

# Toward a Theory of the Development of Unionism in the U.S. Vers une théorie du développement des unions ouvrières aux Etats-Unis

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## Résumé de l'article

Dans cet article, M. Massie se propose d'extraire de la littérature du travail les articles qui expriment quelques-uns des concepts de base qui se sont développés à l'intérieur des unions aux États-Unis, et de tenter l'intégration de ces concepts en vue de formuler une hypothèse d'unionisme dans ce pays. L'auteur s'inspire surtout de F.H. Harbison, Selig Perlman et John T. Dunlop.

### THÈSE GÉNÉRALE

Ce mouvement est caractérisé par un unionisme à la fois dynamique et facile d'adaptation. Les facteurs externes et internes aux unions ont développé chez elles un caractère flexible, adaptable et opportuniste. Les caractéristiques du mouvement ouvrier sont contradictoires, et son unité est réalisée par sa similitude de pensée à différentes périodes.

### ORIGINE DU SYNDICALISME

Les hommes de métier s'organisèrent d'abord à la fin du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle et ce n'est qu'au milieu du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle que l'unité d'action fut réalisée, à la fin du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'action du mouvement s'organisa sur un plan national. Le mouvement se concrétisa à cause de l'opposition des employeurs, des facteurs économiques, sociaux et politiques dans lesquels les travailleurs évoluaient, de l'influence des chefs du mouvement, dont la philosophie cadrait avec les besoins des travailleurs et des modifications apportées aux lois et à leur interprétation par les cours de justice.

### DÉVELOPPEMENT DES UNIONS

Un facteur important qui contribua au développement des unions fut la qualité de leurs chefs. Jusqu'à 1920, le nombre d'adhérents au mouvement varia avec les conditions économiques, mais l'avènement de Roosevelt et de son administration créa un climat favorable au développement des unions.

Depuis les 30 dernières années, le développement s'est surtout concentré dans les industries, et l'opposition même des employeurs en fit un mouvement national. De plus la diversité des fins recherchées par les unions les firent progresser rapidement, car une fin spécifique une fois atteinte, on se lançait vers l'obtention d'une autre bien.

### DÉVELOPPEMENT DE LA PHILOSOPHIE DU MOUVEMENT

L'orientation du mouvement ouvrier américain tint compte du caractère dynamique de l'industrie où il évoluait et de l'aspect hétérogène du travail qu'on y accomplissait. Mais on y remarqua l'absence d'une prise de conscience de la classe ouvrière et une tendance vers le conservatisme. L'intérêt fut surtout centré sur les droits individuels et le respect de la justice dans les tâches.

La formation de cette philosophie ne fut pas consciente, mais fut dirigée par des chefs comme Gompers. On acceptait le capitalisme, et, à partir de là, le principe fut de demander plus en encore davantage. C'est pourquoi le mouvement ouvrier n'a pas, à sa base cette attache d'une philosophie économique positive comme c'est le cas du socialisme, et la loyauté des membres a été centrée sur les unions internationales plutôt que sur la classe ouvrière elle-même.

Il n'entrerait pas dans la philosophie du mouvement d'avoir un parti politique ouvrier, d'abord à cause du caractère flexible des deux grands partis qui pouvaient plaire à des groupes différents de travailleurs, et à cause de la nature de la structure du gouvernement fédéral et des gouvernements locaux.

### BUTS ET POLITIQUES DES UNIONS

Les buts du mouvement sont le relèvement de la dignité, de la valeur et de la liberté individuelle, la préservation des institutions démocratiques et le progrès économique grâce à la négociation collective. Les buts sont pragmatiques et sont un élément conservateur dans l'économie actuelle. Quant aux buts futurs, ils seront déterminés par les chefs actuels et les conditions dans lesquelles le mouvement évolue.

Quant aux politiques, elles sont trop diversifiées pour être généralisées dans l'ensemble, et diffèrent même d'une union à l'autre.

### LE MOUVEMENT ET SON MILIEU

Les milieux social, politique et économique dans lesquels le mouvement évolue sont interdépendants, et il est plus influencé par eux qu'il ne les influence. Il est à prévoir qu'il les influencera beaucoup plus dans le futur, mais actuellement il est une institution parmi d'autres.

