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Autoworkers and the Globalizing World: Working Class Internationalism from Latin America to Deindustrializing America, 1960-1980

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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During the 1960s, American workers confronted new challenges at home and abroad. After more than a decade of Cold War struggles against communism in Europe, organized labor became an integral part of American foreign policy in pursuit of similar goals in developing nations. The concurrent rise of multinational corporations altered the international landscape of employment and created economic uncertainty for workers in the United States.

My dissertation explores the ways rank and file autoworkers and official representatives of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) adopted the language and practice of working class internationalism to respond to these changes. I argue that the transnational exchange of ideas and practices among workers and their institutions demonstrated a convergence of ideas about race, class, and industrial organizing across national boundaries. Through case studies of autoworkers' organizing efforts, I show the ideological overlap between the UAW's international affairs program and domestic organizing projects in U.S. cities. The UAW attempted to build a network for international collective bargaining with workers in Latin America, emphasizing that an organized workforce was a key element of the development process. In Los Angeles, the UAW's "community unions" embraced rhetoric and strategies that echoed modernization theory and were typically applied to developing nations. In Detroit, dissident African American autoworkers infused Black Power and anti-colonialism with class consciousness in an attempt to build an international working class revolution. In each case, the actions of autoworkers were guided by a transnational understanding of class, labor, and community.

My research follows autoworkers' diverse expressions of working class internationalism into the 1970s to broadly consider the relationship between labor and American liberalism in the postwar United States. The UAW championed liberal solutions to problems facing workers and working

class communities in the U.S. and developing nations, even as many rank and file autoworkers cited racial divisions and the impact of deindustrialization to question the postwar liberal order. Ultimately, I conclude that the UAW's fidelity to liberalism at home and abroad during the 1960s left autoworkers dangerously unprepared for the globalizing world.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
AID	U.S. Agency for International Development
AIFLD	American Institute for Free Labor Development
CCAP	Citizens' Crusade Against Poverty
CCC	Center for Community Change
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DOLITAC	Department of Labor International Technical Assistance Corps
ERAP	Economic Research and Action Project
FTUC	Free Trade Union Committee
GMMA	George Meany Memorial Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILAB	Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Metalworkers Federation
IUD	AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department
NARA	U.S. National Archives and Record Administration at College Park, Maryland
OAS	Organization of American States
ORIT	Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores
RAC	Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York
RG	Record Group
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
TELACU	The East Los Angeles Community Union
UAW	The International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America
WAC	World Auto Council
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WLCAC	Watts Labor and Community Action Committee
WRL	Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Detroit, Michigan

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computer to explore New York City and the world. She is my best friend, and never ceases to surprise me every day. Thankfully, our bond—unlike my work on this dissertation—is one thing that will never end.

Introduction

In 1964, the United Automobile Workers (UAW) asked Esteban Torres, a local union officer in Los Angeles, to travel throughout Latin America representing the organization's International Affairs Department. The UAW wanted to develop a network for unions to coordinate collective bargaining across national boundaries. Torres worked to encourage unionization, improve working conditions, and bring the knowledge and practices of the American labor movement to workers in developing nations in this region. Five years later, the UAW asked Torres to return to Los Angeles to lead a new union initiative in the predominantly Mexican American neighborhood of East Los Angeles. The East Los Angeles Community Union (TELACU) was established by the UAW as a way to build economic and political power for the Mexican American community. The UAW considered this foray into community organizing a way to bring the principles of the labor movement—and the power of solidarity—to poor urban neighborhoods. TELACU described East Los Angeles as a "developing community," using these words to highlight the symbolic distance between the "barrio" and other areas of the city and the nation.[1] Through his work in Latin America and Los Angeles, Torres physically embodied the ideological overlap between the UAW's domestic and international affairs. He recognized these comparisons and used his experience in Latin America to address the problems of East Los

[1] TELACU, "A Proposal for Funding," [1970] Center for Community Change (CCC) Collection, Box 8, Folder 16, WRL.

Angeles, approaching this community as one in need of organization and economic development.[2]

Uniting these seemingly disparate components of the union's reform program was a transnational understanding of class, labor, and community. For the UAW, the fortunes of workers, their families, and their communities were tied to unionization and collective action. During the 1960s, the UAW cultivated this notion of unions as harbingers of change, and framed this process as beneficial to local communities as well as the world community of workers. The UAW was, in practice, attempting to redefine the idea of working class internationalism—that long-dreamed of emancipatory impulse to unite the workers of the world. On several fronts, autoworkers injected the interests of labor into the struggle over the future of domestic and foreign policy. Anticipating the global economic changes that would have a profound impact on American workers and their counterparts in other nations, the UAW looked to mobilize beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. The union's international affairs program aimed to build a functioning world bargaining apparatus connecting unions in contract negotiations with the same companies and charted a course for expanding the role of American unions in contemporary discussions about the economic and political future of the so-called "Third World." The UAW also sought a foothold for workers and unions in domestic policy prescriptions, particularly in regards to the urban crisis and political attacks on the power of workers by opponents of the New Deal order. In each case, commonalities were evident in the ways the UAW approached social, economic, and political problems at home and abroad, highlighting a convergence of ideas about poverty, economic development, and the role of organized labor in society.

[2] Esteban Torres, interview by author, 21 May 2008, recording of phone conversation.

This engagement with the world was part of a larger trend within the labor movement at this time. Many American unions considered international affairs to be a crucial part of the future of organized labor. Unions made connections with workers in similar industries abroad and in many instances were active participants in implementing American foreign policy initiatives. This was particularly evident in the efforts of the AFL-CIO's International Affairs Department, which was thoroughly entwined in the politics of the Cold War. Despite its status as a member of the federation, the UAW consciously struggled to contrast its activities abroad with those of the AFL-CIO. While adhering to the rhetoric of Cold War anticommunism, the UAW touted its commitment to building the connective tissue that would facilitate international union solidarity and improving the standard of living of workers in developing nations.

By the 1960s, American unions began to recognize the potential consequences of the emerging global economy and the growing power of multinational corporations, and the UAW was at the forefront of this process. The UAW's International Affairs Department presciently realized that the fortunes of organized labor were threatened by global economic changes that were transforming the landscape of employment, working class communities, and the relationship between unions and management. The increasing mobility of workers, unions, and corporations structured autoworkers' understanding of industrial organizing, economic development, and Cold War politics.

The union's response to challenges such as poverty, deindustrialization, and the growing power of multinational corporations reflected an acknowledgement of the shifting social, political, and economic circumstances facing labor at this time. Torres's experience highlights two instances in which the UAW's strategy for international and domestic organizing converged: the union's International Affairs Department and domestic "community union" initiatives in Los

Angeles and other American cities. Through a transnational application of ideas and practices, unions were touted as potential contributors to the improvement of developing nations and "developing communities" alike. The UAW served as an institutional bridge for ideas and practices to cross borders; however, it was not the only medium through which these ideas were expressed during the 1960s and 1970s. Outside the official channels of the UAW, different incarnations of working class internationalism thrived during this tumultuous period.

Rank and file autoworkers connected their activities in the workplace and the community to international affairs—with some coming to very different conclusions than the union leadership on these matters. Dissident African American workers in Detroit turned to a revolutionary internationalism, creating the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in 1969. Black workers eager for changes in working conditions and union democracy disregarded the calls for inclusion and reform made by the UAW, preferring instead a radical break from the union. The League considered the African American working class the vanguard of a global revolution, infusing black nationalism and anti-colonialism with class consciousness to challenge the UAW's claim to represent African American workers. In a brief period of frenetic activity, the League tied black internationalism to in-plant organizing, creating practical connections with workers abroad while linking the African American freedom struggle to Third World revolutions.

In each case, autoworkers and union representatives used the language of working class internationalism to describe diverse remedies for problems such as unemployment, poverty, and racial discrimination. Common ground was evident in discussions of economic development, life in working class communities, and the pressing need to reconcile racial differences with class

interests. Perhaps most significant was the way postwar American liberalism served as the thread weaving together these different strains of working class internationalism.

As icons of union success in the thriving postwar economy, the UAW was uniquely positioned as a proponent of American liberalism. Drawing from the work of social scientists, international organizations, government agencies, and nonprofit foundations, the UAW crafted an interpretation of working class internationalism closely tied to liberal ideals. UAW President Walter P. Reuther and other members of the union's Executive Board accepted and promoted liberalism as the template for social, economic, and political reform in the United States and the world. The material gains of autoworkers were evidence of the potential benefits of a system in which union victories at the bargaining table were the result of a tacit acceptance of liberal capitalism and the globalization of the economy. Community unions added the interests of organized labor to the liberal reform agenda in U.S. cities, and the UAW's International Affairs Department hoped to serve a similar purpose in developing nations.

Ultimately, the UAW aimed to write organized labor into the formula for change at home and abroad, replicating on the wider stage of international affairs the union's domestic desire to promote a peaceful coexistence between union militancy and liberal capitalism. This framework guided the union during this transformative period, and would soon prove dangerous not only for the UAW, but for the labor movement as a whole in the 1970s. Whereas the League represented a challenge to liberal orthodoxy, injecting race as a divisive factor in the debate and rejecting claims that American liberalism provided a viable path towards change, the UAW tied its future to the ability of liberalism to address the political and economic realities of the 1960s and 1970s. This allegiance to the liberal project of the 1960s left organized labor dangerously exposed in a globalizing world.

My dissertation uses a transnational perspective to explore the fractures in the postwar consensus uniting organized labor and liberalism. With deep roots in the experience of the 1930s—and emboldened by the promise of the 1960s—this bond was jeopardized by the confluence of factors that plunged liberalism and labor into chaos in the 1970s. Essentially, the working class was—to turn E.P. Thompson's insight on its head—"present at its own demise" in the 1960s.[3] The UAW enjoyed unparalleled success in the postwar era, extracting the spoils of the collective bargaining system by increasing the material gains of workers. Yet it remained wedded to the ideas and practices of American liberalism that would prove ineffective in dealing with the challenges of the 1970s and beyond.

The history of autoworkers and working class internationalism during this period provides an important example of workers who recognized the potential problems soon to be facing organized labor and attempted to take bold action to negotiate this crisis on their own terms. The UAW International Affairs Department aimed to outmaneuver powerful multinational corporations seeking the benefits of the internationalization of production. Community unions sought to reorient urban political debates to address the needs of poor communities suffering the effects of deindustrialization and urban decline. These actions were consistent with the UAW's commitment to the prevailing social, economic, and political order. Both the International Affairs Department and local activists emphasized the industrial organizing model alongside liberal ideas about international trade, economic development, race, and culture. Despite the successes of American labor after World War II, international concerns altered the circumstances facing workers and raised questions to which liberalism offered few answers. Radical black workers challenged liberalism as ineffective and cast their lot with revolution. By exploring the

[3] For E.P. Thompson, the working class "did not rise like the sun at an appointed time. It was present at its own making." *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963), 9.

responses of autoworkers in the U.S. to the emerging global economy between 1960 and 1980, this dissertation rewrites the history of the relationship between international affairs, American liberalism, and labor in the postwar United States.

Historiography

The story of autoworkers in the twentieth century is part of the labor history canon. For many historians of the U.S. labor movement the UAW has long occupied an iconic role. The rich historiography on autoworkers moves from the dawn of auto production in the early twentieth century through the rise of Fordism and the prosperity of the postwar period to the problems of international competition over the last thirty years. This story is often intertwined with the history of Detroit itself; autoworkers and the auto industry have become synonymous with the city and its people.[4] The narrative of the UAW's rise to power traces the union from its early hardships to its dramatic organizing successes during the 1930s and 1940s. Its victories in the struggle to improve wages, working conditions, and racial discrimination serve as landmarks in postwar American history. The scale and scope of this institutional triumph for American workers in one of the most prominent industries of the mid-twentieth century inspired a veritable catalog of works by labor historians. This body of literature largely focuses on the forty year period from the 1930s to the 1970s. It presents a history of the golden years of the movement while marginalizing the post-1970s era.[5] Kevin Boyle framed the mid-century "heyday" of the

[4] Babson et al., *Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986).

[5] The historiography of the UAW and autoworkers is best represented by Robert Asher and Ronald Edsforth, eds., *Autowork* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Babson, *Building The Union: Skilled Workers and Anglo-Gaelic Immigrants in the Rise of the UAW* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991); John Barnard, *American Vanguard: The United Auto Workers During the Reuther Years, 1935-1970* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004); Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism 1945-1968* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Sidney Fine, *Sit-down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969); Peter Friedlander, *The Emergence of a UAW Local, 1933-1936: A Study in Class and Culture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975); Nancy F. Gabin, *Feminism in the*

UAW as a vibrant period for liberalism. Autoworkers experienced significant gains in wages, working conditions, and security while the UAW's political activities were influential in shaping the politics of the 1960s. This was a period of struggle—not slow decline—for labor, and the UAW remained an energetic political actor and working class mobilizer during this decade.[6] The untimely death of UAW President Walter P. Reuther in 1970 often serves as an end point for these works, marking a transition to the uncertainties of the ensuing decade.[7]

New works have taken on the history of the UAW since the 1970s, presenting a union fighting to maintain the gains of an earlier era in the face of significant industry upheaval, aggressive management tactics, and a burgeoning conservative counterattack. In 1970, the UAW—now led by President Leonard Woodcock—began a long journey through the dangers of deindustrializing America. A three-pronged offensive from the growing conservative political activism, the ruthless business practices and mobility of U.S.-based corporations, and international labor competition which would inflict near-fatal damage on organized labor in the United States.[8] From new manufacturing techniques such as lean production to the advances in

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Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Martin Halpern, *UAW Politics in the Cold War Era* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); Steve Jefferys, *Management and Managed: Fifty Years of Crisis at Chrysler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995); Lichtenstein and Stephen Meyer, eds., *On the Line: Essays in the History of Auto Work* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Stephen Meyer, *The Five Dollar Day: Labor Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, 1908-1921* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981).

[6] Boyle *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism*; Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[7] Frank Cormier and William J. Eaton, *Reuther* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970).

[8] A few examples of the growing literature outlining these trends are Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009); Beverly J. Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

capital mobility, the auto industry underwent dramatic changes since the 1970s. [9] The globalization of production and the emerging anti-union political climate created formidable obstacles for organized labor. Maintaining the relative success of the postwar era was a herculean task—the old structures that enabled the UAW to thrive within the New Deal order were crumbling by the 1970s, and the global economy was increasingly moving toward conditions that were less favorable for organized labor.[10]

The vast historiography of the UAW largely marginalizes the role of the union outside of the United States. Nelson Lichtenstein provides one of the best scholarly accounts of this topic in his assessment of Walter Reuther's international campaigns during the 1950s.[11] Other histories of the UAW broach the subject of the organization's foray into international affairs; however, no scholarly work has taken seriously the activities of the UAW's International Affairs Department in the 1960s and 1970s.[12] This dissertation explores the distinctive priorities of the UAW abroad, particularly the ideas of the International Affairs Department about the role of workers' institutions in developing nations and the function of union education and training. I argue that when taken as a whole the UAW's vision of working class internationalism provides new insight into the politics of this decisive moment in U.S. labor and working class history.

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[9] Steve Babson, *Lean Work: Empowerment and Exploitation in the Global Auto Industry* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995); Jonathan Cutler, *Labor's Time: Shorter Hours, the UAW, and the Struggle for American Unionism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); Andrew Herod, *Labor Geographies: Workers and the Landscapes of Capitalism* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001); Thomas A. Kochan, Russel D. Lansbury, and John Paul Macduffie, *After Lean Production: Evolving Employment Practices in the World Auto Industry* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1997); Eric Mann, *Taking on General Motors: A Case Study of the Campaign to Keep GM Van Nuys Open* (Los Angeles: Center for Labor Research and Education, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Los Angeles, 1987); Ruth Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory: Auto Workers in the Late Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[10] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[11] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 327-345.

[12] Barnard; Anthony Carew, *Walter Reuther* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993); Edmund F. Wehrle, *Between a River and a Mountain: The AFL-CIO and the Vietnam War* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005).

My study also places cities and race at the heart of the history of autoworkers by focusing on community unions in Los Angeles and black radical workers in Detroit. These industrial cities were epicenters of the racial tensions of the 1960s. My research builds on several studies that concentrate on autoworkers in the city of Detroit by examining the role of autoworkers and the UAW in other urban areas.[13] The UAW's urban activism reached from Detroit to Los Angeles, one of the major western industrial cities in mid-twentieth century America, where it undertook an experiment in community organizing. Several scholarly works have examined the lives of autoworkers in this city, although the civic activism of the UAW in 1960s Los Angeles has yet to be fully explored.[14] This dissertation argues that African American and Mexican American autoworkers played a significant role in the community union movement to overcome the problems of Watts and East Los Angeles, respectively.

African Americans have been afforded a prominent role in the history of the UAW, from the first steps towards interracial cooperation in the 1930s to the UAW's contributions to the civil rights movement of the 1960s.[15] These histories emphasize the ways race acted as a divisive factor among urban autoworkers, particularly in Detroit. The influx of African Americans into Detroit and other industrial cities created a struggle for housing, jobs, and civil and political

[13] For the urban history of autoworkers and the UAW, Thomas J. Sugrue set the standard for the city of Detroit in *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). Other local studies on autoworkers include Lisa Fine, *The Story of Reo Joe: Work, Kin and Community in Autotown U.S.A.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); Ronald Edsforth, *Class Conflict and Cultural Consensus: The Making of a Mass Consumer Society in Flint, Michigan* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987). Robert O. Self briefly discusses the role of the UAW in the development of Milpitas, California, during the 1960s in *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005): 111-119.

[14] Becky M. Nicolaides examines the lives of industrial workers in suburban South Gate mainly in the decades leading up to the 1960s in *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). In *Taking on General Motors*, Mann focuses on the UAW in the Los Angeles area during the 1980s.

[15] August Meier and Elliott B. Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Heather Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

rights. [16] Fueled by social discontent and economic woes, Detroit exploded in rebellion in 1967. The League emerged out of this contentious environment, and was very much a product of the growing presence of African Americans in urban America and the black radical internationalism of the 1960s. In general, histories of the League concentrate on the movement's roots in Detroit's racial strife and the intra-union racial politics of the UAW. [17] This dissertation explores the League's vision of working class internationalism—an oft-overlooked component of this story that adds a transnational perspective to the study of race and class in American cities.

Beyond the United States, the UAW's activities in Latin America reshape our understanding of international labor and working class history in the 1960s and 1970s. Recent works have reexamined collective action through international organizations and alliances during the Cold War and the ensuing decades when globalization reinvigorated discussions about transnational workers movements.[18] Yet these histories concentrate on the activities of the AFL-

[16] Sidney Fine, *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh Administration, Race Relations, and the Detroit Riot of 1967* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989); Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008); Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*; B.J. Widick, *Detroit: City of Race and Class Violence* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972).

[17] Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975); James A. Geschwender, *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); David Morgan Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Nicola Pizzolato, "Workers and Revolutionaries at the Twilight of Fordism: The Breakdown of Industrial Relations in the Automobile Plants of Detroit and Turin, 1967-1973," *Labor History* 45 (Nov. 2004): 419-43; Cornelius C. Thomas, "Black Workers at the Point of Production: Shopfloor Radicalism and Wildcat Strikes in Detroit Auto, 1955-1976" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993); Kieran Walsh Taylor, "Turn to the Working Class: The New Left, Black Liberation, and the U.S. Labor Movement, 1967-1981" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007); and Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*

[18] Kate Bronfenbrenner, ed., *Global Unions: Challenging Transnational Capital through Cross-Border Campaigns* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Anthony Carew et al.; *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions* (New York: P. Lang, 2000); Dana Frank, *Bananeras: Women Transforming the Banana Unions of Latin America* (Boston: South End Press, 2005); Frank, "Where is the History of U.S. Labor and International Solidarity? Part I: A Moveable Feast," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 1 (2004): 95-119; Michael E. Gordon and Lowell Turner, eds., *Transnational Cooperation among Labor Unions* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2000); Magaly Rodríguez García, "Free Trade-Unionism in Latin America: 'Bread-and-Butter' or Political Unionism?" *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 18 (Autumn 2004): 107-34; Rodríguez García, *Liberals of the World Unite?: The ICFTU and the Defence of Labour Liberalism in Europe and Latin America, 1949-1969* (New

CIO during the 1960s and 1970s. From this perspective, the international politics of the American labor movement appear rigidly anti-communist and inseparable from United States foreign policy.[19] Presenting the George Meany-led AFL-CIO as the face of American labor internationalism marginalizes significant internal differences concerning international affairs within movement. Recently, several scholars have taken a more nuanced approach, such as Edmund Wehrle on the differences between the AFL-CIO and the UAW on the Vietnam War and John Stoner on the AFL-CIO in Africa. [20] Autoworkers are the ideal segment of the American workforce for illuminating the impact of international affairs at this time because of the role of multinational corporations in the auto industry, the UAW's influence in American politics, and the concern voiced by autoworkers and the UAW about the effects of the global economy on American industry. Adding the UAW's International Affairs Department to the history of American labor internationalism demonstrates the distinctive ideological priorities of

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York: Peter Lang, 2010); Victor Silverman, *Imagining Internationalism in American and British Labor 1939-1949* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Peter Waterman, *Globalization, Social Movements, and the New Internationalisms* (London: Mansell Press, 1998).

[19] Daniel J. Cantor, *Tunnel Vision: Labor, the World Economy, and Central America* (Boston: South End Press, 1987); Fred Hirsch and Richard Fletcher, *The CIA and the Labor Movement* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1977); Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (New York: Verso, 1988); George Morris, *CIA and American Labor: The Subversion of the AFL-CIO's Foreign Policy* (New York: International Publishers, 1969); Deb Preusch and Tom Barry, *AIFLD in Central America: Agents as Organizers* (Albuquerque, N.M.: The Resource Center, 1990); Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, 1969); Kim Scipes, "Why Labor Imperialism? AFL-CIO's Foreign Policy Leaders and the Developing World," *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society* 13 (Dec. 2010): 465-479; Scipes, *AFL-CIO's Secret War against Developing Country Workers: Solidarity or Sabotage?* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010); Beth Sims, *Workers of the World Undermined: American Labor's Role in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boston: South End Press, 1992); Hobart A. Spalding Jr., *Organized Labor in Latin America: Historical Case Studies of Workers in Dependent Societies* (New York: New York University Press, 1977); Spalding, "U.S. and Latin American Labor: The Dynamics of Imperialist Control," in *Ideology and Social Change in Latin America*, eds. June Nash et al. (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1977): 55-91.

[20] Ronald L. Filippelli, *American Labor and Postwar Italy, 1943-1953: A Study of Cold War Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989); Daniel Garcia, "Free Trade Unionism in the Third World: The National Security State and American Labor in Asia, 1948-1975" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2004); Silverman; John Charles Stoner, "Anti-communism, Anti-colonialism, and African Labor: The AFL-CIO in Africa, 1955-1975" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2001); Wehrle; Brian Kirk Williams, "Labor's Cold War Missionaries: The IFPCW's Transnational Mission for the Third World's Petroleum and Chemical Workers, 1954-1975," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 7:4 (Winter 2010): 45-69.

the UAW abroad, especially its emphasis on the importance of workers' institutions in developing nations and the function of union education and training.

This approach inevitably leads to the convergence between labor and liberalism on the discourse of development—an important, yet neglected, part of the postwar history of the United States. My research on the UAW's International Affairs Department's activities in Latin America suggests the AFL-CIO and the UAW had mixed ideas about anticommunism, Cold War U.S. foreign policy, and modernization theory, while using a common language of economic development. Much of the literature on the AFL-CIO and the Cold War emphasizes the way the federation attempted to execute U.S. foreign policy and maintained its commitment to anticommunism at all costs, downplaying ideas about economic development in Latin America and other regions.[21] While the UAW did not explicitly promote modernization theory, many of the ideas that formed the foundation of its international agenda echoed this theoretical approach. Only recently have historians examined the way representatives of labor engaged with modernization theory. Daniel Maul's work explores the link between the International Labor Organization and modernization theory and development, particularly during the 1950s.[22] But few if any histories of modernization theory and economic development in the postwar period address the contributions of American labor.[23] My research concentrates on the ways two of the

[21] Radosh; Scipes, "Why Labor Imperialism?," and *AFL-CIO's Secret War against Developing Country Workers*; Sims.

[22] Daniel Maul, "'Help Them Move the ILO Way': The International Labor Organization and the Modernization Discourse in the Era of Decolonization and the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 33:3 (June 2009): 387-404; Maul, *Human Rights, Development, and Decolonization: The International Labour Organization, 1940-1970* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[23] David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); David C. Engerman et al., *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American*

most prominent American labor institutions acting outside the U.S. at this time, the AFL-CIO and the UAW, played a part in this process by establishing training programs and promoting policies that centered on the role of labor in this process.

Finally, my dissertation provides insight into the relationship between three parallel historical processes: the atrophy of the U.S. labor movement, the decline of American liberalism, and the emergence of a global economy that challenged the gains of American labor. Portrayed as a product of poor choices by unions and bold right-wing counterattacks, the fall of the house of labor should not be viewed merely through a declensionist perspective.[24] Since the 1930s, labor had made considerable economic, social, and political gains. This unprecedented success was a product of labor legislation, mass mobilization, and state regulation of the economy associated with the "New Deal order."[25] The exceptional postwar period created an expectation that liberalism would provide ground rules for a labor-management accord to solve economic problems at the negotiating table and seamlessly incorporate organized labor into American politics. [26] What American unions did not expect were the emerging challenges to labor's hard-fought place in American society. [27]

Social Science and 'Nation Building' in the Kennedy Era (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) and *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

[24] David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the Twentieth Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Moody.

[25] Boyle; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003); Robert Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[26] Cowie and Nick Salvatore, "The Long Exception: Rethinking the Place of the New Deal in American History," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 74 (Fall 2008): 3-32.

[27] Lichtenstein, "Market Triumphalism and the Wishful Liberals," in *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism*, ed. Ellen Schrecker (New York: The New Press, 2004): 107-112.

Recent scholarship by labor historians has focused attention on the 1960s and 1970s as a turning point for the fortunes of labor, due to the combined impact of the civil rights movement, deindustrialization, trade policy, and international competition.[28] Despite a rise in public sector unionization, by the mid-1970s working class mobilization was frequently stifled and rates of private sector unionization began to decline as the effects of deindustrialization began to be felt across the country.[29] This decline was hastened by the rise of the modern conservative movement, which along with the business community mobilized formidable resources to attack unions as relics of New Deal liberalism that jeopardized economic freedom in the United States.[30] The confluence of international competition and conservative political action imperiled both the labor movement and the political fortunes of liberalism. My study adds another layer to this transitional period, connecting these developments to autoworkers' expressions of working class internationalism in the 1960s. Working under the assumption of an ongoing liberal order at home and abroad, autoworkers unknowingly left themselves unprepared to negotiate the shifting political and economic playing field of the 1970s.

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[28] Cowie, *Capital Moves*; Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*; Nancy MacLean *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) and *Running Steel, Running America: Race, Economic Policy, and the Decline of Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[29] On working class mobilization in the 1970s, see Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010). The growing literature on deindustrialization begins with Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982). See also Cowie, *Capital Moves*; Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, eds., *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 2003); Tami J. Friedman, "Exploiting the North-South Differential: Corporate Power, Southern Politics, and the Decline of Organized Labor after World War II," *Journal of American History* 95:2 (2008): 323-348. For the significance of public sector unions see Joseph McCartin, "Bringing the State's Workers In: Time to Rectify an Imbalanced US Labor Historiography," *Labor History* 47:1 (2006): 73-94; and *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike that Changed America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[30] Michael Lind, "Conservative Elites and the Counterrevolution Against the New Deal," in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *Ruling America: A History of Wealth and Power in a Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005): 250-285; Phillips-Fein; Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, "Origins of the Conservative Ascendancy: Barry Goldwater's Early Senate Career and the De-legitimization of Organized Labor," *Journal of American History* 95:3 (2008): 678-709.

Methodology

I argue that the problems facing labor and liberalism at this critical juncture can be better understood by looking beyond one city or one nation to a transnational perspective. Historical developments in Detroit, Los Angeles, and Latin America were related. Following the import and export of people, organizations, and ideas in various cities and across national borders pushes historians to consider the way ostensibly domestic developments are fundamentally shaped by their relationship with the world. From ideas to organizations, influential forces transcend local and national histories.

Historian Mary Dudziak provides a roadmap to follow this "transnational path" in her work chronicling the ways international events, foreign policy concerns, and the Cold War rhetoric of freedom and democracy played a major role in the domestic success of the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s.[31] For Dudziak, "an international perspective does not simply 'fill in' the story of American history, but changes its terms."[32] This approach has emerged influential in the historiography of the United States. Thomas Bender and David Thelen, among others, have championed the need for transnational contributions to the field.[33] Recent works have concentrated on Cold War foreign policy, trade, culture, urban renewal, and the history of race in American society to build a broad collection of transnational interpretations

[31] Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000): 17.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," *Journal of American History* 86:3 (1999): 965-975; "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111:5 (2006): 1441-1464.

of U.S. history.[34] Other scholars have explored the ways concepts such as poverty, race, class, and identity were shaped by transnational processes.[35]

Victoria de Grazia's work on the international influence of American culture and society in twentieth century Europe serves as a theoretical model for my transnational scholarship on autoworkers and working class internationalism.[36] Reminiscent of Daniel Rodgers' description of the transatlantic "crossings" of progressive ideas decades earlier, de Grazia follows institutions, individuals, and ideas crisscrossing the space between Europe and the United States.[37] The transnational dissemination of ideas and practices led to the creation of a "transatlantic dialectic" that reinforced American hegemony in the region.[38] Working class internationalism in the 1960s and 1970s was a product of this exchange of ideas and practices between autoworkers in the United States and their counterparts abroad.

During the last decade, historians of labor and working class history have encouraged similar theoretical perspectives. Michael Hanagan regards "interrelated processes" occurring across national boundaries as essential to defining the transnational space in which workers and

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[34] Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press: 2002); Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Shelton Stromquist, ed., *Labor's Cold War: Local Politics in a Global Context* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[35] Alyosha Goldstein, *Poverty in Common: The Politics of Community Action during the American Century* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012); Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, "Other Americas: Transnationalism, Scholarship, and the Culture of Poverty in Mexico and the United States," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 89:4 (2009): 603-641; Sandhya Shukla and Heidi Tinsman, eds., *Imagining Our Americas: Toward a Transnational Frame* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).

[36] Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

[37] De Grazia, 11; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

[38] Ibid.

unions operate. Relationships come into focus through the examination of border-crossing phenomena such as migration, industrialization and deindustrialization, international solidarity movements, the actions of multinational corporations, and changing ideas about the workplace, race, and gender.[39]

Transnational processes, then, involve both practical, concrete manifestations of working class internationalism in addition to intellectual and cultural exchanges. Marcel van der Linden suggested that "interpretative efforts" to explore the acceptance and diffusion of both "material and symbolic practices" provide another lens to document working class internationalism.[40] Accepting that workers and unions can forge attachments to other spaces and people beyond the nation creates a wider field of investigation that can simultaneously transcend and inform local histories.[41]

This dissertation accepts the challenge to produce transnational histories that raise important questions about international labor organizing, the relationship between the state and unions, and the movement of capital and labor across borders.[42] These methodological contributions serve as a starting point for examining both the mechanisms for distributing and receiving ideas and practices as well as the process through which ideas are shaped, altered, and ultimately defined transnationally.

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[39] Michael Hanagan, "An Agenda for Transnational Labor History," *International Review of Social History* 49 (2004): 455.

[40] Marcel van der Linden, "Transnationalizing American Labour History" *Journal of American History* 86 (Dec. 1999): 1091.

[41] Neville Kirk, "Transnational Labor History: Promise and Perils," in Leon Fink, *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 20.

[42] For an excellent overview of transnational historical theory and practice, see the essays in Fink, *Workers Across the Americas*. See also Cowie, *Capital Moves*; Leon Fink, *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Neuvo New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and "Workers, the Nation-State, and Beyond: The Newberry Conference," Special Issue of *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 6:4 (2009).

In his wide-ranging rumination on the nature and history of working class internationalism, Eric Hobsbawm stressed the "different kinds or levels of internationalism" existing within the labor movement, voiced by union leadership, rank and file workers, and working class communities.[43] Union leadership can formulate official doctrines on international campaigns that congeal into policy statements and programs. Rank and file workers may describe a vision of international relationships between workers, states, unions, and corporations that can resonate within a community altered by processes transnational in nature, making international affairs tangible at the local level. Autoworkers expressed different notions of working class internationalism during the 1960s and 1970s. For them, working class internationalism was a malleable concept represented by institutional efforts including workplace solidarity, collective bargaining, and political organizing. It also offered workers a common class identity and dreams of liberation regardless of location.

This dissertation explores the purpose and practice of working class internationalism through the actions of autoworkers and their institutions during the 1960s and 1970s. It also uses a transnational model to build a history of working class internationalism that goes beyond the actions of American unions abroad to consider the traffic in ideas and practices that bypassed national boundaries. As historian Julie Greene noted, transnational history "sees this flow and movement itself as constructive of change, as causally significant, and thus as producing history."[44] Workers and unions were involved on both sides of this process, and this push-pull dynamic constituted the meeting point between domestic and international affairs.

[43] Eric Hobsbawm, "Working Class Internationalism," in Frits van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden, eds., *Internationalism in the Labor Movement, 1830-1940*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988): 4.

[44] Julie Greene, "Historians of the World," in Fink, *Workers Across the Americas*, 13.

Chapters

I use archival sources, publications, and oral histories to chart these transnational connections in a series of case studies. From international programs to local organizing projects in U.S. cities, the UAW and rank and file autoworkers attempted to rewrite the narrative of change to reflect an enlarged and essential role for labor in the fate of communities and nations. Rooted in the politics of the 1960s, this international perspective shaped U.S. autoworkers' understanding of the Cold War and developing nations as well as the liberal reform agenda within the United States. These sources illuminate the way these ideas and practices permeated the boundaries of community, city, and nation to form an essential part of U.S. labor and working class history during this crucial period.

Chapter 1 explores the significance of organized labor in international affairs during the 1960s. It illustrates the close working relationship between the American labor movement and the U.S. government through the Department of Labor, and the U.S. Agency for International Development—institutions that considered U.S. unions a critical lever in the ideological struggle of the Cold War. It casts a wide net to examine the way unions, academics, and foreign policy experts articulated the role of labor in the long-term project of economic and political development, particularly in developing nations. This intellectual debate intensified within the labor movement. The labor "statesmen" that prominently represented the face of American workers to the world were well-known for their forceful statements on the subject of diplomatic relationships with communist states; however, they also emphasized the importance of economic development projects in building relationships between the U.S. and the Third World. The AFL-CIO International Affairs Department's was committed to development, and this underexplored facet of the federation's international program played a role in the conflict and controversy over

working class internationalism during the 1960s. However, the UAW worked to create an independent perspective on international affairs.

Chapter 2 examines the UAW's endeavor to establish its own brand of working class internationalism by creating an agenda that diverged from the AFL-CIO's view of labor's role in the world. The UAW's International Affairs Department designed a vision of economic development and social justice in developing nations based on the possibilities of international solidarity and direct cooperation with other international labor organizations and workers around the world. The World Auto Council (WAC), created by the UAW and the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF), worked as a unified bargaining apparatus to better negotiate with multinational automobile companies. In addition to plans to organize workers and help improve working conditions, the UAW International Affairs Department emphasized the importance of a consumer economy and other goals associated with modernization theory, claiming an important role for organized labor within this conceptual approach toward development. Esteban Torres' activities in Latin America embody the everyday application of this international enterprise. Supported by UAW International Affairs Department director Victor Reuther and other UAW representatives, Torres went to great lengths to differentiate the UAW from the AFL-CIO's rigidly anti-communist International Affairs Department and its institutional arm in Latin America, the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD). The UAW's internationalism was firmly grounded in the liberal project of the 1960s while presenting a more moderate and flexible anti-communism than Lovestone's AFL-CIO. This chapter highlights the UAW's desire to address a broad array of concerns such as national development, capital mobility, contract negotiations, and working conditions.

By relating these efforts abroad to events within the U.S., Chapter 3 demonstrates the transnational convergence of ideas about development, race, culture, and class during this period. This chapter recounts the way the UAW sponsored and staffed a domestic development program in urban communities in the United States. Across the nation, the UAW hoped to mobilize residents of poor communities lacking an industrial union base by establishing community unions. In Los Angeles, autoworkers founded and funded the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC) and TELACU with the goal of strengthening the community's representation in local politics while also stimulating a local economic revival. Community unions emphasized neighborhood solidarity and encouraged solutions that involved raising employment rates through job training and behavior modification, as well as through the development of a local consumer economy. These organizations adopted the language and priorities of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty while building a place for organized labor in the regeneration of poor working class communities. WLCAC and TELACU also adopted the language of development and racial and ethnic nationalism, highlighting the cultural and economic discrepancies that distanced these "developing communities" from the rest of the United States. The history of the UAW's relationship with community unions demonstrates the rhetorical and ideological overlap between domestic efforts to confront the urban crisis and the UAW's international program. These organizations valued labor and the principles of unionism as an important component of the development process.

Chapter 4 explores the alternative working class internationalism cultivated by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, a radical union movement of African American workers and activists in Detroit that developed a very different view of international affairs. Emerging from the shop floor rebellion of the late 1960s, the League united the many black

workers' organizations that were challenging the UAW from within Detroit area production sites, such as the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) at the Dodge Main plant. The League saw the UAW as a white-dominated institution that was not concerned with the interests of black workers on the shop floor and incapable of relating with anything less than condescension to workers in developing nations. They were not interested in the UAW's liberal solutions and determined that non-aligned nations, anticolonial movements, and revolutionaries abroad would be better allies in their struggle against economic exploitation and racism. The League considered African American workers the vanguard of an international working class revolution that would unite "colored" workers from around the world, infusing black nationalism and anti-colonialism with class consciousness.

Chapter 5 explains why autoworkers moved away from the expansive working class internationalism of the 1960s toward a more parochial focus that corresponded with the increasingly defensive posture of the labor movement. Conscious of the growing strength of multinational corporations and the rising tide of protectionism from members, the UAW's International Affairs Department emphasized regulation through national legislation and sanctioned international standards for trade and employment. While maintaining a presence in international affairs, the department reconsidered the degree that transnational organizing could effectively counter the power of multinational corporations abroad.

What replaced the nascent working class internationalism of the 1960s was a complex amalgam of solidarity and protectionism coupled with resistance and accommodation. The seeds of this shift were planted in the 1960s, as the UAW International Affairs Department and community unions in Los Angeles sanctioned ideas about economic development and free trade, encouraged job training and behavior changes in the poor and the unemployed, and cultivated an

emphasis on "self-help." The rejection of liberalism by the League underscored the contentious environment within the labor movement at the dawn of the 1970s.

This dissertation records autoworkers' diverse expressions of working class internationalism during the 1960s and 1970s to broadly consider the relationship between labor and American liberalism in the postwar United States. The UAW championed liberal solutions to problems facing workers and working class communities in the U.S. and developing nations, even as many rank and file autoworkers cited racial divisions and the impact of deindustrialization to question the postwar liberal order. Ultimately, I conclude that the UAW's fidelity to liberalism at home and abroad during the 1960s left autoworkers in a precarious position in a globalizing world.

Chapter 1

"To Come from Labor Means to Know About Foreign Affairs": Defining the Role of Organized Labor Abroad in the 1960s

In September of 1967, the labor journalist Victor Riesel used his syndicated column to recount the happenings at a posh party held in a suite on the forty-second floor of New York's Waldorf Towers. The spectacular views of the city, along with the décor of the residence of the United States' ambassador to the United Nations, were described in detail. The attendees were notable for the seeming incongruity between their past vocations and their current status as special guests at a Park Avenue soiree. "George Meany, proud of once having been a plumber, munched a delicate hors d'oeuvre; Dave Sullivan, proud of leading elevator operators and janitors, talked of his mission to Vietnam; David Dubinsky, proud erstwhile cutter of ladies garments, beamed at the full coming of age of American labor. They were all there, the members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, quietly making history amid the cold shrimp, fine Scotch, and quiche Lorraine."[45]

"This was the first time an American ambassador had invited labor's high command in its entirety to such a gathering," Riesel wrote.[46] The recently appointed UN ambassador from the United States was Arthur Goldberg, a lawyer and one time council to the United Steelworkers and the CIO—and briefly a Supreme Court Justice. He resigned his position on the Court to take

[45] Victor Riesel, "Labor Goes to a Party," copy of syndicated column, Publishers-Hall Syndicate, RG 174, Box 491, Folder LD Ford Motor Company 1967, NARA.

[46] Ibid.

on this role at the UN at the special request of President Lyndon Johnson.[47] As a former negotiator and member of the Court, Goldberg felt that he was ideally suited to serve at the world's deliberative body. As if this was not enough, he presented one more rationale to justify his appointment and tout his unique qualifications for the position. "To come from labor means to know about foreign affairs. You deal with the world now," Goldberg emphasized.[48] He considered global politics a fitting next step for the labor negotiator. Who better to engage in difficult General Assembly discussions about communism, international conflicts, and the future of developing nations?

Goldberg's confident assertion about the labor movement was indicative of the prominent role American unions played in postwar international affairs. By the early 1960s, the AFL-CIO wielded extraordinary power within international labor organizations as well as American politics. Riesel's description of the representatives of labor reclining in comfort, enjoying the benefits of their ties to an important diplomat, provided a glimpse of one of the many influential relationships the United States' largest labor federation had cultivated in the postwar era. Even more important than the easy camaraderie with the UN ambassador was the AFL-CIO's working relationship with the U.S. government, particularly the Department of Labor, which resulted in funding for the projects the AFL-CIO planned and implemented abroad.

It was clear to these arms of the state that the American labor movement was a potentially valuable tool in the battle against communism and crucial to U.S. foreign policy. American

[47] When he agreed to resign from the Court for the UN ambassadorship, Goldberg was under the impression that he had a unique opportunity to influence international policy, particularly on the Vietnam War. He also was reportedly told by Johnson that he would be able to return to the Court in the near future—a transition that never occurred. A detailed discussion of this decision can be found in David Stebenne, *Arthur J. Goldberg, New Deal Liberal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 347-351.

[48] Victor Riesel, "Labor Goes to a Party," Publishers-Hall Syndicate, RG 174, Box 491, Folder LD Ford Motor Company 1967, NARA.

labor's activities outside of the U.S. were concentrated in Europe during the immediate postwar period and for most of the 1950s. The primary goal of the AFL-CIO was to promote anticommunism through education and political activity during the contentious postwar battles for political supremacy in European nations. By the early 1960s, the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department turned toward the so-called Third World as a crucial space in the Cold War struggle against the Soviet Union. What were the potential economic and political consequences of American workers and unions organizing in developing nations? Could unions serve as a liaison, building strong relationships with workers abroad that would be beneficial for U.S. foreign policy in the Third World?

In addition to internal discussions among union leaders, Department of Labor officials, U.S. foreign policy advisors, and social scientists contemplated the answers to these questions. They offered a range of responses, from concerns about the way unionization would affect national political culture to speculation about labor costs and the economic health of developing nations. Some economists were concerned with the consequences of allowing American-style collective bargaining to extend to developing nations, pointing to the supposed inverse relationship between rates of unionization and the economic health of "underdeveloped" nations. Social scientists pondered the potential positive role for unions encouraging the dissemination of democratic principles in nations controlled by repressive regimes. Research into these issues informed the policy decisions of the U.S. government, which became increasingly involved in monitoring, funding, and shaping the international activities of organized labor in developing nations.

The diverse array of perspectives on this subject converged on political and economic issues. The AFL-CIO used the concept of "free trade unionism" to meld Cold War

anticommunism to the new social, political, and economic conditions in developing nations, connecting this political stance to the promotion of democracy and economic development. Historian Edmund Wehrle outlined the way the AFL-CIO's fervent anticommunism was deftly woven into the political philosophy of free trade unionism, which combined a belief in independent trade unions as essential components of democracies with an unyielding resistance to communist influence and a commitment to full employment economics.[49] Free trade unionists also abhorred the relationship between unions and the state or any other entity, emphasizing political independence at all costs.[50] The AFL-CIO tried to frame free trade unions as an inseparable feature of industrial society and an important component of nations pursuing development. The case was made on political and economic terms, with a consistent emphasis on erecting ideological boundaries that would sufficiently insulate the political culture of developing nations from an unstable working class movement that might undermine efforts at industrialization. Jay Lovestone, director of the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department, created a network of regional organizations to carry out political education courses, build a local presence for the American labor movement, and provide support for politicians and worker representatives committed to the cause of free trade unionism. In Latin America, the AFL-CIO established the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) to implement this project.

