thomas F. Crowell Company, 1960), pp. 263-266.

¹⁵Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Coming of the New Deal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), p. 99.

for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection; (2) that no employee shall and no one seeking employment shall be required as a condition of employment to join any company union or to refrain from joining, organizing, or assisting a labor organization of his own choosing; and (3) that employers shall comply with the maximum hours of labor, minimum rates of pay, and other conditions of employment, approved or prescribed by the President."¹⁶

For the first time in the history of the nation a statute passed by the Congress of the United States contained a section according workers a legal right to organize and to be protected in the exercise of that right.

Labor's reaction to the provisions of the NRA was most favorable. From Camden, New Jersey came the report that the NRA helped raise wage rates in the pulp and paper industry, furniture manufacturing, and automobile mechanics. Belleville, Illinois reported that NRA made it possible to organize the garment, shoe, and restaurant industries. From Cedar Rapids, Iowa came the report that the NRA had been instrumental in getting a wage hike and shorter hours for the workers.¹⁷

¹⁶William Green, "Labor's Opportunity and Responsibility," American Federationist, XL (July, 1933), pp. 692-694.

¹⁷"From Atlantic to Pacific," American Federationist, XLI (January, 1934), pp. 88-91.

Organization of labor and collective bargaining were provisions employers did not concur with. Consequently, a rash of strikes immediately broke out. The strikes developed because labor wanted to enforce the rights granted through Section 7a. There were strikes by the New York taxi drivers and the shipyard mechanics in New Jersey and a particularly violent longshoremen's strike in San Francisco led by Harry Bridges. These strikes and many others occurred because management did not obey Section 7a. In these strikes there was much bloodshed and violence. Organized labor encountered many obstacles during the existence of the N.I.R.A. Employers utilized everything available to break union movements. The use of tear gas, thugs, and espionage systems by employers was not uncommon.

The U.S. Senate Education and Labor Committee (La Follette Civil Liberties Committee 1936-1940) disclosed industry's use of munitions such as tear gas, grenades, machine guns, revolvers, and shot guns. Two thirds of the tear gas used by industry was bought when unions were demanding recognition. Corporations Auxiliary Company was a detective agency that served big industries such as Chrysler, Firestone, Standard Oil, and thirteen General Motors plants. Spies were sent in by the detective

agencies to gain important positions within the unions.¹⁸ Company unions were organized labor's biggest barrier during this period. Of the six hundred fifty-three companies with union plans in November, 1933, sixty-one per cent were established after the N.I.R.A.¹⁹

The main agency for interpreting provisions of Section 7a was the National Labor Board. This Board made decisions upholding majority rule in union elections. It also said employees should not be coerced by employers in choosing representation. However, this agency's principles were not enforced. The National Association of Manufacturers advised its members to disregard Section 7a until it had been established by proper judicial authority. Judicial delay, however, was destroying labor's rights. The National Labor Board became extinct in the summer of 1934. It was replaced by the first National Labor Relations Board.²⁰

¹⁸Broadus Mitchell, Depression Decade (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1947), pp. 280-283.

¹⁹"Union Movement Gains," Literary Digest, CXIX (May 18, 1935), p. 3.

²⁰"Goodbye Section 7a," New Republic, LXXX (October 31, 1934, pp. 325-326.

General Hugh Johnson's and Donald Richberg's decisions on union-management codes were detrimental to labor. The most famous decision was the merit clause interpretation. The essence of it is as follows: employers could exercise their rights to choose, keep, or promote employees on the basis of merit without considering their membership in a union. Thus, the union movement was rendered helpless.²¹

Unfavorable interpretations, company unions, and vigilante committees were not the only barriers hampering organizing movements during this period. The arrogance and disinterest of the A.F.L. also hurt organizing movements. In March, 1934, the A.F.L. and the Automobile Chamber of Commerce came to an agreement on new unions. This agreement allowed for more than one bargaining agency in each plant. Division of workers into various unions made it quite easy for employers to promote their company plans at the expense of organizing movements.²²

Although labor's status was declining as a result of National Recovery Act decisions, it still retained a spark of

²¹Levinson, Labor On The March, p. 58.