### CONCLUSION

Une fonction importante du mouvement ouvrier actuel est de répondre aux besoins des travailleurs tout en étant conservateur, d'aider au développement d'une jurisprudence industrielle et de représenter des ouvriers aux négociations collectives.

Ce mouvement progresse grâce à sa capacité de changer d'attitude selon les événements et de garder une attitude conservatrice dans ses revendications contre les employeurs, grâce aussi à ses chefs de 1930 et à la concurrence entre les unions en 1934-35.

Aujourd'hui, une force importante lui vient de sa position stratégique sur le marché du travail et de la participation de ses membres aux développements technologiques. A cause de ce pouvoir, le mouvement doit rechercher non pas seulement des buts immédiats, mais aussi le bien-être général de la société.

D'autre part, l'union perdrait son identité propre si elle se liait aux employeurs contre les consommateurs, et son existence serait compromise si elle faisait preuve de faiblesse et d'irresponsabilité, et si elle venait à identifier les buts qu'elle recherche avec les moyens et les techniques permettant l'obtention de ces buts.

# Toward a Theory of the Development of Unionism in the U. S.

Joseph L. Massie

*The purpose of this article is to extract from the writings in the labor literature some of the basic concepts which have developed within unionism in the United States. Periodically, such a summary is desirable because of the diverse set of disciplines which are involved. The deficiencies in securing better understanding in this area of thought are not the result of a lack of profound and incisive study by specialists, but are the result of the lack of awareness by practitioners of the underlying threads of thought which have been spun already. This will be an attempt to weave some of these threads into pieces of cloth; it will be an integration of some concepts into a hypothesis of unionism in the United States.*

The statement of a single theory of the development of unionism in the United States is made extremely difficult because it should include elements from economics, political science, sociology, psychology, technology, administrative theory, and other special fields. The fact that there are heterogeneous groups of laborers with different hereditary and environmental backgrounds makes a single statement even more difficult. A theory which applies to one period of time will not necessarily fit another period of time.

A theory of unionism seems to be a function of the frame of reference and biases of the individual theorist. Value judgments expressed by "management" are often not understood by "labor" and viewpoints of "labor" are misunderstood by "management". Myrdal's observation that no other device for ex-

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cluding biases in social sciences than to face the valuations<sup>1</sup> is the basis of approach here. The writer's opinions are the result of two forces: (1) his preconceived attitudes, both rational and irrational, (2) opinions of writers in the literature and persons who are directly connected with the development. The methodology of this paper is then to integrate a number of viewpoints into a personal hypothesis of what caused the labor movement in the United States to be what it is. A well-rounded theory depends upon a framework of clear definitions, criteria, and assumptions. This paper is based primarily upon frameworks developed by F. H. Harbison, Selig Perlman, and John T. Dunlop.

### General Statement of Thesis:

The general hypothesis of this paper is that the movement is characterized by the dynamic-adaptability of unionism. The thesis is that external and internal factors to unionism in the United States have resulted in the flexible, adaptable and opportunist character which is evident in the study of its history of the past one hundred years. Attempts to analyze the factors by Tannenbaum, Perlman, Wolman, Hoxie, and others show keen observation of certain portions of the movement as of a point in time. None have succeeded in offering a complete theory; yet each offers elements of truth. The "labor movement" has such contradicting characteristics that it may be claimed that there is no such unity to be called a movement. If a movement must have a single leader, purpose, technique, and allegiance to a single group, then there is no labor movement; but if "a labor movement connotes a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of improving their economic and social well-being,"<sup>2</sup> there is clearly an important movement in the United States. The important, emphasis, however, is not on the term used, but on the concept of a unity of thought developing through time with distinct characteristics.

### Origin of Labor Organizations:

The rise of the union movement has been the result of numerous factors: Hoxie saw it as a result of "group psychology"; Tannenbaum viewed it as the "result of the machines"; Perlman emphasized the

(1) MYRDAL, G., *An American Dilemma*. (N.Y.: Harpers, 1944) p. 1043.

(2) PETERSON, FLORENCE, *American Labor Unions*, (N.Y.: Harpers, 1952) p. 3.