The relationship between workers and organized labor and the international project of development during the 1960s has rarely been explored.[51] The main focus of the historiography

[49] Wehrle, *Between a River and a Mountain*, 9, 20-25.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Only the recent work of Daniel Maul on the ILO has highlighted this connection between labor and development. This work largely focuses on the 1950s and examines the ILO's conception of modernization theory and its implications for workers around the world. Maul, *Human Rights, Development, and Decolonization*. The

of the international activities of the AFL-CIO has been the close working relationship between the federation and the U.S. government, particularly the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Department of State. The voluminous literature on the subject outlines the subversive actions of the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department, directing ire at Lovestone and his deputies. Critics proliferated by the late 1960s, undermining the department's image in the eyes of the American public.[52] Further research has demonstrated the air of secrecy that prevailed within the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department, along with programs of questionable efficacy and political support for undemocratic regimes in developing nations.[53] This new body of scholarship has broadened the scope of this literature by turning the focus away from a strict concentration on anticommunism and towards issues such as the AFL-CIO and foreign policy decisions related to the Vietnam War, the role of the federation in Africa, and a better understanding of the concept of free trade unionism.[54]

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recent explosion of work on modernization and development has concentrated on a number of aspects of this story, from the transnational flows of ideas about this process, the Cold War implications of modernization theory, the practical construction of development projects on the ground in so-called Third World nations, and the intellectual debates undergirding these ideas and practices. None of these works, however, consider the way the labor movement interacted with and in some cases encouraged modernization and development. Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission*; Engerman et al., eds., *Staging Growth*; Escobar, *Encountering Development*; Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*; Latham, *Modernization as Ideology* and *The Right Kind of Revolution*.

[52] See, for example, Richard Dudman, "Agent Meany: The AFL-CIO as Paid Propagandist,"; Dan Kurzman, "Lovestone's Cold War: The AFL-CIO Has Its Own CIA," *The New Republic*, June 25, 1966; Sidney Lens, "Lovestone Diplomacy," *The Nation*, July 5, 1965.

[53] Anthony Carew, "The American Labor Movement in Fizzland: The Free Trade Union Committee and the CIA," *Labor History* 39: 1 (1998): 25-42; Fred Hirsch and Richard Fletcher, *The CIA and the Labor Movement* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1977); George Morris, *CIA and American Labor: The Subversion of the AFL-CIO's Foreign Policy* (New York: International Publishers, 1969); Deb Preusch and Tom Barry, *AIFLD in Central America: Agents as Organizers* (Albuquerque, N.M.: The Resource Center, 1990); Kim Scipes, "Why Labor Imperialism? AFL-CIO's Foreign Policy Leaders and the Developing World," *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society* 13 (Dec. 2010): 465-479; Scipes, *AFL-CIO's Secret War against Developing Country Workers: Solidarity or Sabotage?* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010); Beth Sims, *Workers of the World Undermined: American Labor's Role in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boston: South End Press, 1992).

[54] Wehrle; Daniel Garcia, "Free Trade Unionism in the Third World: The National Security State and American Labor in Asia, 1948-1975" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2004); Victor Silverman, *Imagining Internationalism in American and British Labor 1939-1949* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000);

The narrow focus of earlier studies of the AFL-CIO abroad obscured a larger discussion about the purpose of organized labor in developing nations. Academics, policy makers, and union researchers produced a growing literature that engaged the question of unions and development, informing contemporary debates on this issue. The U.S. government was particularly concerned with the compatibility of unionization and development, and appropriated resources and created institutions to make labor an important part of the development process. The AFL-CIO used the concept of free trade unionism to integrate the process of development into its political agenda, particularly in Latin America. During the 1960s, a tenuous consensus coalesced on the role of organized labor in developing nations.

This chapter chronicles the way the U.S. government and the AFL-CIO attempted to make labor an integral part of the Cold War ideological battle in the developing world. As Goldberg noted, the American labor movement had the responsibility to cast off any inklings of parochialism and "deal with the world now." Cold War politics had closely tied American unions to U.S. foreign policy since the 1940s. In the 1960s, however, organized labor had to define its role in international affairs not in the context of postwar Europe but in the developing world. The U.S. government was confident that unions would serve a positive role in building institutions that would facilitate development. The AFL-CIO wove together the interests of workers and the state, broadly aligning the American labor movement with the goals of U.S. foreign policy and national development in Latin America. The AFL-CIO successfully joined anticommunism and development, adroitly using the malleable concept of free trade unionism to signify a social, political, and organizational transformation for workers in developing nations.

John Charles Stoner, "Anti-communism, Anti-colonialism, and African Labor: The AFL-CIO in Africa, 1955-1975" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2001).

Cold War Labor Internationalism

In the 1940s, the Second World War moved men and women around the world. These experiences caused many workers to call for international cooperation to emerge from the discord of the war years. American labor was involved in the war effort on several levels. Domestically, unions mobilized workers in defense industries and worked with the new administrative bodies established to manage the wartime economy.[55] The emerging presence of the CIO in American political life at the beginning of the 1940s exacerbated political battles that would rage for over a decade. The role of communists in the CIO contributed to the growing strength of this movement, but quickly provoked a backlash from factions within CIO-affiliated unions in pursuit of a way to consolidate power.[56] Throughout the decade, internal battles in unions such as the United Electrical Workers (UE) and the UAW were influential in setting the landscape for postwar politics.

For the AFL, the struggle against communist influence in the American labor movement was not merely a local question. The AFL had thrust free trade unionism to the forefront of discussions of labor's role in the world when it established the Lovestone-led Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC), the precursor to the AFL-CIO's International Affairs Department, in 1944.[57] From 1949 to at least 1958, the FTUC received funding from the CIA and provided that

[55] Andrew E. Kersten, *Labor's Home Front: The American Federation of Labor during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

[56] Ronald Schatz, *The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse 1923-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*.

[57] Silverman, *Imagining Internationalism*.

organization with information and occasional cover for ongoing espionage activities abroad.[58] The FTUC covertly worked to encourage anticommunist unions in postwar European politics.[59]

In the years following World War II, the discord of the war was replaced by a fleeting spirit of cooperation. A far-reaching international labor alliance was considered by many workers' organizations to be a very real possibility. Organized labor negotiated a treacherous line between an embryonic international solidarity and an inflexible state of confrontation. First, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) briefly united workers across national boundaries in the immediate postwar years, as workers did not eagerly adopt the politics of the Cold War and were willing to challenge the divisive nature of this new international order. This brief period of potential harmony was crushed by the increasingly obdurate ideological split between workers on either side of the East-West divide. As the WFTU became dominated by communist-led unions from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, this spirit of cooperation was shattered by the hardening of Cold War bifurcations between nations and workers' institutions.[60]

Western unionists responded by creating rival organizations to disrupt the growing power of the WFTU.[61] The ICFTU was founded in 1949 in an effort to prevent the growing Soviet influence on international labor—particularly in postwar Europe—by directly competing with the WFTU.[62] Based in Brussels, the ICFTU served as a Cold War umbrella organization pursuing the political goals of Western workers in the struggle against communism. As a

[58] Carew, "The American Labor Movement in Fizzland," 27.

[59] Ibid., 29-30.

[60] Victor Silverman concentrates on the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) in the 1940s, describing the visions of internationalism emerging from the experience of World War II.

[61] Wehrle, 20.

[62] Silverman.

political organization that aggregated the interests of large trade union federations from around the world, the ICFTU's structure was analogous to the AFL-CIO in many ways. Representatives to each body engaged political questions in the interests of workers, rather than negotiating directly with employers or organizing workers in a specific industry.[63] The ICFTU was organized into regional components serving Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers (ORIT) was established in 1951 as the Latin American affiliate of ICFTU.[64] ORIT was designed to support union education programs, help create new unions, and strengthen existing ones.[65] It supported the broad goals of the ICFTU in Latin America, which included industrial development, improving working conditions, and promoting free trade in the region.[66]

As the ICFTU struggled for international organizational supremacy with the WFTU, the rallying cry for Western workers became the preservation and perpetuation of free trade unionism. Lovestone, Meany, and the FTUC acted as the willing avatars of free trade unionism, with Lovestone emerging as the foremost proponent of this ideology. After the merger between the AFL and the CIO, Lovestone carried the fervent anti-communist spirit of the FTUC into the AFL-CIO's International Affairs Department.[67] Lovestone and Meany were so committed to a doctrinaire anticommunism that there was no ideological space for alternative viewpoints, let

[63] Gary Busch, interview by author, 29 January 2009, recording of phone conversation.

[64] ORIT used the acronym of its Spanish translation, Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores. Carroll Hawkins, "The ORIT and the American Trade-Unions—Conflicting Perspectives," in William H. Form and Albert A. Blum, eds., *Industrial Relations and Social Change in Latin America* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1965): 87; Robert J. Alexander, *International Labor Organizations and Organized Labor in Latin America and the Caribbean: A History* (Westport: Praeger, 2009): 109.

[65] Magaly Rodríguez García, *Liberal Workers of the World, Unite?: The ICFTU and the Defence of Labour Liberalism in Europe and Latin America (1949-1969)* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010): 94-95.

[66] Ibid., 196, 216.

[67] Wehrle, 20.

alone dialogue between Western and communist unions. After the merger between the AFL and the CIO, the fervent anti-communist spirit of the FTUC seamlessly emerged in the AFL-CIO's International Affairs Department.[68]

Due to its relative wealth, the AFL-CIO exercised a disproportionate level of power within the ICFTU. The AFL-CIO's substantial financial contributions were crucial to the budget of the ICFTU, and this afforded the federation considerable power to persuade the ICFTU to maintain a strong commitment to anticommunism.[69] The AFL-CIO had to take a more subtle approach within the International Labor Organization (ILO), as it was part of the United Nations and therefore included labor representatives from communist states. The organization was strategically important as a forum for workers to meet across the ideological divide of the Cold War. By the early 1960s, the membership rolls at the ILO included post-colonial nations, many of whom had joined the non-aligned nations outside of the reach of the two warring camps in the global Cold War. In this venue, the apostles of free trade unionism were forced to coexist with apostates to the cause. This enraged Lovestone and Meany and they did everything possible to thwart the agenda of communist unions within the ILO. In effect, the struggle between the ICFTU and the WFTU was replicated in the meetings of the ILO.

The ILO was also important as a starting point for discussions about labor and development. In the 1950s, under the leadership of American David Morse, the ILO promoted an international development project that incorporated the discourse of modernization.[70] ILO

[68] Ibid.

[69] David Langley, "The Colonization of the International Trade Union Movement," in Burton Hall, ed., *Autocracy and Insurgency in Organized Labor* (Transaction Publishers, 1972): 300.

[70] Daniel Maul, "'Help Them Move the ILO Way': The International Labor Organization and the Modernization Discourse in the Era of Decolonization and the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 33:3 (June 2009): 387-404.

director Morse laid out a plan to combine the organization's long-standing commitment to the creation and enforcement of international labor standards with an on-the-ground project geared at providing technical assistance, which mainly consisted of vocational training centers. The ILO would establish these training centers, prepare a local staff, and supervise the educational process.[71] Historian Daniel Maul has identified Morse as an influential figure in orienting the ILO towards this stance on development. A product of the New Deal, Morse was an expert on labor law and a staunch Cold War liberal. He felt that by improving the productivity of the economies of developing nations, the ILO could create an effective deterrent to communism in the Third World.[72] Morse was an early advocate of President Truman's Point Four program, which would extend the principles of the Marshall Plan to the developing world in the hopes of replicating the economic impact of that postwar aid package to Europe.[73] In 1949, Truman declared that American advancements in planning, science, and technology had remade the nation since the 1930s. He saw the opportunity for change abroad through a similar process, and he called for this to be a cooperative undertaking between "business, private capital, agriculture, and labor."[74] This "program of development" would increase industrial activity and productivity exponentially and ensure "prosperity and peace."[75]

The ILO's approach, which emphasized the role of labor, was evidence of a far-sighted vision proposed by Morse and others interested in the anticommunist foundation that could be a byproduct of development. It was met with resistance from some of the new governments in

[71] Ibid., 395.

[72] Ibid., 393.

[73] Ibid., 391.

[74] Truman, cited in Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission*, 78.

[75] Ibid.

developing countries, as they feared strong unions could possibly hinder national development efforts.[76] The ILO's use of modernization discourse pointed to a larger question about labor's role in economic development. Morse and the ILO were adamant that strong unions, along with international labor standards and technical assistance, would play a positive role in development. Morse provided a synthesis of anticommunism and development, with labor at the heart of this prescription to ward off totalitarian influence. In the 1960s, it was increasingly evident that American labor was part of the project of development.

The "Wave of the Future"

By the 1960s, "development" became the watchword of a generation of liberal interventionists searching for ways to gain the allegiance of Third World nations to prevent the spread of communism. The United Nations declared the 1960s the "Development Decade" and called for "support for the measures required on the part of both developed and developing countries to accelerate progress towards self-sustaining growth of the economy of the individual nations and their social advancement."[77] Targeting the prevailing social, economic, and political problems facing the so-called "Third World," academic research centers, national governments, international organizations, and private foundations contributed to this massive undertaking.[78] By the early 1960s, the work of several scholars, most notably the influential economist and Johnson administration National Security Advisor Walt W. Rostow, crystallized modernization theory as

[76] Maul, "'Help Them Move the ILO Way,'" 401.

[77] United Nations General Assembly, "1710 (XVI): United Nations Development Decade: A Programme for International Economic Co-operation,"16th Session, 19 December, 1961, *Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly during its 16th Session*, online archive accessed 4 November, 2007, [http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/16/ares16.htm].

[78] Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and 'Nation Building' in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 69-72.

a field of study and a practical methodology for economic and social improvement in developing nations.

Often used synonymously with "modernization," the concept of "development" was firmly ensconced in the liberal worldview at this time. It was used as shorthand for a teleological approach to understanding the social, economic, and political characteristics of nations. Cold War comparisons between the United States and the Soviet Union provided a schematic approach to industrialization, with capitalism and communism offering different routes toward a common goal. Some academics and policy makers speculated about the possibility of convergence between these two societies, producing comparative analyses that highlighted the common features of modern industrial societies.[79] Rostow emerged as the foremost proponent of modernization theory, outlining this process as one of sequential—and immutable—"stages of development," culminating in a consumer society modeled on the paragon of modernity, the United States. Nations reaching the end point of this process experienced an industrialized economy and strong political institutions that allowed free enterprise and democracy to flourish. This deterministic approach traced the evolution of "traditional" societies as they traversed the spectrum of development.[80]

Defining development became a discursive battleground during the Cold War 1960s. U.S. policy makers considered developing nations precariously close to slipping under the influence of Soviet communism, and the full intellectual weight of the U.S. university system and private

[79] David C. Engerman, "To Moscow and Back: American Social Scientists and the Concept of Convergence," in Lichtenstein, ed., *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006): 47-68.

[80] W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

foundations was mobilized behind the effort to frame this process in ideal terms.[81] These institutions provided an incubator for the intellectual understanding of the relationship between the prosperity of nations and the efficacy of competing economic systems, and the emphasis on the Cold War struggle between capitalism and communism resulted in the growing significance of modernization theory in attempts to understand the future of the developing world. Modernization theorists established a spectrum of development that was used to comparatively evaluate nations based on political, economic, and social factors. Arturo Escobar has outlined the way this project was framed using a specific discourse that shaped perceptions of the Third World and resulted in the consolidation of Western hegemony in the post-World War II era. He describes this process as "a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, which treated people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of 'progress.'"[82] Development was consistently painted by its backers as a rational, detached methodology that would bring "badly needed" commodities to a grateful population yet to experience the wonders of modern technological society. During the early 1960s, academics, economists, and foreign policy thinkers sought to determine the most effective methods to move nations out of what was considered an underdeveloped, inherently inferior existence, and into the realm of modern, developed, and—most importantly—anticommunist nations. A new academic literature responded to this question, contemplating the economic relationship between labor and development and conducting studies to determine the ideal role for U.S. unions in this process.

Rostow only casually referenced the issues facing labor in his initial work outlining the process of modernization. Dismissing Marx's idea of the inevitability of the class struggle,

[81] Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*.

[82] Escobar, 44.

Rostow instead pointed to the remarkable ability of a truly modern society to accept and integrate trade unions.[83] At a key moment in the capitalist development process, he wrote, "progress was shared between capital and labor; the struggle between classes was softened…."[84] Rostow determined that there was no "cataclysmic impasse," as Marx had predicted, as modernization blunted class conflict and created an economy that benefitted the majority rather than reserving wealth for a few.[85] Labor's material interests would be met and the revolutionary potential of the working class would never materialize.

In practice, modernization produced a mixed record, which was studied closely by academics, union researchers, and employees of the State Department and the Department of Labor. A debate emerged concerning the role of labor in developing nations, focusing on the impact of unions on national politics, anticolonial resistance, and economic development. Participants used economic statistics, social scientific research, and experience in the field to explore the function of unions in this process. For example, Bruce Millen, a veteran labor attaché stationed in India in 1963, applied the question of labor's role in developing nations to the situation in the newly independent states of Africa.[86] Alluding to the warnings of free trade unionists about directly associating with political parties or government, Millen confirmed the dangers of an overly political labor movement. He considered the conflicts that could ensue when a union pursued political goals that clashed with those of the party in power, from government repression to economic uncertainty—both of which could have a detrimental effect

[83] Rostow, 153.

[84] Ibid., 154.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Bruce H. Millen, *The Political Role of Labor in Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1963): 72-73; "Notes on the Contributors," in Everett M. Kassalow, ed., *National Labor Movements in the Postwar World* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1963), 255.

on development.[87] However, he did not dismiss the idea that unions could make positive contributions to the development process. Millen cited local unionists in developing nations who voiced diverse views about the functions of unions, from serving as a political lobbying group for workers' interests in national economic policy to creating a welcoming climate for foreign direct investment.[88]

The political mobilization of workers often served as a specter haunting those who studied the role of labor in development. Revolutionary politics were anathema to these rational thinkers, weighing the costs and benefits of unionization on charts and graphs. In 1959, Walter Galenson, a pioneer in the field of comparative labor studies, approached this issue from several perspectives. Galenson noted the potential problems that could ensue from a mass mobilization of labor in developing nations, including conflict with management, calls for higher wages, and "political extremism" that could undermine efforts to promote national development.[89] Ultimately he concluded that while businesses may face a rise in costs which may reduce the "practicable rate of investment," these costs would be justified by the ability of labor unions to "perform the vital function of channeling worker protests into socially useful forms."[90] He suggested that developing nations could learn from the lessons of the American labor movement before and after the Wagner Act to understand the positive attributes unions bring to an economy.[91] Also, he noted that strong unions can discipline a "raw labor force," which would

[87] Ibid., 72-73.

[88] Ibid., 74.

[89] Walter Galenson, "Introduction," in Galenson, ed., *Labor and Economic Development* (New York: Wiley, Chapman, and Hall, 1959): 13-15.

[90] Ibid., 18.

[91] Ibid.

benefit management.[92] His reference to the Wagner Act highlighted the positive role that government could play in protecting the right to collective bargaining and unionization. In doing so, local governments could "maximize the positive attributes of nascent unionism."[93]

Businesses considering activities in developing nations often claimed that the presence of a growing labor movement made them wary of investing. Paul Fisher, a Social Development Advisor for the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), dismissed those who claimed unionization had a negative impact on the economic health of developing countries.[94] For Fisher, unions would make a positive contribution to development by shaping the economic, social, and political environment in developing nations—becoming another partner in this process.[95] Having a functioning labor movement reduces the possibility of labor unrest or revolutionary sympathies, while collective bargaining creates incentives for labor to "deliver" on the terms of the contract.[96]

This strict economic approach was only one part of the role of unions in developing nations, according to Everett Kassalow, Director of Research in the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department. Concentrating solely on wages for workers or the possibility of investment and profit for companies devalued the way that unions could provide access to equal opportunity to share the gains of development.[97] He emphasized that the most important union contribution to

[92] Ibid., 14.

[93] Ibid., 17-18.

[94] Paul Fisher, "Unions in the Less-Developed Countries: A Reappraisal of Their Economic Role," in Kassalow, ed., *National Labor Movements in the Postwar World*, 102-115.

[95] Ibid., 109-110.

[96] Ibid., 109-112.

[97] Everett M. Kassalow, "Unions in the New and Developing Countries," in Kassalow, ed., *National Labor Movements in the Postwar World*, 246.

the development process was helping to transform what he called the "social overhead" in local communities, such as access to housing, health care, and education.[98] The construction of a suitable environment for a modern society was impossible without the presence of a strong labor movement.

George C. Lodge considered organized labor was a positive force in changing the social, political, and economic environment in developing nations because it was an essential institution in democratic life. It had the potential to train political leaders and protect the interests of citizens. Working within the Department of Labor as Assistant Secretary of Labor for International Affairs, Lodge crystallized the American government's perspective on the role of organized labor in the Cold War when he referred to unions as the "spearheads of democracy."[99] By promoting anticommunism, free trade unions could build a formidable wall protecting the free world by increasing the purchasing power of workers and ultimately creating democratic institutions. For Lodge, this could be accomplished through a variety of strategies, including organizing in the workplace but also extending to the creation of private associations to work together with unions to set up housing cooperatives and social welfare projects.[100]

Fundamental to the role American unions could play abroad was transforming the image of management. Lodge warned that many Latin American unionists consider the "employer is the enemy," a perspective that he felt was not conducive to building his vision of democracy abroad.[101] U.S. labor representatives should emphasize the "interdependence" of government,

[98] Ibid., 245.

[99] George C. Lodge, *Spearheads of Democracy: Labor in the Developing Countries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

[100] Ibid., 139-147.

[101] Ibid., 23.

labor, and management in foreign relations, as democracy could only be constructed if workers in developing nations could articulate their own solutions to their problems within a tripartite framework. He chastened those too willing to promote the U.S. abroad as a capitalist nation, and urged labor representatives to emphasize the role of the federal government in regulation and intervention in the American economy. He consistently referred to labor's role in encouraging "self-help" projects abroad, using language that AIFLD would employ in Latin America soon after. This vision of labor's role in international affairs connected free trade unionism's strict anticommunism to the empowering image of independent labor unions encouraging economic growth and building local economic institutions for mutual gain. This militant notion of unions as a weapon in the struggle for the allegiance of those tempted by communism exemplified the AFL-CIO's understanding of the process by which democracy could be exported abroad. This role was to be undertaken by American unions, broadly defined, but Lodge closely tied this vision to the AFL-CIO. Lodge sanctioned this viewpoint by questioning those unions such as the UAW that were willing to communicate with communist unions. These discussions could potentially foment internal divisions in American labor and Lodge considered them largely unproductive.[102]

It was in this milieu that American labor—and the U.S. government—began to intervene in international affairs on common terms. Lodge foresaw a number of positive outcomes from this cooperative venture. The intervention of government and labor would help workers in developing nations experience "human equality, individual dignity," along with improvements in health care, living conditions, and education. Justice would replace oppression, and a "fair distribution of wealth" would conquer poverty. Finally, the economic gains of a thriving

[102] Ibid., 90-97.

economy combined with the political support of workers would help developing nations experience "independence and self-determination." Lodge emphasized that the United States "must become inextricably connected" to this "wave of the future."[103] To do so, the United States government needed to take concerted action to intervene in Latin America, building a network for the distribution of ideas and—perhaps more importantly—the funds that could make the difference in stimulating development.

The U.S. Government and the "Labor Factor" in Latin America

The United States government was more than capable of underwriting the exploits of organized labor abroad. The relationship forged between these parties was made a practical reality through the international infrastructure of the Department of Labor. On a wide range of issues, department representatives attempted to provide guidance to the AFL-CIO on technical assistance programs and other major projects backed by federal funds. They also regulated travel by foreign unionists into and out of the United States and attempted to intervene in disputes among American unions acting abroad. In Latin America, the Department worked in conjunction with the Alliance for Progress and AID to execute this agenda.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Cold War fears concerning the spread of communism in the so-called Third World intensified. This led the Kennedy administration to organize the Alliance for Progress to direct the social and economic transformation of Latin America.[104] Along with the Organization of American States (OAS), the Alliance directed financial aid and technical advisement toward the developing countries of Latin America. Construction projects, training programs, and public health initiatives were part of the Alliance's prescription for the

[103] Ibid., 156-157.

[104] Jeffrey E. Taffet, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America* (New York: Routeledge, 2007): 5.

ills of the region. This effort was feted in the press as evidence of the commitment the United States to developing nations in Latin America. In the spirit of the Kennedy administration's pivot towards Latin America, other arms of the U.S. government erected a bureaucratic foundation to supervise and intervene in regional matters. The Cold War significance of organized labor, workers, and working class communities was apparent to the U.S. government, and the Department of Labor moved to extend oversight—and take action—in international labor affairs. Particularly interested in monitoring union activity, settling disputes, and guiding Latin American workers towards free trade unionism, the Department of Labor determined that the "labor factor" was integral to the development process.[105] Ultimately, this perspective would become an important part of the relationship between the U.S. government and the AFL-CIO.

The Alliance for Progress established a visible presence for the United States in Latin America at the beginning of the 1960s. It was designed by the Kennedy administration to restructure Latin American politics and promote economic growth in the region. At the outset of the program, the Alliance was slated to provide twenty billion dollars in foreign aid over ten years, with funding going towards the construction of infrastructure projects and training programs.[106] These lofty goals were ultimately not met, but in taking a broad approach to the problems facing Latin American nations, the Alliance incorporated projects that targeted workers as key agents in the transformation of the region. [107]

The Alliance pursued cultural and social change as well as strict economic development projects. The concrete implementation of this agenda involved not only loans for construction

[105] U.S. Department of Labor, "Growth of the Labor Factor in National Development Planning in Latin America," RG 174, Box 491, Folder IL 8-6 Org of Amer States 1967, NARA.

[106] Taffet, 5, 20-21.

[107] Andrew Herod, *Labor Geographies: Workers and the Landscapes of Capitalism* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001), 165-167.

and the establishment of cooperatives but other programs focused on educating farmers and improving rural life. The Alliance financed the construction of new housing projects designed to move the poor communities of cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires into newly constructed units. This was promoted as part of the modernization process, reflecting a transnational application of ideas about urban living.[108] Modernization theorists considered improved living conditions part of a slow but steady climb towards development.

This multilateral attempt to underwrite the transformation of a region was a noble, yet ultimately unsuccessful, strategy. A 1968 U.S. Senate hearing held by a subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations weighed the history of the Alliance against its stated objectives in 1962. Senator Wayne Morse referred to the principles undergirding the Alliance project, which focused on the crucial role of citizen participation in developing nations to overcome the problems of the region. "It was quite clear at that time that our assistance would be given on the basis of the mutuality principle of self-help, and without self-help on their part they should not look to the United States for great aid."[109] Wary of rising costs and without concrete evidence of significant improvements and mass participation, the Alliance faced questions and criticism by the end of the decade.[110]

It did, however, play an important role in drawing attention to the economic needs of poor countries and developing programs that, at the local level, did have significant impact. The Alliance represented a manifestation of the U.S. government's willingness to view change in

[108] Leandro Benmergui, "The Alliance for Progress and Housing Policy in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires in the 1960s," *Urban History* 36:2 (2009): 303-326.

[109] Congress, Senate, Hearings before the Subcommittee on American Republics Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, "Survey of the Alliance for Progress," United States Senate, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, February 27, 28, 29, March 1, 4, 5, and 6, 1968 (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington: 1968), 41.

[110] Ibid., 183.

Latin America through the prism of modernization theory. As historian Michael Latham noted, "[m]odernization theory alone did not 'cause' the Alliance for Progress. It did, however, function as an ideology through which dangers were perceived, strategies legitimated, and national identities projected."[111] This perspective guided other ventures by the U.S. government to uplift the region.

The Alliance for Progress opened avenues for the Department of Labor to apply a hands-on approach in Latin America, working in conjunction with Alliance initiatives to monitor issues connected to labor in the region. Oversight begat intervention and representatives of the U.S. government established a dialogue with union representatives in Latin America. The Department of Labor represented an unlikely vessel for transformative change abroad. Whereas a foray into international labor affairs was within the purview of acceptable activities for the Department of State, the Department of Labor did not have a clear mandate to become an active participant in this global arena in the context of the Cold War. It worked with outside agencies, established new entities under its jurisdiction, and communicated regularly with the AFL-CIO. In addition to the ongoing dialogue established between the department and AFL-CIO leaders, department representatives participated in technical assistance programs and spoke directly to government ministers and labor officials from Latin America about the role of workers and unions in the world.

While the Alliance opened an avenue for the Department of Labor to intervene in Latin American affairs, a new pact between the Department and AID enabled a more direct connection. In late 1962 the Department of Labor agreed to provide services to AID, under the terms included in an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Under this amendment,

[111] Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 91.

federal agencies with duties that correspond to certain domestic fields could be asked to provide resources and assistance to AID programs abroad.[112] Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 stated that the policy of the United States was to encourage the creation of self-help organizations, including cooperatives, credit unions, loan and savings associations. These new institutions would "strengthen free labor unions."[113] The Department of Labor could now be commissioned by AID to more effectively participate in this process.

After participating in the Conference of the Ministers of Labor of the Alliance for Progress in May of 1963, Wirtz recommended to President Kennedy that a further concentration of American advisory activities in AID may be beneficial to the interests of the United States in Latin America. He observed that the Alliance was not as efficient as he had hoped in utilizing U.S. resources, and he suggested that more of the activities funded and operated by arms of the U.S. government could be transferred under the auspices of AID. This would, Wirtz emphasized, provide a "centralization of responsibility" under AID that may be more difficult in the multilateral Alliance.[114]

The Department worked with AID country programs to provide manpower programs and technical assistance. The Department was designated to contribute to AID programs that focused on manpower programs and technical assistance on labor standards, statistics, and training programs. It was also charged with the responsibility of providing training in labor-management relations for local government officials, "in which participation of employers and employee

[112] Willard Wirtz to George Meany, December 10, 1962, RG 174, Box 19, Folder IL-6, NARA; U.S. Department of Labor, "Labor Department to Assist AID," November 26, 1962, 2-3, RG 174, Box 19, Folder IL-6, NARA.

[113] Quoted in Philip Taft, *Defending Freedom: American Labor and Foreign Affairs* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1973), 219. This stipulation can be found in Title I, section 2351(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

[114] Willard Wirtz to President John F. Kennedy, May 21, 1963, RG 174, Box 80, IL-8-6 Org of American States (Jan-May), NARA. 4156-4158

groups in their country's development is emphasized."[115] Ultimately, this program would support the "creation of strong labor ministries to carry out these programs as well as to serve as instruments in the development of free labor movements."[116]

Acting Administrator of AID, Frank M. Coffin, touted this agreement as marking "the release of even greater efforts than have marked American labor's past efforts in the solution of the awesome tasks that we as a people face in helping the people of developing countries achieve their destiny."[117] This goal was contingent upon the successful transformation of developing economies. Wirtz emphasized that the foreign assistance program was guided by the "principle of self-help" and was "widening the prospects for industrial development in the emerging countries of the world."[118] He alluded to the growing emphasis on the development of human capital in domestic anti-poverty approaches, which considered skill training a priority for the unemployed. "Self-help" was emblematic of many of the liberal programs during the Johnson administration, and the Department of Labor would fully embrace this approach in the coming years.

The Department of Labor eagerly engaged in this process through several institutional arms that established its presence in international affairs. The Department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs was based in Washington, D.C., and served as the administrative arm to coordinate department policy relating to inter-governmental organizations such as the ILO and the UN. Referred to as ILAB in internal communications, the Bureau was also charged with

[115] U.S. Department of Labor, "Labor Department to Assist AID," November 26, 1962, 2-3, RG 174, Box 19, Folder IL-6, NARA.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., 1.

[118] Ibid.

providing technical training, holding trade fairs abroad, and collecting information for international economic studies to guide department policy decisions.[119] The Department wanted to assess the transnational applicability of AID programs for future use. Department researchers were directed to track programs implemented through AID in different countries to "determine how labor and manpower programs contribute to national development."[120] Internal communications included questions about the effectiveness of programs, new suggestions, and an effort to standardize the approach of Department programs in developing nations.

One proposal, forwarded to Wirtz by a third party, Gilbert Harrison, publisher of *The New Republic*, was dutifully given a full evaluation by the Department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs, known as ILAB, and AID.[121] It suggested that the internal workings of a closed American factory could be transported to an underdeveloped nation in an effort to stimulate economic development. The former plant workers could serve as a training staff to instruct the local labor force in operating the new machinery. After careful evaluation, ILAB and AID determined that "the proposal does not have much practical merit," due to the costs involved, particularly if American workers accompanied the machinery for a considerable length of time.[122] It is interesting to note that this proposed method of transforming the local manufacturing economy of developing nations was not a new one. According to the Department,

[119] George C. Lodge to Department of Labor International Staff and International Labor Officers in Other Agencies, April 18, 1960, RG 174, Box 19, IL-5 International Trade Unions, NARA; Bureau of International Labor Affairs, "Chart B," October 1962, RG 174, Box 19, IL-5 International Trade Unions, NARA; E.M.L., "Untitled Document on ILAB Structure," November 19, 1962, RG 174, Box 19, IL-5 International Trade Unions, NARA.

[120] U.S. Department of Labor, "Labor Department to Assist AID," November 26, 1962, 2, RG 174, Box 19, Folder IL-6, NARA.

[121] Gilbert A. Harrison to Willard Wirtz, 24 July 1962, RG 174, Box 19, Folder IL-6, NARA.

[122] John Donovan to the Under Secretary, August 23, 1962, RG 174, Box 19, Folder IL-6, NARA.

the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), an agency that was by this time eliminated after the establishment of AID, had considered a similar proposal several years earlier.[123]

ILAB also communicated directly to unions and the public on matters pertaining to international labor affairs. ILAB employed several Labor Advisors that traveled throughout the country to mobilize support and solicit participants in training programs targeting workers abroad.[124] It also produced a bi-monthly publication for international and domestic audiences, creatively titled *International Labor*, which consistently emphasized the benefits of healthy labor-management relations. [125] It provided articles on a range of subjects of interest to both labor and management, including manpower development programs, comparative economic policy studies, and the activities of international organizations such as the ILO and the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department. It updated readers on American unionists traveling abroad to participate in ILAB programs and publicized international trade fairs and exhibitions.[126]

In 1965, a joint venture between the Department of Labor and AID more directly involved this department in international labor affairs. The Department of Labor International Technical Assistance Corps (DOLITAC) was founded to provide specialists for two year terms of service "anywhere in the world."[127] DOLITAC was financed with AID funds and was designed to bring the expertise of Department technicians to developing nations. In this capacity, DOLITAC members would provide instruction to labor ministers, counsel unions facing

[123] Ibid.

[124] E.M.L., "Untitled Document."

[125] U.S. Department of Labor, *International Labor*, vol. IV, no. 5, November-December 1963, RG 174, Box 79, Folder IL-3 Foreign Service, NARA.

[126] Ibid., 20-21; U.S. Department of Labor, *International Labor*, vol. III, no. 2, March-April 1962, 20, 22, RG 174, Box 171, Folder IL-1 Summary Plans and Reports, NARA.

[127] U.S. Department of Labor, "Labor Department and AID Establish Overseas Technical Assistance Corps," Press Release, March 19, 1965, RG 174, Box 268, Folder IL-6 Technical Cooperation, NARA. 4208

industrial disputes, and create industrial education and manpower development programs.[128] Over the course of 1965 and 1966, twenty developing nations received assistance from DOLITAC members.[129] Many of the DOLITAC visitors to developing nations went under the title of "manpower expert," and endured extended stays in their host countries. Most members were charged with creating long-term manpower development programs, sometimes in two nations over several months abroad. For example, Jennings Lee spent three months in Central America devising a regional manpower development program while also taking one month to help improve employment services in Costa Rica.[130] Eugene Vinogradoff traveled spent ten months outside of the U.S., first in Pakistan, then Brazil, then back to Pakistan to help with the implementation of the manpower development plan he devised months earlier.[131] Despite the geographic disparity between Pakistan and Brazil, their status as developing nations made them well suited for a visit from this manpower advisor. DOLITAC members also held training programs to pass on their skills in the field of manpower development to local technicians, who would then be qualified to operate these programs without outside intervention.[132] This was considered an essential function of DOLITAC, as creating new administrators was considered more effective in reaching local audiences and enabled a far-reaching impact for the DOLITAC training methods.[133] Labor ministries in developing nations were the primary target of training

[128] Ibid.

[129] U.S. Department of Labor, "20 Developing Countries Benefited From Labor Department Technical Assistance," March 20, 1966, RG 174, Box 356, NARA.

[130] "DOLITAC Overseas Assignments," [1962], RG 174, Box 356, NARA.

[131] Ibid.

[132] U.S. Department of Labor, "Growth of the Labor Factor in National Development Planning in Latin America," 8.

[133] George L-P Weaver to the Secretary, May 23, 1967, RG 174, Box 525, Folder PE-4-2 Weaver, George L.P, NARA.

sessions held by DOLITAC. The Department considered courses in manpower planning, skill training, labor statistics, safety, the government's role in labor-management relations, and labor standards to be key contributions towards "improving governmental labor institutions" in developing countries.[134]

The Department of Labor was also in communication with a network of labor attaches stationed at American embassies around the world. Labor attaches were charged with the task of observing unions, industrial disputes, and the political activity of workers in developing nations.[135] Embassy contacts, along with the activities of ILAB and DOLITAC, fostered international relationships that enabled dialogue between Department of Labor and representatives of Latin American governments.

This exchange of ideas also occurred on a personal level. A letter from Miguel Dammert Muelle, of Peru's Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Indigenas, provides an example of the conversations between Latin American government officials and the Department of Labor. In early 1966, Muelle wrote to the Under Secretary of Labor, John Henning, to recount some of the recent events in Peru that were significantly altered by the intervention of Henning's department and AID. An ongoing dialogue, beginning at a meeting in late 1965 in Washington, had resulted in a $20 million loan granted to the Peruvian government by the Inter-American Development Bank.[136] Muelle added that he would value any advice that Henning could deliver on the inner workings of the department.

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[134] U.S. Department of Labor, "Growth of the Labor Factor," 7.

[135] "Foreign Service, USIS, and Principal AID Labor Officers Overseas, December 1963," RG 174, Box 79, Folder IL-3 Foreign Service, NARA.

[136] "Translation of letter dated February 24, 1966 from Miguel Dammert Muelle to the Under Secretary," 4 March, 1966, RG 174, Box 374, Folder IL-2 Country Programs Mar-Jun, NARA.

> In order to what you might so call "culturize me" [sic] I would be grateful if I might bother you to send me information on how you resolve your labor problems: conciliation, arbitration, government orders, etc.; since we are developing a Labor Code and would like to know your experiences.[137]

Muelle's letter conveyed the positive aspects of the relationship between the ministry and AID, which had provided assistance in training union leaders and ministry officials. It also demonstrates the way relationships were forged through this transnational dialogue about industrial relations and best practices for this type of institution.

This conversation represented exactly the type of transformation that the Department of Labor desired. In 1967, an internal document assessed the progress made by labor ministries in Latin America since 1963. One of the major goals of the Department was to make sure the staff of labor ministries was "modernized and equipped to play their necessary role."[138] It established labor ministry training programs in a number of cities, including Lima, Peru, where Muelle was based.[139] The Department provided the technical assistance through the service of foreign "technicians" and training sessions for labor ministries in developing nations.[140] It used these training sessions to foster the notion that development should be an inclusive process that shares the benefits of economic growth with more of the population. Instead of concentrating on finding the path towards an increase in the gross national product (GNP), "greater attention should now be given to considerations of the equity of the distribution of GNP, social development, and the

[137] "Translation of letter dated February 24, 1966 from Miguel Dammert Muelle to the Under Secretary." The original copy of the letter was attached. In the original Spanish, it reads: "Por lo que se refiere a 'culturizarme' algo, muy agradecido le quedaría si se molestara Ud. en enviarme informes de como solucionan Uds. sus problemas laborales: conciliación, arbitraje, orden del gobierno etc.; pues estabmos hacienda un Código de Trabajo y quisiera conocer las experiencias de Uds." Miguel Dammert Muelle to John F. Henning, Under Secretary of Labor, 24 February 1966, RG 174, Box 374, Folder IL-2 Country Programs Mar-Jun, NARA.

[138] U.S. Department of Labor, "Growth of the Labor Factor," 1.

[139] Ibid., 3.

[140] Ibid., 6.

institution building process."[141] The Department of Labor's technical assistance was providing the skilled staff to accomplish this goal through the creation of functioning institutions.

The report cited one final area in which progress had been achieved since 1963. To implement this plan beyond the arena of politics and policy, agreements between labor ministries in developing nations and AID allowed AIFLD to conduct "social impact projects" and provide "labor leadership training to thousands of Latin American trade unionists."[142] AIFLD worked closely with AID to create tangible change associated with American investment in the region. Despite its protestations concerning the need for absolute independence in unions in developing nations, the AFL-CIO was not averse to accepting funding and working in conjunction with the U.S. government to build a presence in Latin America.

"Free Trade Unionism" and Development in the 1960s

In 1966, AIFLD Director William Doherty outlined the organization's agenda for Latin America the pages of the *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*. AIFLD aimed to encourage "self-reliance" in a newly constituted "modern society" in the region. This could be accomplished through the labor-sponsored programs, such as training sessions and what AIFLD referred to as "social projects," which included housing construction. Another key factor in this process was the influence of what he called "enlightened U.S. businesses with interests" in the region.[143] Doherty hoped this new, modern Latin America would be characterized by "hard work" and

[141] George L-P Weaver to the Secretary, September 7, 1967, RG 174, Box 491, Folder IL 8-6 Org of Amer States 1967, NARA.

[142] U.S. Department of Labor, "Growth of the Labor Factor," 2.

[143] Doherty, "AIFLD and Latin Labor Building a Modern Society," *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*, July 1966: 3, 6.

"self-help" and would win the "hearts and minds" of Latin American workers.[144] To achieve this victory, AIFLD had a valuable ally in the U.S. government.

The AFL-CIO built a regional network similar to that of the ICFTU, with AIFLD in Latin America, and its African and Asian equivalents, the African-American Labor Center (AALC) and the Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI), respectively.[145] AIFLD was established in 1961 as a non-profit corporation. By 1967 it had a yearly budget of over six million dollars, with over ninety-five percent coming directly from U.S. government contributions.[146] AIFLD's tripartite approach brought organized labor together with prominent businessmen and government representatives on its Executive Board.[147] The American business community had investments in the region, and maintained a civil and cooperative relationship with AIFLD to protect these interests.[148] Even though the financial contributions of American business were extremely small when compared with the public funds used to fuel this Latin American endeavor, Doherty continually stressed the value of cooperation between labor and management to building a modern economy in the developing world.[149] Meany conceived of American society as a collection of stakeholders, with business playing an important role in maintaining a vibrant economy. For Meany, when workers' wages and living conditions improve, "the investors of risk capital also must be rewarded."[150]

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[144] Ibid., 6.

[145] Dudman, "Agent Meany," 13.

[146] Radosh, 416.

[147] Ibid. 417-418.

[148] Ibid., 420.

[149] Ibid., 418.

[150] Meany quoted in Serafino Romualdi, *Presidents and Peons: Recollections of a Labor Ambassador in Latin America* (New York, 1967): 418.

Others questioned how this effort could be reconciled with the concept of free trade unionism. Free trade unionists fundamentally rejected the relationship between unions behind the iron curtain and the state or any other entity—a stance that engendered criticism from unionists abroad and dissenters within the United States, including the UAW, who pointed to the AFL-CIO's transgression of this principled boundary that was a core component of free trade unionism.[151] Nevertheless, AIFLD's trainees consistently took part in "political work" in their home countries. They targeted anti-imperialist unions and other labor organizations that were perceived as not cooperating with U.S. interests in the region. They also participated in several orchestrated regime changes in Latin America.[152]

The relationship between AIFLD and the Department of Labor can be seen in the regular updates provided by AIFLD Executive Director Serafino Romualdi to Wirtz in the early years of the program. In November of 1963, Romualdi described the training of Latin American and Caribbean unionists at the Washington office of the institute. Many of them had returned to their countries and established training programs or had been elected to leadership positions in their local unions. One participant from Bermuda was chosen to represent the workers of his nation at the annual conference of the ILO in Geneva, Switzerland.[153] This early crop of free trade unionists were drawn from across Latin America and were now assuming important positions in their respective nations.

