Social Movement Unionism in North America: An Evaluation of Kim Moody's Account

MICHAEL SCHIAVONE

SEPTEMBER 2004

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
UNLESS CITED OTHERWISE IN THE TEXT, THIS THESIS REPRESENTS THE RESULTS OF MY OWN RESEARCH.

M. SCHIAVONE

MICHAEL SCHIAVONE
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Kim Moody's Account of Social Movement Unionism</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Other Theorists of Social Movement Unionism</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Social Movement Unionism: An Evaluation</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part II</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North American Social Movement Unions</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Introduction to Part II)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 The Canadian Auto Workers</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 The United Electrical Workers</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Teamsters for a Democratic Union</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Conclusion</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Of the many debts I have accumulated in writing the thesis, the first I wish to acknowledge is to my supervisor Rick Kuhn. Rick read each chapter on numerous occasions and offered very helpful advice. I also wish to thank my advisor Dennis Deslippe who read the majority of my work on more than one occasion. I am grateful to Peter Waterman who offered me many useful suggestions throughout the previous three years. Likewise, Kim Scipes was more than willing to offer advice. Moreover, he read the majority of the thesis and provided me with so many useful comments I cannot thank him enough. I can safely say that due to his input the thesis has been vastly improved.

On a more personal note, the friendship of David Mathieson, Jake Ramsay, Chris Wilson, Brett Bowden, Anna Powles, Elly Lawson, and Nick Purdie throughout the course of the thesis meant a lot to me. The regular Friday night drinks in the beer garden certainly helped me stay relatively sane.

My heartfelt thanks must go to Romania. While the thesis, in part, discusses the revival of the North American union movement, I was revitalised through a holiday to East Europe in June 2004. Finally, I wish to thank Anamaria Bara. Words cannot do justice what our friendship means to me. Without her, I would not have finished the thesis. Thus, I dedicate the thesis to her.
ABSTRACT

Social movement unionism has become the new “in-term” for labour academics and union reformers within North America. However, what is often ignored, or simply “brushed over” is that there are different theories of social movement unionism. I analyse four influential theories of social movement unionism: those of Kim Moody, Peter Waterman, Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster, and Kim Scipes. I determine the strengths and weaknesses of the theories as well as ascertaining what theory is most appropriate in understanding what is happening in North America. Moreover, there has been very little analysis of the potential of social movement unionism to revive the North American labour movement. I determine the likelihood of social movement unionism succeeding by analysing two unions that Moody argues are social movement unions; namely, the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), and the United Electrical Workers (UE). In addition, I analyse Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), which I argue is an “embryonic” social movement union according to Moody’s account. I determine that the two unions are indeed social movement unions under Moody’s account, and the TDU is an “embryonic” social movement union. They have been very successful in collective bargaining and in organising new workers. However, at this stage, social movement unionism is unlikely to lead to the dramatic revival of North American unionism. This is because government policy has greatly helped or hindered social movement unionism, and in this era of neoliberal globalisation, governments are more likely to thwart “radical” unions. Furthermore, structural conditions that led to the rise of social movement unionism in other countries are not applicable to North America. In addition, I claim that the CAW, UE, and TDU are not social movement unions under the other three theories. This is because there is a crucial difference between Moody’s account and the other three (and also between social movement unions in the South, such as the Congress of South African Trade Unions, and those in North America). Unlike Moody’s account, Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes specifically argue that social movement unions challenge the existing political and social order. This is the critical distinction between the theories, and social movement unions in the South and North. As a result, I argue, following Scipes, that it is better to term Moody’s account of social movement unionism as social justice unionism. Nevertheless, I conclude by arguing that if unions embrace social justice unionism this will result in them regaining some of the strength that has been lost through decades of business unionism.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Social movement unionism has become the new buzzword for both the academic left and union reformers. As Ian Robinson noted, '... analysts and activists have begun applying the concept to organized labor in the United States, as a characterization of some unions within the larger movement, as an ideal towards which organized labor ought to be moving if it wishes to recapture lost economic and political power, or both'.\(^1\) An increasing number of people argue that social movement unionism is the strategy/ideology that North American unions should adopt.\(^2\) There are, however, different theories of social movement unionism.

My thesis analyses four influential theories of social movement unionism: those of Kim Moody, Peter Waterman, Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster, and Kim Scipes. During

---

the late 1980s, Waterman invented the term social movement unionism in relation to Philippine trade union struggles. He, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes then developed different theories of social movement unionism (see Chapter 3 for an overview of their respective theories). Social movement unionism became prominent as an approach in the US with publication of Moody’s book *Workers in a Lean World*.

Indeed, *Workers in a Lean World* was the catalyst for other US labour academics and writers embracing social movement unionism. Since the book’s release, there has been a plethora of publications arguing that social movement unionism can lead to the revitalisation of North American unions, with most either referencing Moody or using a very similar account of social movement unionism to his. Indeed, Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes recognise the influence of Moody’s account of social movement unionism as Waterman acknowledges that Moody’s interpretation of social movement unionism is ‘more-influential’ than his own. Lambert and Webster stated that the ‘... notion of a global social movement unionism was introduced by Kim Moody in ... *Workers in a Lean World*’; while Scipes stated that Moody ‘... was the first to popularize SMU [social movement unionism] in North America’.

There has been, however, very little systematic analysis of the different theories of social movement unionism, especially Moody’s account (Lambert and Webster, and Waterman did briefly critique each others theories in their publications). Likewise, while an increasing number of people are arguing that North American unions should adopt social movement unionism, there have been few in-depth analysis of the likelihood of this

---

strategy succeeding and revitalising the labour movement. This thesis attempts to fill this
gap in the literature.

The State of North American Unionism

Moody developed his account of social movement unionism in an attempt to demonstrate
that it is possible for United States (US) unions to regain their former strength. This
strength was lost after decades of business unionism and the abandonment of the “social
contract” between labour, business, and government by the latter two.4

The recent history of unionism in the developed world, and in particular in the US, is
a history of business unionism. Business unionism is only concerned with narrowly defined
so-called “bread-and-butter” issues, such as union members’ wages and working
conditions. Robert Hoxie defined it as

\[
\text{[e]ssentially trade-conscious rather than class-conscious ... it}
\text{expresses the viewpoints and interests of the workers in craft or}
\text{industry rather than those of the working class as a whole. It aims}
\text{chiefly at more, here and now, for the organized workers of the}
\text{craft or industry, in terms of mainly higher wages, shorter hours,}
\text{and better working conditions, regardless for the most part of the}
\text{welfare of the workers outside the particular organic group, and}
\text{regardless in general of political and social considerations, except}
\text{in so far as these bear directly upon its own economic ends.}^5
\]

The former president of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial
Organisations (AFL-CIO) George Meany endorsed this type of unionism. He claimed that

---

4 See below for an overview of the “social contract”.
the role of unions is to intervene '... [w]here management decisions affect a worker, [but] those matters that do not touch a worker directly, a union cannot and will not challenge'.

A dominant tendency of business unionism in the period after World War II is the servicing model of unionism. The servicing model concentrates on taking care of the existing membership as opposed to organising new members. While taking care of the existing membership is a worthwhile endeavour, in the US the effects were to '... demobilize the members and turn the relationship between members and their unions into one analogous to that between lawyers or insurance companies and their clients'. As Richard Hurd noted, under the servicing model of unionism

... elected officials and field staff of national unions would focus on collective bargaining and contract enforcement. The AFL-CIO would coordinate political activity. The labor bureaucracy would concentrate on supporting these functions as efficiently as possible. Under the servicing model, active involvement of the members would not be necessary.

In the US, business unionism was quite successful during and after World War II, especially during the “golden years” of American capitalism (1947-73) as workers’ wages increased quite dramatically in a number of industries. For example, average hourly earnings for workers in meatpacking rose 114 per cent between 1950 and 1965, those in steel 102 per cent, in rubber tyres by 96 per cent, and in manufacturing 81 per cent. At the same time as union members’ wages were increasing, union membership was declining. Yet, the AFL-CIO argued that organising new members was not a priority. In 1972, Meany spoke candidly about the AFL-CIO’s position on organising new members:

7 Hassan, p.67.
8 Richard W. Hurd, ‘Contesting the Dinosaur Image: The Labor Movement’s Search for a Future’, Labor Studies Journal, vol.22, no.4, Winter 1998, p.8. However, it is important to note that not all business unions are undemocratic with any rank-and-file involvement, but the majority of them are.
SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM IN NORTH AMERICA

Why should we worry about organizing groups of people who do not want to be organized? ... Frankly, I used to worry about the membership, about the size of the membership. But quite a few years ago, I just stopped worrying about it, because to me it doesn’t make any difference... The organized fellow is the fellow that counts.  

In addition, business unionism views ‘... unions as partners with the state and business in achieving competitiveness for [local] firms while ensuring that some of the gains achieved through productivity increases flow to union members’. Thus, it accepts the status quo. However, by concentrating on the existing membership and “bread-and-butter” issues, and not organising new members, business unionism could not deal with the attack on the “social contract” by employers and the government beginning in the US in the late 1970s following the ascendancy of neoliberal ideology. The social contract was

... characterized by management’s willingness to live with the labor movement where it was already organized and its continued resistance to and avoidance of unions outside labor’s well-organized core sectors. Unions ... accepted managerial prerogatives that conceded control over production, the labor process, and technology, as well as other strategic business decisions. They also accepted productivity bargaining... Both parties accepted (or tolerated) substantially greater government intrusion into what had been the private sphere of labor-management relations. 

Following the attack on the social contract, there was a significant decline in US workers’ wages and conditions in real terms. For example, between 1980 and 1996, the total share of income of the bottom 60 per cent of Americans fell from 34.2 to 30 per cent. This represents a transfer of approximately $160 billion from the poorest 60 per cent to the

---

The working class has suffered a dramatic decline in wages. As John Gray noted, ‘... the average weekly earnings of the 80 per cent of rank-and-file working Americans, adjusted for inflation, fell by 18 per cent between 1973 and 1995, from $315 a week to $258 per week’. In addition to declining workers’ wages, there has been a dramatic decline in union membership. Unions only represent 12.9 per cent of the US workforce compared to 26 per cent in 1973.

Although there was a better situation for Canadian unions and workers, union density has started to decline quite rapidly. Between 1975 and 1992, union membership remained relatively steady ‘... fluctuating countercyclically between 34 and 36 percent’. However, in recent years, membership has slumped from 36.1 per cent in 1995 to 31.1 per cent in 2002. Susan Johnson noted that the decline between 1992 and 1999 was ‘... the longest period of decline in union density in the last 50 years’. However, the decline has continued until the present day and there are no signs of it abating. Likewise, workers’ wages have shown no sign of growth since the 1970s. For example, real hourly earnings (adjusted for inflation) have remained relatively steady since the 1970s, but declined during the late 1980s and early 1990s. As the Global Policy Network noted, ‘... as of May 2000, real hourly earnings had finally recovered to roughly its 1985 level’. Furthermore, between 1989 and 1998 the total share of income for the richest 20 per cent of Canadians increased from 41.9 per cent...
to 45.2 per cent. In contrast, the total share for the poorest 20 per cent decreased from 3.8 per cent to 3.1 per cent.\textsuperscript{18}

**Different Strategies to Stop the Decline**

The decline in North American unionism has led both academics and individuals within the union movement trying to devise strategies for unions to undertake to regain their former strength. However, it is important to note that activists since the 1960s have been trying to devise ways to prevent union density declining. In contrast, until the election of John Sweeney as President in 1995, the AFL-CIO either ignored, or paid lip service, to the decline in union strength. Apart from social movement unionism, value added unionism and such things as labour-community alliances, organising the unorganised, and labour internationalism have been suggested as ways unions can regain strength.

**Value Added Unionism**

Value added unionism could be considered as an updated version of business unionism. The advocates of value added unionism argue that an adversarial relationship between labour and business will not benefit either party. Instead, labour and business should work together. The Economic Policy Council stated that

\[\ldots\text{ a “them and us” system of workplace relations [was] simply inadequate in today’s social and economic environment. Finding the common interests of employees and employers, of unions and managers, and developing a process for overcoming the division}\]

\textsuperscript{18} ‘Overview of Current Economic Conditions in Canada’.
between workers and managers, ...[was] the critical challenge that labor and capital must address in the decade ahead.\textsuperscript{19}

The main difference between value added unionism and business unionism is that a value added union works more closely with management and has a greater say in decision-making than a business union would. Advocates of value added unionism claim that ‘... unions should avoid adversarial relations with management; they should reinvent themselves as value-adding organizations or networks offering positive gains to employers’.\textsuperscript{20} Anil Verma and Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld stated that value added unionism was

... an ongoing formal process where workers and their immediate supervisors or union and management leaders bear \textit{joint} responsibility for making decisions. The scope of decision making may be narrow (i.e., it may involve a single issue), or it may be broader, covering a whole range of issues. In addition, there may or may not be formal procedures for resolving disputes that arise in the joint decision-making process.\textsuperscript{21}

The purpose of joint decision-making is for the union to add value to the company and to the economy. In this way, the union gains “legitimacy” in the eyes of business and the government. As US labour academic Bruce Nissen noted: ‘By creating greater efficiency or quality or responsiveness (a public and private good) and higher profits (a private good for employers), unions add legitimacy unavailable under their traditional goals’.\textsuperscript{22} Examples of value added unionism include the relationship between Harley-Davidson, the International Association of Machinists and the Paperworkers, Allied and Chemical Employees; Shell (Sarina Plant) and the Energy and Chemical Workers’ Union; Xerox Corporation and the


\textsuperscript{22} Nissen, ‘Alternative Strategic Directions for the U.S. Labor Movement’, pp.144-5.
Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees; and arguably, the highest profile US example of value added unionism is the relationship between Saturn and the United Auto Workers (UAW).\textsuperscript{23}

The benefit of value added unionism is that unions can organise workers where otherwise they may not have been able to do so if they did not have cooperation from business. However, value added unionism has to rely on employers agreeing to union representation for their employees and to partnerships. In other words, value added unions attempt to organise employers and not employees. This is an unviable strategy to organise the unorganised and with union density dropping at alarming rates, this is the biggest challenge facing North American unions. It is very unlikely that value added unionism will succeed because employers in North America are generally hostile to unions, whether they add value or not. As noted US labour historian David Brody argued:

The labor movement will not prevail by trying to persuade nonunion employers. It is their employees that have to be persuaded, and if and when that time comes, what will persuade them will be the only kind of appeal that has worked with American workers since the days of Samuel Gompers: namely, the identification of the union with their demand for industrial justice. The source of that appeal is the abiding job-consciousness of American trade unionism.\textsuperscript{24}

Whether business unionism or value added unionism, any type of unionism that has to rely on the willing cooperation of business in this era of neoliberal globalisation, where both business and governments are openly hostile to unions, is bound to fail.