“concern of job scarcities”; Commons directed his attention to the modes of production and market expansion. Above all, a “division of labor” as analysed by Smith and as developed during the Industrial Revolution was necessary before any unionization was possible.

First, it appears that the skilled craftsmen organized in the latter part of the Eighteenth Century and formed the embryo of the labor movement in the United States. Not until the middle of the Nineteenth Century did this idea attain any unity of action; in fact, it was not until the latter part of the Nineteenth Century with the National Labor Union, Knights of Labor, and the American Federation of Labor before any significant facts could be organized into a group action on a national scale. Obviously, the modern idea of unions would have no place in the structure of institutions until the development of employer and employee groups. In the period in which there was worker scarcity, i.e. in colonial times, and large amounts of land for expansion, i.e. before the close of the frontiers about 1890, unions would have had a difficult time caused by the instability of continually losing employees to a self-employed group.<sup>3</sup>

Tannenbaum’s “inevitable” results were only a matter of degree; there are many factors which might have caused employee reactions to develop in a different manner. Golden states that “a faulty management system of communications is as much responsible for giving birth to unions as is any other single factor”.<sup>4</sup> If management had not fought the unions growth so vehemently, or if a number of economic, social, and political environmental factors had been different, the union movement would have been different. Yet, given these factors necessary for a movement, there would have been none if there had not been strong leaders with a philosophy which fitted the needs of the workers. In addition, the attitude of the laws and the courts had to change before the present day movement could develop.

### Growth of Unionism:

Effective unionism is promoted by someone; yet “it has been largely unplanned, responsive to immediate needs, irrepressible, and inar-

- (3) The Massachusetts textile women workers in the early period would not have been good unionists since they were not permanent employees; they did not feel as though they were a «group»; they had alternatives other than to continue as employees.
- (4) GOLDEN, C. S., and Ruttenberg, H. J., *The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy*, (1942) p. 104.

ticulate of its own ends because, on the whole it had no general purposes — but its very lack of ideas made it strong and enabled it to concentrate upon immediate ends without wasting its energies in a futile pursuit of Utopia.”<sup>5</sup> Galenson summarized the factors which determined serious growth as the environment, the economic development, and the culture patterns from which it grows.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, unionism “hasn’t just growed like Topsy.” The satisfaction of the need for leadership had most important effects. Weber’s concept of charismatic heroes is exemplified by Gompers, Lewis, Murray and others. Self-appointed leaders who are followed by those who believe them to have extraordinary powers are viewed by Weber as truly revolutionary forces in history. There is evidence that some members of the labor movement have been considered as having “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with... exceptional powers or qualities.”<sup>7</sup>

The rate of growth until the 1920’s has been analyzed correctly by Wolman as an ebb and flow dependent upon economic conditions. Study of membership statistics would show a close correlation in that period; however, it is true as Barbash puts it that “the growth of unionism that followed the election of the Roosevelt Administration to power... is inextricably intertwined with the favorable climate created for union organization in a positive and energetic fashion by government.”<sup>8</sup>

The rapid growth in the past thirty years has centered in industries in which workers were unorganized, creating in Dunlop’s terminology « growth cones ». L. G. Reynolds observed that the spread of unionism bears many earmarks of a missionary movement. The steel industry, for example, was organized by « missionary » specialists from the outside. Slichter observed that « that rise of national unions meant, of course, that the trade union movement became less and less a spontaneous grass-roots affair. As the nationals gradually grew stronger, the opposition of employers became stiffer and more careful-

(5) TANNENBAUM, FRANK, *A Philosophy of Labor*, (N.Y.: Knopf, 1951) p. 4.

(6) GALENSON, WALTER, *Comparative Labor Movements* (N.Y. Prentice-Hall, 1952) p. 410.

(7) WEBER, MAX, « The Routinization of Charisma and Its Consequences » in *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed., T. Parsons, New York: Oxford University Press, 1947, pp. 558-592.

(8) BARBASH, JACK, *Labor Unions in Action*, (N.Y.: Harpers & Bros., 1948) pp. 6-7.

ly planned. This made it less practical for men to organize on their own initiative. Thus the opposition of employers to unions helped to promote the dominance of the national union ». <sup>9</sup>

The economic factors which caused the growth of the movement include wage, hours, and working conditions; yet unionism grows even where these are satisfactory. Dissatisfaction with social relationships, lack of recognition as an individual, and appeals to the idea of status are sociological factors in union growth. At one time the emphasis might be on education, at another on hours, and still another time on security. The reasons for growth of unionism need not be the same through time.