²²Levinson, Labor On The March, p. 62.

life. During a Labor Day speech at Chicago in 1934, Mayor Fiorella La Guardia of New York prophesied that when American labor got a stronger program nothing would stop its progress.²³

During the campaign of 1934, the Democrats capitalized upon legislation it had given labor in the last two years. The party promised the "forgotten man" more programs, especially a social insurance plan. William Green and the A. F. L. gave support to such a program. Henry P. Fletcher, chairman of the Republican National Committee, accused the Democrats of using relief and drought funds for political purposes.²⁴

In 1935 the N.R.A. was declared invalid. The Supreme Court declared that Congress had unconstitutionally given legislative power to the President to draft the various codes. The Court also stated in the Schechter decision that firms engaged in intra-state commerce did not fall under the jurisdiction of the codes.²⁵

In evaluating labor's fate during the days of N.R.A. several interesting conclusions come to light. Unemployment was reduced

²³"Left vs. Right Battle-Lines Forming in Nation," Literary Digest, CXVIII (September 8, 1934), p. 6.

²⁴Charles A. Beard, "The Politics of Our Depression," Current History, XLI (October, 1934), p. 6.

²⁵Frank Freidel, America In the Twentieth Century, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1960), p. 334.

by about two million during this period. Wages increased on the average of five and one-half per cent. The wage increases were offset, however, by increased living costs. Considering the many pros and cons of the Act, labor as a whole gained. Laborers who were unemployed were better off than those who were unemployed prior to the Act. Even though labor's gains were marginal in many instances, during the first two years of the New Deal, labor undoubtedly lost much of the dread and despair previously experienced.²⁶

The 1935 A.F.L. Convention at Atlantic City revealed the organizing unrest that developed as a result of Section 7a. Several days after the convention began (October 9, 1935), John L. Lewis, Sidney Hillman, David Dubinsky, and Charles Howard led their unions and six others away from the Federation and formed the Committee for Industrial Organization. The primary cause for the split was the A.F.L.'s failure to provide militant and sound leadership to the mass production industries during the period when industrial workers begged to be organized. Tradition overwhelmed the A.F.L. in organizing procedure. The A.F.L. sought to organize the mass-production industries along craft lines. This was illogical since the mass-production worker was a composite mechanic and

²⁶Mauritz A. Hallgren, "Labor and the New Deal, "Current History, XLII (September, 1935), pp. 563-567.

would do the work of various crafts. When the Federation failed to give unrestricted charters to new union groups its split became a fact.²⁷

After the C.I.O. seceded from the A.F.L., labor in general became more closely related to politics and the Democratic Party. Since the N.I.R.A. and Guffey Act gave the C.I.O. leaders a taste of power because of increased membership, their interest in politics became more pronounced. In 1935 Roosevelt took a new and different view of labor. Many workers were irritated with the failure of the N.R.A. or national Run Around as it was now being dubbed. William Green stated the whole labor movement would oppose Roosevelt. Management was becoming more difficult to deal with. With all of these elements stacked against Roosevelt, he supported labor legislation in order to insure labor's loyalty in the coming election. Also he needed to curtail more militant and radical proposals beneficial to labor, such as the Townsend Plan and Huey Long's movement.²⁸

Friends of labor countered the militant groups with the Wagner Act, which became law on July 5, 1935. The National Labor Relations Act was promoted by labor's Congressional

²⁷Levinson, Labor On The March, pp. 21, 109.