\textsuperscript{23} For an overview of the relationship between Harley-Davidson, the International Association of Machinists and the Paperworkers, Allied and Chemical Employees, see Nissen, ‘What Are Scholars Telling the U.S. Labor Movement to Do?’, pp.158-9; For an overview of Shell (Sarina Plant) and the Energy and Chemical Workers’ Union, see Verma and Cutcher-Gershenson, pp.210-1; For an overview of Xerox Corporation and UNITE, see Verma and Cutcher-Gershenson, pp.211-2. For an overview of Saturn, see Saul A. Rubinstein and Thomas A. Kochan, Learning From Saturn: Possibilities for Corporate Governance and Employee Relations, ILR Press, Ithaca and London, 2001; Saul Rubinstein, Michael Bennet, and Thomas Kochan, ‘The Saturn Partnership: Co-Management and the Reinvention of the Local Union’ in Bruce E. Kaufman and Morris M. Kleiner (eds.) Employee Representation: Alternatives and Future Directions, Industrial Relations Research Association, Madison, WI, 1993.

\textsuperscript{24} Brody, p.263.
Labour-Community Alliances, Organising the Unorganised, and Labour Internationalism

The advocates of labour-community alliances, organising the unorganised, and labour internationalism see labour not as an ally of business, but in the main, hostile to it. They argue that if unions undertake one of these strategies this will contribute to their revitalisation. It is important to note that while these efforts are an attempt to strengthen/support the labour movement, they are not consciously tied together or part of a larger programme. Moreover, while some union leaders now argue that unions adopt these strategies, activists have been pushing unions to implement these strategies for a number of years. All the proponents of social movement unionism that I analyse incorporate one or more, if not all, of these strategies within their accounts of social movement unionism (see Chapters 2 and 3).

One of the most popular strategies to rejuvenate unions is labour-community alliances. In the past, there was often a link between unions and the local community. However, in recent years this link has been largely broken in many communities. US labour academic Michael Yates described the change. In 1935

[w]orkers lived in close proximity to one another, and most of them worked close by... Turn the clock ahead to 1995. There is a glass factory near Meadville, Pennsylvania, and some of the employees there want a union. The plant is located in an isolated area, and the company plans to hire people from a widespread area. When the shift ends, workers scatter in their vans and trucks to their rural and suburban homes. There is no sense of community.25

While labour-community alliances used to happen “naturally”, unions now have to specifically attempt to form alliances with the local community and community groups. US labour activists Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello claimed that these alliances are in part

‘... fostered by a sense of common values – of human solidarity, mutual responsibility, social justice, and resistance to oppression’.26 In addition to supporting labour, labour-community alliances also analyse the impact of business moving production facilities out of local communities, and occasionally, ‘... raise important questions about democratic control over investment/disinvestment’.27

In relation to unions regaining strength, there are four main ways that community alliances can benefit unions. First, community groups can assist union organising drives.28 As Executive Vice-President of the AFL-CIO Linda Chavez-Thompson argued, community groups can reassure workers ‘... who often feel isolated and powerless – that the community stands behind them ... [and] also help by using their influence to insist that employers respect the free choice [of workers] to form a union’.29 Second, community groups can aid unions in gaining a first contract. This is by threatening to boycott the companies’ products, and using their influence more generally to force a company to agree to a first contract (see Chapter 6 for examples). Third, unions can benefit from community alliances during collective bargaining, especially if workers are on strike. Brecher and Costello argued that ‘[s]trike support operations use influence in government, media, communities, the marketplace, and other spheres to affect struggles in the workplace’.30 Fourth, community alliances can help to prevent plant closures.31 They can do this in

27 My thanks to Kim Scipes for pointing this out to me.
28 See, for example, Bruce Nissen and Seth Rosen, ‘Community-Based Organizing: Transforming Union Organizing Programs From The Bottom Up’ in Bruce Nissen (ed.) Which Direction for Organized Labor?, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1999.
30 Brecher and Costello, p.340.
31 Swinney, ‘Strategic Lessons for Labor from Candyland’. See Chapter 6 for numerous examples of the United Electrical Workers cultivating community alliances in an attempt to keep companies from closing production plants.
numerous ways; by pledging to boycott the companies’ products, by appealing to their local politicians, and by using their influence more generally.

Another strategy suggested by activists as well as union leaders is for unions to organise the unorganised. One of the most popular “new” organising strategies is the organising model of unionism. While not neglecting existing members, the organising model allocates a substantial part of union resources to organising new members, with the rank-and-file having an active role. A crucial component of the organising model is organising so-called minorities, such as women and immigrants. This is because there is an increasing number of women and immigrants joining the workforce. These groups are more likely to join a union than white males, and they can lead to the revitalisation of unions.

Moreover, as US labour activist Khalil Hassan argued:

> The quintessential practice of the organizing approach was the contract campaign, an all-round activation of the members to participate in collective bargaining. As adopted by several unions, the contract campaign entailed the creation of contract action teams, coalition building, and member education. The same technique could also be used to organize new members.

Indeed, the AFL-CIO would like all affiliated unions to spend 30 per cent of their budget on organising. Following his election as AFL-CIO President, John Sweeney made organising new members his number one priority:

> A new Organizing Department was created with a $10 million annual budget... The Organizing Institute’s program was expanded with the goal of recruiting and training 1,000 new organizers

---


within two years. Internships in organizing for 1,000 college students and young workers were established for the 1996 Union Summer. The AFL-CIO MasterCard agreement was renegotiated with much of the additional revenues earmarked for organizing. A $5 million organizing fund was established to assist innovative multi union organizing campaigns.35

The organizing model has led to an increasing number of workers joining unions than what otherwise would have been the case. US labour academics Kate Bronfenbrenner and Tom Juravich studied factors that contributed to unions’ victories and defeats in National Labor Relations Board certification election campaigns. They concluded that ‘... the use of a grassroots, rank-and-file-intensive, union-building strategy is fundamental in significantly raising the probability of winning’.36

The Justice for Janitors campaign is the classic example that US advocates of the organizing model use as a case study to demonstrate the potential benefits for rank-and-file workers and unions if they adopt such a strategy.

In the US, janitors (i.e. cleaners) have been predominately African-American. However, because of natural job attrition and the influx of immigrants, Latino immigrants were replacing African-Americans at such a rate that by 1990 the percentage of Latino janitors was 61 per cent compared to 7 per cent in 1970.37 A major reason why there was a change in the ethnic origins of the janitors was that as African-American janitors either retired or moved jobs, building owners deliberately replaced the African-American unionised workforce with non-unionised Latino immigrants on lower wages. This resulted in the average wage for a janitor in Los Angeles (LA) decreasing from $7.07 per hour with full health insurance in 1983 to approximately $4.50 per hour with no health insurance in

35 Hurd, p.25.
1987, with union membership declining dramatically.\(^{38}\) The Justice for Janitors campaign, an initiative of the Services Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 399, began in LA in 1987 focusing on Century City: a LA business district. Realising that electoral success through the National Labor Relations Board was next to impossible, the union ‘... devised a strategy which relied on direct action, public pressure, aggressive worker mobilization, community support, legal tactics, and corporate strategies'.\(^{39}\) Examples of these tactics included ‘... sit-ins, ... civil disobedience in building lobbies’, blocking traffic, marches and focusing on ‘... the whole building service industry, instead of individual contractors’.\(^{40}\) A crucial component of the campaign was that the union ‘... relied on [and continues to rely on] the militance of immigrant workers’. As David Bacon explained:

Local 399’s organizers mobilized them again and again, bringing them into the streets to win contracts. They drew on the traditions and experiences of workers who faced down government terror in El Salvador or Guatemala. They appealed to workers who learned, as children in Mexico, that while they have a right to a fair share of the wealth of society, they have to fight to get it.\(^{41}\)

The Justice for Janitors campaign demonstrates the success of the organising model of unionism. Union membership for janitors in LA in the late 1990s was 90 per cent, compared to only 30 per cent in 1987.\(^{42}\) The success of the campaign has seen its adoption throughout the US.\(^{43}\) Moody claimed that the Justice for Janitors campaign contained

---


\(^{41}\) Ibid.

\(^{42}\) Luz and Finn, p.203.

elements of social movement unionism, as it relied on mass actions and the union had alliances with community groups.\textsuperscript{44}

The third strategy that scholars, activists, and unionists argue that unions should embrace is labour internationalism.\textsuperscript{45} I analyse labour internationalism in subsequent chapters. Thus, I will only provide a brief overview here. Yates claimed that if ‘… capital is bound geographically within a nation, it is certainly possible that organized workers will be able [to achieve] through their own actions’ better wages and working conditions.\textsuperscript{46} However, because of neoliberal globalisation and the international nature of capital, there must be alliances between unions and workers worldwide.\textsuperscript{47} As Associate Professor of Political Science at McMaster University Robert O’Brien argued, neoliberal globalisation

... simultaneously challenges the power of organized workers and offers the opportunity to transcend national concerns. Relatively secure labour in developed countries has been threatened by globalization as it has led to an undermining of the welfare state and intense competition from low wage producers. Globalization has been used as an ideology to justify economic retrenchment and the dismantling of social welfare provisions... This has facilitated the forging of transnational coalitions and networks.\textsuperscript{48}

The AFL-CIO’s international strategy demonstrates the shift in policy of North American unions and labour federations since the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, the AFL-CIO was an ally of the US government in its fight against communism. This

\textsuperscript{44} Moody, \textit{Workers in a Lean World}, pp.175-6.


\textsuperscript{46} Michael Yates, ‘“Workers of All Countries Unite”: Will This Include the U.S. Labor Movement?’, \textit{Monthly Review}, vol.52, no.3, July-August 2000, pp.47-8.


\textsuperscript{48} O’Brien, ‘Workers and world order’, p.538.
led the AFL-CIO to attempt to destabilise leftist overseas unions. As US labour activist David Bacon noted, ‘… in developing countries – from Vietnam to Brazil to Chile to El Salvador – the AFL-CIO subsidized unions that supported US policy and attacked ones that didn’t. Sometimes, as in Chile and Brazil, it even helped organize fascist coups, which left thousands dead and entire labor movements in ruins’.49

However, since the late 1980s, with the collapse of communism and the new era of globalisation, the AFL-CIO is starting to develop an international focus. For example, the AFL-CIO sent a delegation to South Africa to meet union officials who, in the past, they would have accused as being communists. Likewise, since the election of John Sweeney as President, the AFL-CIO has begun to support the independent, and not government sponsored, Mexican trade unions something that would have been unthinkable under the previous administration. AFL-CIO secretary treasurer Rich Trumka argued:

The cold war is gone … It’s over. We want to be able to confront multinationals as multinationals ourselves now. If a corporation does business in fifteen countries, we’d like to be able to confront them as labor in fifteen countries. It’s not that we need less international involvement, but it should be focused towards building solidarity, helping workers achieve their needs and their goals here at home.50

Labour internationalism advocates argue that if the North American labour movement embraces internationalism this will not only help local unions gain strength, but benefit workers and unions worldwide.

Labour-community alliances, the organising model of unionism and labour internationalism are all important strategies that North American unions should undertake. Labour-community alliances have assisted organising drives, in unions gaining a first

---


contract, during collective bargaining and have prevented, or at least delayed, plant closures (see Chapters 5-7 for examples). The organising model of unionism has led to an increase in membership in unions such as the SEIU and the Communications Workers of America. Likewise, research by Bronfenbrenner and Juravich determined that unions achieve a higher National Labor Relations Board certification election win rate through adopting the organising model. Labour internationalism, in addition to forging solidarity between workers worldwide, has led to North American unions achieving better collective bargaining agreements (see Chapters 5 and 7 for examples). Furthermore, workers worldwide, particularly in Mexico, have benefited because of the increasing international activities of North American unions (see Chapters 5 and 6 for examples).

There are, however, inherent problems with unions using labour-community alliances, the organising model of unionism, and labour internationalism in isolation from other progressive strategies. Labour-community alliances can help unions in particular struggles, but they do not change a union’s organisational culture and structure. Unions can use these alliances only to achieve better wages and working conditions for their members. Likewise, the organising model can increase union membership, but it is silent on issues such as militancy in collective bargaining and rank-and-file involvement in the union apart from organising. Finally, labour internationalism can help in particular union struggles and build worker solidarity worldwide, but does not necessarily encourage militancy and rank-and-file involvement. Admittedly, very few, if any, of the advocates of these strategies claim that labour-community alliances, the organising model of unionism, and labour internationalism will solve all of the problems facing North American unions.

51 Nissen, 'Alternative Strategic Directions for the U.S. Labor Movement', pp.142-4.
52 Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, pp.21-5, 29-33.
Nevertheless, business unions can undertake all three strategies only for the benefit of themselves and their members. For example, business unions can have labour-community alliances and only implement such a strategy to achieve better wages and working conditions for their members.

They can also use the organising model of unionism to organise workers, but continue business union practices of limited rank-and-file involvement in the affairs of the union, apart from organising. As Moody argued, the organising model in isolation can strengthen other forms of unionism, such as business unionism. This is because unions can use the organising model to recruit new members, but continue business union practices of limited rank-and-file involvement in the affairs of the union (apart from organising) and an exclusive concern with “bread-and-butter” issues. As Christopher Schenk noted, ‘[p]eople cannot be turned ‘on’ for a particular campaign or organizing drive and then turned ‘off’ and returned to passivity only to be asked to turn ‘on’ again for some new endeavour’.

This hybrid form of the organising model and business unionism is the current union strategy of the SEIU. The business unionism of the SEIU led rank-and-file dissidents in the union to challenge for all the positions on the Los Angeles SEIU Local 399 union board, except the President. In a triumph for union democracy, the group known as the Multiracial Alliance won every seat it contested. However, the Local President refused to work with the Alliance, which led John Sweeney, then head of the SEIU and current AFL-CIO President, to place the Local into trusteeship. Members of the Multiracial Alliance were then relocated, without their consent, to SEIU Local 1877. The example of the SEIU

---

54 Schenk, p.250.
demonstrates the challenges facing union reform movements in the US. The SEIU, despite using the organising model to attract new members, is a model of business unionism.

Furthermore, business unions may form international alliances only for their own self-interest. For example, despite the positive changes within the AFL-CIO, it still primarily focuses on American workers irrespective of the effects on workers worldwide. As part of its internationalist strategy, the AFL-CIO has begun to address the role of international economic institutions. The AFL-CIO argues that the World Trade Organisation (WTO) should be transformed into an organisation that would enforce workers' rights by the use of side agreements. This is a somewhat surprising position because the labour side agreement in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has been unable to prevent the exploitation of workers. Sweeney's belief in the positive future role of the WTO led him to sign a letter from US President Bill Clinton's 'Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiators, endorsing administration goals for the WTO talks, including greater access for US corporations and investors abroad'. In other words, Sweeney hopes great market access for US corporations will benefit US workers. This expression of business unionism demonstrates that the AFL-CIO has not entirely broken away from its past.