Labor-management expert Arnold Zack evaluated the labor training effort in developing nations in 1964. Programs such as the AIFLD training courses served an important role in the

[151] Ibid.

[152] Radosh, 421-422.

[153] Serafino Romualdi to W. Willard Wirtz, November 8, 1963, RG 174, Box 68, Folder 1963—Committee-Labor Advisory Committee on the Alliance for Progress, NARA.

promoting the well-being of these countries. AIFLD training participants "return to their respective trade union movements with a specific commitment to organize the unorganized." They are given a "nine-month salary subsidy when they have finished the course. The sponsors hope that the trained trade unionist will build up his union's strength so that it will be self-sufficient and no longer in need of external subsidization." Courses include "training in the skills of trade-union development, such as collective bargaining and contract administration, and also concepts of the trade union as an essential element in democracy, and techniques of fighting Communist and fascist infiltration."[154]

AIFLD's educational philosophy was guided by a simple mantra: "Native communists must be fought by native democrats."[155] To fill the ranks of organizers for the cause of democracy, individuals were selected for AIFLD training seminars based on a set of criteria that included age (21 to 35 years old), basic literacy skills, and a nomination by a "free labor organization, whether local, national or international, and not by governments, employers or any other agency no matter how well-meaning."[156] The most significant factor in making this selection was "a candidate's zeal and militance about the idea of strong, free trade unions."[157] Training programs were divided between "education in the field" and classes held at AIFLD's Advanced Trade Union Training Institute at Front Royal, Virginia, and the Labor Economist

[154] Arnold Zack, *Labor Training in Developing Countries: A Challenge in Responsible Democracy* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 39-40.

[155] William C. Doherty, Jr., "AIFLD Strengthens Free Labor in Latin America," *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*, June 1969.

[156] Jesús Artigas et. al., "Report of the Committee on Selections Procedures," 1, RG 18-007 Series 5, Box 16, Folder 21, GMMA.

[157] Ibid.

Training school at Loyola University in New Orleans.[158] According to an AIFLD internal review in 1963, the educational programs focused on union organizing principles but mainly emphasized the need to create indigenous resistance to the influence of communism.[159]

The curriculum focused on the history of "American government and democratic institutions," providing an understanding of the "traditions and meanings of a free society."[160] AIFLD Executive Director Serafino Romualdi described the way sessions put students "as much as possible under the advice and supervision of joint committees representing labor, management and, when possible and advisable, the local government and the U.S. Agency for International Development missions," thereby immersing them in the groups closely linked to the development project in Latin America.[161]

Aspiring trade unionists were also instructed in the ways of identifying the threat of communism and developing the proper "defense tactics and safeguards" to prevent subversion.[162] The course of study also focused on the history of the American labor movement and the structure of labor-management relations in the United States.[163] In fact, at a meeting of AIFLD Field Representatives and Directors of Education, a committee designated to review the curriculum determined that too much attention was being paid to the history, politics, and

[158] William C. Doherty, Jr., "AIFLD Report to the Board of Trustees," May 19, 1967, RG18-007, series 5, box 16, folder 23, GMMA.

[159] "Background Material: The History of the American Institute for Free Labor Development," RG 174, box 68, folder 1963, NARA.

[160] Morris A. Horowitz, "AIFLD Training Program in the United States for the Year 1964," 1, RG 174, Box 68, Folder 1963—Committee-Labor Advisory Committee on the Alliance for Progress, NARA.

[161] Serafino Romualdi to David Sullivan, April 6, 1964, box 69, folder 34, David Sullivan Collection, SEIU Executive Office Files, WRL.

[162] Ibid., 2.

[163] Ibid.

economy of the United States, and not enough time was spent on corresponding subjects pertaining to Latin America.[164]

Training was coupled with spending for "social projects" that increased the public profile of AIFLD. Housing projects were the main focus of AIFLD-funded construction, as the organization considered poor housing a possible breeding ground for communist sympathies. New housing was served to legitimize and reward anti-communist unions in volatile areas.[165] A consistent stream of updates and announcements concerning AIFLD-funded housing projects emerge from the AFL-CIO's publication for international consumption, *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*.[166] AIFLD claimed to have funneled several million dollars into housing across Latin America by the late 1960s. The John F. Kennedy Housing Project in Mexico City was the most publicized of these developments because of its scale and cost. These housing projects shaped the urban landscape and were also integral as signifiers of power in the Cold War ideological struggle for the allegiance of workers in Latin America.[167]

The costs for workers seeking to purchase homes in these housing projects caught the attention of Marlo J. Schram, a consultant for AID charged with evaluating AIFLD's housing construction in the Dominican Republic. He questioned whether this effort was "designed to impress the USA with the tremendous impact of AIFLD rather than serve the practical

[164] José Estrada et. al., "Committee on Curricula," 1, RG 18-007 Series 5, Box 16, Folder 21, GMMA. 3734.

[165] Herod, 165-167, 188-193.

[166] See, for example, George Meany, "Free World Can't Afford to 'Get Tired,'" *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*, April 1964; Doherty, "American Labor's Own Alliance for Progress," *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*, March 1965; Boris Shishkin, "Unions Drive for Better Housing in U.S. and Abroad," *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*, December 1966.

[167] Herod, 176-196.

necessities of the [Dominican Republic] and Dominican labor."[168] Schram was concerned that the units were too costly for workers and the plan too large to be viable in the context of the Dominican economy. Developing a large number of expensive housing units would jeopardize the long-term viability of the project, and he suggested instead a more measured approach, building smaller projects in multiple sites. These units, which Schram noted could be built quickly and austerely, would better serve the immediate needs of Dominican workers.[169] These types of questions increasingly emerged during the 1960s, as AIFLD's political involvement frequently made headlines at the expense of the social projects implemented to help workers in developing nations.

Conclusion

The "labor factor" was an integral part of the United States' intervention in Latin America during the 1960s. The political tensions of the postwar world had enveloped organized labor in the United States and Europe. The "Development Decade" of the 1960s required a reevaluation of the role of labor abroad. Economists, social scientists, and researchers working for the U.S. government and the labor movement studied the impact of unions on the potential for economic growth and political stability in developing nations. The U.S. Department of Labor identified the need for technical assistance in these nations, and allocated valuable resources to fund training programs and increase the presence of skilled advisors in the region.

The joint effort between the U.S. government and the AFL-CIO utilized AID funding and Department of Labor technical assistance to pursue an agenda based on democratic institution-building. The U.S. government envisioned developing nations building a functional equivalent of

[168] Marlo J. Schram to John Nepple, August 14, 1965, RG18-007, series 5, box 16, folder 21, GMMA.

[169] Ibid., Schram to Angelo Verdu, September 30, 1965, RG18-007, series 5, box 16, folder 21, GMMA.

the Department of Labor to encourage a vibrant presence for organized labor. Unions were a vital component of a developed society and served as evidence of an ongoing process of industrialization, productive economic activity, and a rising standard of living.

In Latin America, the AFL-CIO used the ideology of free trade unionism to deftly link anticommunism and development in the activities of AIFLD. Through U.S. assistance, trained union organizers would do the hard work of building a vital free trade union presence through training programs and social projects that would serve the greater interests of workers across the region. For the AFL-CIO, international union organizing was primarily a political component of the development process, enabling national economic growth by providing economic stability and working with representatives of business and government.

In a region rife with class tensions, and in the context of an increasingly global economy, the AFL-CIO effectively de-valued class in conceptualizing organized labor's role in international affairs. Labor was just another stakeholder in the development process, rather than activists seeking to ensure a voice for workers in the economic and political affairs of developing nations. This organized labor movement was in no way designed to produce a working class movement for change, which was consistent with the Department of Labor's desire to provide skilled administrators for labor ministries in developing nations and AIFLD training programs that were designed to cultivate effective anticommunist union bureaucrats. Both the U.S. government and the AFL-CIO attempted to write labor into the narrative of development in this way. Ultimately, the symbiotic relationship between labor and the state in international labor affairs followed the trajectory of the Alliance for Progress and declined by the end of the decade. Much like the Alliance, this venture welcomed the promise of development in Latin America but was unable and unwilling to achieve truly transformative change in the region.

For some within the AFL-CIO, however, the emphasis on anticommunism and cooperation with business interests did not represent an effective strategy for development in Latin America. UAW President Walter Reuther, head of the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department and a member of the AIFLD board, encouraged his union's International Affairs Department to approach the situation of labor in Latin America from a different perspective, one that emphasized class solidarity and the potential for international collective action rather than wielding anticommunism as a weapon to be used for the benefit of the U.S. government and U.S. corporations.

Chapter 2

Modernizing Solidarity: The UAW and Working Class Internationalism in the 1960s

As an international representative of the United Automobile Workers (UAW), Esteban Torres made several trips to Latin America during the 1960s. The UAW's International Affairs Department sent Torres and other organizers abroad in an effort to build connections with autoworkers, metal workers, and working class communities beyond the United States. In 1969, Torres stopped in the industrial triangle of southeast Brazil to meet with workers in the local metalworkers' union in São Paulo, Sindicato dos Metalúrgicos. Over the course of several weeks, Torres held educational courses on time and motion study, working conditions in the U.S., and the history of the American labor movement. In each city Torres visited, he was all too frequently met with apprehension by some workers. In São Paulo, one worker vociferously questioned his credibility because of his roots in the United States. This worker, Luiz Inácio da Silva—better known as Lula—refused to believe that an American unionist, who was fluent in Spanish and had a working knowledge of Portuguese, was employed by any organization other than the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

After becoming the president of Brazil, Lula was more open to dialogue with representatives from the United States. During the 1960s, however, he had to be reassured by his co-workers that Torres was "not engaged in any political activity," and was acting solely as a representative of the UAW.[1] To Lula and other workers in Latin America skeptical of U.S. labor,

[1]Esteban Torres, interview by author, 21 May 2008, recording of phone conversation; Richard Bourne, *Lula of Brazil: The Story So Far* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008); Henry Santiestevan and Ed

Torres and the UAW were linked to the questionable intentions of the AFL-CIO's political arm in the region, AIFLD, which was funded by the CIA and allied with the U.S. State Department and prominent American businessmen.[2]

This distrust of American unions was not irrational or unfounded. In Latin America, AIFLD influenced union organizing drives and in many instances supported questionable regimes and military dictatorships depending on official U.S. foreign policy directives. Despite its status as a member of the federation, the UAW charged its International Affairs Department with the task of outlining a separate agenda that often clashed with its counterpart in the AFL-CIO. For the UAW leadership, the AFL-CIO's binding alliance with the U.S. government and the American business community was unnecessary and counterproductive—particularly when extending overtures to workers in developing nations. In effect, Torres was engaged in "political activity" on his trip to Brazil, although the politics of the UAW International Affairs Department differed significantly from that of the AFL-CIO and AIFLD.

By the 1960s, the UAW began to forge its own path in international affairs, proposing a course of action that was designed to better the lives of American workers and their counterparts abroad. The UAW's attempt to promote a unique interpretation of working class internationalism in both form and content demonstrates that the AFL-CIO was not a monolithic representative of the U.S. labor movement abroad. Firmly rooted in the liberal internationalism of the era, the UAW's ideological approach to international affairs outlined a working-class internationalism

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Torres, "Report on Trip to Latin America," March 24, 1969, UAW International Affairs Department 1968-1972 Collection, Box 20, Folder 1, WRL. Esteban Torres frequently signed letters and official documents "Ed Torres." According to Richard Bourne, Lula was working in Sao Paulo in 1969, and reports filed that year by Torres to the UAW International Affairs Department confirm his meeting with Lula's union, the Sindicato dos Metalúrgicos.

[2] Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, 1969); Dan Kurzman, "Lovestone's Cold War: The AFL-CIO Has Its Own CIA," *The New Republic*, June 25, 1966.

that embraced a delicate balance between anticommunism, international solidarity, and workplace and community concerns facing workers in developing nations.

The UAW's strategy went beyond a focus on establishing "free trade unions" to a more constructive and cooperative approach that was directly critical of the AFL-CIO and AIFLD. The UAW's International Affairs Department, led by Victor Reuther, prioritized workplace and community concerns coupled with a confidence in the potential impact of organized labor on the lives of workers in developing nations. This program emphasized job training, community empowerment, and unionization, and the UAW extended financial and material aid to workers and unions abroad through alliances with other international labor organizations such as the International Metalworkers Federation. In both purpose and practice, the UAW forged an independent outlook on international affairs that would diverge significantly from that of the AFL-CIO. The UAW International Affairs Department articulated an expansive vision of labor internationalism that combined international labor solidarity, the plight of workers in developing nations, and the perpetuation of free trade unions.

One of the first historians of the postwar history of American labor abroad, Ronald Radosh, focused on the "divisions of style, not overall purpose" evident in the internationalism of UAW President Walter P. Reuther, UAW International Affairs Director Victor G. Reuther, and others in the UAW leadership when compared with that of George Meany, Jay Lovestone, and the AFL-CIO. Radosh felt that Reuther's objections to the ardent anti-communism of the AFL-CIO and AIFLD were superficial and not fundamental to understanding U.S. labor internationalism during the Cold War. [3] The casual dismissal of the UAW's international agenda as merely a less aggressive version of the AFL-CIO's labor diplomacy overlooks the significant

[3] Radosh, 438.

debates between the respective International Affairs Departments of the UAW and the AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO's notion of free trade unionism and development—embodied by the efforts of AIFLD in Latin America—did not, in practice, reflect the ideas animating the UAW's international program in the 1960s.

The UAW attempted to construct a different conclusion to the narrative arc of development. It focused instead on international bargaining and organizing efforts, social and economic development, and a worker education program that went beyond denouncing communism. To shift the focus of working class internationalism away from anticommunism, the UAW supported the creation and empowerment of local unions abroad while highlighting the significance of working class interests in the development process and the globalizing economy. Essentially, the UAW imagined a different future for international capitalism, one in which organized labor played a significant role and working class interests were protected and promoted.

Galvanized by a perceptive identification of the increasing threat posed by multinational corporations to workers in the U.S. and abroad, the UAW outlined a program that incorporated a transnational understanding of economic inequality and unemployment that was intellectually indebted to the liberal developmentalist project of the 1960s. To implement this bold agenda, the UAW initiated a strategy of workplace and community organizing that integrated local, national, and international economic development; designed to stifle the growth of a large gap between workers' standards of living in industrialized nations and the developing world. The UAW's agenda emerged from the Cold War political context of the 1960s and a genuine sympathy for the social and economic well-being of workers abroad, yet it represented more than a benevolent concern for developing nations. The UAW also hoped to organize workers abroad to discourage

multinational corporations from moving production facilities outside of the U.S. in a quest for cheap labor. This was part of a larger international agenda designed to mitigate the growing power of multinational corporations and preemptively address the global and local economic changes that would wreak havoc on the American labor movement in the 1970s and beyond.

In this chapter, then, I explore the UAW's independent approach to labor internationalism during the 1960s. Although it pursued activities in developing nations in Asia and Africa, it was the UAW's international experience in Latin America that offers a telling contrast with that of the AFL-CIO, demonstrating significant ideological and practical differences between these two organizations.[4] The UAW emphasized the role of workers and their institutions in addressing issues such as national development, capital mobility, contract negotiations, and workplace concerns. Instead of the AFL-CIO serving as the monolithic representative of U.S. labor abroad, significant ideological distinctions were evident within the U.S. labor movement, while also outlining the contrasting practical application of these ideas through the actions of institutions and organizers. I examine these differences through UAW publications, internal communications between UAW international representatives and officials in the United States, as well as the implementation of the UAW's international agenda in Latin America. I also explore the response by rank and file autoworkers to the union's effort to promote a new working class internationalism in the 1960s.

Despite its limited resources, the UAW recalibrated the meaning of Cold War labor internationalism, creating a position firmly rooted in anti-communist rhetoric while integrating the interests of organized labor into calls for economic development abroad. This international

[4] For Asia and Africa, see Wehrle; Stoner; Garcia; and Yvette Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000). On AIFLD in Latin America, see Cantor; Preusch and Barry; Sims; Spalding, *Organized Labor in Latin America*, and "U.S. and Latin American Labor."

vision was not confined to the UAW's public pronouncements, as the international also made a concerted effort to promote its agenda on the ground. The UAW International Affairs Department staff served as advisors and educators in a project designed to incubate a new internationalist sensibility—one that expressed a hope for transnational cooperation among workers' organizations in the developing and industrialized world. UAW organizers like Torres traveled throughout Latin America to move working class internationalism away from the divisiveness of the AFL-CIO's rigid anticommunism and towards international solidarity by addressing issues like economic development, working conditions, and the increasingly globalized economy of the 1960s.

"Neither Communism nor Wall Street"

In the context of the increasingly international aspects of labor-management relations and Cold War politics, the UAW articulated different ideas about social and economic development, as well as the role of institutions and organizers in the international labor movement. By the mid-1960s the UAW criticized the rigidity of the AFL-CIO's stance on communism and intensified its concern for the plight of workers in developing nations as well as for the new threat posed by multinational corporations. Abiding by the rhetorical imperatives of the Cold War, the UAW publicly echoed the anticommunism of the AFL-CIO while also developing a program designed to offer more than this narrow component of free trade unionism. For Walter Reuther, "neither Communism nor Wall Street" could provide effective solutions to the problems facing workers around the world, and a new strategy needed to be devised to handle the challenges of the postwar world.[5] The UAW hoped to replace what Reuther referred to as the "growing negative

[5] Walter Reuther, quoted in Victor Reuther, *The Brothers Reuther and the Story of the UAW* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976): 404.

character of AFL-CIO policy in the field of international affairs" with what it considered a more constructive and positive Cold War labor internationalism.[6]

During the 1950s, the UAW mainly focused its international efforts on denouncing Soviet communism and increasing production abroad, particularly in the Western European nations rebuilding after the war. As part of the CIO's European staff, Victor Reuther led the first effort to infuse the representatives of American labor abroad with a more accepting perspective on communism to counteract the work of Lovestone, Brown, and the FTUC. From 1951 to 1953, Reuther was stationed in Paris, where he served as the head of the CIO European office. Upon his return to the U.S. in 1953, he moved to Washington, D.C., to work on international affairs from the CIO's national office.[7] As talks intensified on the merger of the AFL and CIO, Reuther declined an opportunity to serve on the AFL-CIO's International Affairs Department staff, instead taking on the task of building an International Affairs Department for the UAW.[8]

Industrial relations in Germany and Sweden served as ideal frameworks which Walter Reuther hoped to replicate in the United States. The policy of codetermination in Germany provided Reuther with a framework for a cooperative venture that would integrate business, labor, and government in a system that aimed to satisfy the needs of workers, management, and the national interest.[9] For Reuther, increasing productivity was paramount, and had the potential to transform a national economy by encouraging economic growth and a rise in the standard of

[6] "Statement by UAW President Walter P. Reuther, as presiding officer, International Metalworkers' Federation, World Automotive Conference, Frankfurt, Germany," November 8, 1964, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1962-68, Box 53, Folder 12, WRL.

[7] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 332.

[8] V. Reuther, *The Brothers Reuther*, 337, 382.

[9] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 331-332.

living.[10] Reuther's public role abroad was one grounded in his personal activism and relationship with Western European labor leaders. His reputation also extended beyond the European labor movement through his position as a prominent officeholder in both the ICFTU and the IMF, and his personal visits to nations outside of the Western European allies of the United States.

The ICFTU also formed one of the first and most enduring battlegrounds for the UAW's struggle with the AFL-CIO over international affairs. The UAW was involved in the ICFTU since the Confederation's founding in 1949, and UAW President Walter Reuther continued to serve as an Executive Board member after the AFL-CIO merger in 1955. In this role, Reuther remained resistant to accepting the militant anticommunism of the AFL-CIO. Despite a public unity of purpose, differences within the ICFTU were often exacerbated by the disputes over the meaning of free trade unionism and the value of the pursuit of a rigid policy of anti-communism at all costs, with questions emerging from social democratic unions in Western Europe.

This would be only one of many public battles between Meany and Reuther on questions of international affairs. The personal distrust and animosity between these two men was palpable, yet the underlying differences between them were closely linked to anticommunism. The reductionist vision of Meany and Lovestone was contrasted by the willingness of the UAW to emphasize economic ideas and workplace concerns while accepting and promoting the need to establish a dialogue with representatives from communist unions.

While the UAW attempted to carve out ideological space distinct from the AFL-CIO's strict international agenda, the union's independent perspective on the relative value of anticommunism and disdain for AFL-CIO's government and business ties should be considered

[10] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 327-345. Lichtenstein focuses on the 1950s in his discussion of UAW internationalism, mainly Walter Reuther's effort to publicize an increase in production as beneficial for the world's workforce.

in context. The UAW did not reject anticommunism unconditionally. As part of the AFL-CIO, the UAW was complicit in the actions of the federation abroad, particularly the projects and policies of AIFLD, of which Reuther was also a board member.[11] Domestically, Reuther led an internal campaign to rid the UAW of communist influence by the 1950s.[12] This crusade tore apart many UAW locals and CIO unions, robbing the movement of many significant organizers and providing Reuther with the means to consolidate power in the UAW for the next two decades.[13]

Nevertheless, the UAW continued to pursue a more conciliatory relationship with communist unions and governments. This perspective was exemplified by the UAW's policy of encouraging face to face meetings between American labor and communist unions and the leaders of communist states to establish a dialogue that could circumvent the tensions of the Cold War. The UAW criticized the AFL-CIO for overemphasizing the politics of anticommunism, considering this an ineffective strategy for building transnational coalitions among workers. Victor Reuther took particular delight in recounting a meeting he arranged during a state visit by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in September of 1959. Walter Reuther, James Carey, and several other prominent union leaders were in attendance. The Americans raised contentious issues such as the use of force in Hungary and Soviet efforts to stifle domestic dissent.[14] This was the ideal forum for the type of productive dialogue the UAW felt was discouraged by the AFL-CIO's strategy.

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[11] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 406.

[12] David M. Lewis-Colman, "From Fellow Traveler to Friendly Witness: Shelton Tappes, Liberal Anticommunism, and Working-Class Civil Rights in the United Auto Workers," in Shelton Stromquist, ed., *Labor's Cold War: Local Politics in a Global Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Halpern; Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*.

[13] Zeiger, *The CIO*; Halpern, *The UAW and Cold War Politics*.

[14] Victor Reuther, *The Brothers Reuther*, 394-399.

While the UAW's stance on communication with communist unions marked a significant departure from official AFL-CIO policy, it was the way in which the AFL-CIO translated their anticommunism into action that particularly enraged Victor Reuther and others in the UAW International Affairs Department. The presence of businessmen on the board of AIFLD made many question the motives of this organization. Its consistent emphasis on bringing free trade unionism to workers in developing nations was often reduced to platitudes about workers' rights and support for anticommunist governments, regardless of their commitment to workers' interests.

One of the most egregious connections between AIFLD and American business was displayed in an interview AIFLD Executive Director William Doherty gave to two journalists on the AFL-CIO's national radio program, "Labor News Conference," in 1964. In a letter to his brother Walter, Victor Reuther recounted the way Doherty openly conceded the part played by AIFLD's graduates in the months following the overthrow of Brazilian President Joao Goulart earlier that year. "What happened in Brazil on April 1, did not just happen—it was planned—and planned months in advance. Many of the trade union leaders—some of whom were actually trained in our institute—were involved in the revolution…," Doherty said. Victor Reuther was incredulous that Doherty would admit to such a connection between AIFLD trainees and the overthrow of the Goulart regime, and was even more surprised by Doherty's comments about the willingness of Brazilian workers to accept a limit on wages imposed by the new regime.[15]

While noting that the workers of Brazil wanted to maintain a sufficient level of purchasing power, Doherty also allowed for "some element of price control" as well as wage control. The Brazilian labor movement was, according to this AIFLD representative, willing to

[15] Doherty's comments quoted in V.G. Reuther to W.P. Reuther, July 29, 1964. Box 12, Folder 3, Victor G. Reuther Collection, WRL.

"suffer equally. You can't have the poor suffer more than the rich, or the poor less than the rich." Reuther ridiculed this notion of "equality of sacrifice," as "the height of naivete [sic]." He was "horrified" that this type of cooperation was occurring in association with the label of "free trade unionism," and offered a stinging criticism of Doherty's controversial remarks. For Reuther, this acceptance of the idea that business and labor could cooperate seamlessly—avoiding the notion of class conflict at all costs—set AIFLD apart from the UAW's international agenda. "Not even the most servile, company-union-minded workers' organization in the U.S. would dare to advocate this kind of sell-out," Reuther added dramatically.[16]

His incredulous reading of Doherty's comments point to some of the contradictions evident in the UAW's approach to international affairs. While certainly committed to the same notion of increasing workers' purchasing power through collective bargaining, the UAW, Reuther said, should not accept this type of acquiescence to the needs of corporations or support subversive political actions such as undermining existing governments. The policies and rhetoric of AIFLD and the UAW occasionally coincided on anticommunism and economic development. The means to achieve these ends differed greatly, however.

The growing link between the AFL-CIO's activities abroad and the foreign policy arms of the U.S. government, including the CIA, was of particular concern to the UAW in the late 1950s and early 1960s. While Meany and others continually denied the connection between the AFL-CIO and the CIA throughout the 1960s, growing criticisms began to emerge by the middle of that decade. Wary of the link between AIFLD and the CIA, and not enamored with the political subversion and questionable policies of the AFL-CIO in developing nations in Latin

[16] Ibid.

America, Victor Reuther exposed this relationship to the press in 1966.[17] In response, Meany accused the UAW of accepting CIA funds in the early 1950s—which the Reuthers went to great lengths to deny, qualify, and subsequently explain in 1967. Walter Reuther acknowledged that the UAW had received CIA funds in 1952, and this money was distributed to European unions. He adamantly reiterated that the UAW had not dealt with the CIA since this transaction, also mentioning that the agency tried to recruit Victor Reuther to become an undercover agent, a request he "emphatically rejected."[18] According to the Reuthers, despite this earlier lapse, the UAW could point to the ensuing fifteen year period as evidence of the earnestness of its intentions. Despite this tacit acceptance of the Cold War politics of the age, Walter and Victor Reuther attempted to situate the UAW on the moral high ground in relation to the activities of the AFL-CIO abroad.

The UAW's increasing frustration with the actions of Meany, Lovestone, and AIFLD culminated in a public controversy that put into focus the increasing distance between the AFL-CIO and the UAW on international affairs. The venue for this dispute was the International Labor Organization (ILO). The ILO, as labor's equivalent to the United Nations and an affiliate of that world body, was one of the only institutions at the time that offered a forum for interaction between communist unions and Western unions, as all members of the UN were eligible to send representatives to the ILO. At a meeting of the ILO in 1966, the AFL-CIO delegates walked out of the ILO conference in Geneva after a Polish representative was elected to chair the meeting, thus granting a representative from a communist nation this largely

[17] David R. Jones, "Meany-Reuther Rift on Foreign Policy is Attributed to Advisers' Positions," *New York Times*, June 19, 1966.

[18] Walter Reuther, quoted in Frank C. Porter, "Reuther Concedes UAW Got CIA Funds," *Washington Post*, 8 May 1967; James D. Selk, "No Spy Work, UAW Official Says," *Wisconsin State Journal*, 27 June 1967, in Victor G. Reuther Collection, box 32, folder 7, WRL.

ceremonial position for the duration of the conference. Walter Reuther voiced his displeasure on behalf of the entire UAW Executive Board, noting that the walkout was "undemocratic" and "unauthorized," and a significant blow to American efforts to rally world labor to the anti-communist cause. While he conceded the AFL-CIO's perspective that communist unions were "instruments of their governments," Reuther also proclaimed the necessity of communication with communist nations to advance the "cause of human freedom" by demonstrating "the superior value of democratic institutions."[19]

Reuther was careful to underline the UAW's anticommunist credentials in the qualifying statements that amended this denunciation of the AFL-CIO's actions. He emphasized that this "is a matter totally unrelated to the question of the American labor movement's uncompromising opposition to Communism and all other forms of totalitarianism. The UAW yields to no one in our opposition to Communist tyranny."[20] The UAW's outrage over the AFL-CIO walkout was framed in such a way as to point to a strategic flaw in the AFL-CIO's reasoning while confirming its commitment to the politics of anticommunism.

Finally, the Vietnam War would serve as a catalyst in widening the rift in the American labor movement over the issue of anticommunism and foreign policy. After a prolonged internal debate over the merits of the war and the union's support for the Johnson administration's activities in Southeast Asia, several influential figures in the UAW openly discussed their dissatisfaction with American foreign policy. In 1967, Victor Reuther publicly declared his

[19] Walter P. Reuther to George Meany, June 9, 1966, 1-2, Victor G. Reuther Collection, box 32, folder 17, WRL.

[20] President Walter P. Reuther to all UAW local unions, UAW Administrative Letter, volume 18, letter no. 11, June 17, 1966, 1, Victor G. Reuther Collection, box 32, folder 17, WRL.

opposition to the war in Vietnam at a gathering of antiwar labor leaders known as the National Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace. Walter Reuther came out against the war soon after.[21]

This very public split over U.S. foreign policy was the culmination of the dispute between the UAW and AFL-CIO over anticommunism and international affairs. From the 1950s into the 1960s, the UAW gradually widened its criticism of the AFL-CIO to include the actions of AIFLD and other AFL-CIO political activities that were supposedly in concert with the principles of free trade unionism but in fact represented a political project with a questionable commitment to the interests of workers in developing nations. Most of the criticism was behind closed doors and focused on the contrast in relationships with workers around the world and the policies promoted by the AFL-CIO abroad. The struggle over the meaning and implementation of anticommunism was, in a way, a divergence in form not content. This, however, represented only a fraction of the UAW's international program, which ultimately demonstrated a fundamentally different perspective on the role of workers in the world.

Modernizing Solidarity

In November 1964, Walter Reuther addressed a conference of automobile worker unions in Frankfurt, Germany, on the dangers facing the international labor movement. The growing power of multinational corporations had placed labor in a precarious position at the mercy of highly mobile employers "not inhibited by national loyalties." At the same time, the automobile industry was becoming increasingly centralized, a trend that enabled companies to **"**take maximum advantage of disparities in workers' living standards—which, to the corporations, represent disparities in costs." Reuther lamented the changing economic relationships of this new

[21] Wehrle, 111-115; John Bennett Sears, "Peace Work: The Antiwar Tradition in American Labor from the Cold War to the Iraq War," *Diplomatic History* 34:4 (September 2010): 708-711.

era, which he feared would encourage the "international sourcing" of parts production to boost profits and cause divisions among the world's workers.[22]

While the AFL-CIO was still using McCarthyite absolutes to describe an impending communist threat, the UAW envisioned a distinctly working class internationalism concerned with workers, working conditions, and a new frontier for labor relations. The growth of multinational corporations and the impact of these entities on the lives of workers in developing nations and in the U.S. was cause for concern. Reuther was clear that this process would harm workers regardless of their location. It linked workers in industrialized and developing nations to a common fate. Improving workers' standard of living and defending workers' interests against those of powerful multinational corporations were the issues that formed the basis of the UAW's international agenda during the 1960s.[23] The UAW felt that working class internationalism could not be limited to the AFL-CIO's politics of free trade unionism, which emphasized the realization of "freedom," as both the prerequisite for further gains and the apotheosis of unionism. The AFL-CIO did not effectively define the practical experience of "freedom," and broadly associated this with anticommunism. The UAW considered this outlook to be insufficient, and Walter Reuther urged the labor movement to enact an international strategy that would follow the lead of the automobile corporations, which "recognize no boundaries," to move beyond parochial interests to battle the multinational corporations on this new playing field.[24]

As the head of the UAW's International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther was the individual most associated with the ideological perspective of the UAW on international

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[22] "Statement by UAW President Walter P. Reuther, as presiding officer, International Metalworkers' Federation, World Automotive Conference, Frankfurt, Germany," November 8, 1964, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1962-68, Box 53, Folder 12, WRL.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.; "Declaration of Turin," *Solidarity* 11:7 (July 1968): 5.

questions. Reuther retained the ideas of the old CIO tradition of industrial organizing and was intellectually engaged in the policy debates of the 1960s. While many of his speeches cited potential international alliances and the possibilities of organizing in a new global era, Reuther was also careful to ground the department's work in problems that immediately influenced the lives of workers abroad.

During a speech in 1970 reflecting on the UAW's international efforts during the preceding decade, Reuther referred to the union's attempt to "modernize solidarity" by organizing beyond the United States.[25] This was a fitting phrase to describe the UAW's activities abroad, as the union employed language and ideas that resembled those of contemporary modernization theory. Modernity was tied to the notion of a new, global economy that would require a transnational labor movement to confront new issues. The UAW's brand of labor internationalism made workers and their institutions central to the transformation of regions such as Latin America from economically backward and poverty-stricken states absent of democratic rights for workers to thriving industrial nations fit to join the "developed" world. Building on the technocratic approach of modernization theorists, many in the UAW's International Affairs Department tied this theoretical understanding of development to improving wages and living standards through unionization and industrialization. This goal would be achieved by initiating structural economic changes, such as the creation of a thriving consumer economy. This improvement would, in theory, generate a viable internal market for workers with purchasing power to acquire domestically produced goods. The cyclical regeneration of purchasing power

[25] [Victor Reuther] "Solidarity Strategies in the Age of Computers and World-Wide Corporations," 1970, UAW International Affairs Department 1968-1972 Collection, Box 24, Folder 26, WRL.

through substantial wage gains and continuing production would ensure the maintenance of a domestic market for consumer goods such as automobiles.[26]

The UAW promoted the establishment of consumer economies in Latin American nations; however, it did not imagine development as a narrow, national process. Instead, this process was transnational in scope. The UAW recognized the potential problems a spatial disparity in wages could cause for its members within the U.S. as well as workers in developing nations. In 1967 UAW Research Department director Nat Weinberg noted that a number of "runaway plants" were endangering the union's contracts by constructing production facilities outside of the U.S. His concerns were framed in terms of the mutual disadvantage this process created for U.S. workers and their counterparts abroad. Using Mexico as an example, Weinberg emphasized that the UAW must "do everything possible to avoid exploitation of the Mexican workers."[27] In the UAW's vision for a new international order, multinational corporations would not be precluded from opening production facilities abroad, nor was this a call for restricting rather than liberalizing trade. Official publications emphasized that the UAW had "nothing against expansion and integration of markets and wider trading areas. Our argument is with the lag between such progress and our progress in protecting and advancing the well-being of working people."[28] A more equitable international wage structure and steadily rising rates of unionization would benefit all workers, as low wage markets would no longer be such attractive

[26] Victor G. Reuther, "Financing the Underpinnings of Economic Development," April 28, 1960, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1955-1963, Box 65, Folder 5, WRL; "Statement by UAW President Walter P. Reuther, as presiding officer, International Metalworkers' Federation, World Automotive Conference, Frankfurt, Germany," November 8, 1964, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1962-68, Box 53, Folder 12, WRL.

[27] Nat Weinberg to Walter P. Reuther, "U.S. Corporation Operations in Mexico," May 29, 1967, UAW Research Department Special Projects Collection, box 102, folder 23, WRL.

[28] United Automobile Workers, "Solidarity is the Banner: Two Resolutions on International Affairs," May 1966, 43, UAW Region 9A Collection, Box 135, Folder 4, WRL.

investment prospects for multinational corporations. Weinberg stressed that the industrial development of Mexico would be beneficial for Mexican workers, as this process could raise living standards and ensure that they "share fairly in the wealth they produce."[29]

In the UAW's vision for a new international order, multinational corporations would not be precluded from opening production facilities abroad. Nor did they call for restricting rather than liberalizing trade. Official publications emphasized this aspect of UAW foreign policy. "We in the UAW have nothing against expansion and integration of markets and wider trading areas…. Our argument is with the lag between such progress and our progress in protecting and advancing the well-being of working people."[30] A more equitable international wage structure and steadily rising rates of unionization would benefit all workers, as low wage markets would no longer be such attractive investment prospects for multinational corporations. The UAW recognized the potential problems a spatial disparity in wages could cause for its members within the U.S. and workers in developing nations. According to International Affairs Department staff member Gary Busch, the UAW also cautioned against a "tariff wall around the United States" because "it is more costly for us and more costly for everybody else. The only way we are going to get fair trade is if everybody is getting paid a fair wage."[31] Envisioning a symbiotic relationship between workers around the world, the UAW's perspective on international affairs was much more oriented toward confrontation with multinational corporations, rather than AIFLD's emphasis on coexistence and mutual prosperity.

[29] Weinberg to W.P. Reuther, May 29, 1967.

[30] UAW, "Solidarity Is the Banner: Two Resolutions on International Affairs," May 1966, 43,UAW Region 9A Collection, Box 135, Folder 4, WRL.

[31] Busch, interview by author.

To implement this program, the UAW outlined a strategy that encompassed building institutions, educating workers abroad, and sending organizers to developing nations. Victor Reuther touted the creation of an institutional structure to pursue goals such as increasing wages and other tangible improvements like better hours, benefits, and job protection. The World Auto Council provided a structure by which unions negotiating with the same auto company anywhere in the world could share information to get the best contract possible. This body was designed to establish common contract termination dates around the world for workers at every plant operated by one multinational corporation so that the company in question would be severely handicapped when negotiations were to begin, facing a united international workforce sharing information to get the best contract possible.[32]

Victor Reuther regarded the plight of workers in developing nations in relative terms. He did not call for immediate reconciliation between the living standards of workers in industrialized nations and their counterparts in developing nations. This perspective implied that differences would persist as the development process was ongoing, and were linked to the relative stage of development of a nation—although Reuther was careful to describe the "common destiny" of the developed and underdeveloped worlds.[33] To achieve this transformation over time, the UAW's International Affairs Department pushed for the "harmonization" of wages around the world, comparing living standards and setting goals for wages that would meet minimums based on location.[34] Busch noted that the UAW was aware that in Latin America, workers had to earn enough to purchase a different basket of goods in a

[32] V. Reuther, "Legislative Remarks," August 2, 1971, Victor G. Reuther Collection, box 30, folder 2, WRL.

[33] V. Reuther, "Financing the Underpinnings of Economic Development."

[34] UAW, "Published Proceedings of the 1968 UAW Constitutional Convention," (Detroit: UAW, 1968), 180-182.

very different economy.[35] The concept of "harmonizing" wages allowed for a gap in purchasing power between workers in developed and underdeveloped nations, but proponents of this method of transforming developing economies hoped that certain benchmarks would be met through negotiations and pressure from unions.

For the UAW, free trade unions were bulwarks against communism, and tools by which workers could be protected from multinational corporations. They would help developing nations grow exponentially. The UAW's distinctive intellectual approach to labor internationalism was designed to circumvent the growing power of multinational corporations by making international labor solidarity a tangible benefit for workers around the world. While not explicitly claiming an intellectual affinity for Rostow's "stages of development," the UAW did articulate an approach to international labor solidarity that was based on several assumptions which overlapped with the language and premises of modernization theory. Recognizing the relationship between the well-being of workers abroad and those at home, the UAW saw economic justice as a byproduct of development in the so-called "Third World." From a privileged place in the development hierarchy, the UAW positioned itself as a leader in a new type of international labor solidarity that combined the technocratic approach of modernization theorists with the ideas of the old CIO tradition of industrial organizing to counter the problems facing workers in the late twentieth century. The UAW's international agenda created institutions and mobilized organizers in an effort to address the problems of a changing global economy. While staying within the confines of Cold War politics, the UAW recalibrated the popular discourse on development to critique the increasing flexibility of capital at the expense of workers around the world. This expansive

[35] Busch, interview by author.

agenda set the UAW apart from the AFL-CIO on international questions, and the differences were most evident in terms of institutional practices and the actions of organizers on the ground.

Organizing "the UAW's Biggest Region"

To accomplish such a geographically vast project, the UAW aimed to organize what Victor Reuther referred to as its "biggest region" by constructing an international apparatus of its own.[36] Reuther's words alluded to the UAW practice of dividing the United States and Canada into several administrative regions. This nomenclature aptly described the UAW's perspective on international organizing by equating it with domestic organizing to the international arena. The organizational structure of the UAW in the United States and Canada facilitated its success; a similar institutional framework would be needed to bridge the geographic expanses involved in international organizing.

The UAW's International Affairs Department, based in Washington, D.C., was a small yet influential segment of this massive union. From the merger to the early 1970s, Victor Reuther focused the department's efforts on several fronts, including organizing, workplace safety, community health care, education, economic development, and international labor solidarity. The leg work of international organizing was done by a small staff, although regional and national leadership also made appearances at conferences, meetings, and organizing drives. There was limited, yet significant, participation by rank and file workers. Victor Reuther and his staff worked out of the UAW International Affairs Department office in Washington, D.C., while sending organizers to locations around the globe. They were financed by the interest accruing on the UAW's substantial strike benefit fund and guaranteed that over one million dollars per year would be allocated to the UAW's Free World Labor Defense Fund. This pool of money was

[36] UAW, "Published Proceedings of the 1968 UAW Constitutional Convention," (Detroit: UAW, 1968), 187, WRL.

budgeted for projects abroad, often to help an organizing drive or finance a strike.[37] Monetary aid was not the only form of assistance provided. The UAW integrated the institutional support for international solidarity with the everyday tasks of organizing.

Instead of creating an institution such as AIFLD, which was structurally compromised by its links to the U.S. government and American business interests, the UAW affiliated with the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF), an international trade union secretariat. The UAW's strategy was explicitly configured to strengthen workers in bargaining relationships with employers while emphasizing practical connections between workers across national boundaries. This went beyond a focus on establishing "free trade unions" allied with U.S. interests to a more constructive and confrontational approach that was directly critical of the AFL-CIO and AIFLD.

Within the IMF, Walter Reuther served as the head of the World Automotive Department. In this capacity, he was charged with orchestrating the integration of automobile worker unions into one cohesive administrative body. Making this organization functional required a network of effective institutions to coordinate bargaining across national lines. Affiliated auto unions were to be united by the World Auto Council, which brought together member unions according to the multinational corporate ownership they had to confront in bargaining. UAW organizers encouraged metal workers' unions in Latin America to affiliate with the IMF, so that the WAC would be more inclusive and have more leverage in international bargaining. Funds were appropriated for the creation of national auto councils in Latin American nations, which would bring together autoworkers in each nation to coordinate bargaining.[38] The

[37] Victor Reuther, "The International Activities of American Trade Unions," UAW Research Department, Special Projects Collection, Box 102, Folder 21, WRL.

[38] Victor Reuther to Walter P. Reuther, "Request for Grant from UAW Free World Labor Defense Fund," January 27, 1965 and March 15, 1966, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner, 1962-68, Collection, Box 48, Folder 18, WRL; Ed Torres to Victor G. Reuther, "IMF-UAW Activities in Latin

UAW made a concerted effort to create an auto council for Mexican autoworkers. Walter Reuther made a well-publicized visit to Mexico City in 1966 in attempt to foster cooperation between several unions representing Mexican autoworkers.[39]

The WAC would allow autoworkers to build what Victor Reuther called a "parallel international structure" to the one created by multinational corporations.[40] Geographer Andrew Herod has demonstrated the way space and place shape the possibilities for working class mobilization. International solidarity efforts are fundamentally tied to the geographic dimensions of worker to worker or union to union relationships. [41] Although it is much easier for these massive institutions to shape the production process and capital investment, the UAW's ideal vision for working class internationalism conceived of a practical international solidarity that could check the power of multinational corporations.

Staff members working out of the UAW's Washington D.C. office tracked the international auto industry from several angles to map this geography of capitalism. Trade, compensation, and management tactics were all examined to improve the union's bargaining position in negotiations. Staff followed the foreign investments, trade patterns, and collective bargaining agreements of multinational corporations in the auto industry. Busch worked on one project that analyzed Latin American collective bargaining agreements to "set priorities" and "point out weak spots" with the goal of writing a "model contract" based on "best clauses."[42]

America, 1966-1967," September 8, 1967, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner, 1962-68, Collection, Box 57, Folder 11, WRL.

[39] Ruben Salazar, "Reuther Woos Autoworkers in Mexico," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 November, 1966.

[40] Reuther, *The Brothers Reuther*, 401.

[41] Herod, *Labor Geographies*; Herod, "Geographies of Labor Internationalism," *Social Science History* 27:4 (2003): 501-523.

[42] Gary Busch, "Report of Gary Busch," n.d., UAW International Affairs Department 1968-1972, box 19, folder 24, WRL.