### Development of Movement's Philosophy:

The orientation of unionism in the United States has been unique. It is characterized by a lack of class consciousness and a trend toward conservatism. It has been such as to fit the dynamic character of American industry and the heterogeneous types of American labor. Dulles observes that « the American labor movement, again owing to the circumstances of life in the United States, has never had a consistent philosophy conforming in any way to the patterns discernible in European countries ». <sup>10</sup> Whyte points out further that « American workers are interested primarily in individual *rights* or equities in jobs, and, although they are conscious of their status as wage earned, they are not as a group militantly class-conscious in the sense of being opposed to capitalism ». <sup>11</sup> The primary reason for this uniqueness is the fact of a tremendously growing level of material well-being yielded by the system as a whole.

The Perlman's « job-conscious » theory is dependent upon a substantial progress toward attainment of goals. Given an economic system which is chronically in trouble, (e.g. in the magnitude of the 1930's), Perlman's theory would be inadequate and a more radical approach would be necessary. In the United States Perlman's theory has been a partial answer to our question, whereas Marx's concept of the mass of labor as a class has not been.

(9) SLICHTER, S., *The Challenge of Industrial Relations*, (Ithaca: Cornell Press, 1947) pp. 7-8.

(10) DULLES, F. R., *Labor in America*, (N.Y.: Crowell, 1955) p. 394.

(11) WHYTE, W. F., *Industry and Society*, (McGraw-Hill, 1946) p. 170.

The formation of this philosophy by the workers is not conscious. It has been directed into channels by such leaders as Gompers, who stated: « The primary essential in our mission has been the protection of the wage worker, now; to increase his wages; to cut hours off the long workday, which was killing him; to improve the safety and the sanitary conditions of the work-shop; to free him from the tyrannies, petty or otherwise, which served to make his existence a slavery ». <sup>12</sup> His oft quoted cliché of « asking for more, and still more » sums up the short-run approach of unionism in the United States. All of this, however, is predicated on its acceptance of capitalism. « Broad social philosophy, then, whether it emphasizes the desirability of private enterprise or the need for profound economic change is not reflected in the core activities of unionism ». <sup>13</sup> The movement in the United States lacks the binding tie of a positive economic philosophy like socialism because from its very foundation, loyalties have been decentralized to the international unions rather than centralized into a loyalty to a class. The centralization of the Knights of Labor was a factor in its resulting incompatibility with American labor. The decentralization of the AFL and the CIO, and more recently in the AFL-CIO, results in a greater feeling toward international union solidarity in place of « class solidarity ».

An American labor party has not been a part of this philosophy for several reasons. The flexibility of the two major political parties and their ability to appeal to varied groups makes it difficult for a party built upon a single interest, i.e. labor, to gain much headway; there is more to lose than to gain. Perlman points out that the nature of the federal government structure with its checks and balances and the different state and local governments makes it more difficult for labor to gain its objectives through a labor party. « Without any definite goal such as socialism to unite them, wage earners have historically been as diversified in their political allegiance as the members of any other group in American society ». <sup>14</sup> The experience of even the most powerful labor leaders, in attempting to dictate a political viewpoint to labor shows the independence of the American union member, e.g. Lewis' attempt to affect the election in 1940. Thus, the political philosophy has remained one to « stand faithfully by our friends; oppose and defeat our enemies ».

(12) GOMPERS, SAMUEL as quoted in Bakke & Kerr, *Unions, Management and the Public*, (N.Y.: Hartcourt, Brace, 1949) pp. 30-31.