²⁸Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition (New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1959), pp. 336-337.

friend, Senator Robert Wagner of New York. William Connery of Massachusetts managed the Bill in the House of Representatives. The Wagner Act was received with enthusiasm by William Green, who hailed it as labor's Magna Carta. The introduction of the Wagner Act begins with a reference to management's irresponsibility during the period of the N.I.R.A.:

The denial by employers of employees' right to organize and the refusal by employers to accept the procedure of collective bargaining, led to strikes or other forms of industrial strife or unrest, which have intent or the necessary effect, of burdening or obstructing commerce by impairing the efficiency, safety, or operation of the instruments of commerce.²⁹

The Bill defined unfair labor practices on the part of employers, such as interference, restraint, coercion, domination, and discrimination in its relationship with employees. The Wagner Act also established the National Labor Relations Board as the official interpreter of union-management conflicts. The Board possessed the authority to eliminate on the part of the employer many unfair practices that had hampered union organization and collective bargaining rights. Power to settle jurisdictional disputes between rival unions was also extended the N.L.R.B.³⁰

²⁹Leo Wolman, "New National Labor Law," Review of Reviews, XCI (September, 1935), pp. 31-32.

³⁰Florence Peterson, American Labor Unions (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), p. 262.

Employers were of the opinion that the Wagner Act would die the same death as the N.R.A. Even many laborers were apprehensive at this stage. In 1937 the validity of the Act was upheld in the Supreme Court case, National Labor Relations Board v. Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation. This decision marked a new trend in determining the scope of commerce power. The decision stated that whether or not the processes of manufacture were themselves interstate commerce, labor disturbances in the plant would restrain interstate commerce and were therefore subject to regulation. This interpretation paved the way for broader federal regulation. This interpretation had unprecedented powers that granted many favorable decisions to the new union movements.³¹

The Liberty League led the employers in their response to the Wagner Act. This group contended the company union was the true protector of the individual. Majority representation deprived the individual of these rights. A host of company lawyers prepared a brief declaring the N.L.R.A. invalid. This group would provide employers who ignored the N.L.R.B. with legal counsel.³²

³¹Carl Brent Swisher, Historic Decisions of the Supreme Court (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1958), pp. 150-151.

³²"A Conspiracy by Lawyers," Nation, CXLI (October 2, 1935), p. 369.

During the second New Deal a pro labor attitude in legislation is very evident. During the next few years many statutes that were favorable to labor passed through the galleries of Congress. In 1935 the Motor Carriers Act was passed. This Act gave the Interstate Commerce Commission the right to regulate maximum hours of service of employees responsible for safe operation of passenger and freight motor vehicles.³³ The Social Security Act passed in 1935 was another boost for labor. In essence this Act would provide workers with unemployment compensation. This Act went on to state the following:

No one was to be denied payment of unemployment insurance for the following reasons:

- (a) Refusal to accept a job made vacant by strike.
- (b) Refusal of wages and working conditions less favorable than those existing in the immediate locality.
- (c) Refusing to join a company union or resign from a bona fide labor union.³⁴

At last Labor Secretary Perkins' dream had come true. Most state legislatures hedged on approval of the Act. State

³³Peterson, American Labor Unions, p. 262.

³⁴"Eight States Rush to Pass Compensation Laws by New Year," Literary Digest, CXXII (December 26, 1939), pp. 7-8.

legislatures anticipated an invalidation of the law. The constitutionality of the Act was upheld in three cases on May 24, 1937.³⁵

Further benefits were extended to labor in the Public Contracts Act (Walsh-Healy Act) of 1936. This Act stated that employees working on United States Government contracts amounting to \$10,000 or more were to be paid the prevailing wage in the industry. Also, the Act prohibited child and convict labor.³⁶ Another piece of pro labor legislation passed in 1936 was the Byrnes Act (Anti-Strike Breaking Act). The Byrnes Act prohibited interstate transportation of anyone who is employed to obstruct peaceful picketing of employees or interfere with their right to organize and bargain collectively.³⁷

The abundance of pro labor legislation was to reap dividends for the Democratic Party in the 1936 elections. Labor contributed generously to the Democratic campaign chest. Labor's total contribution to the Democratic Party in 1936 was \$770,218. When compared to the A.F.L. political contributions

³⁵"Social Security Act Declared Constitutional," Monthly Labor Review, XLV (July, 1937), pp. 179-187.