Likewise, in its opposition to NAFTA, the AFL-CIO argued that the Agreement would result in US job losses to Mexico. It is examples like these that have led some overseas unions to question the AFL-CIO's internationalist stance. A Mexican union leader asked a US union leader:

INTRODUCTION

Why all of a sudden are you calling us “brothers”? Is it because today you realize you need us, because you are about to lose your jobs – even perhaps your unions – and because you think we stand to gain from your loss? Where have you been for the last 40 years, when many times we were in need of you?\footnote{Ibid.}

Moreover, the AFL-CIO still undermines overseas unions and governments. For example, in Russia during 1999 the AFL-CIO’s Free Trade Institute collaborated with the US coal industry to weaken Russian trade unions in an effort to broker a new coal policy that would benefit US corporations.\footnote{Greg Smithsimon, ‘Transnational Labor Organizing’, \textit{Socialist Review}, vol.27, no.3-4, 1999, p.73.} More recently, since 2003 the AFL-CIO through its “Solidarity Center” has been attempting to destabilise the Venezuelan government.\footnote{Kim Scipes, ‘AFL-CIO in Venezuela: Déjà Vu All Over Again’, \textit{Labor Notes}, April 2002, http://www.labornotes.org/archives/2004/04/articles/e.html accessed June 2, 2004.}

This is not to argue that these strategies will not benefit unions. As I noted, theorists of social movement unionism argue that unions should adopt these strategies. Nevertheless, labour-community alliances, the organising model of unionism, and labour internationalism have not and will not dramatically change the North American business union culture or lead to the revitalisation of North American unions.

Theories of Trade Unionism

As I previously noted, Robinson claimed that analysts and activists argue that social movement unionism could revitalise North American unions. In other words, they view social movement unionism as a strategy. However, behind the strategy of social movement unionism is a theory. In addition to analysing social movement unionism as a strategy, it is also important to analyse it as a theory in order to understand the assumptions behind the strategy. As Simeon Larson and Bruce Nissen claimed, the ‘... purpose of a theory is to put
isolated facts together into a coherent whole, and attempt to explain the “how” and the
“why” of whatever is being examined. To analyse social movement unionism as a theory
it is necessary to provide an overview of the major theoretical traditions of trade unionism.
This is in order to determine if social movement unionism belongs within an existing
theory of trade unionism or as a separate theoretical tradition.

There are many different theories of trade unionism, but the most influential theories
can be grouped as following: (1) Industrial Democracy theories; (2) Psychological theories;
(3) Moral theories; (4) Pluralist theories; (5) Anti-Union theories; (6) Business Unionism;
and (7) Marxist theories.

Industrial theorists, such as John R. Commons, view the ‘... labour movement as a
mechanism for workers to integrate into, rather than oppose, the capitalist system’. The
labour movement is a special interest group that attempts to ‘... increase labor’s bargaining
power, particularly over matters of job control’.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb developed, arguably, the most famous and influential
industrial theory. They believed that unions ‘... do not develop as part of a growing
revolutionary movement ..., they exist simply as economic protection devices for
workers’. The Webb’s stated that to the ‘... idealist who sees in Trade Unionism a great
class upheaval of the oppressed against the oppressors, it comes as a shock to recognise, in
the Trade Union official [who accepts the social order] ... pushing the interests of his own
clients at the expense of everybody else...’. Nevertheless, unions were crucial for
democracy and achieving good wages and working conditions for their members. They

---

64 Larson and Nissen, p.5.
65 Ibid., p.4.
were also '... an essential part of a broader movement to reform the system by humanizing working conditions and providing a livable wage for all'. However, the Webb's argued that

... it is for the consumers, acting either through capitalist entrepreneurs or their own salaried agents, to decide what shall be produced. It is for the directors of industry, whether profit-makers or officials, to decide how it shall be produced, though in this decision they must take into account the objections of the workers' representatives as to the effect on the conditions of employment. And, in the settlement of these conditions, it is for the expert negotiators of the Trade Unions, controlled by the desires of their members, to state under which each grade will sell its labor.

In other words, trade unions only have a minor say in what society produces. It is consumers, and more importantly, the community itself that decide what is to be produced, and it is capitalists who decided how it should be produced. Nevertheless, the Webb's overall conclusion was that trade unionism '... has a permanent function to fulfill in the democratic state'.

In contrast, some psychological theorists argue that unions are a result of people reacting to an individualist, industrial society. For example, Frank Tannenbaum claimed that the '... trade-union movement ... [was] an unconscious rebellion against the atomization of society. It suggests that the men, skilled and unskilled, who do the labor of the world want to return to an older and socially "normal" way of life'. Belonging to a trade union '... gives [a worker] ... a fellowship, a part in a drama that he can understand, and life takes on meaning once again because he shares a value system common to others'.

---

67 Larson and Nissen, p.5.
69 Ibid., p.823.
Psychological theorists claim that a union protects its members’ economic interests, but more importantly, its other goals depend on the ‘... group psychology of the workers’. \(^{71}\) Arguably the most influential psychological theorist, Robert Hoxie stated that

> [f]or as soon as we concede that the union is in essence an expression of group psychology we realize that it will get its specific character not merely from environmental conditions but from these in conjunction with the temperamental characteristics of the workers concerned, and that consequently union variants are likely to appear with a variation in either of these factors. \(^{72}\)

Hoxie claimed there were three types of unionists: leaders, the satisfied rank-and-file (who accepted leaders’ decisions and cared about bread-and-butter issues), and the dissatisfied rank-and-file (“radical” unionists who often disliked union officials’ decisions). \(^{73}\) Because of the different type of unionists and the group psychology of workers, there are diverse types of unions. Hoxie argued that there were four different functional types of unions: business unionism (characterised by strong leaders and satisfied rank-and-file), friendly or uplift unionism, revolutionary unionism, and predator unionism even within the same industry. \(^{74}\)

Moral theorists claim that unions arise ‘... from the natural attempt by human beings to create organizations for human betterment under the existing social and economic conditions’. The union’s role is to ensure that workers’ receive a just wage, while also contributing to social reform in the wider community. \(^{75}\) As Mark Perlman noted, moral theories of unionism ‘... assume that unions can be organized by right-thinking individuals, who, by using persuasion, will inspire individual workers to improve their ethical behavior’. \(^{76}\) Richard Elly argued that unions ‘...educate the laborers to prudence in

\(^{71}\) Larson and Nissen, pp.4, 6, 208.  
\(^{72}\) Hoxie, p.62.  
\(^{73}\) Perlman, p.129.  
\(^{74}\) Hoxie, pp.45-51  
\(^{75}\) Larson and Nissen, pp.5, 6.  
\(^{76}\) Perlman, p.215.
marriage', were ‘...the strongest force outside the Christian Church making for the practical recognition of human brotherhood’, and were attempting ‘... to solve the vexed problems of race in the United States’. Moreover, unions have an economic role as they ‘... assist the laborer to find the best market for his commodity’. Under moral theories of trade unionism, unions are ethical institutions that improve the well being of the union member as well as the community.

Industrial pluralists ‘... imply that conditions for labor movement beginnings will vary depending on the nature of the ruling elite in society’. Nevertheless, the formation of the labour movement is due to ‘... reaction to pressure by that elite’. Industrial pluralists, as Larson and Nissen argued,

... see labor as a generally passive actor in the transformation of society. It is not the industrial work force which controls the levers of power but a new professional elite whose members are indispensable to the functioning of an advanced industrial society. They view unions as bargaining organizations capable of adapting to a new but probably diminished role in a changed industrial world...

Trade unions ultimately aim for the nonideological goals of a special interest group rather than the ideological goals of a class movement. Occupational status goals will predominate in the end.

John Kenneth Galbraith particularly emphasised the reduced role of unions in the contemporary industrial world. He noted:

The union belongs to a particular stage in the development of the industrial system. When that stage passes so does the union in anything like its original position of power. And, as an added touch of paradox, things for which the union fought vigorously – the regulation of aggregate demand to insure full employment and higher real income for members – have contributed to their decline.

---

78 Larson and Nissen, p.5.
79 Ibid., pp.6, 7.
Galbraith went on to argue that after ‘... World War II, the acceptance of the union by the industrial firm and the emergence thereafter of an era of comparatively peaceful industrial relations have been hailed as the final triumph of trade unionism. [However,] on closer examination it seems to reveal many of the features of Jonah’s triumph over the whale’.  

Anti-union theorists believe that unions are the worst kind of monopolies that hold ‘... industrial capital hostage while they progressively destroy the industry through excessive labor costs’: costs that are passed on to the consumer. In other words, unions only benefit a select few. In its most extreme version, anti-union theories argue that with union dominance, the ‘... democratic system of government is undermined; unions form a violent, aggressive special interest which usurps all substantive power. The resulting unstable economy and social system is not compatible with democracy’.  

While there are many theories of trade unionism, the overwhelming amount of attention has been devoted to Business Unionism and Marxist theories.

**Business Unionism**

Business unionism has been the dominant strategy within US unions. Selig Perlman developed arguably the most influential theory of business unionism. As Larson and Nissen claimed, ‘Perlman’s theory was an explanation of (and justification for) the practice of the AFL under Samuel Gompers’.

---

81 Larson and Nissen, pp.5, 6, 284. For arguably the most well known anti-union argument, see Milton and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, NY and London, 1980.  
82 Larson and Nissen, p.284.  
83 Ibid., p.132.
Perlman argued that if trade unions were left to their own devices, business unionism would follow. However, intellectuals often attempted to ‘... frame a [union’s] programs and shape its policies’ away from business unionism. Three factors explain the nature of unions:

(1) the resistance power of capitalism ... (2) the role and influence of the intellectual, and (3) the maturity of the home-grown trade union movement. If capitalism’s power of resistance is great, the trade union movement mature, and the influence of intellectuals in the labor movement minimal, then a stable and enduring business unionism will follow, as it has in the US. On the other hand, if the intellectuals gain influence over an immature labor movement, then a revolution – such as the 1917 revolution in Russia – could occur if the resistance power of the capitalists is low.

Perlman claimed that there was a psychological difference between manual workers and capitalists. Manual workers were pessimists who ‘... prefer a secure, though modest return, – that is to say, a mere livelihood...’. In contrast, capitalists were eternal optimists ‘... who play for big stakes and are willing to assume risk in proportion’. He stated:

The scarcity consciousness of the manualist is a product of two main causes, one lying in himself and the other outside. The typical manualist is aware of his lack of native capacity for availing himself of economic opportunities as they lie amidst the complex and ever shifting situations of modern business.

Manual workers realise that they need a union to protect their interests, but at the same time, they are primarily concerned about their livelihood. This results in business unionism.

Intellectuals, however, while performing necessary and useful functions, often attempt to disrupt this “natural” state of affairs. Perlman claimed that there were three types of intellectuals: the Marxian who was a “determinist-revolutionary”, the ‘... “ethical” intellectual who tries to cause ‘... labor to strive for the fullest ethical self-realization,
which in turn is conditional upon labor’s escape from the degradation of “wagery” into “freedom”, and the “efficiency” intellectual who ‘... sees labor as a “mass” propelled by the force of its awakened burning interest in a planned economic order yielding a maximum and technical social efficiency’. Irrespective of the type of intellectual involved, they all desire to force their ideology onto unions.

According to Perlman’s theory, business unionism arises because of workers’ psychological desires to obtain a modest, but secure income. However, intellectuals trying to make their own ideology the ideology of the union potentially disrupt this state of affairs.

**Marxist Approaches to Trade Unionism**

While there have been a plethora of Marxist approaches to trade unionism, the three main theoretical approaches have been those of Marx and Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky; the Marxist approach has been updated by John Kelly.

Marx and Engels were among the first socialists to embrace trade unions. However, like many on the left today, they detested business unionism. As Hal Draper argued, Marx and Engels opposed the kind of unionism

... that systematically kept its efforts “narrow and selfish” in the interests of specially favored sectors and enclaves of the working class; the kind that remained “too exclusively bent upon the local and immediate struggles with capital,” and increasingly detested struggles of any sort; above all the kind that rejected political involvement and repudiated any program of “complete emancipation” as being an interference with its own pursuit of narrow privileges.  

---

88 Ibid., pp.282-3.
In commenting on the British labour movement, Engels claimed that it was ‘... to-day and for many years has been working in a narrow circle of strikes for higher wages and shorter hours without finding a solution; besides, these strikes are looked upon not as an expedient and not as a means or propaganda and organisation but as an ultimate aim’.\textsuperscript{90} Marx and Engels disapproved of unionism that was primarily concerned with narrowly defined “bread-and-butter” issues, such as union members’ wages and working conditions: namely, business unionism.

However, while Marx and Engels viewed narrow economic struggles in a negative light, they regarded trade unions as a positive development. The clearest discussion of this occurred in \textit{The Communist Manifesto}:

\begin{quote}
[W]ith the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, it strength grows, and it feels that strength more... [Eventually,] the workers begin to form combinations (Trades Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots.

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate results, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers...

This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by competition between workers themselves. But it rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

While Marx and Engels embraced trade unionism, they argued that unions would be more successful if they adopted certain characteristics.