(13) BARBASH, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

(14) DULLES, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

### Aims and Policies of Unionism :

The goals of a free society are goals of the labor movement in this hypothesis. These goals are: (1) enhancement of the dignity, worth, and freedom of the individual; (2) preservation of democratic institutions, (3) economic progress. As a means of aiming at the goals, collective bargaining attains a foremost position; « the core function of collective bargaining is to *generate pressure* for enhancement of the dignity, worth, and freedom of individuals in their capacity as workers ». <sup>15</sup>

A study of the aims and policies of unionism underscores the pragmatic character of the labor movement in the United States. There seems to be general agreement with Perlman who states « the overshadowing problem of the American labor movement has always been the problem of staying organized ». Bakke and Kerr summarize the aims of a mature labor. (1) Although an institution develops in response to a need felt by a sufficiently large group of people to support its development, the institution soon becomes interested in maintaining itself. (2) Once social institutions have acquired a management, the managers have a vested interest in their jobs. (3) The aims are not general but aims to satisfy specific needs for individual members. <sup>16</sup> Perlman condenses the basic aims as follows: « The American trade unionist wants, first, an equal voice with the employer in fixing wages and, second, a big enough control over the productive processes to protect job, health, and organization. Yet he does not appear to wish to saddle himself and fellow wage earners with the trouble of running industry without the employer ». <sup>17</sup> This statement appears to be as valid today as when Perlman made it.

In answer to a question as to what the aim of the labor movement is; it helps to see clearly what the aims are not. The aims are not revolutionary but, in fact, are actually a conservative element in the present economy; witness the numerous times in which the leaders, e.g. Lewis and Murray, very conscientiously cleaned the unions of radical elements. Also, history seems to indicate that the movement does not aim to place all of its political eggs in one basket.

(15) HARBISON, F. H., and Coleman, J. F., *Goals and Strategy in Collective Bargaining*, (N.Y.: Harpers, 1951) pp. 152-154, 158.

(16) BAKKE and Kerr, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

(17) PERLMAN, S., *History of Trade Unionism in the United States*, (N.Y.: McMillan, 1923) p. 279.



The aims of the unions in the future will depend upon the aims of the Dubinskys, the Hillmans, the Murrays, the Lewises, the Reuthers and even the Hoffa's — by those most powerful at the time. Aims of unionism are not determined in a vacuum; nor generally are they determined by the average union member; but they are determined by the environmental conditions and the leaders of the unions.

Unions policies are of such variety that it is impossible to generalize on the whole. The policies toward voluntarism and autonomy within trades have changed noticeably since the days of Gompers. An attempt to generalize on policies or attitudes toward the incentive wage system or toward seniority would be more misleading than helpful, since such policies are determined by the particular union as it is affected by the conditions of the industry and many other different factors. The only helpful approach in understanding union policies in general is the continuous study of individual unions and the development of the policies of each. In 1958, it is dangerous to generalize from observation concerning the Teamsters of the Auto workers. A theory of unionism should allow for an understanding of the various wide differences which exist among unions.

The movement has been helped by « Intellectuals » who formulated theories and rationalizations.<sup>18</sup> However, nothing is more important to the understanding of the American labor movement than is the distinction between the theoretical frameworks as provided by students and the pragmatic approaches of the strong leaders.

#### **Labor Movement and environment:**

The social, political, and economic environment and the labor movement are interdependent. In this hypothesis, however, it is held that the labor movement has been more affected by the environment than the environment has been affected by the movement. Examples supporting this contention have been cited previously as reasons for the origin and growth of the movement. Toynbee's concept of challenge and response is applicable here. Adverse legislation, congressional investigations, and the need for internal reform can provide the challenge for evolving a stronger movement. Such an effect followed from the anti-union attitude of employers in the earlier days.

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(18) DUNLOP, JOHN, « The Development of Labor Organizations », *Insights Into Labor Issues*, p. 179.

The future effects of the movement on environment can be expected to be greater since the size of the movement to the total environment today is greater than it has been previously. Wolman has pointed out the past effects of unions on the location of industry. Unionism will find its responsibility for actions necessarily greater than in the past. At present, nevertheless, it appears that the labor movement is merely one of a number of institutions which go to make up the total social, economic, and political pattern of America. The economy has become more «laboristic» (Slichter's term) only as the movement's size has increased. There are numerous economic, social, and political institutions which have direct effect on the total environment while at the same time being influenced itself by these institutions. The important point is that it is impossible to understand the nature of any one of these institutions without studying the others and the economic, social, and political relationships.