This document would simplify the bargaining process, providing a structure to guide unions in developing nations as they prepared for negotiations by highlighting gains made elsewhere in contracts with the same company. Unions in developing nations were alerted to contract clauses that may have been omitted from negotiations with multinational corporations despite being included in contracts in the United States. Finally, staff members were charged with preparing materials for both the UAW summer school units on international affairs and for international gatherings such as the World Auto Council meetings.[43]

To achieve the desired practical goals of international solidarity, the UAW prioritized data compilation during the 1960s. Busch was part of the staff charged with collecting this information, which ranged from comparative studies of wages, benefits, job classifications, and contract structures to "market basket analyses," which determined the number of hours required for an autoworker to earn sufficient wages to purchase a basket of goods (adjusted for the local economy and prices across national and regional boundaries).[44] This database made international solidarity a worthwhile, tangible pursuit instead of merely a dialogue among union leadership affiliated with the WAC, which would have little impact on rank and file workers. The UAW also acted on behalf of Latin American unions in discussions with multinational corporations concerning strikes and contract negotiations. For instance, when workers at a Ford factory in Venezuela went on strike in 1966, the UAW International Affairs Department encouraged the Ford Motor Company to intervene and urge the local Ford management in Venezuela to settle

[43] Busch interview; Busch, "Report of Gary Busch."

[44] Busch, interview.

the strike. The UAW also helped workers in Mexico City draft contract demands for negotiations with Ford in 1967, and intervened in other nations in similar situations.[45]

A social component referred to as "solidarity assistance" supplemented the organizing focus of the UAW's international affairs. Beyond financial aid, bargaining support, and research, the UAW orchestrated the transfer of office and medical equipment to unions in developing nations. In 1967, drug shipments, medical supplies, and office equipment were distributed to unions in the Dominican Republic, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico.[46] In 1968 these efforts were consolidated under the banner of the UAW's Social, Technical and Educational Program (STEP). Office supplies such as film projectors, typewriters, mimeograph machines, and desks, along with medical supplies, were distributed by UAW-STEP to unions lacking the financial means to purchase this equipment. Organizations and individuals—from unions to companies to private citizens—could make tax deductible contributions to UAW-STEP. Workers targeted to for assistance from this program were not only found in Latin America. Unions across the developing world received donations, as well as what the UAW referred to as "poverty pockets in the U.S."[47] Items were often collected by UAW regional offices and UAW locals, incorporating rank and file members into this effort. Members solicited donations from the community, and local offices made contact with businesses to acquire donated items that could

[45] Ed Torres to Victor G. Reuther, "IMF-UAW Activities in Latin America, 1966-1967," September 8, 1967, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner, 1962-68, Collection, Box 57, Folder 11, WRL.

[46] Ed Torres to Victor G. Reuther, "UAW Solidarity Assistance Independent of the IMF," September 8, 1967, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner, 1962-68, Collection, Box 57, Folder 11, WRL.

[47] "STEP: The Union's Friendly Imprint Around the World," *Solidarity* 11:3 (March 1968): 5; Victor G. Reuther, *The Brothers Reuther*, 410-11; Gerald A. Daniel to Victor G. Reuther, July 10, 1968, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1962-68, Box 24, Folder 24, WRL; Victor G. Reuther to Leonard Woodcock, October 13, 1971, Leonard Woodcock Collection, Box 50, Folder 15, WRL.

be transferred to unions abroad.[48] UAW-STEP made community development and quality of life issues an essential part of labor's involvement in developing nations.

The UAW International Affairs Department attempted to build international solidarity by creating structures for communication, organization, and cooperation that would cross international boundaries and level the playing field for workers in the struggle against multinational corporations. These institutional avenues for international organizing were augmented by the actions of organizers in the field, who worked on the ground building this network in everyday interactions with workers abroad.

"We're not the Institute"

In 1964, Esteban Torres received instructions to report to Detroit for a training regimen designed to prepare him for his time abroad as an international representative of the UAW. In addition to receiving information concerning his trip and his contacts in Latin America, Torres was educated in time and motion study, job evaluation, and incentive systems.[49] He had worked as an autoworker in Los Angeles and had organizing experience from his union local.[50] Torres' language skills and organizer experience in Los Angeles made him a valuable addition to the UAW International Affairs Department staff, and he was instructed to bring all of these skills on his travels in Latin America. Making connections with workers abroad and representing the interests of the UAW did not just involve political organizing; it also involved visiting the shop floor and trying to generate practical changes that would impact the lives of workers abroad.

[48] Daniel to V.G. Reuther, July 10, 1968; Herman Rebhan to Ernie Moran, "Dental Clinic sponsored by Region 6," June 16, 1971, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1968-72, Box 43, Folder 15, WRL.

[49] V. Reuther to Torres, February 26, 1964, UAW Region 6 Collection, box 44, folder 9, WRL.

[50] Torres, interview by author.

UAW representatives held forums to present the values and practices of the UAW to Latin American workers. Organizers met with union leaders and rank and file workers throughout the region to discuss the goals, tactics, and history of the UAW. A concerted educational effort was made to clarify the UAW's position on political questions and transmit knowledge of American labor history, contract negotiations, work processes, and workplace safety. The UAW also began a similar educational campaign within the U.S. to consolidate the membership's support for international organizing.

Working out of a local union office—often affiliated with the IMF—the UAW organizer served as part field researcher, part educator, and part union spokesman. UAW international representatives were supplied with filmstrips and Spanish translations of the UAW's Steward's Manual. Films were used to relate the history of the labor movement in the United States. "This Union Cause," a short film that recounted the history of American workers, framed the labor movement as a product of the American Revolution.[51] It was shown to Latin American unionists, and the ICFTU and unions in England, Germany, and France had requested copies.[52] An accompanying book was published by the UAW International Affairs Department, recounting the momentous victories in American labor's ongoing struggle for freedom. From the liberation of the slaves, to Haymarket and the Pullman strike, up to the CIO organizing of the 1930s, this permanent revolution was equated with rising living standards and broad democratic rights for American citizens.[53] This process was the same "whether in the land of Jefferson and Lincoln or

[51] "This Union Cause," transcript of film audio, n.d., UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1955-1963, Box 89, Folder 11, WRL; "Esta Causa Sindical," transcript of film audio, n.d., UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1955-1963, Box 89, Folder 11, WRL.

[52] Lewis Carliner to Victor G. Reuther, September 18, 1962, Victor G. Reuther Collection, Box 21, Folder 26, WRL.

[53] UAW International Affairs Department, "This Union Cause," 1963.

on the continents where new and developing nations are writing their own declarations of independence and forging their own destinies."[54] The UAW also distributed a pamphlet titled "What's In a Typical UAW Contract."[55] This was often requested by labor attachés. The attaché in Mexico City, in his request for Spanish copies of this document, noted that this "practical information is extremely useful to us in explaining the United States labor movement abroad and also as a guide for use by trade unions here in similar industries."[56]

In a series of reports sent to Victor Reuther and other members of the UAW International Affairs Department staff during his time in the field, Torres recorded the everyday activities and varied responsibilities of a UAW international representative. In Buenos Aires, Torres used the facilities of a local union, the Unión Obrera Metalúrgica (UOM), to collect data on wages, benefits, and working conditions in the region. He also served as impromptu educator, introducing workers to the administrative machinery and politics of the UAW in well-attended meetings. He reported that pamphlets produced by the UAW's Education Department generated "tremendous interest," and spent a large portion of the meeting going over these materials with eager union members.[57] Questions ranged from how the UAW functioned—the collection of dues, contract negotiations—to more political questions concerning the ideas of the UAW.[58]

UOM saw how an American unionist could aid its effort to organize production facilities in Buenos Aires. The local Fiat Motors plant was particularly difficult for UOM to organize, as it

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Victor G. Reuther to Fernando Melgosa Q., May 10, 1963, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1962-68, Box 57, Folder 6, WRL.

[56] Irving Salert to Victor G. Reuther, December 26, 1962, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1955-1963, Box 110, Folder 14, WRL.

[57] Esteban E. Torres to Victor Reuther, "Progress Report of Latin-American Activities for the Period Covering April 4 to April 11, 1964," April 12, 1964, UAW Region 6 Collection, box 44, folder 3, WRL.

[58] Victor G. Reuther to Fernando Melgosa Q., May 10, 1963.

was controlled by a "rival company union." Torres, as a visiting American, proved valuable to UOM's organizing efforts, as he requested a tour of the plant for himself and his companions from UOM. The company provided the tour, presumably because of the presence of Torres, and UOM was able to increase its visibility in the plant by making contact with Fiat workers and receiving a guided tour of the facilities by management.[59] This was a common function for Torres as he traveled across Latin America. In Brazil, he visited Willys-Overland and GM plants, as well as other factories in metal industries with workers affiliated with the IMF in 1964. Torres was welcomed as he touted the UAW's record and the commitment it was ready to make to international solidarity.[60]

In several other situations, Torres was asked to use his political influence as a representative of the UAW and the IMF to intervene in local disputes. In Brazil in 1964, he was asked to discuss with a judge an ongoing case concerning the government's ability to freeze wage increases after the change in regimes that followed the coup. Torres and local union members felt that his presence might turn the decision in their favor.[61]

As a visiting unionist, Torres's high profile meant he was interviewed by the local press. During a radio interview, he was asked to explain the UAW's position on the War on Poverty, the civil rights movement, and other contemporary U.S. political issues.[62] Local reporters, union members, and other workers frequently asked him to clarify the position of the UAW on political

[59] Esteban E. Torres to Victor Reuther, "Progress Report of Latin-American Activities for the Period Covering March 18 to March 27, 1964," UAW Region 6 Collection, box 44, folder 3, WRL.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Esteban E. Torres to Victor Reuther, April 12, 1964.

matters vis-à-vis the AFL-CIO.[63] Like Lula, many Latin American workers were suspicious of him as an American, and he had to reiterate that "we operate a different way, we're not the Institute, we're not involved in the CIA."[64]

Torres also had to deal with the presence of agents of several other U.S. organizations. AIFLD had a strong staff presence in many of the industrial centers in Latin America, but often the Americans in Latin American nations most interested in labor affairs were working for the U.S. government. Labor attaches and other embassy personnel were often interested in the activities of UAW representatives. In Venezuela to attend a national labor congress in 1964, Torres was privately told by Tom Martin, the U.S. Information Agency representative in Caracas, to establish contact with a faction in a local labor dispute that at the time was considered in line with the interests of the U.S. embassy. Torres was told that if he refused, he would be "of no help to them." "I told him to go to hell!," Torres recalled, as he was in Venezuela representing the UAW and the IMF. For Martin, the local perception of the U.S. labor movement was at stake at this gathering, and he was particularly concerned that the AFL-CIO's Meany had not sent an official greeting or sent a surrogate, such as AIFLD's Director Andrew McLellan. Martin even asked Torres to speak on behalf of Meany, which Torres flatly refused. Instead, he addressed the congress as a UAW representative, and was met with a standing ovation.[65]

[63] Esteban E. Torres to Victor Reuther, "Progress Report of Latin-American Activities," April 20, 1964, UAW Region 6 Collection, box 44, folder 3, WRL; Torres to V. Reuther, "Progress Report of Latin-American Activities for the Period Covering March 18 to March 27, 1964."

[64] Torres, interview by author.

[65] Esteban E. Torres to Stanley Greenspan, December 2, 1964, UAW International Affairs Department Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1962-68, box 57, folder 10, WRL.

This political maneuvering was part of the UAW representative's quotidian tasks. They also studied political disputes within the labor movement in Latin America, to determine the relative strength of auto worker and other metal worker unions, as well as the influence of AIFLD on these unions, at each stop of their tours. UAW representatives gauged the prospects of providing assistance to individual unions, determining which ones they considered unstable and might not represent the best potential recipients of UAW assistance.[66]

In the Latin American context, the UAW's objections to the activities of the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department were connected to many of the large projects implemented by AIFLD. The construction of worker housing in Latin American cities was one of the projects identified by the UAW as an example of the questionable motives of AIFLD in the region. Torres disputed the housing construction numbers publicized by the AFL-CIO, referring to AIFLD publications which stated that construction had commenced on housing projects in several cities across Latin America. Torres questioned these numbers and confirmed his suspicions by speaking with his contacts inside the Institute.[67] The number of AIFLD-built housing units was much lower than originally announced, and he determined that AIFLD claimed success based on the actions of other international organizations, such as AID and the Inter-American Development bank.[68] AIFLD-sponsored housing was a social development project of questionable material impact but had significant Cold War implications. This was one way the UAW confronted AIFLD on issues concerning developing nations.

[66] Henry Santiestevan and Ed Torres, "Report on Trip to Latin America," March 24, 1969; Santiestevan, "Latin American Trip," December 16, 1969, UAW International Affairs Department 1968-1972 Collection, Box 20, Folder 1, WRL.

[67] E. Torres to Victor G. Reuther, "Inter-American Bulletin Report of AFL-CIO Housing," January 13, 1967, Victor G. Reuther Collection, box 12, folder 11, WRL.

[68] Ibid.

In 1967, Torres cited an internal complaint from the AIFLD director in Honduras about the poor condition of housing constructed under the auspices of the Institute for SITRATERCO, a union of railroad workers. Torres debunked AIFLD's claims that it had been the primary source of funding behind the Honduras project, citing the *Inter-American Bulletin* and sources he was familiar with inside AIFLD.[69] Jesús Artígas, the AIFLD country program director in Honduras, sent a pointed critique to James R. Holway, the director of the AIFLD's Social Projects Department, criticizing the building materials and the AIFLD-approved inspections of the construction process, which had left most of the units undesirable to current and potential residents. Residents were fleeing the SITRATERCO project despite significant financial penalties for doing so, and Artígas criticized the contractor and was concerned with AIFLD's prominent association with the structurally unsound project may produce a "public scandal which will disturb our present and future labor in Honduras."[70] For Torres, this letter was further evidence that AIFLD was neglecting to disclose the details surrounding these large-scale housing projects, demonstrating that AIFLD was more concerned with the "public relations value" of the proposed projects rather than the social and physical reconstruction of working class communities.[71]

In addition to criticism from the UAW, local unions in Latin America also complained of misinformation and deception from AIFLD organizers in the field. In 1966, Torres reported that a union in Sao Paulo complained about AIFLD's "propaganda" and "false promises," disputing AIFLD's claims that the organization is a "union-to-union program." Citing AIFLD's overwhelming financial support from the U.S. government, these union members were upset that

[69] Ibid.

[70] Artigas to Holway, December 26, 1966, Victor G. Reuther Collection, box 12, folder 11, WRL.

[71] E. Torres, "Inter-American Bulletin Report of AFL-CIO Housing."

the organization had not followed through on its pledge three years earlier to construct five thousand houses for the workers of the city, and accused AIFLD of dangling the prospect of housing construction in front of the workers and deliberately not following through on this program so as to discredit the local leadership, which had suffered from accusations of communist sympathies.[72]

The UAW International Affairs Department made it a point to question the legitimacy of AIFLD's claims to represent "free trade unionism," as it noted the galling connection between American business and AIFLD. As Torres indicated, most of the funding for AIFLD projects came from AID, with a small percentage coming from business and labor sources. This posed a problem for AIFLD in connecting with Latin American workers, many of whom distrusted the motives of the U.S. government and the very same corporations that were operating production facilities in Latin America. The UAW adamantly believed that the AFL-CIO had contradicted the spirit of free trade unionism by highlighting the federation's role in supporting regimes based on anticommunism rather than the interests of workers.

Teaching Internationalism

By the late 1960s, a steady stream of union members from around the developing world either experienced union training programs in their home country or in the United States. AIFLD's training in the United States was focused on the politics of anticommunism, providing each unionist with a stipend to, as Torres put it, "go back and continue to be an agent."[73] AIFLD training courses spent an average of eighteen hours on coursework related to "democracy and totalitarianism" compared with about five hours on collective bargaining, and did not provide

[72] Ed Torres to Victor Reuther, November 16, 1966, Victor G. Reuther Collection, box 12, folder 3, WRL.

[73] Torres, interview by author.

instruction on topics such as profit sharing programs, educating workers, or understanding labor legislation.[74] In 1969, Latin American worker representatives in the U.S. on an AIFLD training program met with the UAW to inquire about its dispute with the AFL-CIO. They were dissatisfied with the way AIFLD had structured their time in the U.S., and complained that "although they expressed their desire of meeting with their trade union counterparts in the U.S., they were always introduced to management in the various plants they visited."[75]

In contrast to AIFLD, which spent most of its time on political education, the UAW foregrounded collective bargaining. In 1968, twenty Latin American union members traveled to the United States to study collective bargaining at a UAW training programs for autoworkers.[76] Working as an instructor, Nat Weinberg was explicitly told to place "special emphasis" on the UAW's methodological approach to collective bargaining. [77] The main areas of instruction were countering employer claims at the bargaining table, shaping public opinion, and mitigating the concerns of government during the bargaining process.

Torres ran UAW programs as "union to union" effort, focusing on this transfer of knowledge and practices on the shop floor and in the union hall rather than the politics of free trade unionism that was a hallmark of the AIFLD instructional regimen.[78] Union members with expertise in a variety of fields, including workplace safety, organizing, and collective bargaining, accompanied international representatives on trips to Latin America after completing intensive

[74] Radosh, 421-422.

[75] Cerefino Rodriguez to Herman Rebhan, June 2, 1969, "Meeting with Latin American Union Leaders at AIFLD," UAW International Affairs Department, 1968-1972 Collection, Box 16, Folder 15, WRL.

[76] Victor G. Reuther to Nat Weinberg, "Training Program—Latin America Auto Labor Leadership," February 19, 1968, UAW Research Department—Special Projects, Box 102, Folder 19, WRL.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Torres interview.

training courses of their own in the United States.[79] Training programs delivered by organizers described strategies for contract negotiations and the everyday workings of the union while also offering recommendations designed to improve the work process itself. Torres highlighted the potential hazards of certain jobs and described the UAW's methods to ensure a safe workplace for its members. He often noted that Latin American workers were unfamiliar with structuring the work process to their advantage, setting rates and safety measures in contracts. Torres also demonstrated techniques for particular jobs that were dangerous such as lead soldering, thereby exposing workers to different ways of completing a task.[80]

This emphasis on workplace concerns was the centerpiece of the UAW's efforts to instruct its membership on the value of its international program. The promotion of international affairs engendered some resistance from rank and file members, many of whom voiced concerns that these efforts were taking away time and resources from more pressing matters within the United States such as job losses, plant movement, and speed ups. Although UAW membership was sympathetic to anticommunist sentiment, it was also comparatively more liberal politically than most unions in the United States in the early 1960s.[81] The degree to which union officials supported the activities of the International Affairs Department progressively increased among local office holders and staff at the regional, national, and international level.[82] The UAW leadership made a concerted effort to convey its ideas about labor's role abroad to the rank and

[79] Torres interview; "UAW Announces Staff Training Program on International Affairs," n.d. [1965], RG18-007, series 5, box 16, folder 21, GMMA.

[80] Torres interview by author; Torres to Victor Reuther, "Progress Report of Latin-American Activities for the Period Covering March 18 to March 27, 1964."

[81] Alfred O. Hero, *The U.A.W. and World Affairs* (World Peace Foundation, 1965), 402-415.

[82] Ibid.

file through official union publications, such as *Solidarity*, the UAW's monthly newspaper.[83] The International Affairs Department encouraged union members to take international trips during their vacations to experience other countries as tourists. It also organized more formal visits by delegations to unions in other countries, particularly those in Europe.[84] The UAW's Education Department also took an active role in distributing information on labor internationalism, producing documents and collating union publications for dissemination to UAW locals.[85]

The UAW's bi-annual Constitutional Convention was another forum for instruction on international affairs during the 1960s and early 1970s. Foreign unionists were invited and granted time to speak to the convention about the support provided by the UAW and how it had aided their cause abroad.[86] This public display of international solidarity was often reciprocated as the UAW convention passed resolutions on international affairs. The resolutions from the 1966 convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, were published as a pamphlet by the UAW, and these were distributed to union locals across the country.[87] The resolutions presented a comprehensive vision of the UAW's understanding of international politics and a call for international solidarity. It questioned the arms race and demanded outreach to communist nations rather than confrontation. The standard anticommunist rhetoric was also included—from questions about the "belligerence" of "Red China" to a conspicuous support for the Vietnam

[83] W.L. Ginsberg to John C. Scott, December 13, 1963, UAW International Affairs Department Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1962-68, box 25, folder 24, WRL.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] UAW, "Published Proceedings of the 1968 UAW Constitutional Convention," (Detroit: UAW, 1968), 177-180, WRL.

[87] United Automobile Workers, "Solidarity is the Banner: Two Resolutions on International Affairs," May 1966, 43,UAW Region 9A Collection, Box 135, Folder 4, WRL.

campaign, with a call to promote democratic elections and a refusal to consider both "withdrawal or escalation" as a solution.[88] The UAW described a global perspective on poverty, including figures on the extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of Western nations. The strategy for solving the problem of poverty around the world could be found in a program that used the levers of government to facilitate financial and technical aid to developing nations. The UAW perceived of organized labor as a major component of this transformation, combating international corporations with international solidarity.

In 1970, UAW International Affairs Department staff member Lewis Carliner described his plan for a visual exhibit designed to portray "international solidarity as a cheerful and satisfying and pleasant experience" through posters presenting the unions abroad that were affiliated with the UAW through the IMF. The most revealing aspect of this display was a multi-sided kiosk presenting the goals of the UAW's international program, including the struggle against "tyranny" and exchanges with communist countries.[89] The other tasks touted by the display went beyond Cold War anticommunist rhetoric focused on the growing power of international corporations and the practical creation of international solidarity. The exhibit stressed that runaway corporations "do not stop at the US border," and that working through the IMF would provide leverage for the world's workforce in negotiations with multinationals to prevent employers from leaving the country to exploit low wages abroad. Finally, the UAW stressed the impact of the social and practical components of its vision for labor internationalism. The UAW-STEP program was cited as a way to "help workers in new countries help themselves

[88] Ibid., 11-15, 17-19.

[89] Lewis Carliner to Herman Rebhan, Colin Gonze, and Victor Reuther, "Convention Exhibit and Education Program," n.d. [1970], UAW International Affairs Department, 1968-1972, Box 24, Folder 29, WRL.

raise their standard of living" to the "levels modern technology require."[90] This exhibit provides a glimpse of the UAW's self-conscious representation of its international efforts. The UAW International Affairs Department wanted members to see it as firmly anticommunist yet concerned about the social and economic costs of the increasingly globalized economy.

The rank and file were not as readily sympathetic to the UAW's liberal vision of promoting dialogue and understanding between the Free World and communist nations and unions. This position was commonplace in the Executive Board and professional activists within the UAW. In the early 1960s, analysis of a 1965 independent survey commissioned by the UAW to assess the membership's perspective on world affairs showed that most members adopted a myopic view of communism as a unified force with little or no internal differences to distinguish the political intricacies among communist states and hint at the possibility of dialogue and compromise. [91]

The survey also determined that worker dissatisfaction on the job resulted in "more conservative views on international affairs and race relations."[92] This interesting convergence between job satisfaction and attitudes on race and internationalism could be subsequently applied to considerations of economic assistance abroad. "Whites who took a liberal position on foreign economic aid were for the most part liberal on domestic race relations as well, whereas white unionists in all types of unions and at all levels within them who would stop aid were highly likely to feel that desegregation had moved too fast."[93] The ideas of the UAW International

[90] Ibid.

[91] Hero, *The UAW and World Affairs*, 423.

[92] Ibid., 289-291.

[93] Hero and Emil Starr, *The Reuther-Meany Foreign Policy Dispute: Union Leaders and Members View World Affairs* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1970): 154.

Affairs Department were not always reflected in the membership. The UAW's leadership was well aware of this gap, and factored this consideration into their policy making.[94]

By the end of the 1960s, the UAW International Affairs Department, working in conjunction with the organization's Education Department, had created a curriculum to relate to American autoworkers the need for an extensive overseas presence. Instructors were met by increasingly hostile classes at the UAW's voluntary summer schools and local and regional meetings. They faced questions such as "Why should we be concerned about living standards overseas—when we've got so many problems here at home?" and "Why is the UAW so interested in these international corporations?"[95] In response, the International Affairs Department emphasized the way wages, employment, and the locations of auto plants were often contingent upon international factors.[96]

Despite the department's concerns, rank and file members were not uniformly opposed to the internationalist agenda of the UAW. One survey determined that "U.A.W. members, even the rank and file, were in the mid-sixties more inclined to support multilateral international cooperation and more equalitarian about race relations than either the general public, other Americans of similar educational, social, occupational, and income status, or even other American trade unionists taken as a group."[97] Many were involved in trips abroad to visit European unions or accompany UAW delegations to conferences and meetings in Latin America. The UAW also organized youth delegations to travel abroad as ambassadors, and tried

[94] Hero, *The UAW and World Affairs*, 423.

[95] "The UAW and Foreign Affairs," UAW International Affairs Department, 1968-1972 Collection, Box 18, Folder 26, WRL.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., 181.

to increase members' participation in the Peace Corps program.[98] A contract clause gave UAW members the option to serve in the Peace Corps "without loss of seniority and with full re-employment rights on completing their two years of service." In 1964, almost 200 UAW members volunteered for this program.[99]

The spirit of participation exhibited by some workers coexisted precariously with the indifference and hostility of others concerning the UAW's international efforts. Despite the UAW's efforts, international affairs proved to be a contentious issue for American workers. This sentiment would intensify as protectionism rose in the 1970s. Still, the concern about the impact of international affairs was often not one of global harmony. During the 1967 Ford strike, one UAW member from New Bedford, Massachusetts, wrote to his congressman to complain about a dues increase on rank and file members of the union, used to enlarge the UAW strike fund. Edward Galary was not a participant in this particular work stoppage, and he felt that the dues increase was chipping away at his take-home pay and consequently his ability to provide for his family. When discussing his immediate predicament, Galary questioned why the UAW doled out support for striking workers in other unions, yet they would not attempt to borrow from other unions in their time of need, which could postpone another dues increase. What further enraged Galary was the UAW's continued willingness to send support "overseas to foreign workers," and he correctly pointed to spending on international affairs as the source of the union's shortfall in

[98] "25 UAW Delegates Attended ICFTU Youth Conference" UAW Region 6 Collection, box 44, folder 6, WRL; V. Reuther to UAW International Executive Board, "CTM Secretary General Endorses Idea of National Auto Council," UAW Region 9 Collection, box 57, folder 1, WRL.

[99] Victor G. Reuther, "UAW's New Contracts: Technological Progress without Fear," November 1964, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1962-68, Box 21, Folder 17, WRL.

the strike fund.[100] The interest accrued on the strike fund had been tied to the Free World Labor Defense Fund, and Galary questioned the necessity of voluntarily contributing that substantial sum to workers abroad rather than UAW members at home.[101] He simultaneously undermined the concept of solidarity while singling out the UAW's international program as a frivolous expenditure that directly damaged the financial prospects of individual members. In one letter, Galary called into question much of the Reuther program, hinting at an underlying distaste for international solidarity among rank and file workers in the late 1960s.

Nevertheless, the UAW persisted in its efforts to mobilize support for international projects among its own ranks and create a dialogue with visiting foreign workers traveling in the United States. Educational programs at home and abroad were limited in their impact yet significant in terms of demonstrating the UAW's intellectual approach to working class internationalism in practice. Torres and other international representatives of the UAW embodied the differences within American labor concerning international affairs, offering Latin American workers an alternative to the AFL-CIO's inflexible anticommunism and a link to an American union more willing to make constructive connections between workers' organizations across national boundaries.

Conclusion

The UAW's foray into international affairs was an ambitious attempt to build practical solidarity across national boundaries. Guided by a transnational understanding of economic inequality and unemployment, the UAW encouraged unionization and helped establish a

[100] Edward J. Galary to Congressman Hastings Keith, n.d. [October 1967], RG 174, Box 491, Folder LD Ford Motor Company 1967, NARA.

[101] The UAW amended its constitution in 1962 in regards to the investments made strike fund, appropriating the income from interest and dividends from investments ma to this reserve fund to the UAW's international solidarity efforts. [V. Reuther] "Solidarity Strategies," 12.

framework for practical international cooperation among unions. This effort did little to stem the expansion of corporate power or build an international movement of workers from below. The UAW's proactive vision of labor internationalism proved ambitious to a fault. In the ensuing decades the achievement of an international solidarity network as effective as the one imagined by the UAW leadership proved unattainable. Nevertheless, the UAW's identification of the power and flexibility of capital, and its recognition of the interrelated fate of workers in the United States and in developing nations, set it apart from the AFL-CIO as a perceptive voice warning of the difficult future facing organized labor.

During the 1960s, the UAW attempted to mobilize its considerable resources behind a reform agenda within the United States. This coeval project of economic and social development was directed at urban areas suffering from high unemployment, endemic poverty, and a significant lack of institutions that could effectively advocate for change. Many of these neighborhoods were former industrial centers feeling the impact of the first wave of deindustrialization. Absent the inroads to political power afforded to wealthy communities, and targeted by urban renewal schemes by the mid-decade, poor urban communities were often populated by minority populations. The UAW felt that a labor-sponsored organizing effort designed especially for communities lacking an industrial base and political power could apply the principles of the labor movement to solve the problems of these marginalized areas.

Chapter 3

"Developing Communities": Community Unions in Los Angeles, 1965-1974

On August 13, 1967, a crowd estimated in the tens of thousands cheered as a parade led by boxing champion Muhammad Ali traveled through the largely African American neighborhood of Watts in Los Angeles. The parade was part of the Watts Summer Festival, an event staged to commemorate the two year anniversary of the violent uprising that occurred in August 1965 during which at least thirty four people died, thousands were injured or arrested, and property damage was estimated at $200 million.[1] One of the most popular floats in the parade was that of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC), which featured a large paper globe with the inscription, "Stop the world, we want to get on."[2] The WLCAC was founded several months prior to the events of that hot summer of 1965, and was originally charged with the task of improving conditions in this impoverished area to prevent such a conflagration. While the WLCAC's stated desire to join a "world" already in motion was surely figurative, it suggested the perceived distance between economically devastated and politically powerless Watts and other parts of Los Angeles and beyond.

As a "community union" established by a group of industrial unions led by the United Automobile Workers (UAW), the WLCAC hoped to stimulate the political and economic revitalization of the marginalized "ghetto" of Watts, producing a modern, self-sufficient

[1] Gerald Horne, *Fire this Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 3.

[2] Robert Windeler, "Watts Fete Led by Cassius Clay," *New York Times*, 14 August 1967, 22.

community in its place. In cities like Detroit, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Newark, New Jersey, the UAW made community development an important part of its domestic agenda. Los Angeles was also home to the East Los Angeles Community Union (TELACU), founded by UAW members three years after the WLCAC and based in the Mexican American "barrio" of East Los Angeles. From the perspective of the UAW, the unorganized and unemployed residents of Watts and East L.A. lacked the means to revitalize their neighborhoods, and these organizations were designed to fill this void by using union tactics to mobilize communities lacking a large industrial workforce. Community unions could harness the collective power of residents to encourage local business investment and economic development, raise the neighborhood's standard of living, provide jobs and train workers in new skills.

The UAW's notion of the possibilities inherent in the community union model was echoed its efforts abroad in developing nations. Through its International Affairs Department, the UAW outlined an agenda for improving developing nations that was grounded in the social democratic ideals of its leadership and considered workers and their institutions a central part of the development process. At this time, the UAW leadership ambitiously hoped that ever-increasing levels of unionization would offset the increasing power of multinational corporations looking for low wage markets to exploit. In this vision, organized workers, along with jobs and sufficient purchasing power to support a thriving domestic economy, formed the foundation for national development abroad.

Organized labor faced a similar struggle within the United States as corporations relocated production facilities not only overseas but also to suburban areas and the largely non-union South in search of lower operating costs.[3] Geography played a role in distilling the

[3] Cowie, *Capital Moves*; Self, *American Babylon*; Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

chronically unemployed and underemployed from a unionized workforce that was increasingly distant from the inner city. In Los Angeles County, this spatial contradiction was epitomized by life in Watts and East Los Angeles, where business investment and job opportunities were scarce and residents lacked adequate representation in local and state politics. These communities were further burdened by the racial barriers within Los Angeles that were only beginning to show signs of weakening in the mid-1960s and were reinforced by deindustrialization and suburbanization.

The UAW's international affairs program wrote labor into the process of development while emphasizing the need for industrial organizing in developing nations. This ambitious project reflected the sense that the principles of organized labor could be applied in a variety of social and economic settings to improve the living and working conditions facing workers. It could also benefit the nation as a whole, as in the case of Latin American nations striving to industrialize. The pursuit of industrialization by these governments resulted in the possibility of a rising number of industrial workers, which facilitated prime conditions for organizing. The inverse was true in urban communities in the United States, as the withdrawal of industry was quickening in the 1960s, creating dire social and economic conditions for industrial organizing. The UAW determined that the dwindling industrial base in neighborhoods such as Watts and East Los Angeles offered the opportunity for union members, acting in conjunction with a local community, to use the principles of industrial organizing to transform the fortunes of a community.

In this chapter, then, I plan to address the early history of the WLCAC and TELACU in the context of organized labor's attempt to negotiate the local and global economic changes of the 1960s and early 1970s. The UAW recognized the implications of this new era, linking job

losses and urban decay within the U.S. to international affairs, particularly industrial movement across national boundaries. The most direct connection between the domestic and the international was Esteban Torres, as he returned from international duty to head TELACU, bringing with him ideas and experience from his time in Latin America. Believing that an alliance between poor people, workers, and unions had the potential to revitalize devastated American inner cities, the UAW encouraged a program designed to expand the housing options, employment opportunities, and purchasing power of local residents. In theory, these improvements would facilitate the exercise of political and economic self-determination for these marginalized communities.

Previous studies of community organizing in the U.S. during the 1960s have focused on President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty as a reform program designed to change the behavior of the poor without taking into account the socioeconomic context of poverty.[4] The UAW accepted this perspective, working very much within the ideological and material constraints of the official War on Poverty, while at the same time recognizing the significance of structural factors in the persistence of urban inequality and attempting to inject the interests of organized labor into community development projects. There is a growing body of scholarship that has focused attention on community organizations during the 1960s.[5] Often these organizations have been viewed as community-inspired or government funded as a result of the

[4] Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989); Thomas Jackson, "The State, the Movement, and the Urban Poor: The War on Poverty and Political Mobilization in the 1960s," in Katz, ed., *The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993): 403-439; O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*.

[5] Robert Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East L.A.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); Noel A. Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007); Karen Ferguson, "Organizing the Ghetto: The Ford Foundation, CORE, and White Power in the Black Power Era, 1967-1969," *Journal of Urban History* 34 (Nov. 2007): 67-100; Jennifer Frost, *"An Interracial Movement of the Poor": Community Organizing and the New Left in the 1960s* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

Community Action Program. The role of organized labor in this process has not been fully explored, and few scholarly works have directly addressed the history of the WLCAC and TELACU.[6]

In addition to the link between the UAW and community unions in Los Angeles, liberal advocacy groups such as the Citizens' Crusade Against Poverty (CCAP), philanthropic organizations such as the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Department of Labor and other federal agencies worked to stimulate economic development in poor urban neighborhoods during the 1960s. Social scientists and liberal activists attempted to build close relationships with minority communities in the United States. The Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation were not only concerned with domestic reform efforts, as both were involved in liberal projects in the developing world, and they were familiar with the community development initiatives as well as "nation-building" programs associated with U.S. foreign policy.[7] Funding and oversight from these venerable institutions demonstrates that community unions like the WLCAC and TELACU were seen as viable instruments for urban reform.

Alyosha Goldstein has demonstrated the way many of the ideas undergirding liberal reform efforts during the 1960s were built upon the understanding of race, class, and difference

[6] Boyle mentions the WLCAC briefly, as does Vanessa Tait, *Poor Workers' Unions: Rebuilding Labor From Below* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2005). The most recent work on TELACU is John R. Chávez, *Eastside Landmark: A History of the East Los Angeles Community Union, 1968-1993* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Bauman links the WLCAC and TELACU to the War on Poverty; however, he does not concentrate on the ties between these community unions and organized labor and his local focus does not place the ideas animating these organizations in an international context.

[7] Inderjeet Parmar, "American Hegemony, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Rise of Academic International Relations in the United States," in *The Invention of International Relations Theory: Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the 1954 Conference on Theory*, ed. Nicolas Guilhot (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011): 185-186; Francis X. Sutton, "Nation-Building in the Heyday of the Classic Development Ideology: Ford Foundation Experience in the 1950s and 1960s," in *Nation-Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*, ed. Francis Fukuyama (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006): 47-57.

that emerged from this transnational milieu.[8] Assumptions about race, culture, and difference shaped the proposed strategies for change in poverty-stricken neighborhoods as well as the interactions between social scientists and other technical advisors and the residents of these communities. At the same time, the WLCAC and TELACU emphasized the significance of spatial and racial divisions within the city, linking race, class, and culture in making a community-based identity the foundation for organizing. The WLCAC and TELACU embraced these differences, claiming cultural and community independence in terms that would be familiar to black nationalists and anti-colonial activists. Race, however, was just one contentious issue in the history of labor's involvement in community development efforts during the 1960s and 1970s. This chapter will demonstrate the transnational application of ideas about race, labor, culture, and economic development, linking the tactics and rhetoric used in developing nations to what TELACU called "developing communities" such as Watts and East L.A.[9]

Domestic Development through Community Unionism

"All unions began as organizations of the poor and outcast," wrote longtime UAW activist Jack Conway in 1967. At the time, Conway was Director of the Industrial Union Department (IUD) of the AFL-CIO. He had consistently advocated for a more liberal interpretation of unionism, denouncing as outmoded and counterproductive a narrow strategy that made elevating wage gains through collective bargaining the main priority for workers and their institutions. A modern union, according to Conway, must understand the interests of workers not in a vacuum but rather in concert with the problems facing the community beyond

[8] Goldstein, *Poverty in Common*.

[9] TELACU, "A Proposal for Funding."

the workplace.[10] Conway was instrumental in making community unionism a primary concern for the UAW and the IUD. In 1964 he was hired to run the Community Action Program (CAP) for the Johnson Administration, which tried to place resources and decision making powers on crucial matters in the hands of local residents as opposed to outside agents.[11] Conway emphasized that modern unions needed to deal with problems outside of the workplace and in the community, and went so far as to call industrial unions "as out of date now as craft unions were in 1935 when the CIO was born."[12] Although he was uniquely positioned to make community unionism a viable part of the War on Poverty, Conway was not the only voice to express the value of this community-based approach. Academics, New Leftists, and administrators of federal programs all looked to the community as a site for change during the 1960s. The WLCAC and TELACU represented labor's attempt to intervene in this effort.

In the spring of 1964, political scientist James O'Connor published a short article that emphasized the value of community unionism as a new strategy for organizing. O'Connor felt that community unions were the solution to the problematic consequences of contemporary trends in the American economy. He envisioned a future in which technological advances engendered long-term unemployment, resulting in the elimination of jobs without the prospects for a cyclical upturn in the economy. This shift would disproportionately impact unskilled

[10] Jack T. Conway, *The Ideological Obsolescence of Collective Bargaining*, (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of Industrial Relations, 1963); "Organizing the Poor—A New Approach," *IUD Agenda* (February 1967), 5.

[11] Boyle, 188-189.

[12] Jack T. Conway, *The Ideological Obsolescence of Collective Bargaining*, (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of Industrial Relations, 1963); "Organizing the Poor—A New Approach," *IUD Agenda* (February 1967), 5; Leon Hughes, "Industrial Unionism Termed Out of Date," Milwaukee *Journal* 16 June 1968, in CCC Collection, Box 16, Folder 21, WRL.

workers and render conventional means to redress grievances in the workplace ineffective.[13] O'Connor's dystopian vision of American economic, social, and political life was not immediately realized, especially as employment increased in the late 1960s because of the production requirements of the Vietnam War. His concern for the impact of technology on workers proved prescient, as the threat of the speed up was a common refrain of workers during the 1960s, especially in the auto industry. O'Connor asserted that workplace organizing was increasingly becoming a marginal strategy in progressive, class-based struggles for change.[14]

O'Connor's concept of community unionism was a direct assault on what he believed was the narrow agenda of bureaucratic organized labor, which he considered to be merely an entrenched "pressure group" engaged in reformist politics.[15] Community unions were to represent the interests of a powerless constituency forgotten by organized labor and marginalized by devastating changes in the local economy. According to O'Connor, residents of isolated communities like Watts and East L.A. faced high unemployment with little hope of finding new jobs or acquiring new skills. They were useless to an organized labor movement that was more interested in obtaining wage and benefit increases for already employed workers. Without industry as the locus of organizing, the community was the only site through which these marginalized groups could mobilize collectively.

The dismissal of organized labor as a bureaucratic relic belies the UAW's attempted urban interventions. The UAW embraced many liberal causes during the 1960s, including prominent public support for the civil rights movement. The UAW's political activism on urban

[13] James O'Connor, "Towards a Theory of Community Unions," *Studies on the Left* 4 (Spring 1964): 143-148.

[14] Ibid., 147-148.

[15] Ibid., 145-146.

issues was one of its more credible interventions in American politics. Walter Reuther made urban development an important part of the union's domestic agenda during the 1960s, and by mid-decade he was advising President Johnson on the planning and implementation of the federal government's Model Cities program.[16] Reuther was also the driving force behind the March 1964 formation of the CCAP, an organization closely linked to the UAW through staffing and financial commitments. The CCAP was designed to provide technical assistance to community groups like the WLCAC and TELACU, advising these organizations on project execution and applications for federal and foundation funds. [17]

The UAW also contributed funding to the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), the urban organizing campaign of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). From 1963 to 1965, ERAP sent student activists to build a multiracial movement to represent the interests of poor urban communities like Newark, New Jersey.[18] This preceded the federal community action programs implemented during the War on Poverty, and was a product of the New Left's initial concern with revitalizing the organizing tradition of the labor movement during the early 1960s. ERAP participant Richie Rothstein lamented the lack of interest and support for this program from union members during its brief existence. According to Rothstein, the UAW "elite" involved in the CCAP were using ERAP's rhetoric of participatory democracy in their community union programs in U.S. cities, and this was a "far cry from the galvanization of the UAW rank-and-file to mass protest."[19]

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[16] Charles M. Haar, *Between the Idea and the Reality: A Study in the Origin, Fate, and Legacy of the Model Cities Program*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975).

[17] Boyle, 190. In 1968, the CCAP was reorganized and renamed the Center for Community Change.

[18] Richie Rothstein, *E.R.A.P. and How it Grew* (Boston: New England Free Press, [1967]); Frost.

[19] Ibid., 6.

Founded and staffed by resident union members and funded by the UAW, the WLCAC and TELACU were initially designed to repudiate criticisms of organized labor's detachment from the problems of urban minority communities. Reporter Harry Bernstein described this campaign as an effort by the UAW to "show that they are different and more militant than the leaders of the AFL-CIO whom [Walter] Reuther has denounced as 'complacent defenders of the status quo.'"[20] Despite the UAW's call for more radical changes at the local level, the community unions employed many conventional strategies to fight poverty. The WLCAC and TELACU focused on job training and retraining for unemployed workers and attracting and developing businesses in marginalized urban neighborhoods—a reform strategy that evoked attempts by other institutions, including the Area Redevelopment Administration during the Kennedy Administration as well as the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), to alleviate the urban crisis of the 1960s.[21] This strategy of behavior modification and changing cultural values, coupled with structural economic changes, was designed to transform the local economy in Watts and East L.A., overlapping in form and content with the UAW International Affairs Department's vision for the future of developing nations.

UAW Chooses Watts and East L.A.

UAW Western Regional Director Paul Schrade hoped to mobilize UAW members in Watts after discussions with Senator Robert F. Kennedy, who had promoted community development programs in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood.[22] Schrade saw the opportunity to infuse this type of program with the spirit of organized labor in Los Angeles,

[20] Harry Bernstein, "Unions Plan to Spend Millions to Help Poor," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 October 1968.

[21] A. O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*; Gregory S. Wilson, "Deindustrialization, Poverty, and Federal Area Redevelopment in the United States, 1945-1965," in *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*, ed. Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 2003): 181-198.