The crucial characteristic of a Marxian trade union is union democracy. Marx continually emphasised this point. For example, when the German Lassallen organisation

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
was in the process of forming ‘... party-controlled trade unions in 1868’ that were
dictatorial in nature, Marx claimed:

As for the draft statutes, I regard them as unsuitable in principle, and I believe I have as much experience as any of my contemporaries in the field of trades unions. Without going further into detail here, I shall merely remark that a centralist organisation, suitable as it is for secret societies and sect movements, contradicts the nature of the trades unions. Were it possible — I declare it tout bonnement to be impossible — it would not be desirable, least of all in Germany. Here, where the worker is regulated bureaucratically from childhood onwards, where he believes in authority, in those set over him, the main thing is to teach him to walk by himself.92

In addition to trade union struggles, Marx and Engels believed that workers need a political party. Engels stated:

In England a real democratic party is impossible unless it be a working men’s party. Enlightened men of other classes ... might join that party and even represent it in Parliament after having given pledges of their sincerity... But no democratic party in England, as well as elsewhere, will be effectively successful unless it has a distinct working-class character. Abandon that, and you have nothing but sects and shams.93

It was only through a workers’ party that workers would achieve significant improvement in their lives. Likewise, just as Marx criticised trade unions that were only concerned with “bread-and butter” issues, he praised unions which undertook political action. He was delighted when ‘... the English ‘trade unions’, which previously concerned themselves exclusively with the wage question’ affiliated with the International Working Men’s Association (the First International).94

While much of Marx and Engels’ early writings on trade unions were optimistic, in their later writings they viewed unions less positively. The main reason was that they believed the union bureaucracy undermined the potential for revolutionary activity by trade unions and the working class as a whole. Marx stated that ‘[t]he leadership of the working class of England has wholly passed into the hands of the corrupted leaders of the trade unions...’.95 Furthermore, Marx and Engels argued that the existing British trade unions should not be privileged organisations for a select few. Marx claimed that ‘Lassalle’s organisation is nothing but a sectarian organisation and as such hostile to the organisation of the genuine workers’ movement striven for by the International [Working Men’s Association]’.96 Engels praised the “new unions” in England in the 1880s because they organised all workers and not just the labour aristocracy. He paid tribute to the “new unionism” because it was ‘... drawing far greater masses into the struggle, shaking up society far more profoundly, and putting forward much more far-reaching demands’. He claimed that the “old unions” were conservative and admitted only a select few. Conversely, the “new unions” ‘... admit every fellow-worker; they are essentially ... strike unions and strike funds’.97 Marx and Engels’ view on trade unions was as an organisation in which all workers, irrespective of their level of class consciousness and ideology, were welcomed into the fold.

Overall, Marx and Engels understood trade unions in the context of their class analysis of capitalism. For example, Engels argued that the struggle of labour versus capital

95 Karl Marx to Wilhelm Liebknecht, February 11, 1878 quoted in Hyman, p.9.
97 Frederick Engels to Sorge, December 7, 1889 quoted in Draper, pp.111; Frederick Engels, ‘May 4 in London,’ May 23, 1890 quoted in Draper, p.113. [Emphasis in original]
... does exist, whatever the apologists of capital may say to the contrary. It will exist so long as a reduction of wages remains the safest and readiest means of raising profits; nay, so long as the wages system itself shall exist. The very existence of Trades Unions is proof sufficient of the fact; if they are not made to fight against the encroachments of capital what are they made for? There is no use in mincing matters. No milksop words can hide the ugly fact that present society is mainly divided into two great antagonistic classes – into capitalists, the owners of all the means for the employment of labour, on one side; and working men, the owners of nothing but their own working power, on the other. 98

In contrast to Marx and Engels’ belief in the positive benefits of trade unions, Lenin had a less optimistic view. However, he still argued that unions had an essential role to play in any leftist upheaval.

Lenin believed that trade unions were working class self-defence organisations within the framework of capitalism. Lenin stated that

... the workers, finding themselves completely powerless against the factory owners, began to understand that complete downfall and pauperism awaited them if they remained disunited... They had only one solution – to join together for the struggle with the factory owners for higher wages and better living conditions. 99

Likewise, he claimed that trade union struggle was sectional, with unions fighting for improvement in wages and working conditions only within their own trade:

The economic struggle is the collective struggle of workers against their employers for better terms in the sale of their labour power, for the better conditions of life and labour. This struggle is necessarily an industrial struggle, because conditions of labour differ very much in different trades, and, consequently, the fight to improve the conditions can only be conducted in respect to each trade (trade unions in the Western Countries, temporary trade associations and leaflets in Russia, etc). 100

100 Vladimir Lenin, What is to be Done? in V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Two Volumes, vol.1, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1950, p.267. [Emphasis in Original]
However, Lenin's most famous argument is that there is a difference between trade union consciousness and socialist consciousness because unions operate within the capitalist system and thus their struggle is economic, not political. He stated in *What is to be Done?* that

... the *spontaneous* development of the working-class movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology ... for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade unionism ... and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy.\(^{101}\)

However, in a previous article ('On Strikes'), and after the 1905 revolution, Lenin seemed to deviate from this position. In 'On Strikes', he stated that '[e]very strike brings thoughts of socialism very forcibly to the worker's mind, thoughts of the struggle of the entire working class for emancipation from the oppression of capital'.\(^{102}\) Likewise, in 1905 he stated that the '... working class is instinctively, spontaneously Social-Democratic, and more than ten years of work put in by Social-Democracy has done a great deal to transform this spontaneity into consciousness'.\(^{103}\)

This seeming inconsistency in Lenin's writings can be explained by the different context of his works. As John Kelly argued, *What is to be Done?* was produced, as Lenin himself later remarked, in a specific context, with a specific purpose. It was written for the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party ... in 1902 as an attack on

---

101 Ibid., p.244. [Emphasis in Original]
the theoretical and political tendency known as economism'. Economism is the belief that economic struggles will lead, by themselves, to revolutionary class consciousness.  

At the same time, however, it is beyond dispute that Lenin privileged the Party over unions. While unions would be open to all workers, only a select few professional revolutionaries would belong to the Party (Lenin did, however, deviate from this position for a period of time: see below). As Thomas Taylor Hammond claimed, ‘... trade unions would be used as organs for drawing the masses into participation in the revolution, while leadership of the mass movement would be exercised by members of the Party’.  

During 1905 revolution, however, Lenin began to argue that the Party membership should be greatly increased, as there was a dramatic increase in the number of revolutionaries. Lenin stated that ‘... we must greatly increase the membership of all Party and kindred organizations in order to be able to keep in step with the stream of popular revolutionary energy that has increased a hundredfold...’. However, following the failure of the 1905 revolution, and subsequent decline in the number of revolutionaries, Lenin reverted to his original position; the Party must be limited to only a select few.  

Lenin wanted Party members to join and/or organise trade unions and to attain leadership positions within the unions. As Hammond noted, ‘Lenin envisaged ... two distinct types of organizations for preparing the revolution: on the one hand the small Party of trained, disciplined, professional revolutionaries, and on the other hand, “front” organizations through which the Party could train and manipulate those who were not qualified for Party membership’.  

---

105 Hammond, pp.36, 37.
106 Vladimir Lenin, ‘New tasks and new forces’, *Vpered*, no.9 February, 1905 quoted in ibid., p.49. Ibid., pp.54-5.
107 Hammond, p.40. See ibid., pp.60-75 for an excellent overview of Lenin’s argument that unions should be a front for the Party.
The following quote clearly outlines Lenin’s position on trade unions:

The trade unions were a tremendous step forward for the working class in the early days of capitalist development, inasmuch as they marked a transition from the workers’ disunity and helplessness to the rudiments of class organisation. When the revolutionary party of the proletariat, the highest form of proletarian class organisation, began to take shape ... the trade unions inevitably began to reveal certain reactionary features, a certain craft narrow-mindedness, a certain tendency to be non-political, a certain inertness, etc. However, the development of the proletariat did not, and could not, proceed anywhere in the world otherwise than through the trade unions, through reciprocal action between them and the party of the working class.\(^\text{108}\)

In contrast to Marx, Engels and Lenin, Trotsky devoted less attention to trade unions. The one area Trotsky did analyse is the notion that the union bureaucracy hinders the development of class consciousness. He believed that the union bureaucracy was incorporated into the capitalist system and deliberately undermined unions’ revolutionary potential. Trotsky stated:

The decay of British capitalism, under the conditions of decline of the world capitalist system, undermined the basis for the reformist work of the trade unions. Capitalism can continue to maintain itself only by lowering the standard of living of the working class. Under these conditions trade unions can either transform themselves into revolutionary organisations or become lieutenants of capital in the intensified exploitation of the workers. The trade union bureaucracy, which has satisfactorily solved its own social problem, took the second path. It turned all the accumulated authority of the trade unions against the socialist revolution and even against any attempts of the workers to resist the attacks of capital and reaction.\(^\text{109}\)

In other words, rank-and-file workers’ living standards decline under capitalism, but the union bureaucracy’s living standards generally stay the same or improve. Thus, the union


bureaucracy is in the main happy with the capitalist system and has no desire to undermine it.

Trotsky's other major contribution to the analysis of trade unions was that of transitional demands. He believed that while workers had the potential for revolutionary instincts, these by themselves did not lead to full class-consciousness. As Kelly noted, "for Trotsky these conditions [that led to full class-consciousness] were defined by a collision between the economic potential of capitalism and the economic demands of the working class, a collision that was to be facilitated by the promotion of transitional demands". An example of a transitional demand in a specific context is people working fewer hours but receiving the same pay.\textsuperscript{110}

In *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, John Kelly provided a contemporary reformulation of the classical Marxist theory of trade unions. Kelly argues that unions are an important component in radicalising workers and in class struggle. He stated that

\begin{quote}
... whilst it is wrong to argue that almost any strike can radicalise workers, it is equally wrong to follow Lenin's claim ... that economic militancy can have no impact on political class consciousness. The central point about [Rosa] Luxemburg's theory [of mass strike] is that it is the mobilisation and ruling-class reaction that determine the impact of strikes on political class consciousness, not the initial demands of the strikers. A wave of 'purely' economic strikes (as in [Britain] in 1915-22) can have a dramatic effect on workers' class consciousness provided the other components specified in Luxemburg’s theory are in place.\textsuperscript{111}
\end{quote}

Kelly defined class consciousness as ‘... theoretically informed practice fusing economic and political behaviour amongst workers’. He admitted that it is unlikely that most workers will ‘... attain class consciousness in the full Marxist sense’. However, the socialist project will ‘... be carried through by a coalition of forces, with organised workers at its heart’. Comprising the coalition will be ‘... a small minority of class-conscious

\textsuperscript{110} Kelly, pp.46-7. [Emphasis in Original]
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p.295. [Emphasis in Original]
activists ... [and] a large majority of people motivated by varying mixtures of self-interest (as workers, consumers, environmentalists, women, gays, pacifists, etc) and progressive values'. However, periods of economic and political crisis will lead to an increase in working class consciousness. During these periods, ‘... trade unions will play an essential role ... as the principal agents of working-class mobilisation, but ... the unions must work in tandem with a mass socialist party’. If a mass socialist party emerges, ‘... the full fruits of militant trade unionism can then be reaped’. 112

Kelly has built on classical Marxist theory by incorporating the belief that individuals do not only see themselves as “workers”, but in a variety of ways, such as women and environmentalists. However, unions are still crucial for the socialist project. This is similar to Moody’s account of social movement unionism, as Moody believes that unions need alliances with community groups and social movements (see Chapter 2). However, where Kelly and Moody differ is that Moody, like Marx, Engels, and Trotsky, argues that the union bureaucracy is conservative and prevents militancy by the rank-and-file. The rank-and-file will lead to the revitalisation of unions (see Chapter 2). In contrast, Kelly claims that this is not necessarily the case. He stated that while there are examples of the rank-and-file being more militant than union leadership, the reverse is also true (see Chapter 2 for a detailed overview). 113

**Thesis Structure**

This chapter has outlined the decline of Canadian and US unionism, various strategies that activists and scholars have argued that will contribute to the revitalisation of unionism, and

---

112 Ibid., pp.303-4.
113 Ibid., pp.182-3.
summarised various theories of trade unionism. The following chapters will analyse social movement unionism both as a theory and as a strategy to revive North American unionism.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part 1 analyses the respective theories of social movement union. Chapter 2 provides an overview and partial analysis of Moody’s account. Likewise, Chapter 3 is an overview and partial analysis of Waterman’s, Lambert and Webster’s, and Scipes’ theories of social movement unionism. Chapter 4 further examines the theories of social movement unionism in depth. I devote an entire chapter to Moody because he is the only one out of the activists/scholars I analyse who exclusively examines social movement unionism in North America. Indeed, almost his entire body of work is devoted to the revival of North American unionism. In contrast, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes devote almost their entire attentions to unions and labour federations in the South, while Waterman does not empirically analyse any union or labour federation worldwide. Moreover, I devote an entire chapter to Moody because he was popularised social movement unionism in North America, and almost everybody who has written on social movement unionism in North America has either referenced Moody or used an account of social movement unionism very similar to his.

Part 2 specifically examines social movement unionism in North America that Moody argues are social movement unions or embryonic social movement unions. Chapter 5 provides an overview of the Canadian Auto Workers, Chapter 6 is an historical overview of arguably the union closest to an ideal social movement union in North America, the United Electrical Workers, while Chapter 7 analyses the Teamsters for a Democratic union, a reform movement that I argue is an embryonic social movement union under Moody’s account. Finally, Chapter 8 draws the conclusions from Parts 1 and 2 together.
PART I

SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM THEORY
Chapter 2

KIM MOODY’S ACCOUNT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM

This chapter provides an historical overview of the development of Moody’s account of social movement unionism. It is divided into four sections: Moody’s publications before 1997, *Workers in a Lean World* (published in 1997) and the further development of social movement unionism in his subsequent works. I demonstrate that in *Workers in a Lean World* Moody developed an account of social movement unionism, but certain aspects are clearly outlined in his previous publications. In addition, I analyse the key aspect of Moody’s account of social movement unionism; namely that the rank-and-file are crucial to the revitalisation of the labour movement. I conclude by arguing that Moody’s social movement unionism is one of militancy and anti-collaboration.
A Brief Biography

Moody has been involved with left-wing organisations since his student days. He began his political activism in the American civil rights movement of the 1960s. From 1960 to 1964, he was active in the Civil Rights Movement in Baltimore. In 1963, he was also a member of the socialist students group, Students for a Democratic Society.

Students for a Democratic Society was an organisation that called for, amongst other things, the end of the Cold War, participatory democracy in America, and the creation of ‘... a world where hunger, poverty, disease, ignorance, violence, and exploitation are replaced as central features by abundance, reason, love, and international cooperation’. Moody’s later work partially mirrored its labour policy. Students for a Democratic Society argued that the ‘... the labor bureaucracy tends to be cynical toward, or afraid of, rank-and-file involvement in the work of the Union. Resolutions passed at conventions are implemented only by high-level machinations, not by mass mobilization of the unionists’. Furthermore, rank-and-file involvement could lead to unions focusing on wider issues, and not just wages and working conditions.\(^1\) Moody later incorporated this criticism of the union bureaucracy and belief in rank-and-file involvement in all union affairs in his publications.

It was the civil rights marches and other forms of mass direct action of the late 1960s that led Moody to socialist politics.\(^2\) During this time, Moody was a member of the International Socialists (IS). The IS, which was a Trotskyist organisation, formed through a merger of Independent Socialist Club across the US in 1969. While the IS called for,

---


amongst others things, US withdrawal from Vietnam, gay and women’s liberation, its prime focus was on the labour movement. Moody edited and contributed to the International Socialists’ newspaper *Workers’ Power* and its successor, the monthly magazine *Changes*. IS policy on unions during the 1970s bears a striking resemblance to Moody’s current position.