### **Conclusion:**

Throughout their discussion the Webbs emphasized that trade unionism has a real function to fulfill in the democratic state. The importance of this function gives fundamental strength to the labor movement. This function today appears to be one of «grievance ventilation», one of answering the needs of the workers by a conservative force in lieu of a radical element, one of aiding the development of an industrial jurisprudence (Slichter), one of improving communications between the workers and management, and one of representing the workers through collective bargaining.

A great strength of the American Federation of Labor was that Gompers «bent to the will of the strong international union when inevitable». <sup>19</sup> The evolutionary process of changing attitudes as events changed and of a conservative attitude in opposing the employer, e.g. the 1894 Pullman strike, the coal and steel strikes of 1919, were the basis for an adaptability which enabled the movement to continue in spite of adverse events.

New strength was added to the movement in the 1930's by a strong leadership which recognized the opportunities of the times and seized upon them in order to gain the greatest growth in the movement's

(19) LORWIN, L. L., *The American Federation of Labor*, (Washington: Brookings, 1933).

to his vociferous techniques of the 1930's is an illustration of the new life added to the old body. The effect of the younger men of the CIO on the actions of the AFL caused a renewed force to develop in both organizations.

A striking paradox is that not until the loss of some solidarity in 1934-35 in the labor movement did a much stronger movement develop. The competition in the movement (dualism) added strength to labor since each union leader felt as though there was need for being alert for fear that another union might come in and appeal to the workers more completely than the existing union could. This element of competition served to strengthen the movement by continuing to spur leaders on to better efforts.

Today a most important strength lies in the strategic position in the market and technological framework (Dunlop) held by the unions. This power that the central cores have over other groups yields strength out of proportion to the number of workers involved. It is this power which carries with it an increased responsibility on labor organizations to weigh the total welfare of the society in addition to merely its short run aims. Management's responsibility to understand the ultimate effect of their decisions on the welfare of the economy has become more history. The reversal of John L. Lewis from his approach in the 1920's generally recognized both within certain management groups and by outside observers. This same broad view and understanding is necessary if unionism is to continue to adapt to new situations and to fulfil its functions in a free society.

Unions and management might become merged into a common interest against the consumer. If this type of « labor peace » developed, unions' identity might be lost in the new association with management. If such should happen, there would be a need for a new labor movement to attempt to organize against the evils of the old labor organizations.

Although the managers and the public now accept unions as a part of the economic structure, a weakness of irresponsibility might cause as sudden a shift against unionism as occurred in favor of it in the 1930's. The recent disclosures before the McClellan committee have shown that unless the movement remains constantly alert to debilitating forces, the entire foundation of the movement could be threatened.

Today the danger of a mature attitude with little spark caused by routinization and bureaucratization of techniques, attitudes, and goals is probably the chief threat to the movement. As an organization becomes large, it tends to lose sight of the ends and goals and to confuse them with the means and techniques towards those ends. In such an event the basis of the strength of the movement — adaptability — would be lost.

This hypothesis of the development of unionism, based primarily on the ideas of others, and supported by references to historical facts is broad enough to encompass a number of related « theories » and is clearly applicable as long as the nature of the American people and the environment remain unchanged. It sees as the heart of the movement the pragmatic, flexible, adaptable, and opportunistic ideas of leaders who react to constant challenges for a better life for labor.

## VERS UNE THEORIE DU DEVELOPPEMENT DES UNIONS OUVRIERES AUX ETATS-UNIS

Dans cet article, M. Massie se propose d'extraire de la littérature du travail les articles qui expriment quelques-uns des concepts de base qui se sont développés à l'intérieur des unions aux Etats-Unis, et de tenter l'intégration de ces concepts en vue de formuler une hypothèse d'unionisme dans ce pays. L'auteur s'inspire surtout de F.H. Harbison, Selig Perlman et John T. Dunlop.

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Les hommes de métier s'organisèrent d'abord à la fin du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle et ce n'est qu'au milieu du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle que l'unité d'action fut réalisée, à la fin du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'action du mouvement s'organisait sur un plan national. Le mouvement se concrétisa à cause de l'opposition des employeurs, des facteurs économiques, sociaux et politiques dans lesquels les travailleurs évoluaient, de l'influence des chefs du mouvement, dont la philosophie cadrait avec les besoins des travailleurs et des modifications apportées aux lois et à leur interprétation par les cours de justice.