³⁶Harold W. Metz, Labor Policy of the Government (Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution, 1945), p. 15.

³⁷Peterson, American Labor Unions, p. 249.

over the past thirty years which amounted to \$95,000, labor's contributions loom quite large.³⁸ A further breakdown of union contributions shows most of the money came from unions affiliated with the C.I.O. Following is a list of union contributions:

United Mine Workers of America	\$469,870
Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America	81,682
International Ladies Garment Workers Union	60,736
Cap and Millinery Union	11,940
International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees & Motion Picture Operators	16,100
International Brotherhood of Teamsters	7,700
Brewery Workers (Locals)	5,834
All other unions	116,356

Of the \$469,870 the U.M.W. contributed, \$50,000 of it was a loan to the Democratic National Committee.³⁹

William Green personally supported Roosevelt. The A.F.L. did not endorse Roosevelt, although many of its affiliates did. Big business reduced its contribution to the Democratic Party from twenty-four per cent of the total campaign funds in 1932 to four per cent of the total campaign funds in 1936.⁴⁰

³⁸Henry Pelling, American Labor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 166.

³⁹Louise Overacker, "Labor's Political Contributions," Political Science Quarterly, LIV (March, 1939), p. 59.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 60.

Governor Alfred Landon of Kansas, the 1936 Republican presidential nominee, earned labor's wrath early in the campaign. A portion of Landon's acceptance speech shows why labor denounced him:

The right of labor to organize, means to me, the right of employees to join any type of union that they prefer, whether it covers their plant, their craft, or their industry. It means that, in the absence of a union contract, an employee has an equal right to join or refuse to join a union.⁴¹

In this speech Landon condoned the open shop and consequently lost union support.

Union support for Roosevelt was evident in a speech by John L. Lewis.

Labor has gained more under President Roosevelt than under any other President in memory. Obviously it is the duty of labor to support him one hundred per cent in the next election.⁴²

In 1936 the Labor Non-Partisan League was established. The purpose of the League was to nominate and elect those candidates pledged to support labor. In the 1936 Presidential election the League contributed \$170,000 to re-elect Roosevelt. The League also supported the formation of the American Labor Party in New

⁴¹Lewis, "Labor Bewitched," pp. 9-10.

⁴²Dulles, Labor in America, p. 314.

York. Sidney Hillman and John L. Lewis of the C.I.O. were active leaders in the formation of the League. In fact, the C.I.O. advanced the League \$500,000. Green and the A.F.L. accused the League of dualism in politics and would not support it. The Non-Partisan League was officially headed by George L. Berry of the Printing Pressman's Union.

The Liberty League was Roosevelt's most bitter and slanderous critic during the 1936 campaign. This group was composed of lawyers, financiers, and business leaders. The Liberty League charged Roosevelt with promoting foreign creeds of regimentation, socialism, and fascism. The Liberty League spent over \$500,000 in the 1936 campaign in an attempt to defeat Roosevelt. This figure did not include funds collected and spent by the state and local units of the Liberty League.⁴³

The American Labor Party, previously mentioned, was known formerly as the New York State Labor League. The American Labor Party nominated Roosevelt to gain the socialist vote in New York. The socialists believed Roosevelt was leading the class struggle against the economic royalists.⁴⁴

⁴³George Soule, "Liberty League Liberty, New Republic LXXXVIII (September 9, 1936), pp. 121-122.

⁴⁴George E. Sokolsky, "The Split in Labor," Atlantic Monthly, CLVIII (October, 1936), p. 468.