In 1970, in an article co-authored by Moody, the IS claimed that that there was a ‘... need for committees controlled by the workers independent of the unions’. As Milton Fisk noted, these committees ‘... would link up between plants and with independent organizations of blacks and women. They would fight for political demands and take political action, whereas unions fight for economic demands and take industrial actions’.

The IS was also involved in union reform movements such as Teamsters United Rank and File and the New Caucus within the American Federation of Teachers. Eventually, the IS began to increasingly focus on union reform movements.

There was a major change in IS policy in the mid 1970s. The 1974 IS convention passed a resolution that adopted class struggle unionism as one of its main principles. Class struggle unionism involved seven propositions; amongst these were ‘... no class-collaboration, worker control, struggle against discrimination, and local and national Opposition caucuses’. Its purpose was an attempt to ‘... influence [militant activist] workers in the direction of ... [IS] politics, Marxism. The most important way to concretize this will be to influence them with ideas which change the way they relate to the actual

---


5 Fisk, *Socialism From Below in the United States*. 
class struggle'. As Fisk noted, '[t]hese ideas were to be the principles of class struggle unionism'. The IS wanted to build rank-and-file reform movements to achieve this.6

However, this approach only lasted two years as the 1976 IS convention adopted “mass work unionism”. Mass work unionism was ‘... mobilizing a significant proportion of the people affected by an issue around a limited program designed to deal with that issue’. As Fisk claimed, it ‘... was not to be just the militants who were to be organized, but even “those who do not yet understand the class struggle”’. In other words, the IS wanted to become involved in many struggles, and attempted to organise individuals whether or not they believed in class struggle. However, transitional politics – ‘... ideas that can be the bridge between the direct experience of workers today and an understanding of the struggle for socialism’ – would attempt to link workers’ economic demands and a Marxist political perspective. The main difference between mass work unionism and class struggle unionism was that under class struggle unionism, the IS attempted to only organise militant activist workers, while under mass work unionism, the IS attempted to organise all workers ‘... affected by an issue around a limited program designed to deal with that issue’.7

Under mass work unionism, the IS formed rank-and-file reform movements such as the Coalition for a Good Contract in the United Auto Workers, and Teamsters for a Decent Contract.8 However, under this approach the IS’s politics ‘...became all-but-invisible as they focused instead on gaining influence by organizing around short-term reforms’.9

Eventually the IS splintered. One group merged with Workers Power and Socialist Unity to form Solidarity, of which Moody is a member. Solidarity’s main goal is a socialist revolution in the US. Solidarity’s position on labour closely resembles Moody’s. Its 1986

---

6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
foundating statement argued that the ‘... labor bureaucracy’s desperate dependence on U.S.-based multinational capital and its political parties precludes them from playing a significant role in ... change’. The rank-and-file will transform existing unions, organise the unorganised, and form a working-class political party. Moreover, the statement praised the new working class movement in South Africa. This working class movement is the Congress of South African Trade Unions, which was eventually considered the leading example of a social movement union worldwide.

In addition to being a member of Solidarity, Moody was, in his own words, the ‘... director, educator, researcher, writer, editor, event organizer, and regular contributor to the monthly publication Labor Notes at the Labor Education & Research Project’. In addition to publishing books on the labour movement, Labor Notes publishes a monthly newsletter – now in its 25th year – as well as hosting an important conference for union reformers in the US and Canada. Despite Moody retiring from Labor Notes in 2001, he still contributes to the publication and is now a union educator in New York. Also, and most importantly, for my purposes, Moody is the leading advocate for social movement unionism in the US.

Social Movement Unionism

It was in 1997 in Workers in a Lean World that Moody developed an account of social movement unionism. However, certain arguments he made in his previous publications regarding the strategies for reviving the US labour movement were later incorporated into his description of social movement unionism. By providing an overview of his earlier

---

11 Kim Moody’s resume in possession of the author.
work, I will demonstrate that Moody’s account of social movement unionism was largely developed during this period.

Moody began writing on the North American labour movement in the late 1960s. During this time, there was an increase in rank-and-file revolts and militancy in general. For example, in 1970 there were 66 million days lost because of strikes: the third highest on record. The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the birth of such rank-and-file reform movements as the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement, Miners for Democracy within the United Mine Workers of America, and Teamsters for a Decent Contract. Teamsters for a Decent Contract eventually led to the formation of one of the most successful rank-and-file reform movements, Teamsters for a Democratic Union within the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. This militancy and optimism among rank-and-file workers was reflected in Moody’s writings.

In the International Socialists’ pamphlet – *Struggle in the Coal Fields* – Moody outlined the 1974 fight between the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA), which represented Coal industry employers. The UMWA demanded better working conditions and an increase in the welfare and pension plan. Moody forcefully claimed, indeed his specific argument in the pamphlet, was that the UMWA could only win its contract fight through rank-and-file involvement. The rank-and-file pressured the union leadership in undertaking mass action. While the union’s demands were over economic “bread-and-butter” issues, Moody claimed that they were also political, as they led to a fight between workers and bosses (between labour and capital). In other words, economic struggles could lead to political struggles as the two were intertwined. It was in this context that he very briefly argued that it was a mistake for unions to have an alliance with the Democratic Party, as the Democrats were a

---

S O C I A L M O V E M E N T U N I O N I S M I N N O R T H A M E R I C A

‘bosses organization’. He claimed that unions needed a political strategy, with the ‘... starting point in that strategy ... [being] an independent labor party’.13

Many aspects of what were later to be incorporated into Moody’s account of social movement unionism were outlined in a series of columns in the International Socialists’ newspaper _Workers’ Power_ in 1974. Moody continually reiterated that the rank-and-file could engage in a revolutionary role by throwing out the labour bureaucracy ‘... and rebuild[ing] a fighting labor movement’.14 In two columns in late May, early June 1974, Moody analysed rank-and-file rebellions in the US in the 1960s and 1970s, with the second column also criticising the UAW’s attempt to increase International officers’ term of office by one year. The purpose of the columns was to argue that union democracy was essential. Moody stated there was a need for union leaders, but they should not be paid exorbitant salaries, or have ‘... any power over and against the workers’ .15 He believed that ‘[s]ide by side with the rank and file movement against the conservative union bureaucracy is the emergence of a revolutionary trend among the workers’.16

In a series of columns later that year devoted to protectionism, Moody claimed that, despite its name, it does not protect American workers’ jobs and wages. He stated that the ‘... most effective way to save jobs ... [in the US] is to fight for higher wages for workers throughout the world’.17 Workers worldwide need to engage in labour internationalism:

Any labor strategy that deals with the world market, and that is what we are dealing with, must be international in scope... A real policy of international solidarity begins with material aid to unionists when they are in struggle – not with donations to various CIA fronts [like the AFL-CIO does]... Equally important is the need for continuous political support... One of the most obvious ways to make international solidarity a reality is to establish

---

13 Ibid., p.12.
collective bargaining with the giant multinational corporations... Just as we need rank and file movement in US unions, so we need an international rank and file movement. Or, to put it another way, our rank and file movement must be internationalist in outlook... International solidarity is not simply a sentiment, for the workers it is an absolute necessity'.

While still writing for *Workers' Power*, Moody and Jim Woodward wrote *Battle Line: The Coal Strike of '78* (1978), which analysed UMWA’s 1977-8 strike against BCOA. Moody and Woodward's main argument was that rank-and-file union members, including Local leaders had a crucial role in sustaining the strike, but they alone could not lead the union to success. They claimed that the democratic nature of the UMWA meant that Local union district leaders were ‘... more tolerant of, and sometimes even favorable to, militant action by miners’ during the strike than union officials generally were. In other words, union democracy could lead unions to become more militant. Moody and Woodward stated that rank-and-file activity, such as ‘... picketing, meetings and rallies, trips to Washington, telegrams [and] petitions’ prevented the UMWA from being defeated. However, the rank-and-file and Local union leaders could not lead the union to victory, as the International UMWA leadership – they negotiated the basic provisions in contracts between the union and the company – were weak and inept, and wanted the strike to end. For such a strike to be successful, a militant leadership was needed at all levels.

As I noted in Chapter 1, Trotsky also argued that the union bureaucracy often undermined rank-and-file militancy.

In a separate section, which was not explicitly connected to UMWA’s struggle against BCOA, Moody and Woodward very briefly argued the union movement should undertake independent political action and form a Labor Party. This was because labour’s

20 Ibid., p.54.
21 Ibid., pp.89-90.
alliance with the Democrats had not been successful and the labour movement had very little influence on Democratic Party policy. They stated that if

... results are the measure of political success, then labor's longstanding adherence to the Democratic Party is certainly a failure... [However,] if a revitalization of the labor movement is down the road, as we believe, then it is almost certain that many of the new rank and file leaders will begin to question the effectiveness of dependence on a political party over which labor has very little control. 22

The late 1970s and early 1980s were marked by two incidents that had a major negative impact on the US labour movement and contributed to its decline. The first occurred in 1979 when the United Auto Workers accepted a concessionary contract from Chrysler in the belief that if it did not do so, Chrysler would declare bankruptcy. This led to other auto companies and US companies generally "crying poor" in an attempt to force unions to accept concessionary contracts. The Chrysler contract was the beginning of the era of concession bargaining (see Chapter 5 for details).

The second incident was the final abandonment of the "social contract" between unions, government and business. 23 The Reagan administration's intervention in the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization strike highlights this abandonment. The intervention eventually led to both the strike being lost and all striking workers being replaced by scabs. This led to "open season" on unions. The AFL-CIO still in the grip of business unionism could not cope with this attack on unions. This resulted in a dramatic decline in union membership and union influence on government policy. However, while Moody noted these attacks on labour and labour's decline, he was still optimistic about the potential for a rank-and-file uprising as highlighted by his Changes' articles.

22 Ibid., pp.112-3.
23 See Chapter 1 for an overview of the "social contract".
After *Workers’ Power* ceased publication in 1978, the International Socialists published *Changes* a monthly and later bi-monthly magazine/journal in 1979. Moody was co-editor of the first issue, and was then a contributing editor until the magazine merged with *Against the Current* at the end of 1985.

Moody’s most important article, for my purposes, in *Changes* is in the July/August 1981 issue. It is entitled: ‘The Rank & File Movement: Confronting Labor’s Crisis in the 1980’s’. The article analysed union rank-and-file reform movements in the US and the bureaucratisation of unions. Moody claimed that the ‘... idea of a rank and file movement arises from two very material facts of American life and history: the employers’ offensive spurred by the economic crisis of the past and present decades, and the bureaucratization of American trade unions’.24 He defined the labour bureaucracy as a

... social stratum within the unions that is separated from the mass of the membership by various institutional barriers, as well as by life-style and income. Its existence as a distinct social stratum within the institutions of the working class, with developed material interests different from those of ordinary workers, determines much of the consciousness of the bureaucracy... [They believe] that ordinary workers are incapable of running their own organizations or of making the right decisions concerning complicated matters of strategy, tactics or politics.25

Moody argued that the labour bureaucracy was ‘... largely the product of a particular practice – that of class collaboration’. Labour’s alliance with the Democratic Party also led to bureaucratisation. Moody stated that

Labor’s political activists never controlled the politicians; rather they had to negotiate with them, cajole, flatter, beg, or pressure them. As in the “delicate” relations with the employers, these sorts of politics do not call for mass involvement except on election day – long after all the meaningful decisions have been made. So the important political activists, those at or near the top presumed to

have the most influence with politicians, had to be sealed off from the membership. 26

Moreover, as bureaucratised unions led to an apathetic rank-and-file they were incapable of undertaking successful struggles against capitalism. 27 Moody’s argument that the union bureaucracy is separate from the rank-and-file within unions and has different material interests mirrors Trotsky’s claim that the union bureaucracy was content with the capitalist system and has no desire to undermine it (see Chapter 1).

In the article, Moody also stated that rank-and-file reform movements have a role to contribute in democratising unions and making them more effective. A major difference between the rank-and-file movements that emerged in the early 1980s and their predecessors in the 1970s was that the reform movements of the 1980s had a significant number of socialist members (he did not explain why there were more socialists within union reform movements in the 1980s). Moody concluded the article by arguing that it was socialists and, more generally, leftist trade union members who have a ‘... specific responsibility to build these rank and file movements, and to move the consciousness of their activists toward broader class consciousness’. 28

The role of the Left in unions was the theme of Moody’s speech to the 1981 International Socialists and Changes’ sponsored conference on the ‘Tasks for the ‘80s’. Moody reiterated the argument he made in ‘The Rank & File Movement’ that the trade union left must take responsibility for building the rank-and-file movement. This was because the rank-and-file were crucial in revitalising unions. 29 As well as leading to union democracy, rank-and-file movements ‘... represent the potential for reviving all the militant

27 Ibid., p.15.
28 Ibid., pp.22, 24. In the article, Moody reiterated his belief that an independent Labor Party is a must, see ibid., p.23.
ideas of the past – the ideas that can provide the alternative to the fear and despair so common today'. Moody admitted that these reform movements were not revolutionary movements. However, revolutionaries, and Marxists in particular, ‘... under certain circumstances, provide superior leadership and direction for the reform movements [because of] their approach to society and the working class ... [and] ... are able to provide a long view of things in a way reformists usually cannot’. This was because Marxists embraced struggle, fought for ‘... democratic demands and actions of the workers’, and undertook independent political action.

Moody’s last major contribution to Changes was published in the May-June 1985 issue and was a critique of the Democratic Party and the labour movement’s alliance with it. Not surprisingly, Moody and Bill Denney (co-author) argued that labour should abandon the alliance. In addition, in the last section of the article, Moody and Denney stated that the labour movement should have alliances with social movements. They claimed that to ‘... create the forces capable of bringing about a genuine change along class lines, which means dumping the Democrats among other things, socialists will have to start with the current struggles, helping to build them along the lines that lay the basis for a new mass left politics’. This would involve the socialist left helping the labour movement, African-American community groups, feminist, and antiwar movements ‘... become aware of each other, by building links between them, and by building organized solidarity wherever possible’. Moody further outlined the benefits of labour-community/social movement alliances in his later works.

---

30 Ibid., p.11.
31 Ibid., p.13.
In 1988, Moody released *An Injury to All*. The book was mainly a critique of the business unionism of the AFL-CIO. However, it also analysed the ‘... active forces within the working class that have attempted to set new directions for labor and some of the potential lines along which working-class activists can fight to defend and advance the interests of their class as a whole’. Many of these new directions and ‘potential lines of struggle’ were later incorporated into Moody’s account of social movement unionism. They are the need for an independent Labor Party; labour internationalism; democracy and rank-and-file involvement throughout the union movement; that unions should organise so-called minorities; and labour-community alliances. The majority of these prescriptions were already present in Moody’s earlier writings.