[22] Paul Schrade, interview by author, 8 May 2008, recording of phone conversation.

which was still a major industrial city during the 1960s with a significant number of autoworkers. While Schrade was influential in bringing the UAW's attention to the possibilities for reform in neighborhoods in Los Angeles, the UAW was broadly interested in urban revitalization in the 1960s. Walter Reuther wanted the government to be more involved in this process—but also listen to the voice of city residents. He called for "democratic planning" to keep the nation's economy growing. "Only an economic moron still believes you can rely on the free forces of the market place to solve the problems of urbanization," he said. "If General Motors can plan their private business, why can't the government plan its public business?"[23] Schrade recognized that the creation of democratic city government required the integration of poor communities into the decision making process. Community unions were conceived of as the means to present a united voice from places like Watts and East Los Angeles—one that was reflective of the interests of the poor and the working class.

To start WLCAC, the UAW searched its membership rolls by zip code to solicit participation of Watts residents affiliated with the union. Both the WLCAC and TELACU were led by full-time organizers on leave from their UAW duties yet still receiving their salary from the organization.[24] After providing the initial financial stimulus for these groups, the UAW worked with a coalition of other unions to continue funding the WLCAC and TELACU. Soon federal funds from the Department of Labor and the OEO, as well as grants from private contributors like the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation, provided a majority of the budget for these organizations.[25] The WLCAC had a budget of 'approximately $5 million' by

[23] UAW *Washington Report*, November 22, 1965.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Tait, 62; Robert Schrank to Eamon Kelly, Ford Foundation, "Visit to WLCAC," 18 October 1973, Rockefeller Foundation (RF), A 77, Series 200D, Box R 1331, Folder "Watts Labor Community Action Committee—Agricultural Education, 1970," Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York (hereafter

1970, and TELACU was receiving several hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding around this time.[26]

The WLCAC was founded as a preventive measure, designed to dissipate the anger and resentment in Watts before it could overflow in an eruption of popular discontent.[27] The ubiquity of newspaper articles and television coverage about "Watts" following the August 1965 riot made this tiny neighborhood in Los Angeles shorthand for black urban rebellion. Once referred to as the "black promised land," Watts' reputation had seemingly been irrevocably damaged. Media coverage spanned from continued reports of poverty and idle black youth, to more sweeping portraits of an economically destitute community divided from the rest of Los Angeles on the basis of race.

The author Thomas Pynchon produced a long narrative piece for the *New York Times Magazine* almost one year after the riot that was evocative of a travelogue to an unfamiliar land.[28] Watts was a "bitter pill of reality" in the middle of a "white fantasy."[29] It was surrounded by imperious highways, separating it from other neighborhoods and allowing an easy bypass for white suburbanites and other commuters not interested in conditions in the so-called ghetto. Pynchon does not reduce his description of this separation to the physical constraints of the city.

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designated RAC). These organizations also sought funding through the Alliance for Labor Action, the short lived (1969-1971) organizing venture established by the UAW and the Teamsters.

[26] "Watts: Everything Has Changed—And Nothing," *Newsweek*, 24 August 1970, in RF, A 77, Series 200D, Box R 1331, Folder "Watts Labor Community Action Committee 1970," RAC; Lawrence F. Parachini, Jr., *TELACU: Community Development for the Future* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Community Economic Development, 1976), 15; Chávez, 90. Both organizations continued to grow, operating on multi-million dollar budgets in the 1970s and 1980s.

[27] Schrade, interview by author.

[28] Thomas R. Pynchon, "A Journey into the Mind of Watts," New York Times Magazine, 12 June 1966, 34-35, 78, 80-82, 84.

[29] Ibid., 34-35.

It is, he says, also a product of the cultures of these separate but unequal communities. "Outside, men stand around a beer cooler listening to a ball game on the radio; others lean or hunker against the sides of buildings -- low, faded stucco boxes that remind you oddly, of certain streets in Mexico."[30] The experiences within each community are so disparate that black and white are farther apart than miles can measure. Watts "lies, psychologically, uncounted miles further than most whites seem at present willing to travel."[31]

Travel was essential in the sprawl of Los Angeles. Pynchon noted economic dislocation in Watts, which accentuated the distance between this urban enclave and the affluence of Southern California. Jobs could be found "after you have driven, say, down to Torrance or Long Beach or wherever it is they're hiring because they don't seem to be in Watts, not even in the miles of heavy industry that sprawl along Alameda Street, that gray and murderous arterial which lies at the eastern boundary of Watts looking like the edge of the world."[32] The WLCAC was charged with providing the ideal bridge across this distance.

Schrade named UAW member Ted Watkins as the head of this fledgling organization. Watkins was an African American auto worker and longtime resident of Watts who had fled Mississippi as a teenager under threat of violence in the late 1930s after an altercation with a white man put his life in jeopardy. He was a union committeeman for UAW Local 923 at the Ford plant in Pico Rivera, California, when he was asked to set up the WLCAC.[33] Official WLCAC literature as well as outsiders portrayed Watkins as the primary force behind the

[30] Ibid., 80.

[31] Ibid., 78.

[32] Ibid., 82.

[33] Schrade, interview by author; Ted Watkins, interview by James Briggs Murray, 11 December 1990, videotape, Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

organization. A WLCAC pamphlet described Watkins as the personification of the group: "WLCAC is Ted Watkins, a man determined to make the most of every resource and to bring every resource to bear on the problems of Watts and its people."[34] A visitor from the Rockefeller Foundation depicted Watkins in terms reminiscent of New York City's Robert Moses: "vain" yet efficient; a power broker for the Watts community who was using his singular vision for the area to concentrate on "getting things done which practically no one else in the ghetto is doing."[35]

The UAW's commitment to Watts provoked union members who were residents of East L.A. to campaign for a similar program. Glen O'Loane, a resident of East L.A. and a member of the UAW and the Mexican American community, questioned the union's support for the WLCAC and concurrent neglect towards similar conditions on the eastside. In 1968, Schrade convinced Esteban Torres, who was working in the UAW International Affairs Department in Washington, D.C., to return to his hometown of East L.A. to lead TELACU. Torres had been an autoworker in Los Angeles before becoming a union representative and subsequently working for the UAW International Affairs Department from 1964 to 1968, during which time he was based in Washington, D.C. and traveled throughout Latin America.[36]

Torres considered the UAW's community union movement in East Los Angeles a mechanism "to bring the area into the political and economic mainstream of the 20th Century."[37] To accomplish this goal, TELACU and the WLCAC attempted to improve the standard of living for residents, make more effective use of the area's resources, and attract new capital investment

[34] "Watts Feeds Itself Through the WLCAC Agriculture Program," RF, A 77, Series 200D, Box R 1331, Folder "Watts Labor Community Action Committee—Agricultural Education, 1970," RAC.

[35] Kenneth W. Thompson, interview notes after a meeting with Ted Watkins, April 23, 1968, RF, A 77, Series 200D, Box R 1331, Folder "Watts Labor Community Action Committee—Agricultural Education, 1970,", RAC.

[36] Torres, interview by author, 21 May 2008.

[37] Bernstein, "Unions Plan to Spend Millions to Help Poor."

to spur local economic development—or create new, community union-operated businesses. Both of these organizations regarded this development strategy as a way to increase employment and purchasing power, providing a "sound economic base" that would finally allow these marginalized communities to fully participate in modern American political life.[38] TELACU and the WLCAC aimed to lessen the implied cultural and political distance between Watts and East L.A. and the rest of the nation, modernizing the ghetto and the barrio on terms consistent with contemporary anti-poverty and development efforts.

Developing Watts and East Los Angeles

Realizing this ambitious program required a wide ranging approach to the problems facing these communities. The UAW urged the WLCAC to focus its first campaign after the 1965 uprising on attaining more and better housing for Watts residents. The WLCAC argued that the need for a hospital in Watts was more pressing, and fought for the public construction of a new medical facility that would become the Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital.[39] Watts lacked accessible hospital facilities at this time, and Watkins saw the hospital as a way to provide jobs and health facilities. The WLCAC justified this public project by citing other communities where "institutions form [an] economic base," like the Chrysler Corporation in Commerce, California.[40] The hospital would fill this void in the community and act as an "economic hub" to raise local employment and increase business traffic.[41]

[38] TELACU, "Economic Independence Thru Community Union," n.d., CCC Collection, Box 8, Folder 13, WRL.

[39] Schrade, interview by author.

[40] Stanley O. Williford, "Black Doctors Wary of King Hospital Image," *Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 1970.

[41] Carolee Gardner, "A Proposal: Improve Motivate Plan Act Communicate Together," March 1968, CCC Collection, Box 16, Folder 6, WRL.

The WLCAC coupled the hospital project with the construction of housing units for low-income families and senior citizens through its subsidiary, the Greater Watts Development Corporation. To maximize the economic impact on the community, the WLCAC directly leased these units to residents while employing others to do the maintenance through its Property Management Division.[42] Watts faced the loss of available housing due to urban renewal projects like the construction of freeways, which often eliminated housing stock that was considered "blighted" by city governments yet still used by low-income residents. The WLCAC took a proactive approach to this problem by relocating houses using equipment acquired through a Ford Foundation loan.[43] In one particular instance, a number of houses were scheduled to be destroyed in a neighborhood adjacent to the airport to make way for new runways. The WLCAC was able to move thirty houses a distance of seventeen miles to vacant land in Watts to house those displaced by freeway construction.[44]

TELACU also made the lack of adequate housing a priority, creating several new housing complexes that were constructed by local residents. Working with the Federal Housing Administration, TELACU was able to finance the construction of the Walter P. Reuther Villa, a six-unit housing project for low-income residents.[45] It created a home repair service to improve existing housing structures, financed by a two year, $210,000 grant from the Ford Foundation.[46] Torres saw the benefits of workers' organizations constructing housing when he served as an

[42] Watkins, interview by Murray.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Guy S. Hayes interview with Ted Watkins, July 22, 1970, RF, Record Group 1.2, Series 200, Box 106, Folder 932, RAC.

[45] Jack Jones, "Housing Project Marks Success for TELACU," *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1971.

[46] "TELACU's Housing and Urban Planning Program," n.d., CCC Collection, Box 14, Folder 19, WRL; Parachini, 19-23.

international representative for the UAW in Latin America. Metalworkers he visited in Argentina and Venezuela had built housing cooperatives, and Torres felt that this may be one way to improve the available housing in East L.A.[47] In April of 1971, TELACU's housing program was observed by a visiting delegation of newspaper editors from Latin America, who commented on the similar problems urban areas in Latin America faced, including the lack of housing available for rural migrants to cities. The delegation commended TELACU for its "foresight" and for using its housing construction program to create "job opportunities and economic development for the local community."[48]

The WLCAC's job programs mainly focused on training the youth of Watts. Initially, these programs hired young residents to create "vest-pocket parks" in vacant lots to beautify the neighborhood and provide recreation space. The organization also attempted to make neighborhood land more productive by having young workers construct an irrigation system and grow crops on idle city property under power lines.[49] Cultivating previously idle community resources like unemployed young workers and open space was an important part of the WLCAC's development agenda for the Watts area, and this was replicated on a larger scale on land the organization acquired outside of the city in Saugus, California.

The WLCAC's Urban Residential Education Center trained "enrollees" in new skills while allowing what program administrators and foundation observers felt was a proper outlet from the inner city that would decrease the likelihood of another explosion of urban violence

[47] Torres, interview by author, 21 May 2008.

[48] "Top Level Inter-American Delegation Visits TELACU and ELA College," April 6, 1971, CCC Collection, Box 8, Folder 13, WRL.

[49] Citizens' Crusade Against Poverty (CCAP), "The Program of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee," May 22, 1969, 3, CCC Collection, Box 20, Folder 25, WRL; CCAP, "Project Area Description," October 1967, 13, CCC Collection, Box 14, Folder 21, WRL.

during the hot summers. Built on county property in Saugus, the Center paid young residents of Watts and others from the Los Angeles area $1.60 per day while they received training in automotive mechanics, farming, food preparation, carpentry, nursing, or office clerical work. Some of the job training was part of the development of the Center itself—for instance, enrollees furnished dorm rooms and remodeled the interior of buildings on the center's grounds. Farming and raising cattle on the large tracts of farmland available at Saugus produced crop harvests and meat that were then sold in the WLCAC-owned restaurant and supermarkets in Watts, giving these businesses access to fresh goods.[50] Despite the training program, the WLCAC found it difficult to increase job placement rates except for those who trained as automotive mechanics, who usually were hired prior to the completion of the program as these skills were in high demand. Many did not complete the program, and others often found that their skills were not in demand locally or the WLCAC's job creation program had not produced the number of openings required to translate skill acquisition into employment.[51]

The Saugus program also focused on shaping the cultural values of Watts youth, demonstrating that the WLCAC's perspective on economic development was tied to the politics of gender and the family. Female enrollees were almost exclusively tracked into the nursing and clerical work options, creating a rigid gender divide in the training programs. This reflected Watkins's view that the revitalization of Watts was tied to reestablishing a gender hierarchy that valued men as the head of the family and the breadwinner in the community. Watkins frequently reiterated the controversial perspective on black poverty outlined by Daniel Patrick Moynihan,

[50] Leland C. DeVinney, "Report on Visit to Saugus Residential Education Center," December 17, 1970, RF, Record Group 1.2, Series 200, Box 106, Folder 932, RAC; Henry Santiestevan, "New Hope for Watts," *IUD Agenda* (February 1967), 18.

[51] U.S. Department of Labor, Manpower Administration, Office of Research and Development, "Program Review Report on Experimental and Demonstration Project: Camp Saugus Residential Youth Opportunity Program," April 17, 1970, RF, Record Group 1.2, Series 200, Box 106, Folder 932, RAC.

decrying the prevalence of families without husbands and fathers and the negative impact this had on the youth of Watts.[52] "We want to make these young guys feel they've got a role to play as men," Watkins said, emphasizing the importance of instilling male enrollees with a measure of responsibility previously absent from their lives while developing a sense of common ownership in the neighborhood by employing Watts youth to build parks and clean up the neighborhood.[53] Watkins linked the physical act of reconstructing Watts to a cultural project of engineering patriarchal families, emphasizing the importance of accountability and an assertive masculinity in male enrollees.

A Rockefeller Foundation visitor concurred with Watkins and added that enrollees needed to acquire a culture of work discipline that was completely alien to the ghetto. "Up to the time they come to Saugus they have never had responsibility for anything," he lamented.[54] Job training, employment programs, and housing projects were not enough to transform the community in the eyes of this technical advisor; only the elimination of a pathological culture could bring about effective change. These descriptions of matriarchal black families and wayward black youth fit neatly into the parameters of the concept of a "culture of poverty" advanced by anthropologist Oscar Lewis during his research in Mexico.[55] Lewis suggested that this was a transnational category of analysis, applicable within the U.S. and developing nations alike, that linked family structure, individual behavior, and other social and psychological

[52] Watkins, interview by Murray; "LK" [Leo Kirschner], "Visit to Watts Labor Community Action Committee, Los Angeles, California, February 5-8, 1972," RF, A 77, Series 200D, Box R 1331, Folder "Watts Labor Community Action Committee—Agricultural Education, 1970," RAC; A. O'Connor, 203-207.

[53] Santiestevan, "New Hope for Watts."

[54] "LK" [Leo Kirschner], "Visit to Watts Labor Community Action Committee."

[55] Oscar Lewis, *The Children of Sánchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).

characteristics to one's economic status.[56] Social scientists and liberal activists embraced these ideas, and found validation of this category in poverty-stricken cities and regions in the U.S.[57]

The WLCAC did not restrict its analysis of urban poverty to a narrow cultural explanation, however, as it emphasized the need for job training and new skills for displaced and unemployed workers and youth. This concentration on the development of human capital aligned the WLCAC with one of the fundamental tenets of the liberal approach towards poverty during the 1960s. Improving human capital by enhancing the skills and changing the behavior of individuals was promoted by liberals and conservatives as the means to simultaneously combat poverty and stimulate economic growth.[58] This emphasis often neglected the problems facing isolated communities like Watts and East L.A., where jobs were scarce and skill training was not necessarily the best strategy in absence of employment opportunities.

While the WLCAC made retraining and changing the behavior of individuals an integral part of the community development process, it did not overlook the local structural economic problems facing the Watts community. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the WLCAC and TELACU were attempting to establish their own businesses to employ local residents and stimulate the local economy in areas where the absence of jobs made altering individual behavior and skills inadequate answers for urban poverty. Former UAW Education Department director Brendan Sexton outlined the value of this type of effort by community unions in a letter to Conway in late 1967. By this time, Sexton was working for the CCAP, administering training classes for community union members. He described the "continuity and stability" offered by trade unions and community unions in planning the development of a local economy. While

[56] Ibid., A. O'Connor, 209.

[57] A. O'Connor, 204-205.

[58] Ibid., 141-142.

private enterprises would, in their own interests, seek to gain a foothold in more prosperous markets in order to increase profits, the community union could pour this money into new construction projects, wages for resident workers, and new business ventures. Sexton also referred to Histadrut, the General Federation of Trade Unions in Palestine and later Israel, as a specific case abroad in which a trade union "played a critical and central role in the economic development of the nation."[59] Histadrut created jobs for its members, eventually becoming the largest employer in Israel. This organization started factories to process steel, chemicals, and building materials, while also developing retail stores and housing construction enterprises.[60] Sexton believed that this model was successful in contributing to the economic development of a nation abroad and would be transferable to developing communities within the U.S. like Watts and East L.A.

Recognizing the dearth of available jobs in these communities, the WLCAC and TELACU became employers almost immediately. The WLCAC purchased a Mobil gas station franchise, trained its staff, and used the profits to fund ventures in the area, such as a WLCAC restaurant and three supermarkets.[61] Other businesses in housing construction and services such as transportation and sanitation were operated by the Greater Watts Development Corporation and hired local residents.[62]

TELACU's Economic Development Division intended to follow this model by creating businesses or securing funding for local enterprises that could employ residents. TELACU provided grants to businesses and established a mattress factory that offered the community low

[59] Brendan Sexton to Jack Conway, 16 November 1967, CCC Collection, Box 16, Folder 7, WRL.

[60] Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), 325.

[61] DeVinney, "Report on Visit to Saugus Residential Education Center."

[62] Watkins, interview by Murray; Guy S. Hayes interview with Ted Watkins, July 22, 1970.

price mattresses made by East L.A. residents. Though ultimately unsuccessful, TELACU envisioned a shareholder plan that would involve East L.A. residents as part owners of this company as well as employees.[63] In addition to creating jobs through financing and managing local businesses, TELACU's Manpower Development Division worked to match skill training programs to the area's available jobs.[64] TELACU also worked with the UAW to sponsor a training program that would take advantage of the UAW's relationship with area employers, guaranteeing job placement for participants.[65]

This process was grounded in an understanding of urban poverty that recognized the way space shaped labor markets. Job training and retraining alone would not solve the epidemic of unemployment in Watts and East L.A. By creating businesses, the WLCAC and TELACU were attempting to become the employers that these areas lacked, providing jobs to residents who would, in turn, spend money in these local enterprises. Claude Martinez of the economic development division of TELACU said that this practice "makes for sound business. It puts money into peoples' pockets, it creates consumers and people will spend in their community more so than out. We have got to generate the dollar and keep it here instead of it flowing out."[66]

For the WLCAC and TELACU, "generating the dollar" was essential to developing a local consumer economy. The CCAP urged a similar transformation for Watts in its proposal for a technical assistance program for the neighborhood. Framing the problem as a lack of

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[63] Jack Jones, "Housing Project Marks Success for TELACU," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 June 1971; "TELACU's Housing and Urban Planning Program," n.d., CCC Collection, Box 14, Folder 19, WRL.

[64] Harry Evans, "The Quiet Revolution in East Los Angeles," *Solidarity* 12:10 (Oct. 1969): 9.

[65] TELACU, "The East Los Angeles Community Union," n.d., CCC Collection, Box 8, Folder 16, WRL.

[66] "TELACU's Growth Featured in Magazine," *East Los Angeles Gazette*, 29 August 1971, in UAW International Affairs Department Box 6, Folder 29, WRL; "Unions Open Training Facility in East L.A.," *East Los Angeles Tribune*, 27 February 1969, in UAW International Affairs Department Box 6, Folder 26, WRL; "Progress Report on the Activities of The East Los Angeles Community Union," 1970, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1968-1972, Box 6, Folder 28, WRL.

consumption, the CCAP referred to the "unmet needs" of the community that would be satisfied once "purchasing power begins to rise." This process had the potential to be even more beneficial should investment come from "indigenous capital"—located within the community and presumably reinvested in the community.[67] The CCAP lamented the exploitative situation in Watts in terms that would be familiar for those discussing the developing nations.

> Almost all of the money already invested in this region is capital owned by people who do not live there. . . . In the long run, new capital will be more effective in getting the area to the 'take-off stage' if it is capital which is reinvested and re-circulated in the same region over and over again.[68]

Here the CCAP employed the language of contemporary modernization theorists to describe Watts. The "take-off stage" was the pivotal point in economist Walt W. Rostow's description of the five "stages of development," through which Rostow posited all developing nations would inevitably pass on the path to modernity. A nation at the "take-off stage" would be experiencing rising income and employment as purchasing power and social and political institutions would be in place to support continued industrialization.[69] "Take-off" would set the nation on the "drive to maturity," during which economic development would increasingly distance a developing nation's social and economic life from the starting point of "tradition." The final stage in this sequence was "the age of high mass consumption," which would consist of an economy focused on manufacturing consumer goods and providing services along with a welfare state.[70] By placing Watts along this spectrum of development, the CCAP rhetorically linked national development abroad and community development at home. This progressive teleology was a

[67] CCAP, "Project Area Description," 6.

[68] Ibid., 6-7.

[69] Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 191.

[70] Ibid., 193.

labor-centric interpretation of the process described by Rostow and other modernization theorists. Community unions at home and organized labor abroad would both provide the social and political institutions necessary to improve workers' lives in the community and the workplace. At the same time, the use of this development discourse marked Watts as an underdeveloped community and established distance between it and surrounding communities.[71]

Development and Community Identity

The WLCAC and TELACU embraced the divisive rhetoric that marked the differences between Watts and East L.A. and other neighborhoods in the city, and these boundaries formed the core of a community-based identity. In Watts, black identity was linked to the rebellion of 1965, which stigmatized the neighborhood and had a profound economic impact on the area. Most East L.A. residents identified with Mexican American culture and the burgeoning Chicano movement, and TELACU consistently portrayed East L.A. as an internal colony in need of liberation. Both organizations shared the notion that securing local economic power was the means to achieve political self-determination for Watts and East L.A.

The WLCAC hoped to coordinate its economic development programs to protect the black community from high prices, layoffs, and a lack of quality consumer goods. Although the Rockefeller Foundation commended its cultivation of "black capitalism" in the ghetto, the WLCAC was not interested in merely expanding a small group of black business owners.[72] Rather than encourage business ownership for the purpose of personal enrichment, the WLCAC was more inclined to plan the economic development of Watts through the creation of profitable businesses that would be beneficial to the community. This interpretation of the term "black

[71] My use of this discursive approach towards ideas about development has been influenced by Escobar in *Encountering Development*.

[72] "LK" [Leo Kirschner], "Visit to Watts Labor Community Action Committee."

capitalism" put the WLCAC at odds with the Nixon Administration, which was attempting to attract African American voters with business loan programs and federal contracts for black businesses.[73] Watkins recalibrated the meaning of black capitalism in the interest of the community. Instead of seeing market individualism as a way to get out of the ghetto, Watkins felt it was "wasteful to scatter resources among a group of individual entrepreneurs, whose chances for success are small," and preferred to plan large businesses operated by the WLCAC to maximize the impact on the local community.[74] Ultimately, Watkins hoped this process would lead to the assimilation of Watts into mainstream American political life, as economic power would lead to "political and social leverage" for the black community.[75]

In the case of Mexican American workers, the UAW was both a staunch ally and an uneasy partner. The UAW was the most prominent supporter of the United Farm Workers in the 1960s, providing crucial financial assistance and solidarity with the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee as it began the process of unionization and achieved a contract with businesses in Southern California. Despite this support, some of the UAW's rhetoric concerning the striking farmworkers hinted at a distinction between Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans and the average UAW member. The UAW's own publication, *Solidarity*, described the relationship between growers and migrant Mexican workers led by UFWOC as one of mortal enemies, at least from the growers' perspective. The employers looked at the farmworkers as if they "were the Viet Cong" during a strike in Texas.[76] A comparison between wages for Mexican

[73] Dean Kotlowski, "Black Power—Nixon Style: The Nixon Administration and Minority Business Enterprise," *Business History Review* 72 (Autumn 1998): 409-445.

[74] "LK" [Leo Kirschner], "Visit to Watts Labor Community Action Committee."

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ray Martin, "La Huelga: The Desperate Cry Along the Rio Grande," *Solidarity* 10:2 (Feb. 1967): 3, 11.

workers in the U.S. and in Mexico showed little difference in pay, and many of these poor farm workers just wanted a small raise in wages and a union contract, which was "as much a dream as were the UAW's own dreams, years ago, of paid vacations and company-financed pensions."[77] This comparison implied a distance between the desires of established UAW members and their counterparts just beginning to reach the next stage of development.

Language was also a marker of modernity and progress. The striking California grape workers led by Cesar Chavez were joined by 1,500 UAW members at a demonstration in 1969, where the two groups combined to shout "huelga" in support of the strike. Of these UAW members, "[f]ew, if any, had ever before uttered a word in Mexican [*sic*]. They were auto and aerospace, agricultural implement and parts plants workers."[78] Looking beyond the cultural ignorance in the author's repeated referral to "huelga" as "Mexican for 'strike,'" language was used to establish a difference between the English-speaking, American industrial workers and their poorly paid, Spanish-speaking counterparts.

The linguistic deficiency of immigrant workers could be overcome through unionization and education. One such "success story" refers to migrant farm workers in Rio Grande Valley, Texas, relocated to work for LTV Aerospace Corporation in Dallas through the efforts of the UAW in conjunction with the aerospace industry and the federal government. Workers gained "dignity" through their new jobs, along with the higher wages, workmen's compensation, and other benefits of unionized work. The UAW's coverage of this drastic change in the lives of Mexican workers made it clear that cultural differences considered shortcomings would be eliminated through migrants' experiences as industrial workers and union members. Moving to

[77] Ibid.; "The World of Domingo Arrendondo" and "La Huelga: The Cry for Justice," *Solidarity* 10:4 (April 1967): 11, 12.

[78] Howard Lipton, "In Delano: A Companero is Honored," *Solidarity* 12:10 (Oct. 1969): 5.

Dallas would also integrate these newcomers into modern consumer culture. The program provided homes in a Dallas housing project where "Dallas Housing Authority instructors taught wives basic English, home economics, use of household equipment with which they were unfamiliar and other necessities of city living."[79] The relocation of these farm workers and their gendered introduction to American life was presented as an example of how an undisciplined and poor workforce could be modernized through union leadership, a process with the potential to produce comparable results elsewhere.

TELACU organizers employed the UAW's cultural interpretation of the difficulties facing Mexican Americans in the United States in a very different way. Both a marker of the emerging Chicano culture of East Los Angeles and the roots of the community in Mexico, TELACU used this identity as a mobilizing force to call for participation, inclusion, and solidarity from community members.

Economic independence for TELACU was tied to a process of community self-determination that was self-consciously analogous to the liberation of a Third World colony. Restricted by a dependent economic and political relationship with surrounding communities, TELACU adopted an anti-colonial perspective on the conditions in East Los Angeles. The Chicano movement of the late 1960s and the labor movement provided inspiration for TELACU's effort to merge cultural pride with a class-based agenda for economic redevelopment. East L.A. was an "urban Delano," and like Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers, TELACU appealed to the Mexican cultural identity of the community.[80] Torres celebrated the barriers isolating the barrio. He viewed East L.A. as a "Latin American colony. It

[79] Al Adams, "Success Story in Texas," *Solidarity* 12:8 (Aug. 1969): 6-7.

[80] Evans, "The Quiet Revolution in East Los Angeles."

has its own culture and simply can't be helped from the outside in . . . ."[81] Economic development would have to come from local residents, and TELACU determined that a cooperative effort was the best way to distribute resources and generate economic growth. Torres recalled that TELACU wanted to demonstrate the way a community union could "own the means of production."

> I had learned from my Latin American experience that unions owned hotels, unions owned banks, and owned housing projects, and they were stockholders in industry and I felt that we could do the same, but that we would be the managers, we would be the owners.[82]

This rhetoric was accompanied by a consistent call for community "self-sufficiency" and "self-determination"—the end goal of national liberation movements abroad. For TELACU, community self-determination could be attained through the same type of collective power wielded by organized labor, and TELACU felt that the cultural identification of East L.A. residents was just as important as class consciousness in this process. "Trade unions were formed, through long and bloody struggle, because workers could see that they were all part of the same cause, and that unity was the key to victory. Now people in minority communities are beginning to see the same thing."[83] This nascent incarnation of identity politics was integral to a new conception of community self-sufficiency that tied race and identity to class. In this way, TELACU attempted to turn racial exclusion into the means to build solidarity and take collective action.

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Torres, interview by author, 21 May 2008.

[83] TELACU, "Getting Ourselves Together," n.d., CCC Collection, Box 14, Folder 5, WRL.

Conclusion

The history of the WLCAC and TELACU demonstrates a transnational convergence of ideas about race, culture, and development during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The UAW's International Affairs Department and the community unions in Los Angeles encouraged similar programs for development that made labor the central component of this process. While not explicitly conveying a dogmatic enthusiasm in modernization theory or overtly equating developing nations with ghettoes and barrios in the U.S., the UAW did propose solutions to the problems facing developing communities that resembled those recommended by its International Affairs Department for workers abroad. In each setting, these organizations aimed to create a strong consumer economy and a thriving working class that would, as Watkins put it, "turn money over in the community more than one time."[84] Recognizing the need for rising purchasing power in poor communities at home and abroad, the UAW made structural concerns an important part of its development strategy, linking the prevailing notion of skill training and employment opportunities as anti-poverty measures to a fundamental restructuring of the economies of poor communities.

Despite the backing of the UAW, private foundations, and federal funding, this labor-based community organizing agenda proved largely inadequate in solving the problems facing economic development and anti-poverty efforts. While the WLCAC and TELACU did assuage some of the problems facing Watts and East L.A.—particularly in terms of housing and to some extent employment—the business ventures and training programs promoted by these organizations did not radically alter life in these communities. Community unions could not

[84] Watkins, interview by Murray.

generate enough activity in the local economy to drastically alleviate poverty in Los Angeles during the 1960s and early 1970s.

The WLCAC and TELACU embraced the rhetoric of opportunity promoted by the Great Society, and the consistent emphasis on self-sufficiency diluted the link between community unions and organized labor by the middle of the 1970s. The new ethos of community development would focus on the business ventures of these organizations, transforming WLCAC and TELACU into more conventional economic development corporations. By the mid-1970s both the WLCAC and TELACU moved away from their initial labor-inspired rhetoric, focusing instead on economic development in business terms without the emphasis on the principles of community unionism. Both Watkins and Torres lamented the UAW's move away from a commitment to community unionism, contributing this gradual shift to the absence of Walter Reuther following his death in 1970.[85] This departure could more accurately be attributed to the organizational difficulties of the union movement as a whole rather than the death of one individual. Above all, the rhetoric and tactics used by the WLCAC and TELACU were flawed by their acceptance of contemporary social scientific explanations of poverty and prescriptions for economic development.

The late 1960s and early 1970s represented a brief period during which the UAW attempted to link the principles and power of organized labor to the social, economic, and political transformation of developing nations abroad and developing communities at home. In the Los Angeles neighborhoods of Watts and East Los Angeles, the UAW emphasized economic development while incorporating ideas about race and gender to provide direction for community reforms. Race played a significant role in this process as an impetus for reform from the

[85] Stanley Williford, "The United Automobile Workers Union: Has It Changed?" *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 25 October 1973.

International. The UAW identified Watts and East Los Angeles as in need of reform because of the marked poverty and racial difference of these communities, and the WLCAC and TELACU tried to organize residents by appealing to the shared experiences of local neighborhoods.

The UAW's community union experiment is part of the history of liberal urban reforms in the 1960s and early 1970s. The city was a site for the War on Poverty, and race played a major role in the distribution of resources and the targets for this liberal crusade. In Detroit, however, race played a major role in another movement that much more self-consciously approached the question of international ties to a local struggle. This movement sought change that would be beneficial to the black community, but defined that community in class terms as well as international terms, and considered the reform agenda advocated by Great Society liberals and the UAW to be anathema to the achievement of any real change.

Chapter 4

The *Inner City Voice* of Global Revolution: DRUM and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1968-1971

A very different kind of working class internationalism emerged in Detroit. On May 2, 1968, African American autoworkers at the Dodge Main plant in Hamtramck, Michigan, engaged in a wildcat strike to protest recent production speedups, repeated safety violations, and the discriminatory actions of white supervisors. This unsanctioned protest explicitly claimed to champion the interests of black workers. The success of this action along with several more work stoppages in the ensuing months led to the formation of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), an organization that challenged the UAW's authority in the plants and fought the union and management for recognition of the needs of African American workers on the shop floor. Beginning in Hamtramck, an incorporated city entirely surrounded by the city of Detroit, Revolutionary Union Movements formed by black workers soon spread to other automobile factories in the Detroit area. In 1969 these groups united under as the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. The League attempted to transform this spontaneous uprising of African American workers into an organized movement that combined shop floor activism with a radical critique of racism, capitalism, and U.S. imperialism.[1]

The League's activities and vision were grounded in the experience of black workers in Detroit. Detroit's dramatic demographic transformation culminated in an explosion of racial violence in the 1967 Detroit Rebellion. The social conflicts tearing Detroit apart shaped race

[1] Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975).

relations on the shop floor. Black workers faced the intransigence of management and the UAW when trying to access better paying job categories and more rights in the workplace and the union. The League responded to the situation in Detroit with a strategy based on racial solidarity that extended beyond the city and the nation. League members saw African American workers as the vanguard of an international revolution against U.S. imperialism, and tied its efforts to national liberation struggles in the Third World, connecting race, class, and revolutionary politics in a vision of radical internationalism.

What made this movement unique among the groups that identified with the late 1960s "Third World left" was its origins in the workplace. African American autoworkers recognized problems in wages, working conditions, and race relations between black workers and management and the UAW.[2] Yet contemporary observers had noticed significant economic gains for African American workers in the automobile industry. For example, Herbert Northrup's Ford Foundation-funded study examined the economic standing of African Americans autoworkers, citing rising levels of compensation and increasing employment numbers as marks of progress in the industry during the 1960s.[3] Reflecting on the formation of DRUM and the League many years later, one of the leaders of this movement acknowledged these improvements. According to autoworker and activist General Baker, "at that point in history, we were probably the highest paid black workers on earth, when you look around the globe at who got what."[4] Despite the comparative financial remuneration of African American autoworkers, Baker emphasized that

[2] Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of the U.S. Third World Left* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006); Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao, and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002).

[3] Herbert R. Northrup, *The Negro in the Automobile Industry*, The Racial Policies of American Industry, Report No. 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 54-65.

[4] General Baker, interview by author, 3 November 2004, Highland Park, Michigan, transcription of tape recording, 3.

this mattered little when one considered the complex interplay of other factors such as the "oppression and dehumanization" of factory work, the UAW's obstinacy when confronted with calls for change, and the difficult conditions facing African Americans outside of the factory.[5]

For the League, wages were a narrow slice of a larger story that remained obscured by a lack of understanding of the myriad forces shaping the lives of African American workers. Northrup's study did not deny the divisive role race played in the workplace. He cited the "political realities" of the day to absolve the UAW of blame for not rectifying this situation.[6] The League rejected this perspective, which overemphasized modest economic gains while marginalizing the difficulties facing African Americans in the United States during the 1960s. From management to the union hierarchy and beyond, African American workers consistently received poor treatment and had limited options to redress grievances.[7] Baker warned that it was impossible to evaluate the place of the African American working class in the United States on wages alone. The League determined that African American workers' relative place of privilege in the geography of capitalism was not an obstacle preventing further action against the systemic oppression of workers in the U.S. and around the world.

The League used a comparative framework to highlight commonalities in the social and economic experiences of "colored" workers around the world. Whether they lived in the Motor City or Mexico City, these workers were forced to shoulder a disproportionate share of the burdens of capitalism and imperialism. The League used this concept of transnational oppression to organize black workers strategically located in Detroit's hub of production into a Marxist-

[5] Ibid.

[6] Northrup, 54-65.

[7] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*; David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey, eds., *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Stein, *Running Steel, Running America*.

Leninist movement that related the experience of black workers in Detroit to that of their counterparts abroad. This "colored" alliance would ultimately liberate nonwhite workers from a repressive relationship with the United States.

The League applied this revolutionary framework to domestic affairs as well. It rejected liberalism, which offered ineffective solutions for poverty, civil rights violations, and economic justice. The legislative gains of the civil rights movement and the minimal improvements associated with President Johnson's War on Poverty had not effectively dealt with the problems facing African Americans—the majority of whom were part of the working class. The social and economic hardships facing black workers were particularly acute in cities, and in the 1960s Detroit experienced every aspect of the urban crisis. The League determined that resistance and independent organization in the workplace and the community was the most effective path to solving the problems facing African Americans.

To fully comprehend these problems, the League crafted a narrative of localized racial oppression that related the experience of black workers in Detroit to that of their counterparts abroad. Echoing TELACU and the Mexican American community in East Los Angeles, the League adopted an anticolonial perspective that underlined the connection between minority urban communities and colonies in the Third World. African American workers in Detroit were considered part of an internal colony—explicitly black and in need of a movement to promote self-determination. This notion was common at the time, especially among African American activists and those that consciously identified with black nationalist ideas and the Black Power movement. The Black Panther Party was the most renowned proponent of the ties between black urban America and the Third World, and black intellectuals and activists such as Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, and the student revolutionaries in the Revolutionary Action Movement

(RAM) promoted this spirit of common struggle, which transcended nations and was often expressed in racial terms.[8]

The League forged a new path in the dense thicket of late 1960s black radical internationalism by emphasizing the transformative role to be played by black workers in the process of liberating the internal colony of black America. It would organize black industrial workers into a radical movement for change at home while battling U.S. imperialism around the world. As a crucial cog in the production process, black workers in the U.S. could use their skills, earnings, and political power to be a decisive force in advancing revolutionary change. According to the League, this movement required the discipline of a Marxist-Leninist party and a decisively transnational framework for understanding the problems facing African Americans and all "colored" workers regardless of their location.

This chapter explores the brief yet intense history of the League from 1968 to 1971, highlighting the significance of its vision of working class internationalism. The internationalism of the League is consistently downplayed in histories of black workers in Detroit, which focus mainly on the electoral battles with the UAW, shop floor activism, and attempts to intervene in Detroit politics.[9] Local organizing in the Detroit area, divorced from this international context,

[8] Charles E. Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998); Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," *Souls* 1 (Fall 1999): 6-41; Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Nikhil Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

[9] Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*; Geschwender, *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers*; Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism*; Nicola Pizzolato, "Workers and Revolutionaries at the Twilight of Fordism: The Breakdown of Industrial Relations in the Automobile Plants of Detroit and Turin, 1967-1973," *Labor History* 45 (Nov. 2004): 419-43; Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Cornelius C. Thomas, "Black Workers at the Point of Production: Shopfloor Radicalism and Wildcat Strikes in Detroit Auto, 1955-1976" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993); Kieran Walsh Taylor, "Turn to the Working Class: The New Left, Black Liberation, and the U.S. Labor Movement, 1967-1981" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007); and Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*

provides only one part of this story. From protests grounded in the workplace came a city-wide movement that emphasized the international implications of black workers' oppression in Detroit. International economic and political concerns were not the inconsequential musings of aspiring revolutionaries—the League also established connections with unions and activists in other countries, particularly in Europe. In this period of transition from postwar boom to the new economy of the 1970s, the League identified with an imagined community of working class revolutionaries around the world, animated by what historian Nikhil Singh called the "black global dreams" of this era.[10]

The League's working class internationalism provided a language of empowerment directly connected to ideas about the place of African American workers in the landscape of world revolution. Yet this emphasis on an explicitly black working class internationalism served as a divisive force in union politics in Detroit in the late 1960s. The League's rejection of liberalism placed it at odds with the UAW and many rank and file workers, both white and black, who were skeptical of revolutionary politics and deterred by the organization's use of the rhetoric of Black Power and black nationalism. White workers and the UAW leadership were extremely hostile to the League's agenda. Criticism also emerged from an older generation of black workers and activists in the UAW who were uncomfortable with the League's militancy and radical politics. Even within the League's leadership a division emerged over the necessity of an international presence and the degree to which international efforts diverted resources away from in-plant organizing. During the transitional moment at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, the League used this contentious vision of black working class internationalism to challenge the notion that American liberalism could create an inclusive society founded on racial

[10] Nikhil Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

equality and address the class inequities evident in the volatile industrial cities of the United States. This movement stood between the optimism of the 1960s and the uncertainty of the 1970s, as the League questioned the ideological and institutional assumptions at the heart of American liberalism. The city of Detroit proved to be a perfect incubator for this connection between class, race, and internationalism to take hold.

Black Internationalism in the 1960s

By the late 1960s, a long history of black internationalism was available for the League to draw from. Examples of working class, black, and revolutionary internationalism can be found in earlier movements, yet they were selectively mined by the League in their effort to relate this discursive tradition to the particularities of Detroit. The League was not the first attempt to link black America to the world. Historian Robin Kelley described the worldview of Alabama sharecroppers aligned with the Communist Party of the United States during the Great Depression. Southern African American traditions shaped a hybrid form of communism that connected local experiences in the fields of Alabama to the organizational strategies of the Communist Party and the class politics of the Soviet Union. African American sharecroppers saw the Soviet Union as an egalitarian society that offered hope for a new world beyond the divisive barrier of race.[11]

A broader and more inclusive link was made between black Americans and the world through the politics of the African diaspora. Establishing a common bond between the world's colored population, activists and intellectuals such as Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois worked to unite people in disparate lands through their common experiences with colonial oppression, racism, and poor working conditions. This movement grew during the 1930s and reached its

[11] Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990): 99-116.

apogee during World War II, only to succumb to external attacks by McCarthyism and internal attacks from black liberals who embraced American Cold War foreign policy. [12]

International affairs became increasingly important to civil rights activists who used the Cold War to their advantage in domestic struggles to gain political rights. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, the civil rights movement framed their struggle as an attempt to correct the misunderstandings abroad about American freedom and democracy. Victories in Little Rock, Montgomery, and elsewhere were consistently portrayed as a necessity in the face of Soviet propaganda publicizing the treatment of African Americans in the United States.[13]

The movement made a deft tactical choice to use the call for reforming American democracy to meet the grand proclamations concerning protections for individual rights. It urged reconciliation and integration rather than a fundamental restructuring of American society. By the early 1960s, ideas equating black civil rights activists in the U.S. to revolutionary movements abroad were hard to find.

One of the few voices with this perspective on the black freedom struggle was the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), which linked black oppression within the United States to the white domination of the entire "colored" population of the world. RAM was inspired by the armed self-defense tactics of Robert F. Williams, a North Carolina NAACP member who in the 1950s defiantly advocated the use of force in the face of Southern white repression.[14] Williams' publication, *The Crusader*, often found its way into the hands of American radicals, and he used a powerful transmitter provided by Castro to broadcast his radio

[12] Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[13] Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*.

[14] Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*.

show, *Radio Free Dixie*, from Cuba deep into the U.S. His articles attacked federal inaction, racism, and the American legal system. [15] Incoming broadcasts and newsletters featuring Williams' criticisms of American society were particularly influential. Coming from a black man living in Cuba and later China, with close ties to Castro and Mao, represented further confirmation of a worldwide "colored" alliance.

While it existed for most of the decade, RAM was not a mass movement and did not organize many actions to further its goals.[16] Essentially a small group of radical African American students, RAM tried to construct an image of militant resistance to American power at home and abroad. RAM named Williams its "leader in exile" and went to great lengths to publicize his critique of American society. Nevertheless, the central role RAM afforded race in discussions of oppression and exploitation provided a theoretical foundation for the League to build upon.[17]

RAM envisioned a triumphant black uprising in its 1966 manifesto, *The World Black Revolution*, which warned of a revolution in the Third World. It began with a not-so-subtle allusion to the opening line of the *Communist Manifesto*. "All over Africa, Asia, South, Afro and Central America a revolution is haunting and sweeping."[18] Yet RAM took a different approach in identifying the impetus of revolution. RAM focused on "caste" divisions, or race, instead of class divisions, and determined that the destruction of capitalism and class inequalities would follow the elimination of racism. "In the present situation, caste predominates the question of

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[15] Robert F. Williams, "The Crusader," *Inner City Voice* (Aug 1968): 15, *Inner City Voice* Collection, Folder 1968, WRL; Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*.