With vengeance Roosevelt's critics attacked him in the 1936 campaign. Projects such as F.E.R.A., T.V.A., and W.P.A. were viewed as vote acquiring schemes. The New Deal was promoting a decay of American "individualism" and creating a society of social parasites. In the last analysis Roosevelt's opponents contended, "You cannot beat Santa Claus."⁴⁵

In all of Roosevelt's campaigns during the 1930's, the Republicans spent more than the Democrats. The figures below validate the above statement:

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
1932 election	\$2,245,975	\$2,900,000
1936 election	5,194,741	8,892,972 ⁴⁶

It is interesting to note that labor contributed over a fifth of the Democrats total campaign funds in 1936. After the 1936 election the Lonergan Committee, a Senate Investigating Committee, recommended the prohibition of contributions from labor. This recommendation made no headway at this time.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Louise Overacker, Presidential Campaign Funds (Boston: University Press, 1946), p. 18.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁷Louise Overacker, Presidential Campaign Funds, p. 55.

The C.I.O.'s ties with President Roosevelt became strained after the 1936 election. The primary reason for the tension was a feud between John L. Lewis and Roosevelt. Lewis' arrogance became unbearable after the 1936 election. Lewis attributed the victory of the Democrats in 1936 to his vote producing ability. He also inferred the New Deal and Roosevelt were now fully obligated to C.I.O. policies. Roosevelt very tactfully rebuked Lewis' thesis. As a result of the President's rebuke, Lewis began to nurse a grudge which would deepen in the ensuing dispute with the "Little Steel" companies.

In 1937 the C.I.O. made their first serious attempt to organize the steel workers. The drive to organize the steel workers was done through the Steel Workers Organizing Committee under the leadership of Philip Murray. The large steel companies such as United States Steel made an early agreement with S.W.O.C. Organization of several smaller companies gave S.W.O.C. its biggest challenge. Republic Steel under the leadership of Tom Girdler, violently resisted unionization. Memorial Day, 1937, saw ten strikers die at the Republic Steel Plant in South Chicago. The many exchanges between Lewis and Girdler so irritated Roosevelt that he lashed out at both of them saying "a plague upon both your houses."⁴⁸

⁴⁸Dulles, Labor in America, p. 320.

As a result of this utterance, Lewis publicly denounced Roosevelt. In his classic statement Lewis claimed:

It ill behooves one who has supped at labor's table and who has been sheltered in labor's house, to curse with equal fervor and fine impartiality both labor and its adversaries when they become locked in deadly embrace.⁴⁹

Lewis considered Roosevelt ungrateful for the support labor gave him in the 1936 campaign. Lewis returned to the Republican Party. Though Lewis left the Democratic Party most of the C.I.O., leaders and members remained loyal to the party. Roosevelt's attitude as exhibited in his utterance, "a plague upon both your houses," was actually beneficial to labor. After Roosevelt's outburst the government took a position of aloofness. The government refused to use force in stopping the many sit-down strikes.⁵⁰

The sit-down strikes were utilized by the C.I.O. in gaining recognition from General Motors, Chrysler, and Goodyear. Of the 4,740 strikes in 1937, 477 were sit-downs. The sit-down strikes were declared unconstitutional in March 1939. The sit-downs were declared illegal in their inception and prosecution. The N.L.R.B.'s interpretation of the sit-down strikes was also

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 321.

⁵⁰Dexter Perkins, The New Age of Franklin Roosevelt 1932-45 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 65.

invalidated in this court decision.⁵¹

In 1937 Roosevelt became increasingly troubled over the split in labor. Grounds for Roosevelt's pessimism were evident on the West Coast. Harry Bridges of the C.I.O. and David Beck of the A.F.L. were bickering over jurisdictional rights in this area. President Roosevelt, who was touring the West Coast, found indications that the A.F.L. might break away from the New Deal. The major complaints of the A.F.L. were that the regional offices of the N.L.R.B. were biased and that the Wagner Act was operating for the benefit of the C.I.O. Roosevelt's concern over the internecine war was justified politically. The A.F.L. and C.I.O. were the New Deal's principal supporters west of the Mississippi.⁵²

Labor's biggest boost from the New Deal in 1938 was the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Act established minimum wages and maximum hours. It also provided for time and one-half rates for hours in excess of forty per week. Another notable provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act Prohibited child labor in concerns producing for interstate commerce.⁵³

⁵¹"Sit-Down Setback," Newsweek, XIII (March 6, 1939), pp. 47-48.