Moody, like Marx and Engels, argues that a mass working class party is important for the labour movement. In *An Injury to All*, he claimed that the lack of such a party in the US was one reason why US unions were weak in comparison to unions in Canada and most of Europe. Where working class parties exist, workers have had a ‘... higher level of both organization and class awareness of political questions’. The existence of working-class parties in Canada and Europe had slowed neoliberal reforms. Moody asserted that the ‘... breakdown of American party politics and the kind of mass movements from below that were also the basis for a new unionism’ would eventually result in a new political party along working-class lines.

---

33 Moody, *An Injury to All*, pp.xx-xxi.
35 Moody, *An Injury to All*, pp.343-5.
labour and capital was impossible without a working class party that would reach beyond current union members and embrace all workers.\textsuperscript{36}

In this era of globalisation, Moody claims a strong national union movement and independent Labour party were not enough; there is a need for labour internationalism. He quoted Harley Shaiken:

> As globalization increases, there is a less direct relation between the financial fortunes of a manufacturing firm and the well-being of workers in any country in which it operates. In the United States, for example, a corporation’s sales could be rising and its profits robust but the search for lower costs and even greater profits leads to production being transferred somewhere else.\textsuperscript{37}

Moody argued that this process increased the chance for labour internationalism. This was because it led to workers in different countries being ‘... drawn together across national lines by the same employer and made part of an integrated system of production’.\textsuperscript{38}

Moody approvingly listed numerous examples of worker grassroots international networks, such as the International Commission for Coordination of Solidarity among Sugar Workers and the Transnationals Information Exchange (see below). The strength of such networks was that there were ‘... direct communication among plant-level organizations, the freedom from the bureaucratic protocol that in many cases limits the ability of the ITSs [International Trade Secretariats] to act, and their ability to circumvent the political divisions that have led to the creation of different (and hostile) international federations’. Their major weakness was that they have limited resources and as such had ‘difficulty maintaining communications’. Nevertheless, these grassroots networks were an important step toward building an effective labour internationalism.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p.164.
\textsuperscript{38} Moody, \textit{An Injury to All}, p.297.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., pp.298-301.
In addition to a grassroots network being a prerequisite to labour internationalism, Moody claimed that rank-and-file involvement throughout the union movement was important for union revival. In an analysis of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), Moody praised TDU’s efforts to democratise the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and its emphasis on leadership development programmes for the rank-and-file. He noted that the growth of Latino membership within the Teamsters ‘... intersected with the growth of the TDU’. Indeed, Moody asserted that so-called minorities, such as Latinos and African-Americans, were largely contributing in reforming the union movement. For example, in addition to TDU, African-American workers played a major role in the 1970s and 1980s’ union reform movements from New Directions in the United Auto Workers (UAW) to New York City Transit Authority workers in the Transport Workers Union. In addition, Latino workers, ‘... along with other groups of immigrant workers, were playing a significant role in militant resistance, the reintroduction of rank-and-file unionism, and in developing new tactics and ideas’ in many struggles in the 1980s.

One of the new tactics and ideas developed by Latino workers was that the union movement should form alliances with the local community. This was later to become a crucial aspect of Moody’s social movement unionism, At this stage, he argued that beginning in the 1950s, corporations migrated ‘... away from centers of unionism ... and sought to decentralize production by using smaller plants, geographically dispersed and located in semi-rural areas where they thought tradition would weigh against unionization’. This led to the decline of working-class communities. However, labour-community alliances were beginning to reform. For example, both the United Food and

40 Ibid., pp.232-6.
41 Ibid., p.257.
43 Ibid., p.100.
Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local P-9 in its strike against the Austin Hormel plant and the ‘... strike by one thousand frozen food workers against Watsonville Canning’ during the 1980s enlisted the support of community groups. Arguably, these strikes led labour-community alliances gaining prominence within labour academic circles.

Moody extended his analysis of labour-community alliances in his 1990 essay 'Building a Labor Movement for the 1990s: Cooperation and Concessions or Confrontation and Coalition'. The article, like much of Moody's work, was an attempt to outline the ways that the US labour movement could regain its former strength. It was to do this through rank-and-file involvement and alliances with the local community and community groups. Moody noted that a major lesson learnt during successful labour struggles of the 1980s was that labour-community alliances were crucial in resisting management aggression. He argued that the idea of labour-community alliances was because of ‘... the dramatic changes in the relationship of working-class communities to the workplace':

The global integration of the US economy, the migration of industrial plants from the central cities to suburbs and exurbs, and the fragmentation of working-class communities that accompanied their suburbanization in many cases all contributed to a growing physical separation of residence and work in the decades after World War II. Thus, even the mobilization of working-class community groups came to require a special effort and a sense of strategy to accomplish what came naturally to earlier generations of workers.

Moody defined "community" as ‘... organized constituencies that are multiclass in nature and frequently middle class or professional in leadership’. The middle class nature of the leaders of community groups meant they were unlikely to have total commitment to the alliance, especially if the fight against business turned nasty. Thus, the part of the

---

44 Ibid., pp.314-30.
46 Ibid.,p.222.
“community” with which the labour movement could form alliances usually only included social movements, liberal churches and oppressed racial or national groups. At the same time, union leaders had often been wary of labour-community alliances because they believed these alliances were a ‘... threat to ... [their] own vision of the role of US labor. Thus most international unions deliberately put a brake on most attempts to move beyond the conventional strikes’. This led the UFCW’s leadership to oppose the strike against the Austin Hormel plant and the UAW leadership to prevent picketing against the auto part supplier A.P Parts. However, there are examples of union leaders supporting labour-community alliances, such as the then President of the UMWA, Richard Trumka, and UMWA Vice-President Cecil Roberts during the strike against Pittston Coal. Moody noted that while labour-community alliances might sustain strikes and union struggles, there was no guarantee that these alliances would result in victory.

In a discussion of the social composition of the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO), Moody provided new reasons for the importance of labour-community alliances in response to a review of An Injury to All in Monthly Review. He claimed that the CIO’s community dimension was important because ‘... of the role it played in many union victories, the opening it offered for the participation of women, and the “lateral” means it provided for spreading unionism beyond basic industry’.

While union membership continued to decline during the 1990s, there was renewed optimism that there might be a revival of the US labour movement. Within the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, following government intervention, mob influence was greatly
reduced. Moreover, for the first time in Teamsters’ history, the rank-and-file could elect the top union officials. Union reformer, Ron Carey, who was supported by TDU, became President. Carey supported rank-and-file involvement in the union. These tactics greatly contributed to US labour’s greatest victory in decades: the Teamsters’ 1997 victory over United Parcel Service in a strike (see Chapter 7). Likewise, a reform slate within the AFL-CIO led by John Sweeney gained office in 1995 following the first contested leadership election in AFL-CIO history. Sweeney argued that unions needed to organise the unorganised and wanted all unions to spend 30 per cent of their budgets on organising. However, Moody claimed that the despite the rhetoric the AFL-CIO was still the same organisation that wanted a return of the “social contract”. Nevertheless, Moody was still optimistic that while unions had to make major changes to regain their former strength, the potential was still there to do so.

As I have noted, since the 1970s Moody argued that unions needed international alliances. Not surprisingly, with the beginning of the new era of economic globalisation, Moody continued to argue that labour internationalism was crucial. In the book, Unions and Free Trade: Solidarity vs. Competition, Moody and Mary McGinn analysed the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (which came into existence in 1995) and its impact on US, Canadian, and Mexican workers. They argued that while NAFTA could result in competition between workers in the three countries, it could also lead to an increase in international solidarity. The book is important because Moody and McGinn outline a six-step proposal for effective international labour solidarity. They argued that the basis for international labour solidarity was ‘... mutual respect for each other’s nationality, culture, traditions, and language – as well as race, ethnicity, and
The first step for effective international alliances was for local unions to form an international solidarity committee. The committee would educate its members on the benefits of international solidarity, and form alliances with overseas unions and workers. Second, there was a need for a ‘... national grassroots network on free trade’ that would coordinate campaigns and help facilitate international contacts. Third, international union conferences could begin to turn abstract internationalism into an effective internationalism by helping US workers realise that overseas workers were just like them. Fourth, unions should engage in industry-wide networks as many industries had production facilities in different countries. These networks could ‘... exchange information on wages, benefits, working conditions, and company strategies; develop common demands, and monitor labor and human rights’. Fifth, unions that operated within transnational companies (TNCs) should engage in internationally coordinated bargaining. Moody first argued for this in 1974 (see above). The purpose of such coordinated bargaining was not a ‘... single contract or even identical contracts’ for workers in different countries, but to help facilitate international solidarity. The final step for an effective international solidarity was for rank-and-file workers to change their unions so they were member-controlled and militant.

In ‘American Labor’s democratic revolution’, Moody further made the link between union democracy and union militancy. In the article, which was an overview of union reform movements in the US, Moody argued that union rank-and-file reform movements were concerned with class struggle, as well as union democracy. In his analysis of the United Mine Workers (UMW) strike against Pittston coal, Moody implicitly argued that the militancy of the UMW and the risks it took to win its demands were because of its

---

53 Ibid., pp.52-6.
democratic nature. He concluded the article with a quote from the US civil rights movement: ‘... one person, one vote. It could start a revolution’.

In ‘The Industrial Working Class’, which was one of his final articles before the publication of *Workers in a Lean World*, Moody’s main argument was that the industrial working class was crucial to the class struggle. He first made this claim in 1970. Moody stated that it was the “gravedigger” of capitalist society and the coordinator of a new society. He defined the industrial working class as ‘... private sector production or nonsupervisory workers (and their households) in mining, construction, manufacturing, transportation, communications and energy production’. The industrial working class was the “gravedigger” of capitalist society because it produced most social wealth in developed capitalist societies. Moreover, Moody claimed that the industrial sector ‘... produces capital in all its physical forms. Wholesale and retail trade, finances, overseas trade and many services in the sphere of circulation grow on this productive foundation, providing what employment growth the system still maintains’. Thus, the industrial working class ‘... has a potential power no other social grouping, within or outside the working class, has’.

In Moody’s publications before *Workers in a Lean World*, he emphasises certain tactics crucial to the revival of the US labour movement. These were later incorporated into his account of social movement unionism. They include the importance of union democracy, labour internationalism and labour-community alliances; the need for a US broad-based working-class party; and the view that economic struggles could lead to political struggles. Indeed, Moody’s position on how to revive the US labour movement

---

55 Ibid., p.9.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
has remained largely unchanged from the 1970s. While the nuances on his take on such issues as labour internationalism have changed, the majority of his prescriptions are the same as he made 30 years ago. This demonstrates that while social movement unionism has become the new buzz word in certain labour and academic circles, people have been arguing for this type of unionism for many years. Moreover, as I noted in Chapter 1, Marx and Engels first argued that unions should adopt these majority of these characteristics over 100 years ago.

**Workers in a Lean World**

It was not until the publication of *Workers in a Lean World* in 1997 that Moody published a detailed analysis how to revive the North American union movement. This was to be achieved through social movement unionism. However, neither in *Workers in a Lean World* nor in any subsequent publication, did Moody mention the initial discussion about the term, and only referenced one other theory of social movement unionism: that of Gay Seidman. Seidman, however, based her theory of social movement unionism on Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster’s work. Furthermore, it is important to note that Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes developed social movement unionism based on the new unions in developing countries (specifically Philippines and South Africa). Moody is suggesting that this approach could be “exported” to North American unions.

Moody argued that the changing nature of contemporary work undermines old union structures and practices, and leads to a new form of unionism. The history of unionism has moved from ‘... craft unions to general unions and, now, to some hybrid of the last two’.

---

60 Private email from Kim Scipes to the author in author’s possession.
For unions to successfully organise workers and mobilise their current members, they must adopt a new form of unionism: social movement unionism.\(^{61}\)

Social movement unionism is one that is deeply democratic, as that is the best way to mobilize the strength of numbers in order to apply maximum economic leverage. It is militant in collective bargaining in the belief that retreat anywhere only leads to more retreats – an injury to one is an injury to all. It seeks to craft bargaining demands that create more jobs and aid the whole class. It fights for power and organization in the workplace or on the job in the realization that it is there that the greatest leverage exists, when properly applied. It is political by acting independently of the retreating parties of liberalism and social democracy, whatever the relations of the union with such parties. It multiplies its political and social power by reaching out to other sectors of the class, be they other unions, neighborhood organizations, or other social movements. It fights for all the oppressed and enhances its own power by doing so.\(^{62}\)

The crucial aspect of social movement unionism which Moody repeatedly emphasised in *Workers in a Lean World* was that union democracy and rank-and-file involvement in the affairs of the union were essential: Marx and Engles also advocated this (see Chapter 1). Moody quoted Michael Eisenscher:

> In confronting more powerful economic and social forces, democracy is an instrument for building solidarity, for establishing accountability, and for determining appropriate strategies – all of which are critical for sustaining and advancing worker and union interests. Union democracy is not synonymous with either union activism or militancy... Given that unions are institutions for the exercise of worker power, their responsiveness to membership aspirations and needs is determined, in part, by the extent to which members can and do assert effective control over their political objectives, bargaining strategies, disposition of resources, accountability of staff and officers, and innumerable other aspects of organizational performance.\(^{63}\)

It is important to note that Eisenscher’s (and hence Moody’s) belief that ‘unions are institutions for the exercise of worker power’, is a different position from Lenin, as he

---


\(^{62}\) Ibid., pp.4-5.

claimed that unions are defence organisations within the framework of capitalism (see Chapter 1).

Moody claimed that an active membership and successful organising drives were intertwined. Indeed organising new union members is a crucial part of Moody’s social movement unionism. A 1997 *Business Week* study noted that where the rank-and-file were the organisers, unions were successful in 73 per cent of National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) representation elections, compared to only ‘... 27 per cent when the organising was performed by professional organizers’.  

With an active rank-and-file, the leaders of the union movement in the future would ‘... be better able to look around and see that, as one African-American educator likes to say: “We are the leaders we’ve been looking for”’.  

Moody placed further importance on union democracy and the rank-and-file in *Workers in a Lean World* as he implicitly argued that union democracy could lead to greater militancy, although he quoted Eisenschier who claimed that union democracy was not identical with either union activism or militancy. In his analysis of the Korean Trade Union Congress (KTUC), Moody claimed that the ‘... grassroots democracy of the newer KTUC unions, combined with a strong sense of class solidarity, provided the means by which hundreds of thousands of workers could be mobilized in a short period of time and by which this mobilization could be sustained and revived’.