## DÉVELOPPEMENT DES UNIONS

Un facteur important qui contribua au développement des unions fut la qualité de leurs chefs. Jusqu'à 1920, le nombre d'adhérents au mouvement varia avec les conditions économiques, mais l'avènement de Roosevelt et de son administration créa un climat favorable au développement des unions.

Depuis les 30 dernières années, le développement s'est surtout concentré dans les industries, et l'opposition même des employeurs en fit un mouvement national. De plus la diversité des fins recherchées par les unions les firent progresser rapidement, car une fin spécifique une fois atteinte, on se lançait vers l'obtention d'un autre bien.

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L'orientation du mouvement ouvrier américain tint compte du caractère dynamique de l'industrie où il évoluait et de l'aspect hétérogène du travail qu'on y accomplissait. Mais on y remarque l'absence d'une prise de conscience de la classe ouvrière et une tendance vers le conservatisme. L'intérêt fut surtout centré sur les droits individuels et le respect de la justice dans les tâches.

La formation de cette philosophie ne fut pas consciente, mais fut dirigée par des chefs comme Compers. On acceptait le capitalisme, et, à partir de là, le principe fut de demander plus en encore davantage. C'est pourquoi le mouvement ouvrier n'a pas, à sa base cette attache d'une philosophie économique positive comme c'est le cas du socialisme, et la loyauté des membres a été centré sur les unions internationales plutôt que sur la classe ouvrière elle-même.

Il n'entrerait pas dans la philosophie du mouvement d'avoir un parti politique ouvrier, d'abord à cause du caractère flexible des deux grands partis qui pouvaient plaire à des groupes différents de travailleurs, et à cause de la nature de la structure du gouvernement fédéral et des gouvernements locaux.

## BUTS ET POLITIQUES DES UNIONS

Les buts du mouvement sont le relèvement de la dignité, de la valeur et de la liberté individuelle, la préservation des institutions démocratiques et le progrès économique grâce à la négociation collective. Les buts sont pragmatiques et sont un élément conservateur dans l'économie actuelle. Quant aux buts futurs, ils seront déterminés par les chefs actuels et les conditions dans lesquelles le mouvement évolue.

Quant aux politiques, elles sont trop diversifiées pour être généralisées dans l'ensemble, et diffèrent même d'une union à l'autre.

## LE MOUVEMENT ET SON MILIEU

Les milieux social, politique et économique dans lesquels le mouvement évolue sont interdépendants, et il est plus influencé par eux qu'il ne les influence. Il est

à prévoir qu'il les influencera beaucoup plus dans le futur, mais actuellement il est une institution parmi d'autres.

#### CONCLUSION

Une fonction importante du mouvement ouvrier actuel est de répondre aux besoins des travailleurs tout en étant conservateur, d'aider au développement d'une jurisprudence industrielle et de représenter des ouvriers aux négociations collectives.

Ce mouvement progresse grâce à sa capacité de changer d'attitude selon les événements et de garder une attitude conservatrice dans ses revendications contre les employeurs, grâce aussi à ses chefs de 1930 et à la concurrence entre les unions en 1934-35.

Aujourd'hui, une force importante lui vient de sa position stratégique sur le marché du travail et de la participation de ses membres aux développements technologiques. A cause de ce pouvoir, le mouvement doit rechercher non pas seulement des buts immédiats, mais aussi le bien-être général de la société.

D'autre part, l'union perdrait son identité propre si elle se liait aux employeurs contre les consommateurs, et son existence serait compromise si elle faisait preuve de faiblesse et d'irresponsabilité, et si elle venait à identifier les buts qu'elle recherche avec les moyens et les techniques permettant l'obtention de ces buts.

### **XIV Congrès des Relations industrielles de Laval**

#### **Bénéfices sociaux et initiative privée**

Cette année le 14e Congrès des Relations industrielles, organisé par le Département des relations industrielles de la Faculté des sciences sociales, aura lieu au Château Frontenac, les 20 et 21 avril 1959.

Les participants étudieront le problème des bénéfices marginaux et leurs implications pour l'entreprise, les travailleurs et l'économie générale.

**Tous sont cordialement invités à s'inscrire.**