⁵²Richard L. Newberger, "Roosevelt Rides Again," Current History, XLVII (November, 1937), pp. 45-46.

⁵³Paul H. Douglas and Joseph Hackman, "The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938," Political Science Quarterly, LIV (March, 1939), p. 29.

The 1938 Congressional elections demonstrated labor's active position, however, labor's vote in 1938 lacked the solidarity it possessed in 1936. On the positive side for labor Senator Robert Wagner of New York was re-elected by a large majority. The American Labor Party polled over 400,000 votes. A referendum against unionism was defeated in California. In New York, a "bill of rights for labor" was written into the state constitution.⁵⁴ One of labor's major defeats in the 1938 election was the defeat of Governor Frank Murphy in Michigan. Murphy had been instrumental in the success of the sit-down strikes at General Motors in 1937 when he refused to use the National Guard.⁵⁵ The Non-Partisan League entered into the congressional elections of 1938 and tried to defeat all opponents of the New Deal and to elect its adherents.⁵⁶ In the late 1930's Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers assumed the political leadership of labor. Hillman's ties to the administration became strong as a result of the Lewis-Roosevelt split in 1937.

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 turned the nation away from many of its domestic problems. The A.F.L. and the

⁵⁴"What Election Means," New Republic, XCVII (November 23, 1938), pp. 58-59.

⁵⁵"Election Sets Stage for Purge of Administration's Purgers," Newsweek, XII (November 21, 1938), p. 11.

⁵⁶Dulles, Labor In America, p. 315.

bulk of the C.I.O. membership supported Roosevelt's foreign policy. Lewis bitterly resented Roosevelt's failure to use him as his principal adviser. As a result, Lewis took a hostile attitude to the President's foreign policy. Communist dominated unions opposed Roosevelt's foreign policy and promoted complete neutrality. The Communists' position coincided with the Nazi-Soviet Pact signed in August, 1939.⁵⁷

Labor's affiliation with politics carried into the 1940's. The Political Action Committee, under Hillman's leadership, was organized in the early 1940's to support candidates sympathetic to labor. Labor's relationship to politics was now an established precedent.

Labor's affiliation with politics was inevitable. The older political symbols had more prestige than those of the labor movement. Consequently, labor had to move toward political action to achieve its goals. Though there were movements for a labor party in the 1930's, labor realized the tradition of the older parties carried weight that a new party would lack. Thus, the Democrats were a natural carrier of labor's objectives.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Pelling, American Labor, pp. 171-172.

⁵⁸Robert R. R. Brooks, When Labor Organizes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), p. 293.

It can hardly be doubted that Roosevelt and his advisers were not aware of labor's plight and labor's large bloc of votes. The workers and their potential political energy became more important to Roosevelt than the political immunity of the A.F.L. executive council.⁵⁹

Because of labor's political potential a large portion of the New Deal legislation was pro-labor. The New Deal stood for the right of wage earners to organize and bargain collectively. Because of the Wagner Act the government is obligated to protect labor's rights. Social security and unemployment compensation gives relief and security to the unemployed. The New Deal means, above all, government intervention to remove economic maladjustments. New Deal legislation in the 1930's or depression decade made it possible for organized labor to realize some of its objectives.⁶⁰

⁵⁹Milton Derber and Edwin Young (ed.), Labor and the New Deal, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1957), p. 181.

⁶⁰Elmer A. Benson, "The Direction is Forward," Nation, CXLVII (December 3, 1938), p. 588.

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