[16] Kelley, "Black Like Mao," 17.

[17] Ibid.

[18] RAM, *The World Black Revolution*, 2, in Muhammad Ahmad, ed., *The Black power movement: Part 3, Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement, 1962-1996* (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; Bethesda, MD: LexisNexis, 2002), microfilm, reel 5, slides 666-694.

class in that the exploitation of the have nots though initially perpetrated on class lines of the present, maintains itself on caste (racial lines)."[19] Proclaiming themselves revolutionary nationalists, RAM outlined a program by which the "Black Underclass," or the world's colonial population, would liberate themselves through a violent uprising. According to RAM, this revolution would only take ninety days to accomplish within the United States, and when accompanied by successive revolutions in Asia and Africa, the colonial population would quickly stand the racial hierarchy of the world on its head.[20]

RAM represented a departure from earlier traditions of internationalism. The most enduring contribution of this organization was the way it equated "black" with "oppressed" around the world, and broadened the definition of "black" to include those in Latin America and Asia.[21] With race at the forefront of its analysis of the imperialist system, RAM divided the world by color, emphasized the link between race and class, and preached revolutionary discipline. This nucleus of black activists would influence the course of radical black movements throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Members of the League's leadership collective and the founders of the Black Panther Party, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, developed their confidence in the revolutionary potential of the world's black population as part of RAM.

The Black Panthers brought the ideological convictions of RAM to the masses. They protested against imperialism and racism through many demonstrations and open acts of defiance in the face of white power. Historian Nikhil Singh has described the ideological power the Panthers held at this juncture. They were the "primary relay station for the absorption of the

[19] Ibid., 3.

[20] Kelley, "Black Like Mao," 17.

[21] "The Colonial War at Home," *Monthly Review* 16, no. 1 (May 1964): 9.

liberatory impulses of decolonization."[22] The Panthers proclaimed the existence of a black colony within the United States and used increasingly aggressive rhetoric towards the American government. The League developed an ideology that maintained some significant connections with this tradition while shifting their political aim from merely achieving power to gaining power for the black working class.

While both RAM and the Panthers focused on black liberation as a panacea for all other inequities, particularly for the lumpenproletariat, which the League closely identified with. The League framed this emancipatory discourse within a distinctly working class politics centered on the workplace. The origins of this key distinction can be found in the black radical tradition in Detroit.

Detroit was an important center for radical activism because of its union tradition and large industrial working class. Beginning in the 1930s with the drive for UAW recognition, the city had attracted a growing number of radicals trying to organize what Detroit activist Dan Georgakas called "the most advanced sector of the American working class."[23] By the 1950s, small but influential organizations such as Max Schachtman's Workers' Party, C.L.R. James' Correspondence, and the Socialist Workers Party were competing for organizational supremacy on the left. James' organization held formal and informal meetings, and the SWP sponsored weekly speakers at their "Friday Night Socialist Forum." Many League members filtered through this radical environment. Several members of the League's Central Staff were part of this organization, including General Baker and John Watson.[24]

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[22] Singh, 208.

[23] Dan Georgakas, interview by author, 23 March 2005, New York, New York, transcription of tape recording, 2.

[24] Ibid.

The League concentrated on the black working class as the vanguard of a new American Revolution.[25] The League's philosophy was indebted to the James group and its successors were the most closely connected to the League's philosophy. They concentrated on the black working class as the vanguard of a new American Revolution.[26]

Detroit activist James Boggs, who was affiliated with the James group, pushed race to the fore in his writings, uniting the emerging civil rights movement with the tradition of organized labor in Detroit. Boggs was a black auto worker who was a generation older than the League's membership. His influential writings on race in the workplace were read widely in these circles. A southern migrant who had worked on the line for years, Boggs represented an organic intellectual voice from the black working class. His writings focused on the alienation of the assembly line and the impact of new technology on the working conditions in the plant. For Walter Reuther, technology was the way to achieve more leisure time and a better standard of living. For Boggs, automation was detrimental to the experience of workers on the line, and new technology meant a faster assembly line and overproduction.[27] Boggs highlighted the connections between the civil rights movement, urban rebellions, and workplace struggles, emphasizing the roots of the "Black Revolt" in the working class.[28]

[25] Ibid.; Kent Worcester, *C.L.R. James: A Political Biography* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

[26] Ibid.

[27] James Boggs, *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968).

[28] Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970): 10-12.

"UAW Means You Ain't White"

A period of rank and file unrest began in 1968 and peaked in the early 1970s, as younger industrial workers challenged the power of entrenched union officials.[29] The widespread discontent of rank and file workers upset workplace relations in a number of industries, including steel, autos, and mining. By 1973, the GM plant in Lordstown, Ohio, had become synonymous with the nation-wide phenomenon of the "blue collar blues," representing the prominence of the auto industry in this struggle for rights within the workplace and within the increasingly bureaucratic world of organized labor.[30] During this same period, simmering racial tensions within unions emerged across a varied industrial and geographic landscape, including steelworkers and transit workers in Chicago, the building trades in Detroit, transit workers and retail workers in New York, and autoworkers in New Jersey.[31]

At the Dodge plant in Hamtramck, DRUM linked the dissatisfaction of an increasingly youthful workforce with the politics of black liberation to force its way into the politics of the UAW. Only weeks prior to DRUM's first wildcat strike in May of 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. King had traveled to Tennessee to support striking sanitation workers facing difficult working conditions, low pay, and an intransigent city government that refused to bargain with workers' representatives. Along with support from AFSCME, the entirely black contingent of sanitation workers in Memphis staged one of the most significant protests of the 1960s. The influential imagery of black workers picketing while wearing clapboards and holding signs displaying the slogan "I am a man" brought the nation's

[29] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*.

[30] Ibid., 42.

[31] Gannon, "Black Unionists;" Damon Stetson, "Negro Members Are Challenging Union leaders," *New York Times*, 29 June 1969, 37; Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*.

attention to grievances that went beyond integrating public spaces. King had attempted to use the situation in Memphis to highlight the interconnectedness of workers' rights and civil and political rights in anticipation of his Poor People's Campaign—an encamped protest in Washington planned for the summer. One year earlier, his public denunciation of the Vietnam War crystallized his perspective on the rights of the poor and minorities in the United States, placing these issues in an international context. His death sparked riots across the country and contributed to the success of the sanitation workers' strike. It also robbed the movement of a prominent voice that had eloquently—and with increasing frequency—linked issues relating to race in American society to class divisions, and to the Cold War.[32]

From A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Movement during World War II to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, economic rights had long been intertwined with civil rights.[33] Class had periodically divided the movement, especially during the 1950s when the NAACP amassed a largely middle class membership and pursued a court-based strategy to strike down discriminatory practices. The movement on the ground, however, had broadened the scope of participation. A diverse array students and community members from different class backgrounds were attracted to local organizations working to desegregate public spaces and change business behavior through boycotts, sit-ins, and protest campaigns in the North and the South.[34]

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[32] Michael K. Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007).

[33] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*; Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Struggle for Economic Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

[34] Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*; Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*.

By 1966, the question of economic rights became conflated with the call for Black Power in American society. The brash leaders of the Black Power movement, such as Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown, made impatience a virtue and demanded a radical reconfiguration of the civil rights movement. "Black Power" was defined in myriad ways, from Carmichael's notion of using the ballot to gain political power in local elections to cultural independence to the revolutionary nationalism of the Black Panther Party.

Journalists and other outside observers—including businessmen and union officials—viewed DRUM through the prism of the Black Power. The *Wall Street Journal*, for instance, caricatured DRUM as Black Power militants more interested in posturing and rhetoric rather than politics. In less than flattering terms, reporter James P. Gannon referred to DRUM's "revolutionary gospel," and highlighted what the author considered markers of Black Power militancy. DRUM "tells black 'brothers' to stop paying dues to the UAW," and "is headed by a heavyset man who calls himself 'General Baker.' When he meets a visitor, he is flanked by two silent aides who stare sullenly from behind dark glasses."[35] Baker's given name was not a rank—several generations of Baker men had been named General—yet the ominous implication of a "general" waging a looming race war offered the author the perfect segue into a discussion of a racially divided working class threatened from within by aggressive—and irresponsible—militants. [36]

The influence of the ideas and language of the Black Power movement on DRUM and the League was evident in its denunciations of the "honkies" in the UAW and the auto companies that had conspired to suppress workplace gains for black workers. It stoked divisions

[35] James P. Gannon, "Black Unionists: Militant Negroes Press For a Stronger Voice in the Labor Movement," *Wall Street Journal*, November 29, 1968, 1.

[36] Ibid.; Baker, interview by author, 12-13 November 2002.

within the black autoworker population by identifying black workers who were complicit in this system as "Uncle Toms." And it threatened violent reprisals for these "compradors."[37] Public proclamations at rallies, in interviews, and in the organization's publications lent credibility to the portrait painted by Gannon in 1968. "Clearly, black power has come to the blue collar world," he warned.[38]

Gannon rendered Black Power and blue collar as incompatible; however, this belied the melding of principles that produced something unique to the late 1960s.[39] The League consistently emphasized its commitment to improving the place of all black workers in the union, the workplace, the company, the city of Detroit, the nation, and eventually, internationally. This process began when a workplace dispute provoked the initial series of wildcat strikes at the Dodge Main plant, serving as the inspiration for the founding of DRUM and later the League. The May 1968 strikes were a response to workplace grievances among black workers, especially in relation to their working conditions and relationships with management and the UAW, which had accumulated over the course of the decade. African American autoworkers watched as they were treated with disdain by management and indifference by their union, and concluded that the collective bargaining system and the demands of the auto industry combined to institutionalize their predicament.

The structures of liberalism did not serve black workers in Detroit. By the 1960s, the auto companies and the strong union presence in the industry represented the apex of manufacturing

[37] This language was so commonplace in publications by DRUM, ELRUM, the League, among others, that providing several representative sources will suffice. "Quiet As It's Kept," *drum* 2, no. 4, DRUM Collection, Folder 1969, WRL; "Running with the Foxes & Budding with the Hounds!" *drum* 2, no. 13, n.d. [1969], Detroit Revolutionary Movements Collection, Box 1, Folder DRUM 1969, WRL; Baker, interview by author, 2002.

[38] Gannon, "Black Unionists."

[39] Ibid.

under postwar liberalism. The protests from DRUM and other emerging militant groups provoked commentary from Peter Henle, the Chief Economist of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, who went so far as to question whether or not unions could adequately attend to their once crucial role in the American economy. The democratic structure of union elections and procedures "all seem to indicate that dissent can be expressed constructively within the present framework. Yet in some eyes, the union has outlived its usefulness as an instrument of protest—to become itself a target of protest."[40]

DRUM emerged as a response to questions concerning the relevancy of unions, and it was followed in quick succession by the creation of revolutionary union movements (RUMs) at Detroit-area auto plants, such as Chrysler's Eldon Avenue Gear and Axle plant (ELRUM), Jefferson Avenue Assembly plant (JARUM), and Mack Avenue plant (MARUM).[41] Ford's River Rouge plant (FRUM), Cadillac's Fleetwood factory (CADRUM), and other industries organized revolutionary union movements as well, including local UPS workers (UPRUM), health care workers (HRUM), and Detroit *News* workers (NEWRUM).[42] The degree of organization among these RUMs varied significantly, with DRUM and ELRUM forming the most effective and committed local organizations.

By June of 1969, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers was founded to unite this broad-based movement. The League was structured as a meeting point for the individual RUMs. The Central Staff of the League included workers from job sites with organized RUMs as well as local radical activists. They were charged with setting policy and harnessing the resources of the

[40] Peter Henle, "Some Reflections on Organized Labor and the New Militants," *Monthly Labor Review* 92 (July 1969): 24.

[41] The most comprehensive sources for the story of DRUM and the League are Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, and Geschwender.

[42] Georgakas and Surkin, 83, 85-86.

organization for protests, publications, and programs. The leadership group included current and former autoworkers such as General Baker, Mike Hamlin, Charles "Mao" Johnson, and Chuck Wooten. It also included John Watson, Kenneth V. Cockrel, and Luke Tripp, working class African American students and activists who were influential in developing the ideological approach of the organization and contributed to the flyers, pamphlets, and articles it produced. For some autoworkers on the shop floor, the presence of these outsiders was controversial, but many accepted them because Baker and other workers had a direct connection to the factory floor.[43]

The League concentrated its activities on workplace reform, union politics, and community organizing. Promoting itself as the "vanguard" of a new revolutionary force in the U.S., the League's leadership collective prioritized the creation of a media arm to communicate to Detroit's black working class community and to the workers in each factory. This process preceded the formation of the League, as plant newspapers such as *drum* and the *Eldon Wildcat* were distributed by DRUM and ELRUM, respectively. DRUM activist and Wayne State University student John Watson sought out more resources for this endeavor. Watson became editor of the university paper, the *South End*, and with the help of the staff used this publication to disseminate information about the League. It helped that the newspaper had a secure funding line from the university. Watson used this platform to publicize the League's activity, attract potential student allies, and place the League in the context of the radical internationalism of the late 1960s by providing articles about revolutionary movements abroad, comparing the black revolutionaries of Detroit to those of developing nations. Often Watson would arrange for the paper to be distributed at the auto plants instead of the university, and he changed the masthead

[43] Baker, interview by author, 2002.

to read "One Class Conscious Worker is Worth 100 Students." This relationship ended once the university challenged Watson's use of the *South End* as a political project. He also became the editor of the *Inner City Voice*, a Detroit-area paper that covered community issues. Watson transformed it into a radical voice in the black community, billing it as "The Official Organ of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers."[44]

DRUM and the League used these means to present black workers with a radical vision of change. In its initial demands made to the Chrysler Corporation in the summer of 1968, DRUM focused on racial discrimination in employment, workplace discipline, and black workers' relationship with the UAW. DRUM called for the company to immediately increase the number of black foreman and other supervisory positions, and hire a black plant manager. It also requested the restructuring of the workforce in the hiring office, plant security, and the medical centers to reflect the largely African American population at the Dodge Main plant.[45] DRUM equated a transformation of the racial composition of the workforce in these positions with an improvement in working conditions at the plant.

The treatment of African American workers was at the forefront of the organization's program for change—DRUM activists had been fired and not re-hired after the wildcat strikes in May while other strikers had been able to rejoin the workforce. DRUM called for more transparency by including rank and file black workers as part of any investigation of grievances and the disciplinary process. It also declared that black workers must stop paying union dues to the UAW, which had proved unable to improve working conditions or defend the rights of black

[44] Geschwender, 141.

[45] DRUM, "Drum Demands," *drum* 1, no. 9, n.d. [1968], Detroit Revolutionary Movements Collection, Box 1, Folder DRUM 1968, WRL.

workers in the auto industry. [46] In its place, DRUM would serve the interests of these workers. These demands targeted institutions of power within the plant. Management and the union controlled hiring, firing, working conditions, and the levers of change. DRUM wanted to demonstrate the way the interests of the black working class were not served by the corporation or the UAW, and subsequently lead black workers in a movement to attain power in the production process writ large.

Acquiring these positions of power would allow black workers to influence the parts of the production process that shaped their lives—including job tracking, seniority, and workplace safety. Black workers were most likely to be hired in the least desirable jobs, in the dirtiest and most dangerous areas of the plant.[47] Management cited white workers' refusal to accept hazardous work assignments as justification for relegating black workers to difficult tasks.[48] Job segregation was also a product of the seniority system. African American workers were still the last hired and first fired in times of economic downturn, and while some black workers who had attained positions decades earlier had accumulated seniority rights that protected them from employment fluctuations, most of the younger generation entering the plants in the 1960s was at the mercy of the industry. Despite booming production, career prospects were uncertain due to industry restructuring—particularly in terms of plant movement beyond the city's boundaries.[49] The jobs on the lowest rung of the seniority ladder were largely unskilled and made worse through company indifference to safety concerns and the pace of the production process in the

[46] DRUM, "Drum Demands."

[47] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 99.

[48] B.J. Widick, "Black Workers: Double Discontents," in B.J. Widick, ed., *Auto Work and Its Discontents* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 54.

[49] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 104.

auto industry. A safety director for the Chrysler Corporation chronicled a litany of dangerous and worn equipment in the Eldon Avenue plant, along with deliberate efforts by the foremen to put machinery and vehicles in need of repair back onto the shop floor to maintain production levels at all cost.[50] Detroit's black workers faced common working conditions, as on-the-job injuries and even fatalities were common occurrences in plants across the city.[51]

The League emphasized the way long-standing problems facing autoworkers were experienced differently by African American autoworkers. The assembly line presented the opportunity for management to increase the pace of production, requiring workers to complete dangerous tasks at a higher rate of speed. High production quotas, based on the number of finished products per hour, referred to as the "speed up," were one of the first issues targeted by the UAW in the late 1930s.[52] Nevertheless, during the 1960s speed ups persisted. Rising rates of production did not coincide with a corresponding rise in the workforce. [53] The companies and many liberal unionists like Reuther noted that technological advances in automation had increased the efficiency of the production process, while the League stressed that an accelerated production rate on the line was most likely to be found at plants with a predominantly black workforce. African American workers referred to this dangerous combination of a physically demanding pace and rising output as "nigger-mation."[54] Mike Hamlin identified the key factor in

[50] Letter from Lloyd D. Utter, Safety Director, to Art Hughes, Assistant Director, Chrysler Corporation, June 3, 1970, reprinted in Geschwender, 101.

[51] Geschwender, 98-102.

[52] Ronald Edsforth and Robert Asher, "The Speedup: The Focal Point of Workers' Grievances, 1919-1941," in Asher and Edsforth, eds., *Autowork* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 88.

[53] Georgakas and Surkin, 101-102. The authors cite production figures from 1946 as 550,000 autoworkers churning out a little over three million vehicles. By 1970, approximately 750,000 autoworkers had completed more than eight million vehicles.

[54] Georgakas, "An Interview with John Watson," *Liberated Guardian* (May 1, 1971): 13.

the companies' ability to implement this strategy as the "large supply of reserve labor, black labor, cheap labor available for them, that they can speed it up on us as much as they want to."[55] He emphasized that this practice did not occur in shops with a white majority, and cited the comparatively lower unit-per-hour rate at the Ford assembly plant in Mahwah, New Jersey, as an example.[56] In Detroit, foremen were "snapping the whip" on the backs of black autoworkers, overworking them for arduous, underpaying jobs.[57] The League cited this treatment, along with the "doublefaced, back-stabbing" of the UAW, as a perfect example of the way the companies and the union had joined together to perpetuate workplace injustice based on race.

Racial discrimination in the workplace was effective in mobilizing support for RUMs and the League in 1968 and 1969. As a result, the various RUMs were able to make an impact in the workplace within the first year of their existence. The sustained protest campaign at the plants, along with the ongoing battle of ideas between the UAW and the League, galvanized workers to fight for black power in the union. Rallies at Dodge Main and Eldon Avenue demonstrated local support for the revolutionary union movement from within the established union locals. The best example of a formidable political movement mobilized by the RUMs was DRUM's effort to get Ron March elected trustee of Local 3. This position determined the distribution of funds by the union, and DRUM declared that black workers should have a representative in the decision-making process. March focused his candidacy on injustice in the workplace and the union, emphasizing the white workers' control of the local despite the numerical superiority of African American workers in the union electorate. Although there was a strong turnout and a relatively high profile campaign, March ultimately lost this election. DRUM protested to no avail, accusing

[55] "Fight on to Victory," 6.

[56] Ibid., 6-7.

[57] "Black Workers Uprising," *Inner City Voice* 1 (June 1968): 1.

the incumbents, their white allies in the union (including retirees), and the Hamtramck police force of voter fraud.[58] DRUM envisioned this as the beginning of a sustained attack on union power even as the UAW incumbents had maintained their position in Local 3.

Beyond local union politics, the League attempted an ambitious community organizing effort. Connecting local politics and the factory, it contemplated running candidates for citywide elections, with the goal of getting judges and perhaps eventually a mayoral candidate elected. Ken Cockrel, a member of the League leadership and a prominent black lawyer in Detroit, aimed to be that mayoral candidate; however, the League's dissolution before the 1973 election aborted that attempt.[59]

Another community endeavor involved organizing high school students as an auxiliary force for the League to count on during protests—and hopefully as workers once they graduated. Some inroads were made with students at Northern High School and other high schools in the city, and in some cases these groups contributed to widespread support for strike efforts at nearby factories. The League attempted to work with a local community organization called Parents and Students for Community Control (PASCC) to desegregate Detroit-area high schools by mobilizing protests in response to resistance by white students and parents to school integration.[60]

The League emphasized the crucial role of organizing efforts in the plants to community organizing and local political campaigns. The factory was identified as the only source of power that the African American community had, especially at plants such as Dodge Main and Eldon

[58] Geschwender, 103-122.

[59] Baker interview, 2002; Georgakas and Surkin, 73.

[60] "The Black Plan," *Inner City Voice* 2, no. 8 (Oct 1970): 13, *Inner City Voice* Collection, Folder 1970, WRL.

Avenue. With a majority of black workers at these plants, making improvements to working conditions and wages was the fastest way to make real change in their lives—and gain community support. "By winning the plant," Ron March emphasized, "we win the community."[61] This departed from other black revolutionary organizations in the late 1960s, from cultural nationalists to revolutionary nationalists such as the Black Panthers. Even those who favored an electoral route to grasping hold of a position of power in American society, such as Carmichael, had not conceived of organized labor as a tool in this struggle.

The League saw this link between the community and the point of production as the fulcrum of black power in the city. It wanted to funnel union dues paid by African American UAW members back into community organizing efforts in black neighborhoods to fund political campaigns, housing developments, schools, and recreation centers. Black economic development was a cause that the League felt could be underwritten by the millions of dollars collected from black workers every year in the Detroit area. These funds must be "turned back into the hands and control of rank and file black U.A.W. members, cried the *Inner City Voice*. "We have already spent too much in supporting the needs of white America, and we want the white ruling class, also Reuther and the auto barons, to keep out of the business of the black community."[62]

The League acknowledged that the racial divide in the city of Detroit was intensifying due to the ongoing migration of white workers to the suburbs. These enclaves were becoming the source of political opposition to welfare and education programs targeting urban areas. The League identified white workers' increasing fear of city residents, who were implicitly racialized after the devastation of the 1967 rebellion, highlighting the desire of many involved in the white

[61] Quoted in "The Dodge Rebellion," *Ramparts*, November 30, 1968, 12.

[62] "Black Workers Protest U.A.W. Racism, March on Cobo Hall," *Inner City Voice* 2, no. 2 (Nov. 1969), 13.

exodus to form "militias against the so-called threat of black rioters."[63] For the League, the deterioration of community relations reflected a larger disconnect between white workers and their African American counterparts. "In reality, the white worker is moving more and more to think of himself as a middle class suburbanite than as a worker."[64] The revolutionary union movement was a product of the "failure of the white labor movement to address itself to the racist work conditions and to the general inhumane conditions of Black people."[65] White workers concentrated their efforts on "wage increases, living allowances, etc., but say nothing about worker control of plants, production and the state."[66] The League determined that institutions such as the UAW oriented worker protest toward material gains in collective bargaining rather than toward addressing fundamental problems on the shop floor or achieving a measure of power in American politics and society. As John Watson emphasized, white workers have "time and time again chosen to defend their position of privilege rather than to move in conjunction with black workers to overthrow all inequities."[67]

Nevertheless, the position of black autoworkers in the United States economy afforded them strategic power and an opportunity to serve as the vanguard in the emerging worldwide anti-imperialist struggle.[68] The revolutionary potential of the African American working class was, for the League, established by several factors. First, black autoworkers had a relatively

[63] John Williams, "An Abridged Analysis of the Labor Question," *Inner City Voice* 2, no. 2 (Nov. 1969), 16.

[64] Ibid.

[65] League of Revolutionary Black Workers, "General Policy Statement," *Inner City Voice* (1970), 10, Inner City Voice 1967-1971 Collection, Box 1, Folder Inner City Voice 1970, WRL.

[66] Williams, "An Abridged Analysis of the Labor Question," 16.

[67] Dan Georgakas, "An Interview with John Watson," *Liberated Guardian* 2, no. 1, May 1, 1971, 12. This interview was conducted in September 1970 in Rome and Florence, Italy, but not published until May 1, 1971.

[68] "D.R.U.M.—Vanguard of the Black Revolution," *South End*, 23 January 1969, WRL; DRUM, "DRUM Constitution," Box 44, Folder 6, UAW Regional Collection, WRL.

substantial and steady income when compared to other black workers in the U.S. and the world. Dues-paying black workers were considered the starting point for a regeneration of the African American urban community in the late 1960s. DRUM proposed redistributing union dues to the black community to foster self-determination and independence.

Second, black autoworkers had acquired positions producing valuable commodities in major global industries such as automobile manufacturing. The League emphasized the strategic advantage of black workers in the struggle against discrimination and inequality. The black working class was an essential cog in the productive machinery of the American economy. Watson underlined the power of African Americans in industrial work by identifying factories that were crucial to the production process, such as Dodge Main and Eldon Avenue. Organizing and potentially withholding the labor of black workers would cripple the manufacture and assembly of valuable commodities. Eldon Avenue, for instance, was the only gear and axle plant in Chrysler's network of production facilities. "When that plant shuts down, all Chrysler production ceases," Watson noted, adding that "Eldon has a key role in production as black workers have in the proletariat."[69] This spatial understanding of production framed the League's conception of the place of black workers in the American economy. Both the majority-black workforce at the Eldon Avenue factory and the arduous labor forced upon black industrial workers through "nigger-mation" were essential to grasping the extent of economic and racial oppression forced upon African Americans in the United States.

Baker felt that the experience of black workers during the August 1967 uprising contributed to the League's notion of the strategic value of the black working class.

> I think the lessons out of the '67 rebellion, under the martial law, when the only place you could go under martial law was to the plant. You couldn't go to the store and get

[69] Georgakas, "An Interview with John Watson," *Liberated Guardian*, 1 May 1971, 13.

> food. I mean that was a fundamental lesson to us there, and we had come to the conclusion that the only place that black people had any value in society was at the point of production, and the only section of us that was at the point of production was black workers. Black middle class wasn't there . . . they were useless to the ruling class during the rebellion.[70]

This point was made even more salient during the curfew imposed by the city after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968, when DRUM reported that "the white power structure realized [they] could not get their production without Black workers."[71] The military was called into the city and only workers from Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, and other corporations were allowed to go to work at night.

Finally, DRUM and subsequently the League openly allied black autoworkers with the ongoing international revolution against imperialism. The important role of black workers in the United States contrasted with the poor treatment they received from management and the UAW, and the League emphasized that the solution to this problem lay in organized action against capitalism and imperialism.[72] White workers and organized labor were the first obstacles in this struggle. "The labor movement as represented by United Mine Workers, Steel Workers, UAW, AFL-CIO, etc., are all the antithesis of the freedom of black people, in particular, and the world, in general."[73] The League determined that these institutions were complicit in the continued exploitation of black workers and a Marxist-Leninist approach was the most effective route for the black working class in the late 1960s.[74] John Watson claimed the white left was not

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[70] General Baker, interview by author, 2004, 4.

[71] *drum* 1, no. 5, DRUM Collection, Folder 1968, WRL.

[72] David Gaynes, "Urgent Appeal," *South End* May 22, 1969, 6, WRL.

[73] John Williams, "An Abridged Analysis of the Labor Question," *Inner City Voice* 2, no. 2 (Nov. 1969), 16.

[74] Ibid.

committed to organizing workers, and that this was a "necessity" for Marxist-Leninist organizations. Watson dismissed the "so-called Left" for being unwilling to commit to the difficult task of organizing workers from the ground up. "They criticize us for dividing the working class," he lamented, while continuing to support an economic model that imposed limitations on white and black workers.[75] Black workers mobilized against the entrenched power of organized labor were ideally suited to serve as the primary agent in a global revolution against imperialism.

The radical politics of the League described imperialism as the main issue facing "colored" workers around the globe. For the League, race was the defining factor shaping the lives of black workers in Detroit and the world, guiding the movement's approach to organizing. Watson dismissed the narrow concerns of cultural nationalists, who were "not effectively engaged in any kind of real struggle against the system." [76] The League was also wary of the disconnect between some groups associated with the "Third World left" and the working class.[77]

"Needless to say, our line is the hard line," read the DRUM Constitution. The racial exclusivity of the movement was not open to compromise. "We are in a life and death struggle that has been raging savagely for 5 centuries."[78] This epic battle had "shown no quarter to the black man," and should be dichotomously understood as a conflict between "master and slave, rich and poor, black and white, beast and prey, management and worker."[79] From this

[75] Georgakas, "An Interview with John Watson," *Liberated Guardian*, 1 May 1971, 12.

[76] John Watson, "Perspective: A Summary Discussion," speech given to "Control, Conflict, and Change" book club, 8 June 1971, 14. Dan Georgakas Collection, Box 5, Folder 5, WRL.

[77] Ibid.; Baker, interview by author, 2002.

[78] DRUM, "DRUM Constitution."

[79] Ibid.

perspective, class, race, and rigid social and economic barriers neatly aligned to define this struggle.

Mike Hamlin explained the incompatibility of black and white workers in an interview in 1969. "Whites in America don't act like workers. They don't act like a proletariat." Instead, he said, white workers benefitted from their racism through "white skin privilege," and this was inherently divisive in any working class organizing effort. Hamlin's organic articulation of the "wages of whiteness" was accompanied by a call for an all-black labor movement—represented by the League—to fight against racism and imperialism until white workers abandoned the apparent benefits of a racially divided workplace and agreed to work with, rather than against, black workers.[80] General Baker recalled this sentiment, noting the existence of some degree of contact between DRUM and the League and progressive white workers and the possibility of a future collaboration between black and white workers on a coalition basis. He considered the break with the UAW and white workers in general to be essential to the movement, however, as DRUM "figured that we needed to move the way we did at that time cause we wanted to first of all show black workers that they had a certain strength, that they hadn't expressed before…."[81] The League identified the workplace as the locus of Black Power in the United States. Gaining power on the shop floor was the first priority in improving conditions for workers and their communities.

The "hard line" drawn between black and white workers, along with the unconventional tactics and provocative rhetoric used by the movement, engendered criticism from workers and union officials. The League's emphasis on the way race created a disparity in the everyday

[80] "Fight on to Victory."

[81] Baker interview 2004.

experience of autoworkers provoked a fierce reaction from white workers in the Detroit area, who were most likely to be older than the black militants and more inclined to support the local union officials.

Despite the wide ranging agenda of the League, critiques emerged from the UAW leadership and other rank and file autoworkers which mainly focused on attacking the racial politics of the movement and defending the union. Within the UAW, two prominent factions moved to sternly condemn the League. The first included an older generation of black political activists and union officials who had worked hard to reform the racial politics of the UAW from within during the first two decades of its existence.[82] Organizations such as the Trade Union Leadership Council (TULC) had lobbied for more African American representation in decision-making positions in the union since the 1950s.[83] Long tenured African American autoworkers had seen their lives improve considerably through their relationship with the UAW. They too were dissatisfied with the slow pace of change but were uneasy with the tactics and rhetoric of the League. Workers on a DRUM picket line chanted slogans such as "UAW means You Ain't White," denouncing the union as a racist institution and UAW icons such as Walter Reuther as nothing more than accomplices in the exploitation of black workers.[84]

Autoworker Charles Denby was no stranger to protest movements within the UAW. As an African American migrant from the South, he was involved in UAW political battles at the local level in Detroit since the 1940s.[85] Denby identified with DRUM's description of the

[82] Meier and Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*.

[83] Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism*.

[84] *Finally Got the News*, prod. by Stewart Bird, Peter Gessner, René Lichtman and John Louis, Jr. in association with the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 55 min., Black Star Productions, 1970, videocassette.

[85] Charles Denby, *Indignant Heart: A Black Workers' Journal* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978).

oppressive environment black workers found in the workplace and to some extent agreed with the movement's criticism of the UAW, especially the attacks on Reuther. Denby was much less enamored with the violent and "vulgar and derogatory" language in DRUM publications and what he considered the questionable ties between DRUM leadership and the workers on the line, and raised questions about the movement with his fellow workers. Looking back on the early stages of this movement in his memoir on life in Detroit's auto factories, Denby stressed that the protests of DRUM and ELRUM attracted the support of hundreds of workers. One meeting attended by over five hundred workers from the Eldon Avenue plant was in response to the firing of twenty-six black workers. The speakers at this meeting, according to Denby, were intent on discussing the virtues of Mao's "little red book," calling him "our closest ally." He noticed the unease among the workers in attendance, adding, "this sort of meeting was what the labor bureaucrats needed to destroy the movement."[86] For Denby, black workers were caught between "the bureaucrats and the Maoists," two factions seeking to manipulate the rank and file for their own purposes.[87] His objection to the international connection made by the speaker at this particular rally points to the potential hazards of associating a shop floor organizing effort with revolutionary movements abroad: the possibility of striking a disconnect with the rank and file and opening the movement up to outside attacks.

Denby's prediction of a harsh reaction by the UAW proved correct. UAW Executive Board members such as Chrysler Department Director Douglas Fraser and Treasurer Emil Mazey were outspoken in defense of the UAW's relationship with black workers as well as the racial politics of Local 3. The UAW leadership was caught off guard by the strenuous criticism

[86] Ibid., 267-268; Denby, "Black Caucuses in the Unions," in Burton Hall, ed., *Autocracy and Insurgency in Organized Labor* (Transaction Publishers, 1972).

[87] Denby, "Black Caucuses in the Unions."

received from DRUM, and Walter Reuther and other Executive Board members felt the need to rebut this challenge regarding the efficacy of organized labor.

Soon after the wildcat strikes in 1968, the UAW began its counterattack. It accused DRUM of physical assaults on union members, intimidation, and sabotage of the plant grounds and machinery.[88] Next, the UAW appealed to its members to adopt a "common sense" approach to the problem of racial unrest in the union. In a letter distributed to members of Local 3—which included the Dodge Main plant and was the target of Ron March's candidacy for trustee—the UAW made its case against DRUM by portraying the movement as antithetical to the best interests of individual workers, the union, and even the nation. The UAW attempted to discredit DRUM by highlighting the movement's intractable views on race, contrasting this with the UAW's commitment to the interests of African American workers since the 1930s and its support for open hiring mandates at union shops.[89] DRUM's activities were framed in terms of their violation of the sanctity of the system of labor relations established by liberalism. Wildcat strikes were the perfect example of this, as unsanctioned protests only cost the participants' wages rather than facilitating material improvements to working conditions or pay.[90]

In many ways, these criticisms echoed those offered by Denby and other African American critics of DRUM and the League. Linking DRUM to the *Inner City Voice*, the UAW leadership claimed that this paper—and by implication, the organization—constituted "not so much the voice of the Inner City as it is the voice of a worldwide propaganda network."[91] The

[88] Ibid., 24.

[89] United Automobile Workers, Local 3, "Common Sense—Or Chaos?," n.d. [1968], Box 44, Folder 6, UAW Regional Collection, WRL.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

union chose to highlight the rhetoric of DRUM to call into question the movement's commitment to Detroit workers. The UAW impugned DRUM as outside agitators interested in promulgating revolutionary ideas drawn from abroad.

> The paper carries articles by and about Chinese Communist leader Mao Tse-Tung, the late Cuban revolutionary, Ernesto Che Guevara, the North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh and the American expatriate, Robert Williams, now living in Red China, to mention just a few.[92]

The UAW's willingness to employ the language of anticommunism demonstrates the ongoing danger of associating with radical international movements, as Cold War politics had been very successful in impeding the growth of earlier efforts at black internationalism and black labor solidarity.[93] In 1968, the UAW viewed this international connection as one of the most powerful means to attack DRUM. It did not merely focus on claims of dual unionism and unauthorized strikes to combat DRUM's influence in Local 3. Instead, it chose to highlight DRUM's affinity for revolutionary icons abroad, including Robert F. Williams. These telling choices illuminate the significance of international affairs to the history of DRUM and the League. The black working class internationalism espoused by this movement in the late 1960s prompted criticism from the UAW, yet it also served as a mobilizing force for black autoworkers, who the League asked to identify with revolutionaries around the world.

Mapping the Black Workers' Revolution

Using publications, films, and organizing methods such as coalition building and educational efforts, the League attempted to shape members' understanding of the interconnectedness of Third World liberation movements and the liberation of Detroit's black population. The League evoked a geography of revolution, highlighting a wide range of

[92] Ibid.

[93] Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*.

movements engaged in struggles that were portrayed as providing insight into—or in some cases analogous to—the situation in Detroit , including movements in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Frederic Jameson describes this process as "cognitive mapping," the creation of a "mental map of the social and global totality we all carry around in our heads in variously garbled forms." This mental map can be a way of projecting the local social structure onto a global framework. Jameson emphasizes the empowering nature of this process, while warning that "the incapacity to map socially is … crippling to political experience."[94]

League members who had deep roots in radical organizations such as RAM found an origin point for their identification with Third World liberation movements in the 1955 Asian-African Conference at Bandung, Indonesia. The purpose of this conference was to establish an independent bloc of countries outside of the spheres of influence of the United States and the Soviet Union. General Baker considered this conference influential in structuring the international perspective of the League, as he characterized the non-aligned movement as "really being a movement of color."[95] Nearly all of these nations represented people who were then referred to as "colored," as African, Arab, and Asian countries were the most numerous in attendance.[96] The conference galvanized this Third World consciousness in the black radical imagination, demonstrating that the interests of "Bandung world" could exist outside of Cold War geopolitical alliances.

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[94] Frederic Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988): 353.

[95] General Baker, interview by author, 2004, 2.

[96] Cary Fraser, "An American Dilemma: Race and Realpolitik in the American Response to the Bandung Conference, 1955," in *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988,* ed. Brenda Gayle Plummer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 2003): 117.

Cuba was also included in this "cognitive map" because it presented an example of a successful revolution followed by the implementation of a socialist system. A link had been forged between Cuba and black America through Fidel Castro's open support of black rights and his acceptance of Robert F. Williams when Williams was forced into exile to evade American authorities. Castro had stayed in Harlem during his visit to the United Nations in 1960, in solidarity with American blacks and in an attempt to discredit the U.S. in the international community by highlighting America's racial hypocrisy.[97]

Baker and several other members of the League were part of a large group of students who traveled to Cuba in 1964 in defiance of the State Department's travel ban. They were guests of the state and played baseball with the Castro brothers and Juan Almeida. They encountered other potential revolutionaries who were involved with RAM as well as students and revolutionaries from around the world. Baker described Cuba as a revolutionary paradise, where everyone was politicized and socialism was a reality. This positive view of early 1960s Cuba was reinforced by what he perceived as the racial egalitarianism in Cuban society. [98]

The *Inner City Voice* printed several articles and statements from Third World revolutionary movements which echoed the efforts by the League to forge international solidarity. Some were didactic in nature, as in the reprint of an excerpt from Che Guevara's *Episodes of the Revolutionary War*, which described in an inspirational fashion the difficulties of armed insurrection.[99] Nigeria, Uganda, and Guinea-Bissau were among the many other sites of revolutionary conflict and imperialist influence that the League publicized through the *Inner City*

[97] Kelley, "Black Like Mao," 14; Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 233-4.

[98] General Baker, interview by author, 2002, 8-9.

[99] "Episodes from the Revolutionary War," *Inner City Voice* 1, no. 8 (Aug 1968): 14, Inner City Voice Collection, Folder 1968, WRL.

Voice.[100] Several articles from Thailand in support of black revolutionaries were also reproduced. The Committee for Afro-Asian People's Solidarity of Thailand praised the black struggle against the "American monopoly capitalist system" in the "centre of imperialism." Calling the black liberation movement "an inspiration to the people of all countries including the Thai people," the article pointed to Mao's statement in support of the black struggle as further evidence of the significance of this cause.[101]

Robert F. Williams sent Mao's statement to the *Inner City Voice* from exile in China. He praised the efforts of blacks in the U.S. as a "component part of the contemporary world revolution," and optimistically predicted a united movement composed of civil rights activists and American workers that would "eventually end the criminal rule of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class."[102] Finally, Williams' own work was reproduced in the *Inner City Voice* while he resided abroad to escape federal charges.[103] His tumultuous life within the United States, fierce advocacy of armed self-defense, and political radicalism in the 1960s provided a bridge between African American radicals in the U.S. and revolutionary movements abroad.

The League incorporated other minority groups within the United States into its understanding of Third World workers. By the late 1960s, Detroit's Arab population had grown to about 85,000, and many of these new residents were working in the Detroit auto plants.[104] The

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[100] *ELRUM*, 19 February 1970; *Inner City Voice* (Feb. 1971): 15; *Inner City Voice*, (April 1971): 17, in Ernie Allen, Jr., ed., *The Black power movement: Part 4, The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976* (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; Bethesda, MD: LexisNexis, 2004), microfilm.

[101] "Thailand Revolutionaries Support Black Struggle," and "More From Thailand," *Inner City Voice* 1, no. 8 (Aug 1968): 16, Inner City Voice Collection, Folder 1968, WRL; General Baker, interview by author, 2004, 2.

[102] Ernest Allen, Jr., "Dying from the Inside: The Decline of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers," in *They Should Have Served that Cup of Coffee*, ed. Dick Cluster (Boston: South End Press, 1979): 90; "Chairman Mao's 2nd Historic Statement," *Inner City Voice* (Aug 1968): 15, *Inner City Voice* Collection, Folder 1968, WRL.

[103] Tyson, 283.

[104] Georgakas, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, 76.

Palestinian liberation movement was another front in the fight against American imperialism, and leaflets were translated into Arabic in a concerted effort to attract sympathetic auto workers. League representatives met with members of al Fatah in Detroit and two League members traveled to Palestine to conduct an interview with al Fatah's leadership.[105] Race provided a fundamental link between these two organizations. The League was willing to expand the notion of "black workers" to integrate as many groups as needed to "educate Black people to the struggle going on all over the world against white oppression of non-white people."[106]

The League's commitment to making race an inclusive category was reflected in its support for the struggles of other minority groups in the United States. It found common cause in the American Indian Movement, and the *Inner City Voice* presented articles about Native Americans' quest for fishing rights in Washington State.[107] The League considered other black workers agitating against discrimination in the labor movement to be important allies. At the Ford Motor Company plant in Mahwah, New Jersey, the United Black Brotherhood (UBB) modeled itself after DRUM, challenging the UAW and management over similar issues such as the speedup and working conditions.[108]

This patchwork quilt of international movements stitched together by the League included a many of the same revolutionary icons of the Black Panthers and other groups broadly associated with the "Third World Left." The League connected these international movements to a revolution on the shop floor, eschewing the notion of armed revolution. The insurgency in

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[105] "Arab People—Governments=Struggle," *Inner City Voice* (Feb. 1971): 19, in Allen, Jr., ed., *The Black power movement: Part 4, The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976*, microfilm.

[106] *ELRUM* 2, no. 3, in Allen, Jr., ed., *The Black power movement: Part 4, The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976*, microfilm.

[107] "Indian Rights Upheld!," *Inner City Voice* (April 1971): 14, in Allen, Jr., ed., *The Black power movement: Part 4, The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976*, microfilm.

[108] "United Black Brothers," *drum*, [n.d.], DRUM Collection, Folder 1969, WRL.

Vietnam was the final component of the League's "cognitive map." While the League considered the Viet Cong part of the global revolution against imperialism, it also criticized the UAW and the AFL-CIO for their continued support of the Johnson administration and the war effort in Vietnam.

The DRUM Constitution rhetorically convened a meeting of the non-aligned world through the struggle for black workers' power. "We recognize our struggle is not an isolated one and that we have common cause with other black workers in this racist nation and throughout the world." Just who encompassed the category of "black worker" was liberally defined:

> Being in the forefront of this revolutionary struggle we must act swiftly to help organize D.R.U.M.-type organizations wherever there are black workers, be it in [Chrysler President] Lynn Townsend's kitchen, the White House, White Castle, Ford Rouge, the Mississippi Delta, the plains of Wyoming, the tin mines of Bolivia, the rubber plantation of Indonesia, the oil fields of Biafra, or the Ch[r]ysler Plants in South Africa.[109]

Black workers could be found around the world in this transnational community—African descent or residence in the United States was not a factor in determining who could identify as a "black worker." Instead, a common relationship with imperialism became the marker of this global racial divide.

DRUM and the League tried to strengthen this perspective through educational efforts and practical connections with movements abroad.[110] The League developed a curriculum for workers' political education, divided into several subjects, from history to imperialism.[111] These materials focused on the labor movement and "black liberation struggles." These broad subjects

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[109] DRUM, "DRUM Constitution."