---

66 Ibid., p.216.
Globalisation/Labour Alliances

In *Workers in a Lean World*, Moody argued that there was a difference between the current period of economic globalisation and the preceding periods of increased international economic integration. During the current period of economic globalisation international ‘... trade and foreign investment compose a greater part of the world’s economic activity’, with TNCs being a significant facilitator of this integration. In addition, this period of globalisation has led to a form of international production chain gaining prominence. The oldest type of international production chain was where TNCs had production facilities in an overseas country to produce goods for that country. The other type of production chain is where ‘... production for the “home” market ... is decentralized, with the production chain extending across borders into one or more “host” countries, but the bulk of output is sold in the “home” country’. This type has become more common since the 1970s.

Moody argued, contrary to the ‘popular globalization literature’, that the increased economic integration of the world’s economy had not led to the state becoming powerless: the idea that businesses can relocate offshore in an instant ‘is largely globalonely’. He claimed the nation-state was still crucial, as business needed the state to protect its investments. The state in capitalist society was required to introduce laws to protect private property, have a police force to enforce the laws, have courts to prosecute offenders who broke the laws, and provide services such as education. Moreover, economic globalisation has led to an increase in some state functions. These include the basic ‘... infrastructure of the world market, its ports, airports, ... the countless bilateral and multilateral trade and

---

67 Ibid., p.48
68 Ibid., p.70.
69 Ibid., p.7.
commercial agreements that facilitate the world market, ... and when capital gets in trouble abroad, it is its “home” nation-state that comes to the rescue through negotiations, pressure, or military threat or intervention’.  

Moody claimed that while TNCs only employ a small number of workers relative to all employers, ‘... their potential impact at the heart of the world economy gives these workers a strategic position... TNCs dominate many nominally independent employees, set the world-wide trends in working conditions, and preserve the unequal wage levels that perpetuate competition among workers even in the same TNC’. In other words, successful international campaigns by workers against TNCs will have a flow-on effect to workers worldwide in many industries.

Moody argued that the International Trade Secretariats (ITSs), which are federations of national unions, the International Council of Free Trade Unions, and alliances between union leaders will not result in an effective internationalism because most existing Western unions are bureaucratic in nature, and are business unions. Likewise, while the European Work Councils can help facilitate an increase in cross-border contact between workers, the Work Councils relies on the European Union for funding. Its is doubtful whether the European Union would continue to fund Work Councils engaged in protracted campaigns against European TNCs. Instead, an effective international solidarity must be built on ‘... workplace-level activists and leaders’.

Moody claimed that the grassroots international network Transnationals Information Exchange (TIE) offered ‘... lessons that are the key to building rank-and-file internationalism’. Formed in 1978, the TIE is an international workers’ network that has a ‘... decentralized, minimalist organization and structure’. The TIE provides workers in

---

70 Ibid., pp.135-7.
71 Ibid., p.280.
72 Ibid., pp.280-1.
different countries the opportunity to develop long-term contact, exchange information, and conduct joint campaigns.

The major lesson that the TIE experience provided was that ‘... it is not really possible for a world-wide network of workplace activists to “match the power of the multinationals”’. Using the TIE campaign against the auto industry as a case study, Moody noted that the TIE auto networks did not have the resources or the personnel to even come close to equalling the power of the TNCs. Thus, while the TIE remains a worldwide network, its decision to focus on regional operations was the correct choice. Through a regional focus, the TIE remained ‘... close to the workplace [and the] focus on linking workplace activists ... remains key to the whole project’. This led the TIE to perform different functions in different regions. For example, in Russia it provides basic education on social movement unionism without necessarily using that term. In Asia, ‘... it has attempted to link activists and leaders from new unions who have been largely ignored by the ITUs’.74

The second lesson was that the TIE’s success in a particular country is dependent on the country’s pre-existing network. Moody used Labor Notes (which houses and supports the North American branch of the TIE in its offices) as an example of how to build a national rank-and-file network. Through publications and conferences, Labor Notes provides ‘... educational and sometimes organizational support and publicity to oppositional movements within many unions, and more generally help to build a common identity across unions’.75

Moody stated that international solidarity was ‘a two-way street’ and not just from the North to the South. Unions in different countries should support each other’s struggles. For

---

73 Ibid., pp.254-5, 262-3.
74 Ibid., p.263.
75 Ibid., pp.264-7.
example, he praised the alliance between the United Electrical Workers (UE) and the Mexican labour federation Frente Autenico del Trabajo (Authentic Labor Front (FAT)). The UE ‘... provided funds for FAT organizers ... [and] agreed to help ... [them] in the metal and electrical industries, which produced a number of successful recruitment drives there’. Likewise, FAT sent an organiser to help organize Mexican immigrant workers at a Milwaukee factory (see Chapter 6 for more on the UE-FAT strategic alliance).  

Moody’s position on internationalism is not an abstract labour internationalism that ignores national struggles. He claimed:

Most of the struggle against the structures and effects of globalization necessarily occurs on a national plane. That, after all, is where workers live, work, and fight... The most basic feature of an effective internationalism for this period is the ability of the working class to mount opposition to the entire agenda of transnational capital and its politicians in their own backyard.  

While not explicitly stated, the lessons learnt by the TIE – it is impossible for workplace activists to match the power of multinationals, and the TIE success depends on a country’s pre-existing rank-and-file network – may have led Moody to focus on both national and international struggles. 

Moody admitted, however, that the huge income inequality between Northern and Southern workers undermines the potential for labour internationalism. The auto industry provides a specific example of wage inequality between workers in the North and South. In 1994, Mexican workers who were employed by the same TNC and working on the same product as their US counterparts received the equivalent of US$3.87 per hour. In comparison, US workers received $24.82 an hour.  

76 Ibid., p.241. Moody also noted other examples of international solidarity being a ‘two-way street’, see ibid., p.240.  
77 Ibid., p.274.  
78 Ibid., p.71.
In addition to the importance of the labour movement having international alliances, Moody reiterated a point first made in *An Injury to All* that labour should form alliances with the local community. However, he changed his view on the decline of working class communities. In ‘Building a Labor Movement for the 1990s’ Moody argued working class communities were in decline, but he now claimed that contrary to the widespread view, new working communities ‘... have taken shape, while many old ones remain’. Examples of new working-class neighbourhoods include ‘... new immigrant neighborhoods in cities as different as Los Angeles and Paris’. Moody used a study by Hector Delgado to argue that successful organising drives in these communities were dependent ‘... not only on the efforts of the union, but also on family and community ties’. These new immigrant communities provide fertile ground for union organising, as the Justice for Janitors campaign demonstrated.

Moody asserted that Sterling Heights, Michigan, is an example of the revival of old working class communities. Sterling Heights had been a home of so-called ‘Reagan Democrats’ – working class people who vote Republican - yet this did not prevent them from mobilising in support of striking Detroit Newspaper Agency workers during the mid-1990s. Various Africa-American, Latino and white community organisations supported the striking workers. Moody claimed that the ‘Detroit Newspaper strike became an embryo of social-movement unionism in one city’. Likewise, the United Farm Workers, by organising themselves and drawing on family and community ties, in addition to a broader solidarity in its struggles, ‘... adopted models of social-movement unionism, albeit without using the term, and won’.

---

79 Ibid., p.171.
80 Ibid. See Chapter 1 for an overview of Justice for Janitors.
81 Ibid., pp.172-3.
82 Ibid., p.174.
Labour in the Political Realm

As social movement unionism leads the fight for everything that affects working people, it must have a political focus/strategy. Moody reiterated his point, first made in *The American Working Class in Transition* (in 1970) that economic trade union struggles could result in greater political struggles. He argued that such struggles mainly occur when trade unions respond to initiatives by governments and capital. Moody quoted Frederick Engels’ discussion of the early unions in Britain:

> The active resistance of the English workingman has its effects in holding the money-greed of the bourgeois ... within certain limits, and keeping alive the opposition of the workers to the social and political omnipotence of the bourgeois... But what gives these Unions and the strikes arising from them their real importance is this, that they are the first attempt of the workers to abolish competition [between workers].

Although Moody admitted most unions were ‘... poorly suited, organisationally and ideologically, to advance class consciousness or even pursue decisive struggles’, he argued that there were examples of trade union struggles preparing workers for greater political struggles. These included the Ontario Days of Action – a two-day protest in 1995 against the ruling Ontario New Democratic Party’s (NDP) shift to the right and the Canadian Tory government’s budget cuts, which included a Canadian $1.5 billion cut to the public health system – and the massive French strikes of November-December 1995. Moody quoting Sam Gindin noted that while the Days of Action did not change government policy, they

... led to new links across union-coalition lines, developed new organizational skills, and exposed weakness we’d later have to address. They increased economic and political literacy and developed a conscious need to continually educate ourselves about capitalism. They made serious inroads into the hegemony of right-

---

83 Frederick Engels quoted in Draper, pp.91-2 quoted in *Workers in a Lean World*, p.303.
wing ideas. They created that intangible space and collective self-confidence that set the stage for future struggles, big and small, over jobs, collective bargaining, municipal democracy, and rights of citizenship.  

The French strikes of late 1995 were more impressive. The uprising officially began on November 24 as a national strike by railroad workers. The strike was caused by the Plan Juppé (named after the French Prime Minister) that would have adversely affected the majority of working class and middle class people. Between November 24 and December 20, there were mass working class demonstrations in support of the strikers, with other public sector workers coming out in sympathy. The strikes were successful as the government backed down and agreed to eliminate some sections of the plan and modify others. More importantly, they led to increased unity between the three French labour federations and increased rank-and-file pressure on the union leadership, especially on the Democratic Confederation of Labour whose president had supported the Plan Juppé.

Moody’s hope that there would be an alternative political party for the labour movement to support rather than the Democratic Party came to fruition, as there is now a US Labor Party, although the Party was not, and is not, a serious political force. The formation of the Labor Party occurred at a convention in Cleveland Ohio in June 1996. The delegates at the convention were mostly blue-collar rank-and-file unionists, with the exception of the female dominated services sector such as the Californian Nurses Association, the Communication Workers of America and the Service Employees International Union. The Labor Party adopted a motion that its leadership committee include an ethnic and gender balance. The Party also adopted positions on social issues that US unions often avoid, such as opposition to ‘US military intervention to protect anti-

---

worker regimes and support for immigrants’ rights.”87 It is important to note that Moody was a member of the Labor Party Advocates, a group that campaigned for an independent Labor Party, and he attended the conference where the formation of Labor Party occurred.88

However, Moody recently claimed that the Labor Party has “run out of steam”. He argued that it was predicated on a false strategy: it refused to run candidates as it did not want to upset union leaders who supported the Democratic Party. The Party’s strategy was to pursue unions and not the rank-and-file. This strategy was unsuccessful as the Party only managed to entice nine unions into its ranks.89

**Social Movement Unionism in the Third World**

Moody’s clearest discussion of social movement unionism occurred in his analysis of Third World unions. He placed less emphasis on the industrial working class in its unionised form as the “gravediggers” of capitalist society compared to his earlier works. He now stated:

Social-movement unionism arises from the recognition that while the new industrial working class has a great deal of power within the economy, unions of industrial workers can only compose a minority of this new class. Alliances with other organizations of class, including unions in other sectors of the economy, public-sector unions, and neighborhood-based, and often women-led, organizations, are a necessary step toward the “organization of the proletarians into a class,” as Marx put it a hundred and fifty years ago.90

---

87 Ibid., pp.32-3.
88 Ibid., footnote 46, p.313.
89 Interview with Kim Moody, September 23, 2002.
90 Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*, p.207
Thus, while Moody argued that the industrial working class was still important for a social upheaval, the working class as a whole were the “gravediggers” of capitalist society and the organisers of a new society.

Moody noted that both the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the Brazilian Labour Federation Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT) have alliances with community-based organisations, including women’s movements and they believe such organisations are part of a ‘... broader class-based movement’. This class outlook allowed CUT to be at ‘... the center of attraction for the diverse social movements found in Brazil’.\textsuperscript{91} Another aspect of social movement unionism that both these national labour federations exhibit is their contacts with unions in other countries. Both COSATU and CUT have alliances with unions in other Third World countries, as well as North America and Europe. In addition, CUT played a leading role in the development of the Brazilian Workers’ Party, which is ‘... aggressively socialist and sought to represent and include all the working-class-based organizations’. COSATU has an alliance with the ruling African National Congress, but has still acted independently. For example, on April 30 1996, it organised a strike in protest against the government’s contemplation of restrictions on union rights.\textsuperscript{92}

Moody claimed that there are also social movement unions in South Korea and Taiwan. He argued that while social movement unions in these countries were different in some respects, they also exhibited similarities. These include grassroots democracy, serious discussion about forming an independent Labor Party, and working class women playing a leading role in coordinating community-based organisations.\textsuperscript{93} However, while Moody

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., pp.210-2. I analyse whether COSATU is still independent in Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., pp.204, 213-8.
gave a clear overview of social movement unionism in South Africa, Brazil and South Korea, his analysis of social movement unionism in Taiwan was very brief and superficial.

While Moody developed an account of social movement unionism in *Workers in a Lean World*, Peter Meiksins has claimed that ‘... social movement unionism remains vaguely defined’ in the book.\(^94\) Notwithstanding Moody’s definition quoted at the start of the section, Meiksins’ statement has merit as the different aspects of Moody’s account are scattered throughout the book, without a clear explanation of how they are part of social movement unionism. Nevertheless, the outlines of Moody’s description of social movement unionism are clear: namely, union democracy leads to strong progressive unions, unions should organise the unorganised with the rank-and-file playing a key role, unions need international alliances as well as with community organisations, and economic trade union struggles can lead to greater political struggles. However, as *Workers in a Lean World* is in part an attempt to get unions and workers to adopt social movement unionism, Moody should have outlined his account of social movement unionism more clearly.

Moreover, Moody did not go into any detail about how unions could adopt social movement unionism and for it to become the dominant trade union ideology in North America. He only implied that the rise of neoliberal globalisation and subsequent assault on the working class, which has led to a decline in their economic and living conditions, combined with union democracy and increased rank-and-file involvement in union affairs, could lead to social movement unionism. While Moody did not provide an explanation on how social movement unionism occurs in the developed world, he did in relation to the Third World. He claimed that social movement unionism developed in the Third World because of the

... rise of ... [the] working class, half employed, half semi-employed ... [plus] the growth of a modern middle class based in the TNCs and allied financial, communication, and business services. This middle class has a cosmopolitan focus and views the world in neoliberal terms.95

Thus, Moody claims that the growth of the working class and the neoliberal orientated middle class has increased class struggle, which is leading more workers towards embracing social movement unionism.