[110] "The Colonial War at Home," *Monthly Review* 16, no. 1 (May 1964): 8-9.

[111] League of Revolutionary Black Workers, "Cadre and Mass Education: General Statement," in Ernie Allen, Jr., ed., *The Black power movement: Part 4, The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976* (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; Bethesda, MD: LexisNexis, 2004), microfilm.

were meant to illuminate connections between the history of black workers and the local conditions at the particular factory at which the workers were employed. The next step on this prospective syllabus was to develop an understanding of concepts such as imperialism and political economy. Finally, the focus turned to "relevant" revolutions—Cuba, Russia, China, and Vietnam.[112] Other educational materials provided a detailed suggested reading list, which included Lenin's *State and Revolution*, *Imperialism,* and several works by Mao Zedong.[113] The historical topics outlined in these materials radically restructured American history, providing a history of black labor and American imperialism from 1600 to the founding of DRUM in 1968. Slavery, industrialization, and imperialism—one after another—led to the changes in African American lives following World War I. The Great Migration pointed black workers toward "Plant Plantation American Style," transforming this agrarian population into an urban workforce. The postwar civil rights movement and the creation of a revolutionary union movement served as the coda to this brief history of the United States. The League felt that history had been used by whites against blacks in the U.S. for so long; therefore it wanted to turn this situation around by making history a "weapon" in their struggle.[114]

African liberation movements were consistently invoked as representative of the type of struggle the League wished to undertake. The League not only discussed various movements across the continent in its publications, it also made an effort to develop a network of revolutionary movements and workers' organizations. As Baker recalled,

[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

[114] "Revolutionary Black Culture as a Weapon," in Ernie Allen, Jr., ed., *The Black power movement: Part 4, The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976* (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; Bethesda, MD: LexisNexis, 2004), microfilm.

> . . . [W]e had a level of contacts with the budding movement in Africa, levels of the ANC [African National Congress in South Africa] and the MPLA [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola]. . . . We never really had formal contacts with the Congolese movement or the Algerian movement, even though we tried to agitate and foment the popularization of those movements as we moved along.[115]

The League also established practical connections to movements in Europe. For an organization so inclined to draw the "hard line" dividing black and white workers in the United States, the League was able to forge a connection with European radical organizations and movements of workers. League members who visited Italy cultivated a robust connection to Italian workers. Watson spoke about the black struggle in the United States at a December 1968 international anti-imperialist conference held by the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP), which also featured a representative from the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front. This relationship was facilitated by Georgakas, who was living abroad at the time.[116]The League connected with white European workers on the basis of class and politics, a departure from its rhetoric that condemned interracial cooperation. The political stance of these organizations was more important than race to League leaders involved in the internationalist effort, such as Watson and Cockrel.[117]

In 1970, the League produced a film entitled *Finally Got the News*, which documented the brief history of the organization.[118] The League created Black Star Productions to distribute the film, and worked with Newsreel to produce it. The film presents an idealized vision of black workers challenging management and the UAW and forcefully stating their case for drastic

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[115] General Baker, interview by author, 2004, 2.

[116] Dan Georgakas, "Young Detroit Radicals, 1955-1965," *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981).

[117] Georgakas, interview by author, 3.

[118] *Finally Got the News*, prod. by Stewart Bird, Peter Gessner, René Lichtman and John Louis, Jr. in association with the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 55 min., Black Star Productions, 1970, videocassette.

changes in the production process. It consisted of scenes of workers on the assembly line and protesting combined with revolutionary analysis by Watson and Cockrel. Watson discusses the power of black workers at the point of production while standing in front of a wall of posters featuring images of Che Guevara, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Malcolm X, and the MPLA. Cockrel reiterates the commitment of the League to the "world wide struggle" against racism and imperialism. Nevertheless, most of the film concentrates on problems faced by black workers in the workplace and in their relationship with the UAW.

The League saw the potential inherent in the medium of film, and felt that distributing *Finally Got the News* was a revolutionary act. "The film has been shown throughout this country and the world and is evidence of our consciousness of the duty to extend the line to every corner of the world."[119] Watson went to Europe in an attempt to raise funds by selling copies of the film. Two Italian organizations, the PSIUP and Workers Power (Potere Operati), met with the League in Detroit. In the spring of 1970 Watson returned to Italy show the film and lecture to meetings held by the Communist Party and the Socialist Party.[120] The film served as a means of bridging the spatial division between Europe and black America, providing a glimpse of the black workers' struggle in Detroit to a group of workers who might never leave continental Europe. Film offered a medium for overcoming limited mobility and the geographic isolation.

The League used other short films at meetings in Detroit. One League function open to the public advertised the showing of two films, *Hanoi, Tuesday the 13th* and *Wilmington*.[121]

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[119] "The Split in the League of Revolutionary Black Workers: Three Lines and Three Headquarters", 12, in Muhammad Ahmad, ed., *The Black power movement: Part 3, Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement, 1962-1996*, microfilm.

[120] Georgakas, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, 61, 145; Georgakas, interview by author, 3.

[121] Congress, Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws of the Committee of the Judiciary, Extent of Subversion in the 'New Left,'" 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 6 August 1970, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 1271.

Hanoi provides an overview of daily life in that city, showing scenes of work, community, and dedicated resistance to recurring American air attacks. Its Cuban director, Santiago Alvarez, and affiliation with the Cuban Institute of Motion Pictures and the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America place this film at the center of transnational revolutionary discourse.[122] It is an example of the cultural and geographic distance between these revolutionary movements, however, as it shows a radically different lifestyle than the one experienced by Detroit's black workers. Black Detroiters could make few connections with the scenes of farming and fishing that made up the core of the film, but League members viewed repeated bombings of Vietnamese agrarian life as representative of the impact of U.S. imperialism.'' The use of force by the U.S. government provided a neat transition to the other film, *Wilmington*, which recounts a story more accessible to black Detroiters. It documents the occupation of Wilmington, Delaware, by the state's National Guard for nearly nine months in 1968-69. Governor Charles L. Terry, Jr., had ordered the continued military presence in Wilmington's black neighborhoods following a riot in response to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.[123] Wilmington's African American population was constantly under military surveillance during this period, facing hostility from law enforcement and the governor. Detroit had a similar encounter with the military during the summer of 1967—on a much larger scale.

"Third World People in the U.S."

Wilmington is representative of another trend in the League's efforts to create a black working class internationalism by highlighting the relationship between the African American

[122] *Hanoi, Tuesday the 13th*, dir. Santiago Alvarez, 38 min., Third World Newsreel, 1999 [1967], videocassette.

[123] *Wilmington*, Newsreel, 1970, 15 minutes; "Delaware Put on Alert," *New York Times*, 9 April 1968, 36; Ben A. Franklin, "Armed Guardsmen Still Patrol in Wilmington's Slums, 7 Months After Riot," *New York Times*, 17 November 1968, 80; "Troops Withdraw From Wilmington," *New York Times*, 22 January 1969, 26.

population and other non-white groups within the United States and throughout the Third World. The idea of a black "internal colony" in the United States was rooted in the postwar black urban experience. Cities were, for the Black Power movement, a new "battleground" in the United States. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton tied the explosive uprisings in urban areas to a new expression of black agency.[124] The League accepted this view and expanded it, focusing on the isolation and exploitation imposed upon African American communities in urban areas in the late 1960s.

In his writing, James Boggs focused on cities as the site where blacks could gain power within the U.S. because of the growing urban black population. In a 1965 essay, he related the condition of black Americans to that of "the colored peoples of the underdeveloped (i.e., super-exploited) countries" facing colonial domination.[125] Boggs perceived the city as a launching pad for a new revolutionary movement within the U.S., one that he made clear was analogous to other "colored" movements around the world, particularly the Vietnamese.[126] The urban black population had numerical superiority and could seize the means of production, thus ensuring black power. This perspective formed the core of the League's revolutionary philosophy, and diverged from other analyses of black "internal colonies" in the United States.

General Baker also focused on geography when asked about what set the black population in the U.S. apart from colonies in Asia and Africa. "We always talked about what made us different was that we in the belly of the beast instead of being outside of it."[127] The

[124] Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, "Dynamite in the Ghetto," in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967): 146-162.

[125] James Boggs, "The City Is the Black Man's Land," in *Racism and the Class Struggle* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970): 42.

[126] Ibid., 49.

[127] General Baker, interview by author, 2004, 2.

League's location within U.S. cities made it even more strategically important as the vanguard party of "Third World people in the U.S."[128] The lack of geographic distance between the colonial power and the oppressed colony had implications pertaining to the extraction of resources as well. *ELRUM* highlighted this difference between traditional colonial relationships and black America. "Black communities of the United States do not export anything except human labor."[129] Lacking definitive geographic boundaries, no raw materials were extracted from the black colony in the United States. Nevertheless, *ELRUM* noted that the position of African Americans in American society could be best understood through economic relationships. "It is the objective relationship which counts, not bull shit equal rights or geography."[130]

The League stressed that the African Americans encountered the realities of American oppression daily. John Watson described black workers as "crucial to imperialistic production," particularly in Detroit where the engines, parts, and vehicles produced by the auto industry were useful to the military.[131] Ken Cockrel further connected industrial production and the war effort through the example of a tank production facility in Detroit in which the majority of workers were black. He called for worker resistance at this plant because it would restrict production of a necessary instrument of war that was not only being used overseas but in Detroit as well. He

[128] "D.R.U.M.—Vanguard of the Black Revolution," *South End*, 23 January 1969, WRL; League of Revolutionary Black Workers, "Revolutionary Black Culture as a Weapon."

[129] *ELRUM*, 13 January 1969, in Allen, Jr., ed., *The Black power movement: Part 4, The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976*, microfilm.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Georgakas, "An Interview with John Watson," *Liberated Guardian*, 1 May 1971, 19.

evoked images of the Detroit Rebellion when he declared, "[w]hat do you think were rolling down the streets July 23rd, 1967, and is rolling all around Vietnam today?"[132]

Part of the League's colonial analysis was tied to the fundamental struggle for self-determination. The power dynamic between the white and black populations of Detroit were made clear in situations such as the rebellion of 1967. *ELRUM* explained the nature of their subordination. "Politically, the decisions which affect black lives have always been made by white people the white power structure," and handed down directly or through a system of indirect rule.[133] This system was perpetuated by black collaborators who worked with whites, gaining some privileges while remaining complicit in this system of exploitation. The League reserved some of its most severe criticism for these individuals, denouncing African Americans who worked with the UAW, management, or the government as "Uncle Toms" and publishing a list of the accused in the *South End*.[134] They were considered "traitors to manhood itself," and consistently threatened with violent retributions. [135]

An organizational flyer distributed by the Forge Revolutionary Union Movement (FORUM) at the Detroit Forge plant, visually displayed the connection between revolutionary violence and internationalism.[136] The flyer delineated a new hagiography of black radical workers by portraying images of three individuals—Mao, Malcolm X, and black auto worker James Johnson—each representing one facet of the revolutionary internationalism espoused by

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[132] Jim Jacobs and David Wellman, "Fight on to Victory: An Interview," *Leviathan* (June 1970): 8, 36.

[133] *ELRUM*, 13 January 1969.

[134] Larry Lewis, "The Nigger Word," *Elrum* 1, no. 3, DRUM Collection, Folder 1968-69. WRL; "Categorizing Toms," *South End*, 23 January 1969, 6, WRL.

[135] "Running with the Foxes & Budding with the Hounds!" *drum* 2, no. 13, n.d. [1969], Detroit Revolutionary Movements Collection, Box 1, Folder DRUM 1969, WRL.

[136] Undated FORUM Flyer, in Allen, Jr., ed., *The Black power movement: Part 4, The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976*, microfilm.

the League. Mao symbolized the revolutionary politics the League advocated, while Malcolm corresponded with its black nationalism and militancy.

Johnson is a telling addition to this trio. He killed two foremen and a fellow worker after enduring a job change and refusing to work when not provided with standard safety protections.[137] In his capacity as a lawyer, Ken Cockrel gained an acquittal for Johnson based on his history of mental instability, which Cockrel explained was exacerbated by working in the fast-paced and dangerous auto industry. Even though Johnson was not a member of the League, his violent outburst was celebrated in many League publications, as he forcefully confronted the oppressive working conditions of the plant. Here the League entered dangerous ground by supporting Johnson's extreme case of retaliation against a representative of management.

The League framed Johnson's individual act of resistance within Franz Fanon's notion of revolutionary violence, which enabled the League to relate this incident to their anti-colonial politics. Fanon describes decolonization as "always a violent phenomenon," and the League presented Johnson's case as an example of revolutionary violence in practice.[138] In other publications the League glorified Johnson's stand against the poor working conditions of black workers and his willingness to "wage an armed struggle at the point of production."[139] Mike Hamlin went so far as to demand absolute commitment from black workers to expand their physical resistance to imperialism beyond the factory, becoming "interchangeable" with their Vietnamese counterparts fighting the U.S. military.[140] The League promoted a gendered discourse to chart the course for liberation from colonial oppression. Black workers needed to

[137] Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*, 125-7.

[138] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1963), 35.

[139] *Inner City Voice*, 15 July 1970, WRL.

[140] Allen, Jr., "Dying from the Inside," 94.

"stand up and be counted as Black Men, not as boys, toms, or puppets."[141] Johnson had done so—with disastrous consequences. Repeated calls for the reclamation of black masculinity echoed the demands for an end to colonial domination.[142]

Women played a significant role in the League, with some running for union offices and others having a large degree of responsibility in the publication process.[143] "Male supremacy was rampant and we never got proper credit," within the organization, recalled League member Marian Kramer. While there were not a large number of women in the plants at the time, women did play a major role in the League's activities, yet often faced harassment by men within the League.[144] Many League members acknowledged the chauvinism displayed by male members, although little was ultimately accomplished in efforts to eliminate this sentiment.[145]

The League's colonial analysis was effective in drawing a line between local problems such as the exploitation of workers and poverty in the black community. It also gave rise to a rhetoric of violence and masculinity that was counterproductive for change at the local level. Fighting for control at the point of production and within the community constituted the focus of the many actions undertaken by the League in its brief, yet influential, three year existence. Tactics such as wildcat strikes, running campaigns for union office, and mobilizing Detroit's high school students were all designed to gain some level of direct control for the community over their everyday lives, a central tenet of anti-colonial movements across the world. Calls for

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[141] "Will You Be Next," *drum* 1, no. 9, DRUM Collection, Folder 1968, WRL.

[142] "300 Years Ago," *drum* 2, no. 25, DRUM Collection, Folder 1969, WRL.

[143] "Fight on to Victory," 35.

[144] Interview with Marian Kramer, in *Detroit Lives*, ed. Robert H. Mast (Philadelphia: Temple University Press: 1994): 103; General Baker, interview by author, 2004, 4; Thompson, 171.

[145] Baker, interview by author, 2002.

the use of force and dismissive attitudes toward women only heightened the internal tensions that would ultimately result in the League's demise.

Divisive Internationalism

In Detroit, the League built on the political language of its predecessors to produce a vision of black internationalism that placed the African American worker at the center of a global struggle. It was difficult to make these connections in other American cities, and even more difficult to build an international movement that crossed cultural and geographic space. The League's vision of a seamless connection between the local and the global would not materialize, as internal strife limited the effectiveness of the revolutionary union movement. Two poles developed within the leadership and were unable to reconcile with one another. One was determined to continue building a larger coalition of RUM organizations at factories across the country, raising the League's profile while continuing to emphasize the international component of this project. The other faction was less enthusiastic about the prospects of realizing this ambitious plan for an international network of black revolutionary workers without well-organized rank and file workers in Detroit.

Baker and Chuck Wooten were the most outspoken members of the group that wanted to concentrate on organizing workers within the city. They were convinced that the only way the movement could mature was through in-plant organizing and the formation of a concrete base composed of Detroit's black working class. The internationalist project could be a goal and a source of inspiration, but it was impossible without a solid foundation. This sentiment was supported by many members in the Detroit area RUMs that were first motivated by the challenge to UAW power and were concerned about the wide focus of League activities.

Others reaffirmed their commitment to a radical political agenda, but tried to emphasize the way these principles applied to the practical reality of workers in Detroit. At the Eldon Avenue plant, a leaflet disavowed the records of some of the icons of the movement, denouncing Stalin, Mao, and Castro for deviating from the objectives of the communist movement and serving as "obstacles in the fight for workers' power." ELRUM represented a different strategy. "WE ARE FOR WORKERS' CONTROL and so we <u>are</u> 'commies' in the original meaning of the word."[146] Restructuring the working conditions in the plants and creating a more democratic union were the goals of this faction. In many ways they were responding to the support the movement received during the initial series of wildcat strikes in 1968. These job actions were tied to plant conditions and proved influential in attracting participants willing to protest the actions of the company and the union. Ernie Allen, a League member who had moved to Detroit to participate in what he saw as an important development in the Black Power movement because of its emphasis on organizing workers, recounted his concern about the top-down nature of the League's Marxist-Leninist politics.[147] Many rank and file members expressed ambivalence about the League's grand plans and its concept of black working class internationalism, an ambivalence that would ultimately prove influential in the downfall of the organization.

Executive Board members Watson, Cockrel, and Hamlin were committed to building the League beyond Detroit, and believed they could accelerate the League's growth by increasing their stature on the national and international stage.[148] These individuals were often viewed as the public face of the organization. They were influential in guiding the educational efforts and

[146] Eldon *Wildcat*, July 15, 1970 (emphasis in original), in Ernie Allen, Jr., ed., *The Black power movement: Part 4, The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976* (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; Bethesda, MD: LexisNexis, 2004), microfilm.

[147] Allen, Jr., "Dying from the Inside."

[148] Georgakas, interview by author, 2.

publications of the League, as well as the production of the film. This group resigned from the League in June of 1971. Their complaints about the parochial outlook of many within the organization ultimately encouraged rank and file members to demand a change in leadership.[149] Hamlin expressed his frustration with the in-plant focus, criticizing their narrow view of the revolutionary landscape.

> Some believe that if they take control of Northern High or Dodge Main, everything will be alright. The organization cannot be bound by those who have provincial views. What's going on in Asia, etc.? Many people in the organization do not know of the existence of revolutionary movements in Africa.[150]

Hamlin's perception of the ineffectiveness of the League's internationalist discourse does not negate its significance. Baker noted that the League's internationalism was a mobilizing force, but he always returned to the idea that the strength of a workers' organization comes from the rank and file in the plants. He wanted to see further international efforts undertaken after a mass movement was formed at the local level.[151]

Conclusion

Soon after the resignation of Cockrel, Watson, and Hamlin, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers ceased to exist. Members joined a variety of organizations, mainly the Black Workers' Congress and the Communist League. While several organizations and grassroots movements attempted to continue the League's brief mobilizing success in the auto plants, the internationalist focus that was so central to the ideology of this organization ultimately

[149] Allen, Jr., "Dying from the Inside," 101-102.

[150] "General Meeting (28 March 1971)," unpublished minutes, in Muhammad Ahmad, ed., *The Black power movement: Part 3*, microfilm, reel 9, slide 835.

[151] Baker, interview by author, 2002.

contributed to its downfall, demonstrating the difficulty of transcending borders and effectively incorporating ideas of the global and the local into a coherent movement.

The League's brief melding of shop floor activism and internationalist ideas about race and class was shattered in 1971. But practical implementation of these ideas had represented an important transitional period for labor in the United States. The fleeting history of the League demonstrates the challenges facing organized labor and liberalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Unions were challenged by internal discontent from rank and file workers, while the liberal order was increasingly beset by political attacks, urban unrest, and a faltering economy. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers represented a rejection of liberalism, postwar institutional unionism, and the UAW's dubious commitment to furthering the interests of African American workers. Instead, it embraced self-determination, racial solidarity, and working class internationalism.

The League's articulation of working class internationalism was fundamentally shaped by race. Racial differences and the legacy of imperialist exploitation had limited the possibility of a future convergence between developed and underdeveloped nations. The League's analysis of what was to be done to ameliorate the conditions facing the black community in the U.S. did not follow the terms outlined by the UAW's International Affairs Department or the community unions established in Los Angeles. The League did not discuss the Third World in the context of modernization or development. Instead of a region on the path towards integration and assimilation into the global economy, the Third World was a site for revolution and self-determination.

By linking their movement to international and domestic movements, the League tried to create local, regional and global bonds that transcended national borders and focused attention on

issues of race and class as primary in the black freedom struggle. The League's internationalist agenda identified African Americans as the most oppressed—yet most strategically powerful—segment of the labor force. At the dawn of a new decade, the League raised questions about race, class, and internationalism that did not fit into the UAW's analysis of international affairs. The League also represented a rejection of the liberal solutions accepted by the UAW in international affairs and community unions in cities such as Los Angeles. The changing global economy endangered cities, industrial workers, and unions in the 1970s. The League's refutation of liberalism offered a bridge to a new era, one in which the changing political and economic reality facing workers and communities provoked autoworkers to employ a different vision of working class internationalism.

Chapter 5

"An Orderly Evolution of International Trade": The UAW International Affairs Department Changes Direction in the 1970s

In the midst of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers' challenge to its power in Detroit's factories, the UAW was involved in an insurrection of its own making. The AFL-CIO hierarchy, led by President George Meany, had took great pleasure in battling the UAW on a number of issues since the mid-1960s, including AIFLD's role in Latin America, the Vietnam War, and national party politics. These issues converged over the course of 1968 and 1969, as the federation and the UAW struggled for influence in several international labor organizations. Also, the AFL-CIO continued to stand by the Johnson administration—and the 1968 Democratic nominee for president, Hubert Humphrey—on questions pertaining to the conflict in Southeast Asia. In response, UAW President Walter Reuther finally launched a direct attack on the AFL-CIO's power in the American labor movement, leading a drive to change the direction of the federation that would end with the UAW severing its ties to the organization.[1]

The sustained campaign waged by the UAW against the AFL-CIO's international activities in the 1960s was only one of many issues the union used to argue for disaffiliation. Walter Reuther and other longtime UAW officials had long simmered in frustration as Meany and Lovestone harnessed free trade unionism for their narrow purposes. This struggle for power began almost immediately after the AFL-CIO merger in 1955. Reuther had been prepared to bide his time until the retirement of the aging Meany, however, that opportunity would not arise until

[1] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 409.

1977—seven years after Reuther's death in an airplane accident in 1970. Reuther's dissatisfaction with the domestic direction of the federation over the course of the 1960s fueled his desire to reinvigorate union organizing efforts in the United States and stake out bold new political positions that moved his union away from the conservative leanings of Meany and working class Americans in general.

In May of 1968, the UAW was suspended from the AFL-CIO after it had withheld its per capita dues payment to the federation since March of that year. The UAW had demanded a special convention to discuss the policies and direction of the AFL-CIO—if such a convention was not held, the union threatened to leave the federation. [2] By July 1, the UAW cut ties with the AFL-CIO by declaring it had "formally" disaffiliated from the federation.[3] Later that year, the UAW engaged in a very public battle with the AFL-CIO over its application to join the ICFTU—an action that Meany went to great lengths to preempt through threats and legal arguments against UAW membership. Meany argued that only the AFL-CIO could represent American labor in the ICFTU, and threatened to withhold the AFL-CIO dues contribution, forcing the ICFTU Executive Board to reject the appeals of Reuther, their friend and political ally.[4]

The breakdown of relations with the AFL-CIO produced a significant change in the direction of the domestic affairs of the UAW. In July of 1968 the UAW found an odd political bedfellow in the Teamsters and formed Americans for Labor Action (ALA), a new initiative designed to expand the social reform agenda of the labor movement and allocate additional resources for organizing workers in the spirit of the industrial union campaigns of the 1930s.

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[2] "AFL-CIO Statement on Suspension of the UAW," *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*, June 1968, 2.

[3] "AFL-CIO President Meany Cites the Record On Disaffiliation of United Auto Workers," *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*, July 1968, 1.

[4] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 430.

From 1968 to 1972, the ALA was briefly a significant point of contention within American labor. In May of 1969, reporters for the *Wall Street Journal* went to great lengths to highlight the apparent incongruity in this relationship, referring to it as an "unlikely alliance" and a "curious confederacy" rife with the potential for inefficiency and political squabbles that would preclude the implementation of its "grandiose" proposals.[5] The AFL-CIO attacked it as a renegade institution attempting to poach unions from the federation, stating that this "combine does violence to the objectives and principles of the federation."[6]

ALA organizers described it as "action-oriented" rather than "another labor bureaucracy"—the perfect alternative to Meany's leadership.[7] The ALA's agenda ranged from local issues affecting working class communities, such as increasing housing choices in poor and working class neighborhoods, to national issues such as tax reform, arms reduction, and peace in Vietnam.[8] It also tried to bring a renewed vigor to the organizing process, which was evident in its well-funded and ambitious program that attempted to build a strong presence for unions in the previously impenetrable Southern states.[9] Beginning in Atlanta in 1969, the ALA tried to organize workers in factories while executing an expensive advertising campaign that used radio broadcasts, bus advertisements, and phone calls to reach non-union workers in the right-to-work

[5] James P. Gannon and Laurence G. O'Donnell, "Alliance of Teamsters, UAW Maps Bold Plans In Labor, Social Fields," *Wall Street Journal*, 14 May, 1969, 1.

[6] "Bid AFL-CIO Unions Shun UAW-Teamster Combine," AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News, October 1968, 2. The AFL-CIO even went so far as to create a new Department of Urban Affairs at AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, D.C., in a rival effort to address many of the issues raised by the ALA. "New AFL-CIO Units to Concentrate on Urban Problems, Job Programs," AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News, October 1968, 8.

[7] Quoted in Vanessa Tait, *Poor Workers' Unions: Rebuilding Labor From Below* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2005), 64.

[8] James P. Gannon and Laurence G. O'Donnell, "Alliance of Teamsters, UAW Maps Bold Plans In Labor, Social Fields," *Wall Street Journal*, 14 May, 1969.

[9] Victor Devinatz, "'To Find Answers to the Urgent Problems of Our Society': The Alliance for Labor Action's Atlanta Union Organizing Offensive, 1969-1971," *Labor Studies* 31:2 (Summer 2006): 69-71.

state of Georgia. Ads touted the benefits that accompanied unionization to potential members, as if these were commodities for sale.[10]

The campaign in Atlanta was indicative of other local organizing efforts by the ALA. The large spending binge by the new organization resulted in meager gains in organizing, particularly in terms of establishing union shops.[11] It attempted to promote the community union model begun by WLCAC and TELACU in Los Angeles with less than stellar results.[12] Also, the ALA's plan to siphon unions from the AFL-CIO's massive membership rolls ultimately produced dismal returns, with only two unions joining the ALA. The International Chemical Workers Union (ICWU) and the National Council of Distributive Workers of America were the only unions to leave the AFL-CIO for the ALA. But with ninety thousand and thirty thousand members, respectively, the Chemical Workers and the Distributive Workers did not represent a mass exodus from the Meany-led federation.[13] The ALA increasingly proved unsuccessful in accomplishing its goal of revitalizing the American labor movement. It was hampered by a reduction in funding from the UAW after the 1970 General Motors strike, which drained the union's resources and put it in significant financial difficulties. The ALA met its end in the spring of 1972, a casualty of the union's finances and the ineffective track record of this "action-oriented" organization.[14]

The brief explosion of interest in the potential of the ALA as a viable alternative to the staid AFL-CIO was quickly extinguished. After the collapse of the ALA, the UAW's quixotic

[10] Tait, 64-66; Devinatz, 76-82.

[11] Tait, 65. The ALA also provided funding for the WLCAC and TELACU. Tait, 66; Devinatz, 75.

[12] Devinatz, 73-75

[13] Ibid., 73.

[14] Ibid., 87.

attempt to create a new domestic agenda was in disarray. The UAW's drive to promote another era of mass labor mobilization coincided with a movement which was more closely related to the militancy of the League rather than the CIO drives of yore. Rank and file unrest reached a fever pitch in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with internal challenges to union officials posed by workers interested in preserving union democracy and control over their workplaces.[15] These were younger workers with little tolerance for the conditions they faced on the job. Walter Reuther and other longtime union officials did not recognize the potential of these workers, who were already union members and waiting for the chance to take action.[16]

Loyal to the liberal order of the day, UAW officials were still unable to fully harness the spirit of the young workers that were clearly dissatisfied at the turn of the decade. The union was also dealing with a distinct changing of the guard in its leadership positions, as, in addition to Walter Reuther's untimely death, several retirements produced a new generation of top officials. They did not, however, represent the new generation of workers, with most being Reuther loyalists with decades of service to the union. Reuther's successor as president, Leonard Woodcock, led the organization as it confronted issues related to the changing global economy and adjusted to an increasingly bleak domestic economy. Woodcock was less committed to the social unionism and urban reform initiatives of Reuther, and his administration faced a very different economic landscape in the dark days of the 1970s.

With a membership of around 1.6 million, the UAW was not yet hemorrhaging members as it would in the years following 1980.[17] Yet this influential union faced a dilemma in terms of what tools were available to combat the significant obstacles emerging in the domestic and

[15] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 23-74.

[16] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 431; Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 47-48.

[17] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 440.

global economies. During the 1960s, the UAW focused on innovations such as the World Auto Council and the community union project, whereas what followed was a renewed reliance on the structures of liberalism. The regulatory arms of the state and the political connections held by organized labor in the 1970s served as blunt tools in the quest to strike down the forces working against labor during this decade. As more autoworkers were faced with hard times, the UAW sought to maintain production and consumption levels that would help members keep their jobs. Facing an emergent counterattack by conservatives in the early 1970s, liberalism provided few decisive solutions to meet the needs of labor at this time.[18]

Nevertheless, the UAW chose a similar tactical shift for its approach to international affairs during the 1970s. Just as the UAW abandoned the ALA project after 1972, the UAW International Affairs Department drifted away from its earlier vision of labor's role in the world. In the 1960s, the UAW's international agenda emphasized a collective approach to improving workers' standard of living in industrialized and developing nations alike. This grand project of organizing on a global scale employed practical worker education programs and union training that was not overly versed in the politics of anticommunism. Instead, the UAW sought a preemptive strike on the power of multinational corporations.

While this seemed like a possibility in the 1960s, the UAW changed its understanding of the role of labor in international affairs relatively quickly during the 1970s, adjusting to a new political and economic climate at home and abroad. The target remained multinational corporations, however, the UAW's method for combatting these institutions shifted from an international organizing offensive to a much more defensive approach. This change in strategy prioritized governmental action through regulation and tariff barriers, and transformed the way

[18] Philips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, 166-184.

the UAW considered its relationship with workers in developing nations. The dire straits of the 1970s created a crisis of confidence in the union's ability to successfully implement its plan to "modernize solidarity."

Any sense of apprehension towards this approach was not evident at the dawn of the new decade. In 1970, Victor Reuther proclaimed that the UAW had already made great strides to implement this plan during the previous decade of international activism. He heaped praise upon the organization for being "internationalists from the start," proclaiming the dangers of multinational corporations well before the 1970s.[19] Always willing to use the formative years of the CIO as a reference point, Reuther warned that the problems emerging at the international level were reminiscent of those faced by workers forty years earlier. Global bargaining was the solution to this predicament, just as industrial unionism protected unorganized workers from the powerful national corporations. If this "historic new approach to industrial relations is genuinely accepted by industry, labor, and governments, the transition can avoid some of the disaster characteristics of labor relations of the early thirties."[20] Reuther identified the importance of a tripartite framework for industrial relations, even in the context of a globalizing economy. Nations could play a major role as a bulwark against rampant multinational corporations rather than passively enabling the implementation of unfettered corporate agendas.

Despite its best efforts during the 1960s, the UAW had not been able to fully gain the upper hand in its struggle against the power of multinational corporations. For the UAW, the prospects for global labor solidarity forming an independent check on the power of multinational corporations began to fade at this time. The agenda for the 1970s, then, needed to involve new

[19] Victor Reuther, "The Trade Union Response to Multinational Aspects of the Automobile Industry," n.d. [1970], 4, Victor G. Reuther Collection, box 30, folder 6, WRL.

[20] Ibid., 23.

tactics. Searching for an alternative to this costly and arduous process, the UAW began to lobby for national and international regulations on multinational corporations, which could be enforced by international organizations or individual governments. In the case of American autoworkers, the UAW called on Congress to take appropriate action to ensure that these corporations did not strip the domestic economy of production and employment. The UAW also foresaw the possibility of regulation on the international activities of corporations as well, through import and export policies and even international fair labor standards. Victor Reuther framed this new approach to the international activities of business and labor as the "orderly growth and development of the increasingly integrated free world economy."[21] This shift in strategy was accompanied by a concomitant reevaluation of the role of unions in developing nations.

Ever the optimist, Reuther predicted in 1970 that "within the next decade, collective bargaining can and will take place on a world-wide basis" in the automobile industry.[22] Over the course of the 1970s, however, the UAW gradually moved away from a faith in the capacity of unions to organize workers and collectively bargain with companies across national boundaries, instead adopting a strategy focused on constructing an international regulatory regime to supervise the transnational movement of capital, production, and consumer goods. The nascent solidarity of the 1960s dissolved in debates over the merits of protectionism and the redefinition of the relationship between workers in industrialized nations and their counterparts in developing countries. Just like the ALA and the domestic labor movement, the UAW's activities abroad were difficult to divorce from the underlying assumptions of liberalism, no matter the rhetoric of revolutionary change. In the 1970s, the UAW forged a working class internationalism that

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

explicitly welded its interests to those of the U.S. government and the extant international organizations. By seeking solutions through the actions of these parties, the UAW found it difficult to achieve substantive change.

Eliminating the "fears of dislocation"

In March of 1970, Victor Reuther engaged in a passionate but respectful exchange with the Department of Labor concerning the upcoming meeting of the Metal Trades Committee of the ILO in September. Controversy was sparked when the Department allowed the AFL-CIO to name all of the representatives for American labor to this committee, which excluded the UAW. Reuther felt that since the entire membership of the UAW were employed in the metal trades, his union needed to be represented. But the tone of his initial letter to the Secretary of Labor, George Shultz, was one of righteous outrage over the treatment of the UAW in this situation. According to Reuther, the AFL-CIO had monopolized control over the labor attaches placed in American embassies around the globe, along with labor representatives in AID and the Department of State, and this had resulted in continual mistreatment and marginalization of the UAW in international affairs. He cited a "deliberate policy by U.S. Government personnel" as the cause of the rapidly declining number of visiting foreign unionists afforded the opportunity to meet with the UAW, which went from eleven hundred in 1965 to seventy-two in 1969.[23]

The UAW's treatment was a clear signal for Reuther that in the "area of international labor affairs the U.S. Government has, to a very large extent, contracted out its responsibilities to the AFL-CIO."[24] This was unacceptable, as the UAW considered the functions of government in international labor affairs to be representing the diverse opinions of American citizens on these

[23] Victor G. Reuther to George P. Shultz, March 24, 1970, 3, RG 174, box 192, folder IL-8-2 International Labor Organization 1970, NARA.

[24] Ibid.

issues, rather than "serving as an advocate of one segment of the American community to the detriment of others…."[25] Reuther's discussion of the role of the government in international labor affairs provides insight into the changing direction of the UAW in the 1970s. The UAW wanted access to a seat at the ILO conference because of the upcoming discussion of multinational corporations. Restricting the UAW's right to participate would leave the AFL-CIO as the sole representative of American labor at this conference, a situation which was not acceptable to Reuther and the UAW. According to Reuther, it was the responsibility of the Department of Labor to "see to it that all bona fide branches of the American trade union movement" could participate in these discussions.[26] On the issue of multinational corporations, excluding the UAW would essentially silence the voice of those in the labor movement that were concerned about this issue.

Evidently, the tensions of the 1960s still raged between the UAW and the AFL-CIO in 1970, but Reuther's seemingly eternal struggle with Meany and Lovestone was coming to a close. The new strategy of the UAW International Affairs Department would involve enlisting the assistance of the U.S. government in creating new frameworks for intervening in international labor affairs. The UAW also identified a useful role for international institutions such as the ILO and international trade agreements to set policies in regards to workers in the global economy. Finally, the target for these new approaches to international labor affairs was squarely placed upon multinational corporations.

This new agenda emerged during the early years of the 1970s, as the UAW's leadership was experiencing a transitional period that began with the death of Walter Reuther and the

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 2

election of Leonard Woodcock as president. Victor Reuther retired as head of the International Affairs Department in 1972.[27] According to Gary Busch, Woodcock's political differences with Reuther caused him to "phase the International Affairs Department to the back burner" during his tenure as president.[28] Based on the attention to these issues by Woodcock during this decade, however, the new regime did not seek to downplay international affairs but to concentrate these efforts into appeals for policies and legislation related to international trade.

The new agenda was implemented by the incoming UAW International Affairs Director, Herman Rebhan, and he was joined in 1974 by Esteban Torres, former International Affairs Department staff member and TELACU director, who resumed his involvement with the UAW's international efforts as Assistant Director of the International Affairs Department in 1974.[29] The Department began to concentrate on the possibility of regulating multinational corporations, developing alternatives to its earlier emphasis on the prospects of mass mobilization abroad.

Victor Reuther hinted at this change in direction for the union in a 1968 memo distributed to UAW locals.[30] For Reuther, the main problem with multinational corporations was the way these institutions were able to profit with "a minimum assumption of social responsibility." The "de-nationalization" of production had allowed many corporations to avoid restrictions imposed by individual governments. Reuther attached excerpts from an October 1967 speech by then former Assistant Secretary of State George Ball to suggest "a possible mechanism" to address these problems. Ball referred to the need for "new world instrumentalities" to rectify this

[27] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 444.

[28] Gary Busch, interview by author, 29 January 2009, recording of phone conversation.

[29] Frank del Olmo, "Latin Activist Gets Key Post in Auto Union," *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1974, B4.

[30] Victor G. Reuther, letter to UAW locals, 4, April 8, 1968, UAW President's Office, Walter P. Reuther Collection, box 445, folder 6, WRL.

imbalance of power between governments and multinational corporations. An "International Companies Law" could be established through a treaty agreement, which would bind signatories to certain terms that would include the regulation of production and working conditions and anti-monopoly law. This would make corporations "literally citizens of the world," and was a distinct possibility particularly in the context of the creation of regional trade agreements such as the European Economic Community.[31] Reuther emphasized the need to develop a "workable code of fair labor standards" for all multinational corporations to follow, and Ball's vision of the utility of international agreements served as his inspiration for a global regulatory regime.

"There is a widespread feeling," Reuther wrote, "that many governments are losing their basic sovereignty and are no longer able to implement broad economic programs at the national level to guarantee full employment and stability…."[32] Reuther felt that the consequences of government inaction would be detrimental not only to American workers but those in developing nations. He saw the value in action "at both the trade union and government levels" to deal with this looming crisis.[33]

To emphasize the need for this tactical shift, Reuther referred to the IMF's adoption of a formidable statement on the issue of multinational corporations in October 1971. It also cited the possibility of international oversight, and Reuther urged Woodcock to make this part of the UAW's international agenda going forward. The IMF asked its national affiliates to work to persuade governments and international organizations to act to prevent "abuses" by multinational

[31] "Excerpted from the remarks of the Honorable George W. Ball, before the British National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce, in London, England, October 18, 1967," attached to Victor G. Reuther, letter to UAW locals, 4, April 8, 1968, UAW President's Office, Walter P. Reuther Collection, box 445, folder 6, WRL.

[32] Victor Reuther to Leonard Woodcock, December 2, 1971, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 50, folder 15, WRL.

[33] Ibid.

corporations. The prospect of "international corporate laws" was also raised in the IMF statement. For the IMF, the ideal international regulatory structure would preserve the broad concept of the "social interest" by ensuring health and safety standards, the right to unionization, corporate transparency, and consumer protections.[34] This was the only way to counter multinational corporations' immunity to national regulation. "Either the national governments will concert their policies and actions to dominate the global oligopolies, or the latter will use their centralised [sic] decision-making machinery to dominate the national governments."[35]

The ominous tone of the IMF resolution foreshadowed an array of problems for the international labor movement in the near future. Nat Weinberg, Director of the UAW Research Department, translated these concerns to the American context in 1972. Weinberg was another longtime UAW stalwart who was simultaneously part of the retiring old guard and one of the architects of the UAW's approach towards multinational corporations in the 1970s. Before he retired in 1974, he went to great lengths to contribute to this new agenda.

To meet the multinational challenge, Weinberg wanted the UAW to "persuade the US Government to control the overseas activities of US corporations."[36] In 1972, he highlighted a number of proposals that could meet this objective in a speech to the German-American Forum in Washington, D.C. The ideas he presented formed the core of the international resolution passed at the 1972 UAW Constitutional Convention, and laid out a course of action for the union in the 1970s. To limit the growing power of multinational corporations, the UAW called for the U.S. government to establish policies that would create standards for the auto industry, limit

[34] International Metalworkers Federation, "Resolution on Multi-National Corporations," October 30, 1971, 6, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 50, folder 15, WRL.

[35] Ibid., 5.

[36] Nat Weinberg to Leonard Woodcock, December 9, 1971, UAW International Affairs Department Herman Rebhan Collection 1965-1980, box 15, folder 7, WRL.

runaway plants, and provide assistance to workers negatively affected by the international movement of production or other economic decisions made by multinational employers in the United States. These changes were necessary, according to Weinberg, to combat the "siren voices of protectionists" luring workers to denounce imported cars and foreign workers.[37] This myopic view of the problems facing American workers could be altered through a practical approach that began with a commitment to full employment.

The idea of full employment had been imprinted in the minds of liberals when President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed the Full Employment Bill in 1945. This legislation would require public spending to reach full employment if projections determined that the private sector would not meet that threshold. Roosevelt was unable to see the bill through with such strict terms and conditions, and the resulting Employment Act of 1946 was vague and toothless.[38] The UAW felt that in the absence of a formal full employment policy, other measures could practically direct the nation towards this goal.

The first step was to restructure the costs and advantages of doing business internationally. The UAW called for changes in tax policy to keep capital in the U.S. and to discourage corporations from making use of the exploitative wage differentials in developing nations. The U.S. tax code encouraged direct investment in other countries because profits were not subject to U.S. taxes until they were repatriated.[39] Weinberg viewed the actions of multinational corporations as inherently damaging to American workers, and his call for tax reform made sense to change the behavior of these highly mobile entities. Altering the

[37] Nat Weinberg, "U.S. International Economic Policies and Labor," speech to the German-American Forum, Washington, D.C., April 30 through May 2, 1972, 1, UAW International Affairs Department Collection 1965-1980, box 15, folder 9, WRL.

[38] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 266.

[39] Nat Weinberg, "U.S. International Economic Policies and Labor," 5-6.

framework for taxation on profits made abroad was a significant obstacle, however, and difficult to achieve. Weinberg considered this proposal—and others like it—eminently possible at the beginning of the 1970s.

Another policy alteration that would aid autoworkers concerned tariffs on imports.[40] The UAW wanted government to adjust tariff barriers for imports so that U.S.-based companies could see reciprocal changes in relation to American exports, which would be good for workers in the United States.[41] Imports quickly became a target of rank and file resentment in the 1970s—and many in the UAW leadership, including President Woodcock, did little to discourage the notion that foreign companies (particularly Japanese automakers) were crippling the American workers' economic prospects. Historian Dana Frank has described the campaign to "buy American" during this period, which was embraced by many working class Americans even beyond the auto industry.[42] The UAW International Affairs Department did, however, offer a more nuanced position on imports, calling for government action to ensure competition rather than permit the existing structures that encouraged the outflow of capital and the inflow of imports. Weinberg pointed the blame at the U.S. auto companies that refused to compete with imports, particularly low-cost, smaller vehicles that were becoming more appealing to American consumers. He noticed that despite the burgeoning popularity of these cars, the Big Three were committed to the production of larger vehicles because of the greater potential profit when sold

[40] Weinberg, "U.S. International Economic Policies and Labor," 4; UAW, "International Corporations and Foreign Trade: Resolution adopted by 23d UAW Constitutional Convention in Atlantic City, N.J., April 23-27, 1972," 8-9, UAW Research Department Special Projects Collection, box 106, folder 32, WRL.

[41] UAW, "International Corporations and Foreign Trade: Resolution adopted by 23d UAW Constitutional Convention in Atlantic City, N.J., April 23-27, 1972," 9, UAW Research Department Special Projects Collection, box 106, folder 32, WRL. Stein notes that this position on government action to reduce obstacles for American exports abroad was held by most of the American labor movement at the time. *Pivotal Decade*, 38.

[42] Dana Frank, *Buy American*, 160-168.

in the United States.[43] The UAW proposed a "Competition Promotion Tax" to penalize industries that continue to make profits while imports inundate their markets.[44]

The UAW attempted to educate members on the problem of imports, creating handouts, booklets, and curriculum to facilitate an understanding of this issue. One handout focused on the relationship between employment and international trade, highlighting the issue of "dumping" for UAW members.[45] It focused on the role of multinational corporations in cutting prices on cars which were sent to the United States in an effort to gain a larger share of the world's biggest auto market. These imports were eroding the market share for U.S. auto companies. The UAW tried to encourage discussion on what could be done to recognize the way companies created conflict between workers when they engaged in these practices, "exporting unemployment from one country to another."[46] Instead of stoking tensions, the UAW wanted to explain the underlying economic influence of globalized production and consumption. This handout was accompanied by information for discussion leaders to guide workers towards the goals of the UAW in international affairs. Discussion leaders were encouraged to emphasize the way regulations and tax reforms could force corporations "to behave in a socially responsive way, and to help workers and communities adapt to inevitable changes in the location of economic activity."[47] It also pointed to international mechanisms such as international organizations and

[43] Weinberg, "U.S. International Economic Policies and Labor," 4.

[44] Ibid., 9.

[45] "Your Job and the Multinational Corporations," Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 51, folder 9, WRL.

[46] Ibid., 2.

[47] "Outline for Discussion Leaders on 'Your Job and the Multinational Corporations,'" June 1, 1976, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 51, folder 11, WRL.

international solidarity efforts as ways to bridge the divide between workers and deflate the rising animosity between autoworkers in the U.S. and abroad.[48]

The UAW was, however, a hotbed of protectionist sentiment, particularly at the grassroots level. Collin Gonze, a staff member with the International Affairs Department who eventually served as Assistant Director in the mid-1970s, wrote to Woodcock in 1974 to voice these concerns about the disconnect between the union's international agenda and the rank and file. "It seems to me that the work of the UAW in international affairs is not penetrating too far down the line. Our convention resolutions are fine, but lack the needed stimulus of direct contact and dialogue; for instance, at conventions our foreign guests receive polite but bored attention. Fortunately, statements, releases and your own speeches are read, else we'd be operating in a complete vacuum."[49] He suggested an increased presence for International Affairs Department staff and Woodcock himself to promote these issues and get feedback from the membership.[50]

The International Affairs Department distributed information in the form of charts and figures on exports and imports to International Executive Board members and local unions to undermine some misperceptions in the balance of trade with particular nations. In the case of Mexico, Esteban Torres sent information "showing an overwhelmingly favorable balance for the United States in 1975. The total value of U.S. exports was $519 million, while the value of imports from Mexico, excluding U.S.-made components, was $88 million. I hope this

[48] Ibid.

[49] Collin Gonze to Leonard Woodcock, October 31, 1974, Leonard Woodcock Collection, Box 51, folder 4, WRL.

[50] Ibid.

information proves useful in dealing with inquiries from our members concerning the job impact of imports from Mexico."[51]

International trade was a major theme of a glossy booklet produced by the UAW in 1974 that conveyed the important issues facing the union to its membership. Multinational corporations were described as an "invisible empire," lurking in the shadows and manipulating the international economy.[52] The UAW described an alternative future, in which the "obligations of corporations" were understood by these institutions in the context of a global economy.[53] Collective bargaining rights, full disclosure of financial data, advance notice of any plans to move or close factories were all part of the UAW's view of the social responsibilities of corporations.[54] The booklet also contained the UAW's positions on U.S. foreign policy, Cold War détente, and international labor solidarity.[55] It presented a possible alternative path for the 1970s, in which labor and corporations could achieve a working relationship and national governments and international organizations could serve as regulators of multinational corporations. This was a departure from the UAW's publications on international affairs during the 1960s, which emphasized economic development and made international labor solidarity and the prospects for coordinated international collective bargaining the main priority for success in the global economy.[56]

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[51] Esteban Torres to International Executive Board Members, July 6, 1976, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 51, folder 11, WRL.

[52] UAW, "The UAW in International Affairs: Four Resolutions Passed in 1974," 8, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 51, folder 5, WRL.

[53] Ibid., 23-24.

[54] Ibid., 24.

[55] Ibid.

[56] See, for example, United Automobile Workers, "Solidarity is the Banner: Two Resolutions on International Affairs," May 1966, UAW Region 9A Collection, Box 135, Folder 4, WRL. The UAW's framing of its international agenda was discussed in detail in chapter 2.

The UAW's effort to foster an exchange of ideas on international affairs was coupled with an attempt to make tangible improvements for workers to transform their understanding of international issues. The transnational movement of production often resulted in a loss of jobs in the United States, and the UAW acted to reassure members that it was doing all it could to prevent this. Whereas the UAW confidently asserted that it could organize around the world in the 1960s to actively combat mobile multinational corporations on their own terms, the union looked to support from the U.S. government to ensure the economic security of its members and all workers in the United States. The UAW proposed that the U.S. government guarantee adjustment assistance to any workers "adversely affected by international trade."[57] The UAW also supported the IMF's call for all of its national affiliates to encourage their governments to seek an amendment to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) charter, which would require similar provisions of adjustment assistance to workers in all participant nations.[58] GATT also offered the opportunity for international cooperation on the level of working conditions, and the UAW raised the prospects of added an "international Fair Labor Standards Code" to this agreement.[59] These proposals were part of the UAW's attempt to reconcile its tacit support for liberal trade policy with the realities of problems imports and multinational corporations caused for autoworkers. As Weinberg described it, the goal was to ensure that "all would share equitably in the costs as well as the gains from international trade."[60]

[57] UAW, "International Corporations and Foreign Trade: Resolution adopted by 23d UAW Constitutional Convention in Atlantic City, N.J., April 23-27, 1972," 6, UAW Research Department Special Projects Collection, box 106, folder 32, WRL.

[58] Ibid., 8.

[59] V. Reuther, "Legislative Remarks," August 2, 1971, 13, Victor G. Reuther Collection, box 30, folder 2, WRL.

[60] Weinberg, "U.S. International Economic Policies and Labor," 6.

The implementation of a government-mandated adjustment assistance program was considered an essential part of reducing what Weinberg called the "fears of dislocation" so prevalent in autoworkers and other manufacturing workers in the U.S. in the 1970s. [61] To provide further protection against this type of experience, the UAW suggested a licensing system that would require a vast array of details from any multinational corporations proposing foreign investments. This would essentially require independent corporations to request permission to invest abroad, and the government would have the ability to inspect whether or not the proposed investment would "serve the interests of the United States economically and will be free from harmful political consequences."[62] This would allow government oversight of any potential shift in production abroad, and mandate compensation for workers affected by this process.[63] Weinberg added that a code of conduct for multinational corporations could be tied to these licenses.[64] He pointed to the requirements mandated by the state in Sweden, which monitored corporations for discriminatory practices, limitations on trade union rights, and withholding "social benefits" from workers. This framework for oversight was tied to Sweden's practice of guaranteeing investments by Swedish companies in developing nations.[65] Establishing a licensing program would provide another incentive for multinational corporations to ensure the rights of workers.

Ultimately, the UAW's approach to multinational corporations in the 1970s revolved around the principle of ensuring fair competition between nations, companies, and workers.

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., 8.

[63] Ibid., 8.

[64] Nat Weinberg to Leonard Woodcock, December 9, 1971, UAW International Affairs Department Herman Rebhan Collection 1965-1980, box 15, folder 7, WRL.

[65] Ibid.

Collin Gonze described the goal of this agenda as achieving "an orderly evolution of international trade."[66] This was possible through the actions of the U.S. government to level the playing field, using legislation and international agreements to limit the growing power of multinational corporations. This was not protectionism, however, and Gonze recognized that many of the UAW's objections to imports in particular may be viewed in this light. He emphasized that the UAW was not interested in defending domestic industry, "but with preventing large-scale social disruption of networks of communities. At a certain, presumably calculable point, the benefits of international trade are more than offset by the socio-economic injuries."[67] Preserving competition and imposing limitations on these mammoth corporations was directly related to the survival of working class communities in the U.S. and abroad, and during the 1970s the UAW recalibrated its understanding of the role of American labor in developing nations.

"Turning off the Zeal" for Development

In 1972, Charles Levinson, the Secretary General of the International Federation of Chemical and General Workers' Unions (ICF), surveyed the recent history of labor in international affairs from his position as the head of a major International Trade Secretariat (ITS). The ICF united workers in the chemical industry, mainly in North America and Europe.[68] Levinson contrasted 1972 with the so-called "Decade of Development," pointing to significant changes that had occurred in the understanding of the mechanics of the development process.

[66] Collin Gonze to Leonard Woodcock, March 27, 1975, 2, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 51, folder 6, WRL.

[67] Ibid., 1.

[68] Brian Kirk Williams, "Labor's Cold War Missionaries: The IFPCW's Transnational Mission for the Third World's Petroleum and Chemical Workers, 1954-1975," Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas 7:4 (Winter 2010): 59.

Whereas the emphasis had previously been on "comprehensive economic planning and the dominant role of the public sector in development," the new approach to development marked the multinational corporation as the "decisive instrument of development."[69] A switch had been flipped, "turning off the zeal" of the multifaceted campaign to make development a practical reality in the 1960s. Instead, there was a reliance on private investment as the public sector demonstrated a lack of commitment to the cause. "It would be amusing if it were not so serious," Levinson candidly remarked, and he made it clear that this marked shift was of great concern for the international labor movement.

A "scepticism [sic] and disenchantment" had also set in among the unions that had, in the decade prior, fervently provided aid to their brethren in developing nations.[70] This was coupled with those who Levinson referred to as "self-serving academics," propagating theories about the incompatibility of unions and collective bargaining in developing countries where "nation-building" was paramount and organized labor could only serve as an impediment in this process.[71] Levinson rejected this approach and questioned the broad assumptions that had engulfed the debate over development. Despite the fact that the development project of the 1960s had not produced "self-sustaining, take-off levels" in any country, he called for a renewed commitment to technical assistance and vocational training as part of an increase in economic aid. Without this, a system of "neo-colonialism or managerial imperialism" would consolidate control over the developing world.[72]

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[69] Charles Levinson, *International Trade Unionism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1972), 358.

[70] Ibid., 357.

[71] Ibid., 359.

[72] Ibid., 356, 358.

Levinson was right to point out the complications involved in the development project of the 1960s. Modernization theorists and the politicians they inspired had become less comfortable with the prevailing assumptions of the 1960s.[73] By the early 1970s, crisis had engulfed developing nations in the realm of theory and practice. Levinson voiced the concerns of those in the labor movement who recognized that the process of development must be judged by the degree to which it assists the poor and working class of developing nations.

The UAW was sympathetic to Levinson's narrative of the changing relationship between labor, multinational corporations, and developing nations. In the 1970s, the union adjusted the way it framed development, weaving this process into the larger discussion about global trade and national and international regulatory measures. The UAW International Affairs Department shifted its view of the role of labor in developing nations by focusing on international trade and multinational corporations at the expense of the mass mobilization of workers. Trade policy became a prominent part of the development process. For instance, in a letter to Senator Russell B. Long, Woodcock voiced his support for a program designed to subsidize the purchase of U.S. exports by developing nations. He described the way encouraging exports would be beneficial for workers because it had the potential to help "poor countries break out of the vicious circle of poverty." As "development gets underway in these countries," Woodcock emphasized, "their demand for, and ability to pay for, American products rises dramatically."[74] New markets for American exports were a byproduct of development, and trade policy could facilitate this process—and keep American workers employed in the United States.

[73] Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission*, 235-237.

[74] Leonard Woodcock to Senator Russell B. Long, August 31, 1973, UAW International Affairs Department Herman Rebhan Collection 1965-1980, box 1, folder 7, WRL.

On imports, the UAW International Affairs Department disavowed protectionist rhetoric and focused on the potential positive impact of international trade on developing nations. While the union's leadership did not explicitly discourage "buy American" campaigns, the International Affairs Department noted that if competition was preserved through effective full employment policies and adjustment assistance programs, the U.S. could admit imports from poor countries without adversely affecting American workers.[75] This would help workers around the world, rather than making workers rivals for the meager spoils of multinational corporations.

The UAW recognized the waning commitment to economic aid to developing nations and called for the United States and other wealthy nations to reconsider.[76] Increasing economic assistance would make it less likely that developing nations would allow multinational corporations to benefit from "cheap labor."[77] Both "indigenous employers and international corporations" were guilty of this permissive approach, and external aid to developing nations was an alternative.[78] Weinberg went so far as to suggest that the U.S. government and the International Monetary Fund should encourage "foreign holders of dollars, governmental and private, to use them to buy the assets of the foreign subsidiaries of American corporations operating within the boundaries of their respective countries."[79] He claimed this would foster more international competition and establish businesses rooted in developing nations, rather than extensions of multinational corporations mainly concerned with profits and flexibility.

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[75] UAW, "International Corporations and Foreign Trade: Resolution adopted by 23d UAW Constitutional Convention in Atlantic City, N.J., April 23-27, 1972," 9, UAW Research Department Special Projects Collection, box 106, folder 32, WRL.

[76] UAW, "The UAW in International Affairs: Four Resolutions Passed in 1974," 31-32, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 51, folder 5, WRL.

[77] UAW, "International Corporations and Foreign Trade," 9.

[78] Weinberg, "U.S. International Economic Policies and Labor," 7.

[79] Ibid., 9.

It became increasingly clear, however, that the UAW was fighting against a rising tide of free market triumphalism. Observing a presentation by a spokesman for the Department of Treasury, Collin Gonze recounted the ways this official marked "good" and "bad" governments, praising those that allowed the "general recognition of business 'realities'"—a euphemism for the free market policies gaining traction in development discourse in the 1970s. "Bad" governments interfered in economic affairs of multinational corporations and expressed "redistributive ideologies."[80] The UAW was not ready to concede, as Gonze put it, that multinational corporations "are, so to speak, the carriers of progress and development."[81]

To combat this perspective, the UAW maintained international relationships with unions in developing regions like Latin America. The scaled-back presence of UAW representatives in developing nations reflected the focus on international trade and development priorities, but it did not preclude them from engaging in the politics of developing nations and intervening in strikes in Latin America.

A recurring task for the UAW was to appeal for the release of political prisoners. Esteban Torres passed on information about the status of human rights in Chile to Woodcock, who formally cabled the Chilean government to spare the life of political prisoners.[82] The UAW formally objected to Henry Kissinger's official visit to Chile in 1976, asking Congress to criticize the Secretary of State for this decision.[83] Other protests were lodged with the Uruguayan

[80] Collin Gonze to James P. Grant, December 11, 1975, 2, UAW International Affairs Department Herman Rebhan Collection 1965-1980, box 1, folder 7, WRL.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Esteban Torres to Leonard Woodcock, January 13, 1975, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 161, folder 8, WRL; "International Affairs Activities: February—May 1975," 7, UAW International Affairs Department Herman Rebhan Collection 1965-1980, box 17, folder 9, WRL.

[83] Esteban Torres to Leonard Woodcock, June 7, 1976, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 161, folder 10, WRL.

government, and the UAW claimed success in forcing the release of a tortured prisoner held by the military junta.[84] Torres was outspoken on this issue after his return to the International Affairs Department, denouncing the "rapid increase of military dictatorships in Latin America," and the concurrent oppression of labor activists in these nations. He was particularly critical of the U.S. government's unwillingness to challenge these repressive regimes, accusing it of being more concerned with protecting U.S. investments than human rights.[85]

The UAW did maintain some connections to Latin American autoworkers, particularly those in Mexico. The International Metalworkers Federation representative based in Mexico City, Fernando Melgosa, lamented the lack of "a physical presence of the UAW in our countries," and requested that Torres attend meetings in Colombia and Venezuela to maintain contacts and show solidarity for autoworkers in Latin America.[86] This was increasingly not a priority for the UAW, especially to the extent that representatives crisscrossed Latin American during the 1960s.

A more tangible impact was made by the UAW in terms of strike support. In a strike against GM in 1975, the UAW provided crucial financial assistance and attempted to pressure GM to listen to the workers' demands. In this instance, the UAW demonstrated that its framework for transnational solidarity actions by workers' organizations was still effective, even with a threadbare presence of UAW representatives in Latin America. When notified of the problems facing the Sindicato de Obreros y Empleados de la Planta de Montaje de la General

[84] "International Affairs Activities: February—May 1975," 7, UAW International Affairs Department Herman Rebhan Collection 1965-1980, box 17, folder 9, WRL.

[85] Esteban Torres, "Statement by Esteban E. Torres, Assistant Director, UAW International Affairs Department," June 15, 1976, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 51, folder 11, WRL.

[86] Fernando Melgosa to Esteban Torres, January 6, 1975, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 51, folder 5, WRL.

Motors de México, the UAW voiced its support for the strikers directly to GM in the United States. The UAW was informed of the intricate details of the strike by the IMF representatives in Mexico City.[87] Irving Bluestone, a member of the UAW's Executive Board, criticized the "minimal" proposals offered by the company to its workers in Mexico City.

> We deeply regret General Motors' attitude in failing to discharge what we consider to be its social and economic responsibilities to its Mexican employees. It would seem to us that a Corporation like General Motors, operating globally, should attempt to lead the way in labor relations rather than bringing up the rear guard of resistance to justifiable worker proposals and rational solutions to workers' problems.[88]

Bluestone urged GM to improve its offer to its workforce, while at the same time the UAW authorized five thousand dollars in financial assistance to the union, sustaining this strike for twenty-eight days. The workers won a thirteen percent wage increase along with important clauses in their new two year contract. The major concession won was an agreement not to transfer production outside of Mexico City over the duration of the contract. The union was also able to negotiate severance pay, in the form of twenty percent of a workers' annual salary, if the company eventually transfers operations outside of Mexico City.[89] Victory came through concerted action on the ground by local workers with the benefit of a powerful ally abroad. The UAW's familiarity with GM and its willingness to take action and provide funding proved crucial to winning a better contract for workers in Mexico City.

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[87] Nancy H. Moreno to Irving Bluestone, February 20, 1975, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 162, folder 8, WRL; Eduard Murguia to Irving Bluestone, March 4, 1975, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 162, folder 8, WRL.

[88] Irving Bluestone to George B. Morris, Jr., Vice President, General Motors Corporation, [no date], Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 162, folder 8, WRL.

[89] Leonard Woodcock to Emil Mazey, March 10, 1975, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 162, folder 8, WRL; Esteban Torres to Leonard Woodcock, March 17, 1975, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 162, folder 8, WRL.

Conclusion

The instances of successful transnational action such as the GM strike in Mexico City were few and far between in the 1970s. By the end of the decade, UAW President Douglas Fraser discussed the future direction of the International Affairs Department.[90] He pointed to recent successes in holding seminars on international topics and maintaining cooperative working relationships with workers abroad. He also suggested a reinvigoration of the then-dormant Social, Technical, and Educational Program (UAW-STEP). One of the main issues Fraser raised was the need for a "practical two-way working relationship" between the department and the membership, which he felt could make international affairs a more pressing issue for the rank and file.[91] Fraser hoped to build a more relevant department in the coming years.

In terms of the UAW's approach to international trade, little had changed by the end of the decade.[92] The adjustment assistance proposals that the UAW campaigned for were included in the Trade Act of 1974 but on much less stringent terms than the autoworkers' had called for.[93] The limited impact of many of the innovative proposals raised by the UAW in the 1970s was evident in a memorandum on trade negotiations in 1979, which denounced the U.S. government's abdication of its responsibility to set a coherent industrial policy for the nation while reiterating the UAW's commitment to trade liberalization with structures to protect

[90] Douglas Fraser to Officers, Board Members and Department Heads, August 3, 1978, UAW Washington Office Steven Schlossberg Collection, box 39, folder 3, WRL.

[91] Ibid., 2.

[92] Lee Price, "Inter-office communication on Trade Negotiations." February 12, 1979, UAW Washington Office Steven Schlossberg Collection, box 38, folder 15, WRL.

[93] Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 49.

workers such as strong adjustment assistance. International fair labor standards were also listed as a potential goal in GATT negotiations.[94]

The department would come full circle in 1980. Leo Suslow was appointed director in 1977. He had been involved in establishing labor, manpower, and social development activities for the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s through his position as labor specialist for the Organization of American States.[95] In 1980, he relayed information about another GM strike in Mexico, discussing the possibility of economic aid for the strikers with Fraser and UAW Vice President Pat Greathouse. Suslow favored assistance at this moment, as the UAW "is just beginning to develop an on-going relationship with the Mexican trade unions. A demonstration of solidarity at this time will also contribute to our long-range goals in Mexico."[96] After nearly twenty years of activity in Latin America and close ties to the IMF representatives in Mexico City, the UAW was still searching for a definitive link to the Mexican labor movement. The grand plan to establish a world-wide collective bargaining system, using the IMF and the World Auto Council to make labor a formidable opponent to multinational corporations, had tread a rough road from 1960 to 1980.

In the 1970s, the UAW's idea of working class internationalism was revised to accommodate the difficult conditions of this decade. The UAW shifted toward a focus on governmental and non-governmental regulatory regimes to level the playing field. The UAW persisted in its requests for governmental action to smooth the harsh edges of the 1970s

[94] Lee Price, "Inter-office communication on Trade Negotiations." February 12, 1979, UAW Washington Office Steven Schlossberg Collection, box 38, folder 15, WRL.

[95] UAW, "UAW Names Suslow Director of International Affairs Dept.," October 20, 1977, UAW Washington Office Steven Schlossberg Collection, box 39, folder 3, WRL.

[96] Leo Suslow to Doug Fraser and Pat Greathouse, February 15, 1980, UAW President's Office: Douglas Fraser Collection, box 59, folder 2, WRL.

economy. It felt that a regulatory state could effectively limit the damage caused by multinational corporations, and ensure fair competition between nations, companies, and workers. The liberal framework that so many influential UAW officials believed in, however, was crumbling in the 1970s. "For more than 20 years, this system worked," Herman Rebhan wrote in a letter to Leonard Woodcock about international trade agreements in 1974. "Now, everything is falling apart."[97]

[97] Herman Rebhan to Leonard Woodcock, January 15, 1974, 1, UAW International Affairs Department Herman Rebhan Collection 1965-1980, box 14, folder 26, WRL.

Epilogue

Labor, Liberalism, and Working Class Internationalism in the 1970s and Beyond

During the decades following the 1970s, it was management, not labor, that effectively realized the dream of a flexible global network to limit the power of its rival. Multinational corporations internationalized production and shipped goods around the world, and the geography of capital and labor played a powerful role in shaping the lives of workers and the economic health of working class communities. At the same time, businesses and their political allies fortified their social, economic, and political position within the United States. The highly motivated and ruthlessly effective conservative movement successfully reoriented the political discussion, moving the United States away from liberalism and toward free market economics at an opportune moment.

The UAW had devised a plan to do just the opposite in the 1960s. Its goal of building a network to connect workers and unions around the globe was ultimately unattainable. The UAW rejected the uncompromising anticommunism of the AFL-CIO and instead prioritized the transnational mobilization of labor, which would have provided a deterrent against practices that undermined labor's bargaining position and political power. In theory, the UAW's vision for working class internationalism would have not only sheltered workers from the worst abuses of nimble automobile companies, it would have strengthened the liberal order in the United States. There was a role for the state to play in protecting the interests of workers by regulating corporations, improving international trade agreements, and implementing an inclusive foreign policy to break down economic inequities between nations.

The UAW leadership, especially those working in the union's International Affairs Department, felt that even though this was not an easy goal to achieve, it was eminently attainable if the union employed successful arguments and sufficient resources. In 1975, it seemed incredulous to many in the UAW that conservatives' free market ideology could be accepted as a viable direction for the U.S.

government. Reflecting on the problems with imports and the impact of trade policy on autoworkers and their communities, UAW International Affairs Department Assistant Director Collin Gonze was perplexed that the U.S. government would allow and encourage these conditions. "No responsible government anywhere in the world, outside the U.S., would dare continue to take refuge in 'free trade' shibboleths were they in our position."[1] For the UAW, it was clear that international competition was compromising their position in the United States economy, and the government needed to take action in response to the threats to the American manufacturing sector. The conservative movement, however, was already beginning to change the political climate, making Congress more receptive to those Gonze referred to as "NAM-Chamber of Commerce types" interested in maximizing free trade no matter the social or economic costs for working class communities in the United States.[2]

The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the Chamber of Commerce, and others were making a concerted move to wrest political power from liberals and their working class allies in the 1970s. These organizations spent millions to fund lobbyists and stimulate research by ideologically-inclined think tanks, which were charged with the task of changing the political culture and ideas about corporations and individuals in American society.[3] Researchers, politicians, and a distinct school of economists touted supply-side economics as way to return the U.S. to prosperity after the economic crises of the 1970s. Proponents of this doctrine focused on the choices of individuals as paramount in American economic life. Businesses created political action committees and funded research that altered the public rhetoric on issues such as taxation, economic growth, and the role of capital in American society.[4] The market achieved a privileged place in social, economic, and political discourse, and participation in

[1] Collin Gonze to Leonard Woodcock, March 27, 1975, 2, Leonard Woodcock Collection, box 51, folder 6, WRL.

[2] Ibid., 1.

[3] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 43-44.

[4] Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, 187-206.

market exchanges was praised as instructive in the moral code of a capitalist society.[5] Incentives in the form of material gains would be available to all once the entrepreneurial spirit was revived through the elimination of burdensome taxation and regulation.[6] Historian Howard Brick observed that after the 1970s, "the concept of society was under threat."[7]

Since the 1970s, the general acceptance of free market economics in American politics has fundamentally altered working class life in the United States. This political shift coincided with the rapid pace of globalization in the late twentieth century, which fulfilled the worst fears voiced by the UAW in the 1960s and 1970s. Highly mobile corporations were able to change the automobile industry through strategies such as lean production and plant relocation.[8] Deindustrialization resulted in the loss of manufacturing jobs, which significantly altered working class communities.[9] Structural changes in the U.S. economy undermined the traditional manufacturing base that was instrumental to the rise of the industrial union movement. The service and retail sectors became more important employers in the U.S., and this change was coupled with political attacks on unions through right-to-work laws and attempts to limit the effectiveness of regulatory organizations such as Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).[10] This state of affairs was exactly what the UAW hoped to prevent.

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[5] Ibid., 178.

[6] Ibid., 181-182.

[7] Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of A New Society in Modern American Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 238.

[8] Babson, *Lean Work: Empowerment and Exploitation in the Global Auto Industry* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995); Elliot Siemiatycki, "Forced to Concede: Permanent Restructuring and Labour's Place in the North American Auto Industry," *Antipode* 44:2 (2012): 453-473.

[9] Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982). See also Cowie, *Capital Moves*; Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, eds., *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 2003); Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

[10] Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009); Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 165-166; McCartin, *Collision Course*; Phillips-Fein, 206-211.

The 1960s, however, was a moment of possibility, and autoworkers seized the notion of working class internationalism as both a mobilizing force and a source of ideas and practices that could reshape society in their interests. This dissertation has demonstrated the diversity of internationalist ideas circulating at this time, going beyond institutional histories of organized labor acting abroad to focus on local movements by urban workers in the United States searching for answers to vexing questions. Autoworkers interpreted the challenges faced by the American working class as symptomatic of a globalizing world, acknowledging the significance of workers, unions, ideas, and practices moving across national boundaries.

Historian Dana Frank described the history of U.S. labor and international solidarity as "vast and slippery."[11] By focusing on the 1960s and 1970s, I have attempted to pin down one corner of this history through the stories of autoworkers. In this context, working class internationalism encompassed international solidarity efforts and more informal and symbolic transnational connections between workers, working class communities, and unions. The exchange of ideas and practices was just as relevant as the UAW's International Affairs Department in linking workers' struggles in the U.S. to events and ideas circulating around the world. The physical connections between unions were enhanced and complemented by an emerging global imaginary that influenced local movements such as the community unions in Los Angeles and the League in Detroit.

This study also demonstrates the convergence of the history of labor and liberalism when viewed from a transnational perspective. Liberal international projects such as the Alliance for Progress, along with U.S. government institutions working abroad such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), used connections with the labor movement and the Department of Labor to integrate the problems facing workers into the discussion of modernization and development. This dissertation highlights a gap in the literature on this topic, demonstrating that workers' institutions played a role in the attempt to define development by inserting worker agency into the discussion of this process.

[11] Frank, "Where is the History of U.S. Labor and International Solidarity?," 96.

The UAW was an industrial union closely tied to the labor-liberal alliance, and its approach to international affairs and domestic organizing and reform was structured by liberal principles. Domestically, unions and labor leaders were afforded considerable power through labor legislation and the degree to which collective bargaining was a common feature in mid-century labor relations. Abroad, it casually accepted the prospects of increasing trade liberalization in the 1960s because of its belief in the potential organizing prowess of industrial workers the world over. Perhaps the UAW was overconfident in its assessment of the prospects for international organizing. It also viewed this global struggle on the same terms as earlier battles to build industrial unions, which were successfully won by organizing on the ground to then take collective action.

In the case of the community unions in Los Angeles, the UAW believed in the ability of local communities to use union organizing principles to achieve concrete change in an urban setting, away from the workplace. Community unions adopted liberal approaches to poverty and unemployment, working within the parameters of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty. Job training, small business loans, and construction projects were ways to better equip individuals for the labor market and improve the physical structures in poor communities like Watts and East Los Angeles.

During the 1970s, the UAW's community unions gradually moved away from the spirit of the industrial labor movement. TELACU and the WLCAC initially envisioned a community union as the source of economic and political power for the poor and unemployed in the absence of an industrial workplace. By the early 1980s, TELACU was a multi-million dollar enterprise facing accusations of corruption and exaggerating its impact on the East Los Angeles economy. All that remained from the early years of the organization was the name and rhetoric about advancing the community. The end goal was no longer political power within the city or economic organization for the poor, it was economic development through the creation of businesses and job training programs—many of which had been poorly executed by 1982.[12] Decades later, Esteban Torres lamented the change in philosophy by

[12] Claire Spiegel and Robert Welkos, "Giant Anti-Poverty Agency Did Little to Create Jobs," *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1982.

TELACU.[13] He spoke of the loss of the connection to the original purpose of the community union. Gone was Jack Conway's notion of community unions as the CIO without a factory—a community organized to gain economic and political power in local affairs.

Ted Watkins was also troubled by the "corporate image" of TELACU. In 1990, Watkins claimed his organization, the WLCAC, was still committed to the community, even though it was no longer closely connected to the labor movement or the UAW.[14] Watkins had been an autoworker, and had often made reference to the UAW's assistance in the early years of the organization. He did, however, begin to use the rhetoric of self-help and economic development to describe possible avenues for reform during the 1970s. This coincided with the actions of many of the civil rights and community organizations in African American neighborhoods, which expanded the definition of "Black Power" by exploring the possibilities of government grants and independent funding for reform projects.[15]

These organizations maintained few ties to the UAW by the end of the 1970s, formally becoming Community Development Corporations (CDCs). CDCs made use of federal, state, city, foundation, and corporate money to provide job training, housing, low-interest loans, and jobs to poor communities—which is very similar to the agenda of community unions. The CDC, however, was designed to promote "community capitalism."[16] Straddling the line between collective action and funding for business development projects, CDCs increasingly became a reformist force in urban reform efforts.[17] CDCs redefined the term "development" in the 1970s by focusing on low-interest business loans and housing

[13] Esteban Torres, interview by James Briggs Murray, 31 July 1991, videotape, Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

[14] Ted Watkins, interview by James Briggs Murray, 11 December 1990, videotape, Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

[15] Ferguson, Organizing the Ghetto: The Ford Foundation, CORE, and White Power in the Black Power Era, 1967-1969;" Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

[16] Nishani Frazier, "A McDonald's That Reflects the Soul of a People: Hough Area Development Corporation and Community Development in Cleveland," in Laura Warren Hill and Julia Rabig, eds., *The Business of Black Power: Community Development, Capitalism, and Corporate Responsibility in America* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2012): 70.

[17] Goldstein, *Poverty in Common*, 248.

development. Government funding that had been available in the 1960s had dried up by the 1980s. CDCs prioritized technical assistance and loans for local entrepreneurs based in troubled communities.[18] Alyosha Goldstein, in his transnational study of poverty during the 1960s, referred to this change in the approach of CDCs as undermining the prospects for the political organization of poor communities and instead fostering competition in the search of those he refers to as the "entrepreneurial poor."[19] The emphasis on self-help and economic development enabled community unions to work within a newfound political climate in which the financial backing of government agencies such as the Office of Economic Opportunity were no longer available. This choice also confined community unions to a narrow strategy for addressing the needs of poor communities such as Watts and East Los Angeles.

The League took a different approach, rejecting liberalism and offering a revolutionary alternative for an urban minority population in Detroit. Whereas TELACU and WLCAC used the language of working class internationalism to push for reforms that would help East Los Angeles and Watts become more integrated into the Los Angeles economy, the League claimed that black workers in Detroit—and "colored" workers around the world—wanted nothing to do with the United States. This movement emphasized that the internationalization of production—and U.S. economic imperialism—was detrimental to the interests of the working class, and the entrenched racial divide between white and black workers meant that global revolution was the only viable strategy. The League dissolved in the early 1970s, but this distinct vision of working class internationalism demonstrates the intersection of ideas about race, class, and international affairs during the late 1960s.[20] What distinguished the position of autoworkers in each of these cases was the way they cobbled together a transnational understanding of class, labor, and community. Work—or the absence of work—contributed to development of ideas about class and community. From the perspective of the UAW and its community unions in the 1960s, there was a connection between labor, the state, and local communities that was fundamental to a functioning

[18] Ibid., 250.

[19] Ibid., 247-251.

[20] Singh, *Black is a Country*; Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*.

economy. Without organized labor and opportunities for employment, communities would not be economically self-sufficient. For many in the labor movement, liberalism prescribed a role for the state in realizing these goals.

By the 1970s, the New Deal order no longer offered sufficient protection for working class communities affected by global and domestic economic changes. The labor movement would be increasingly on the defensive in the 1970s on issues such as international trade, import policy, and labor legislation. The growing push for right-to-work laws coupled with the impact of deindustrialization on the American manufacturing sector hobbled industrial workers. Calls for regulation, industrial policy, and aid to workers negatively affected by plant movement fell on unresponsive ears. Autoworkers were left to fend for themselves as neoliberalism set the agenda in the U.S. and the globalizing world. This shift from liberalism to neoliberalism produced important changes in the social, economic, and political future of the American working class. From lower rates of unionization in the United States, to formidable multinational corporations with few restrictions, to anti-union legislation and direct attacks on unions, the worst fears of the UAW's International Affairs Department were realized.

I argue that organized labor's commitment to proposed liberal solutions for the problems facing developing nations, international trade questions, and the urban crisis ultimately left workers and working class communities in a precarious position in the 1970s and beyond. Autoworkers anticipated these problems and responded with diverse and innovative strategies. This was a contested process, as the state, corporations, and labor all had a vested interest in the emerging global economy.

Several important trends identified by autoworkers in the 1960s proved extremely influential during the ensuing decades, such as the rise of multinational corporations, the structural flaws in the American auto industry, and the impact of the geography of production and trade policy on the welfare of workers and working class communities. Autoworkers correctly identified the problems on the horizon, but multinational corporations were more politically and financially prepared to win this battle.

The recent experience of the U.S. South offers an interesting nexus of ideas about development, international trade, and working class communities. Since the mid-twentieth century, the U.S.

manufacturing sector has made a concerted effort to move production to low-wage, non-union sites not only overseas but also in the South.[21] The CIO recognized the dangers posed by this region early in the postwar years, funding an ultimately unsuccessful campaign called "Operation Dixie" to organize this region.[22] Reflecting on the obstacles encountered during this organizing drive in 1958, Lewis Carliner of the UAW's International Affairs Department pointed to the flawed strategy of CIO campaigners. He felt that organizing in the workplace was not enough, and that increasing the "standard of living and culture of an area" would help the union movement gain traction. He added that the South "is by almost any definition is an underdeveloped area," and required the type of aid "from the US that is contemplated for the backward areas of the world."[23] Carliner determined that the South would continue to pose a problem for industrial unions unless a comprehensive approach was taken to fully integrate this region into the American economy. "What is most urgent is that the South be helped to achieve economic maturity in cooperation with the rest of the country rather than in conflict with other areas."[24]

In an interesting reversal, foreign automakers have increasingly made use of this disconnected, "underdeveloped area" within the United States during the past decade. These companies have flourished in the South because of the relatively low cost of land and labor. Management has been able to successfully convince workers that the UAW—or any other union for that matter—was not going to considerably improve their working lives. In fact, organized labor may do just the opposite by reducing employment, skimming dues from paychecks, and encouraging these foreign companies to reconsider their commitments to Southern towns. This last point is crucial, as for many southern communities such as West Point, Georgia, and Montgomery, Alabama, auto industry jobs have been the lifeblood of a

[21] Tami J. Friedman, "Exploiting the North-South Differential: Corporate Power, Southern Politics, and the Decline of Organized Labor after World War II," *Journal of American History* 95:2 (2008): 323-348.

[22] Barbara S. Griffiths, *The Crisis of American Labor: Operation Dixie and the Defeat of the CIO* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

[23] Lewis Carliner to Victor Reuther, May 9, 1958, UAW International Affairs Department, Victor Reuther and Lewis Carliner Collection, 1955-1963, Box 72, Folder 8, WRL.

[24] Ibid.

stable, relatively prosperous local economy.[25] This can be contrasted with the experience of once vibrant industrial suburbs of Detroit, such as Livonia, Michigan, which formed the first site for the exodus of auto production from Detroit during the twentieth century. Livonia has seen its tax base and population decline in recent years, while formerly stagnant rural areas such as Georgetown, Kentucky, have been transformed by the auto industry.[26]

The cost of production in Northern industrial regions was not the sole cause of this shift in the geography of production. The problems facing the American auto industry were exacerbated by the disastrous decision to produce large, profit-making cars regardless of the long-term environmental impact and the constant competition from smaller imports.[27] Victor Reuther predicted this strategy would be catastrophic for the Big Three. Speaking in 1970, Reuther chastened the auto companies for not listening when the UAW urged them to prioritize the market for smaller cars in the United States a decade earlier in 1960.[28]

Not heeding this advice created difficulties for workers and management during and after the 1970s. Competition from small cars contributed to the problems the American auto industry faced during the economic crisis of 2008, which caused General Motors and Chrysler to seek a bailout by the U.S. government.[29] The Obama administration was not only concerned about the potential collapse of GM and Chrysler, but also the suppliers and other ancillary businesses which would be affected if these companies disappeared from the American economy. Such an eventuality, in the middle of one of the worst

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[25] Tim Higgins and Keith Naughton, "Hyundai Teaches UAW Best Factory Job Doesn't Need a Union: Cars," *Bloomberg*, June 22, 2011; Patrik Jonsson, "America's 'Other' Auto Industry," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 5, 2008.

[26] Micheline Maynard and Nick Bunkley, "As Auto Prosperity Shifts South, Two Towns Offer a Study in Contrasts," *New York Times*, December 5, 2006.

[27] Joseph Stiglitz, *Freefall: America, Free Markets, and the Sinking of the World Economy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 187.

[28] V. Reuther, "Legislative Remarks," August 2, 1971, 7, Victor G. Reuther Collection, box 30, folder 2, WRL.

[29] Stiglitz, *Freefall*, 43-44.

economic crises in U.S. history, would worsen the economic prospects for many Americans.[30] In recognition of the value of industry to local communities and regional economies, the Department of Labor authorized the creation of the Office of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers (ORACW) in 2009. ORACW was designed to help communities affected by a plant shut down or relocation get access to the federal funds and resources available to assist with the economic recovery of the community.[31] Through a court settlement, the U.S. government established the Revitalizing Auto Communities Environmental Response (RACER) Trust to repurpose former auto factories and fund the environmental cleanup and sale of foreclosed properties formerly held by General Motors.[32] These actions represented a modest assumption of responsibility by the federal government to address some of the issues facing working class communities. Perhaps the long-repressed institutional memory of Democratic administrations past stimulated the President to take actions that vaguely evoked parallels to the heyday of liberalism. The state recognized that it had a vested interest in ensuring employment in this massive industry, and understood that its success was connected to that of workers and the local community.

The bailout was clearly designed to aid the auto companies, and helped prevent the collapse of the entire industry. Auto companies also had an excuse to take additional measures to adjust during the economic crisis. In addition to the capital injected into these companies from the federal government, the crisis brought the UAW to the bargaining table to renegotiate agreements with American companies, restructuring wages to reduce the hourly income of some workers and creating a two-tier wage structure, reflecting what UAW President Bob King called the new "business model" of the twenty-first century.[33]

The emergence of neoliberalism and the declining strength of the American labor movement have placed workers, unions, and working class communities in a precarious position. In a globalizing

[30] Ibid., 43.

[31] Department of Labor, Office of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers, "Auto Recovery Blog," http://www.dol.gov/autocommunities/blog.htm, [accessed May 1, 2013]

[32] "The RACER Trust: Empowering America's Auto Communities," www.racertrust.org, [accessed February 10, 2013].

[33] Bill Vlasic, "With Sonic, G.M. Stands Automaking on Its Head," *New York Times*, July 12, 2011.

world, the problems facing autoworkers were complicated by geography, which thwarted the best laid plans of the UAW's International Affairs Department. The UAW's emphasis on building a working class movement that transcended national boundaries was an admirable one, and suggests that American labor in the 1960s and 1970s was made up of more than just protectionists and passive victims who would be trampled by the coming changes associated with globalization. Perhaps today a more interconnected movement could be constructed using new communication technologies and herculean efforts to sift through the massive quantity of data available on the activities of multinational corporations. The just-in-time production methods utilized by many multinational corporations have opened up the opportunity for a strategic strike at a parts facility to severely damage a particular company's production schedule.[34] The success of this tactic in the UAW's 1998 strike against General Motors was not replicated to any considerable extent, however, and companies have continued to pursue flexible production processes and taken advantage of the geography of labor to stay one step ahead of any global action by unions.[35]

Finally, the UAW's acceptance of trade liberalization—and its belief that the U.S. government had the potential to act in the best interests of labor—created a political context for the rise of ever more aggressive challenges to regulation and other barriers to free trade. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) accomplished several neoliberal goals when it was signed in 1992. NAFTA allowed goods, services, and investment to move freely between Canada, Mexico, and the United States.[36] A key player in the signing of this agreement was Esteban Torres, who was elected to the House of Representatives from California's 34th district in 1982 and served several terms until his retirement in January of 1999.[37] Reflecting in 1997 on his decision to support NAFTA, Torres spoke with regret about

[34] Silver, *Forces of Labor*, 68.

[35] Siemiatycki, "Forced to Concede," 457-458.

[36] Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002), 4.

[37] Steven V. Roberts, "Hispanic Caucus Is Flexing Its Muscle," *New York Times*, October 10, 1983; Torres, interview by author, May 21, 2008.

how his expectations for this trade agreement were ultimately unfounded.[38] He was upset that job training programs and lending programs promised to his district and others with large Latino populations were never implemented. President Clinton had also guaranteed that NAFTA would stimulate a dramatic increase in job opportunities for American workers.[39] In practice, NAFTA had brought together nations on the basis of trade while dividing workers at the same time.

Recalling his experiences with the UAW in Latin America in the 1960s, Torres spoke of the camaraderie and solidarity between UAW representatives and the workers they met as they circumambulated the Americas. "People felt good about our union because they saw us as real humans, really getting out there in the trenches with them."[40] The personal connections he established, along with the UAW's emphasis on workplace and community organizing, were essential to achieving Victor Reuther's goal of organizing the union's "biggest region."[41] By the end of the 1970s, this vision had yet to materialize. Instead of workers and unions experiencing transnational solidarity, markets were brought closer together and commerce was able to move quickly and efficiently across national boundaries. Today's workers are still facing obstacles preventing the establishment of a practical working class internationalism. But what was clear to many in the 1960s remains relevant today. There can be no artificial barriers separating workers by nation, region, or other administrative category. The globalizing world is an interconnected world, and recognizing the sheer size, power, and flexibility of capital is essential not only to some distant dream of global revolution, but to local struggles to improve the lives of workers and their communities.

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[38] John Maggs, "Before and NAFTA," *The New Republic*, September 1, 1997, 11-12.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Torres, interview by author, May 21, 2008.

[41] UAW, "Published Proceedings of the 1968 UAW Constitutional Convention," (Detroit: UAW, 1968), 187, WRL.

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