The Further Development of Social Movement Unionism

Moody further developed his account of social movement unionism in a series of publications in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In 'Unions, Strikes, and Class Consciousness Today' Moody and Sheila Cohen partially outlined Marxian theory, which they used to analyse the current state of the US labour movement. This is an important article for my purposes because this is something Moody had largely not done since writing for Changes. Moody and Cohen claimed that the UPS strike led to a growth of working class consciousness.96 This is a longstanding Marxist position as Marx and Engels amongst others argued that trade union struggles could lead to an increase in worker class consciousness. Furthermore, in the article Moody and Cohen expanded on Moody's argument that a decline in economic conditions could lead to an increase in class consciousness, and that unions’ focus on economic demands could lead to an increase in workers’ political consciousness. The authors argued that it was the ‘... economic circumstances of ... workers, rather than their initial consciousness that propel them into

95 Moody, Workers in a Lean World, p.208.
resistance with the potential to challenge some of their most basic assumptions about the nature of the world.\textsuperscript{97} In other words, a decline in workers’ economic conditions could lead them, even if they are socially conservative, into struggle. They noted that in \textit{The Poverty of Philosophy}, Marx claimed capital leads to a common situation and common interests for workers, and it is through struggle that workers become a class for themselves.\textsuperscript{98}

However, history has demonstrated a decline in economic conditions can also lead to the far right gaining power. As Peter Waterman claimed, ‘[p]ast and present evidence suggests that economic and political crisis can also lead to mass fascism (Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy), religious fundamentalism (North Africa), ethnic chauvinism (Yugoslavia), exhaustion and disorientation (Poland), terroristic communism (Khmer Rouge, Shining Path) and neocorporatism (“social concentration” strategies in Latin America?).’\textsuperscript{99}

Moreover, if a change in economic conditions is paramount in unions adopting a particular form of unionism, different labour movements within a single country will all embrace the same type of unionism. However, this is not the case in countries such as Brazil, the Philippines, South Africa, and South Korea.\textsuperscript{100} For example, as Kim Scipes argued, in South Africa the industrial unions generally did not become involved in political issues, as they believed the South African Congress of Trade Union’s involvement in political campaigns contributed to its decline. However, at the same time, South Africa had community unions as they ‘... had been more directly inspired by community-based

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., p.112.
\textsuperscript{100} Kim Scipes, ‘Social Movement Unionism: Can We Apply the Theoretical Conceptualization to the New Unions in South Africa – And Beyond?’, 2001, p.47. This is an unpublished paper in author’s possession. For a modified version of the paper, see \textit{LabourNet Germany, http://www.labournet.de/diskussion/gewerkschaft/SMUandSA.html} accessed June 11, 2002, p.12.
struggles and then later, the UDF [United Democratic Front] – they believed it was impossible to separate workers' demands in the factories from their township problems.101

Thus, a decline in economic conditions will not necessarily result in workers becoming militant and radicalised. Moody is mistaken to continually focus on the belief that a decline in economic conditions potentially leads to an increase in class consciousness. While it may result in this, it may also lead to the rise of, for example, the far right. However, as I will argue in Chapter 3, a decline in economic conditions combined with other factors can lead to an increase in class consciousness and the rise of social movement unionism.

In his essay ‘American Labor: A Movement Again?’ (1998) Moody analysed the changes within the US labour movement during the 1990s. The article further demonstrates Moody believes that for positive change to occur in the US union movement it will have to occur through rank-and-file uprisings. Moody reiterated that there is a link between union democracy and organising. He asserted that professional organisers have never recruited the massive numbers of new members who would have to be organised for a revival of the US labour movement. It was the rank-and-file who accomplished such feats, for example during the 1930s and the massive increase in public sector workers in the 1960s. Moody noted a study by US labour academics Kate Bronfenbrenner and Tom Juravich which argued that for every rank-and-file intensive tactic unions use in the lead-up to National Labor Relations Board certification elections, such as ‘... direct actions, and the use of ten or more rank-and-file volunteers from already organized workplaces, ... the chance of victory grew by 9 percent’.102

---

101 Ibid., pp.37-40.
In ‘The Dynamics of Change’ (1999), Moody analysed the 1997 Teamster strike at United Parcel Service. He claimed it ‘... presents a microcosm of what the U.S. labor is and what it might become’. Moody’s main argument was that ‘... new consciousness and sometimes desperate militancy’ within the labour movement came from the activist layer of unions: workers, workplace representatives and Local union officials. This is a rare instance of Moody arguing that another group, not just the rank-and-file, are militant and are attempting to move unions to the left. In addition, Moody claimed that there was an increase in disputes between the activist layer and union leaders. As labour-democracy attorney Paul Levy’s speech to the National Lawyers Guild noted:

There is extensive intra-union activity in a large number of national unions, much more than ever before. In service unions such as the Food and Commercial Workers, the Service Employees and Hotel Workers, construction unions such as the IBEW [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers] ... or the Bricklayers and the Carpenters and the Laborers, government unions like the Letter Carriers, the AFGE [American Federation of Government Employees] ... and the Treasury Employees, industrial unions like the machinists and the Auto Workers.

Furthermore, the article is important because unlike in Workers in a Lean World, Moody provided an explanation on how social movement unionism can occur in North America. He argued social movement unionism was a realistic alternative given the combination of worsening economic and living conditions, and workers’ resistance to these conditions. The difference between the potential likelihood of social movement unionism more likely to become a reality now compared to the 1980s was because today’s ‘... workplace problems are common across all industrial, regional, and demographic lines.'
Today’s workplace problems are social problems in that they affect much of the working class.

Moody’s latest major publication – ‘Unions’, which was published in 2001 – is an account of the role of unions in the anti-globalisation movement. It is a notable article because Moody attempts to find common ground between the anti-globalisation movement and the labour movement. This is important because many unions have either ignored or only given lip service to the anti-globalisation movement. For example, the AFL-CIO in an official capacity was not involved in the major protests in Seattle (it held a separate march and rally). Moody noted that the numerous working class upsurges in countries such as South Korea, Nigeria, India, Uruguay, Argentina and Bolivia during the past few years had only been national in scope and ‘... were not linked or coordinated across borders or seas’. These demonstrate the ‘... relative immobility of the working class’ in contrast to the highly mobile anti-globalisation protests in such cities as Seattle, Prague and Quebec City. However, Moody claimed the working class by its ‘... ability to act in its place along with its majoritarian numbers gives it a special weight and power that is denied to all other classes except possibly the ruling class itself’. In contrast, the anti-globalisation protesters lack social weight to bring about major change.

Nevertheless, he outlined four strategies in which these two groups could forge an effective alliance. First, the labour movement and the anti-globalisation protesters need to focus on the common enemy, namely, capitalism. Second, there is a need to refocus the activist core anti-globalisation protesters ‘... away from [their] exclusive focus on elite meetings [such as the WTO] toward other aspects of globalisation, such as national ratification or implementation’ of trade and financial agreements. Third, anti-globalisation

\[105\] Ibid., p.113.

protesters need to realise that the labour movement is ‘not a monolith’. There is a substantial difference between the rank-and-file and local unions, and the AFL-CIO. Fourth, an international alliance between the labour movement and the anti-globalisation protesters is important. Moody noted that this is difficult to achieve because of the often nationalistic outlook of the trade union bureaucracy, and the fact that activist rank-and-file workers are ‘constrained by its very class position’. 107

The Role of the Rank-and-File

Throughout his works, Moody places great emphasis on the rank-and-file transforming unions. They do this by opposing conservative union leaders and/or becoming leaders themselves. Moreover, the rank-and-file are important for organising drives, as Moody believes that they, and not professional organisers, will lead to unions successfully organising the unorganised. The role of the rank-and-file is the crucial aspect of Moody’s account of social movement unionism. If Moody is mistaken about the potential of the rank-and-file to transform unions, his account of social movement unionism will be undermined.

As previously noted, the rank-and-file have greatly contributed to organising drives and the use of rank-and-file tactics increase unions’ chances in NLRB elections. However, it is important not to underestimate the contribution of professional organisers, which at times Moody does. For example, the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE) is successful in organising drives using both rank-and-file and professional organisers. Eve S. Weinbaum and Gordon Lafer noted that

107 Ibid., pp.298-300.
UNITE succeeded through a range of tactics and strategies. Approximately 70 percent of its southern staff are ex-rank-and-file members, while 30 percent come from other backgrounds. While the union is known for its efforts to involve rank-and-file members in organizing drives, it is also known as the union that perfected the "blitz," in which a large group of organizers (in UNITE’s case, a mixture of rank and fileers and outside staff) kick off the campaign with intensive house visits to sign up a majority of workers.108

Moreover, they go on to argue that their case studies of UNITE, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union ‘... show the false dichotomy between bottom-up and top-down organizing models. It is often hard to tell if an organizer – or a union staff person – is an insider or outsider. Someone who is rank and file in one workplace can be a carpetbagger in another environment’.109

However, Weinbaum and Lafer’s main argument was that the crucial role for organisers was to empower local activists. They stated that their case studies

... all demonstrate that, no matter who the organizers are, their ultimate goal should be to equip local activists to become strong leaders themselves. Strategically, it is almost impossible to defeat an antiunion initiative unless the workers have a high degree of internal organization. And in the long run, the goal of organizing is to transform power relations, to empower workers over their own working conditions.110

This is something that Moody would undoubtedly agree with. Nevertheless, Moody is wrong to downplay the role of professional organisers. They, as well as the rank-and-file, have a crucial role in organising drives.

However, a potentially more damaging problem for Moody’s account of social movement unionism is the iron law of oligarchy. Robert Michels famously argued that

109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
there was an iron law that prevents organisations, such as unions, from being truly democratic. There are two components to this. First, even if unions have democratic practices, they develop an oligarchical leadership. This is because the rank-and-file accept leaders right to office; leaders gain experience and knowledge in their position, as such are difficult to replace; and leaders become ‘tied to their position’.\textsuperscript{111} Thus, leaders formulate the union polices and impose them on the union, irrespective of the workers’ wishes. For example in relation to workers demands for a wages increase and whether or not to strike, leaders ‘... claim the right to decide the merits of the question on the sole ground that they know better than the workers themselves the conditions of the labour market throughout the country and are consequently more component to judge the chances of success in the struggle’.\textsuperscript{112}

The second aspect of the iron law of oligarchy is that there is a transformation of union polices and practices in a conservative direction.\textsuperscript{113} Michels stated that there was a ‘... transformation of a number of proletarians with considerable intellectual gifts into employees whose mode of life becomes that of the petty bourgeois’.\textsuperscript{114} In addition, and more importantly, Michels claimed that the union leader

\begin{quote}
[i]nspired with a foolish self-satisfaction ... is apt to take pleasure in his new environment, and he tends to become indifferent and even hostile to all progressive aspirations in the democratic sense. He accommodates himself to the existing order, and ultimately, weary of struggle, becomes even reconciled to that order. What interest for them has now the dogma of social revolution? Their own social revolution has already been effected. At the bottom, all the thoughts of these leaders are concentrated upon the single hope that there shall long continue to exist a proletariat to choose them as its delegates and to provide them with a livelihood.\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{113} Hyman, p.16; Voss and Sherman, p.305.
\textsuperscript{114} Michels, p.81.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p.305.
Under the iron law of oligarchy even if the rank-and-file manage to defeat the incumbent conservative union leaders (which is difficult in itself), eventually they will become conservative officials themselves. Thus, Moody’s belief that the rank-and-file will transform unions into social movement unions can be called into question if there is an iron law of oligarchy.

Not surprisingly, Moody rejects the iron law of oligarchy thesis. He stated in *Workers in a Lean World* that ‘... the rise of democratic unions in the more industrial countries of the South and the partial reversal of bureaucratization in the US Mine Workers in the 1970s, the Teamsters in the 1990s, and, to a lesser extent, other unions in the US brings Michels’ “Iron Law of Oligarchy” into question’.\(^{116}\)

Moody is correct to criticise the so-called iron law. In relation to unions developing an oligarchical leadership, Alvin W. Gouldner argued:

> When ... Michels spoke of the “iron law of oligarchy”, he attended solely to the ways in which organizational need inhibit democratic possibilities. But the very same evidence to which he called attention could enable us to formulate the very opposite theorem – “the iron law of democracy”. Even as Michels himself saw, if oligarchical waves repeatedly wash away bridges of democracy, this eternal recurrence can happen only because men doggedly rebuild them after each inundation. Michels chose to dwell on only one aspect of this process, neglecting to consider this other side. There cannot be an iron law of oligarchy, however, unless there is an iron law of democracy.\(^{117}\)

The continual reform efforts by rank-and-file groups within the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, most recently by Teamsters for a Democratic Union support Gouldner’s findings. Despite a seemingly never ending number of setbacks, union reform caucuses within the Teamsters continually strive for union democracy and transforming the union into a militant organisation. While only achieving partial success at best in relation to the

---


latter, the Teamsters for a Democratic Union greatly contributed to union democracy within the Teamsters in the 1990s (see Chapter 7).

However, even if the rank-and-file continually attempt to oust conservative union leaders, if they gain office they will become like the old officials under the second aspect of the iron law of oligarchy.

Nevertheless, in a comprehensive study of CIO unions, Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin clearly demonstrated that '... oligarchy and democracy are alternative possible paths of union development'. They argued that

> [w]hich path a union takes is determined not by any “iron law,” but by specific, relatively contingent, political struggles among workers’ parties and factions over the aims, methods, and uses of union power, and by both the resultant pattern of the unions’ internal political relations and the political consciousness, radical or conservative, of their leadership. Where these struggles are waged through insurgent political practices, resulting in durable internal bases for opposition factions and allowing radicals to put down deep roots and win and hold their leadership, the union tends, consequently, to be democratic. But where the opposite political constellation prevails, they tend to be oligarchic.\(^\text{118}\)

In other words, there is considerable doubt over the iron law of oligarchy. While oligarchic practices may emerge with a union, it is equally possible that a union will be democratic and militant. Thus, Moody is correct to argue that the rank-and-file can contribute in unions becoming social movement unions.

However, at the same time it is wrong to assume that the so-called union bureaucracy cannot greatly contribute to the positive transformation of unions. Kim Voss and Rachel Sherman analysed what led to the progressive revitalisation of particular Locals within the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Hotel and Restaurant Employees (HERE), and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). They concluded that

there were ‘... three factors in conjunction distinguish the fully revitalized locals from the others: ... the experience of an internal political crisis, which facilitated the entrance of new leaders into the local, either through International Union intervention or local elections; the presence in the local staff with social movement experience outside the labor movement; and support from the International Union’.\textsuperscript{119} They go on to argue that

\begin{quote}
... International union leadership was crucial in leading to full revitalization. The International initiated or supported much of the change in local unions; this process was not one of “bottom-up,”... [P]rogressive sectors of the International exerted varying degrees of influence over locals in crisis, which led to full revitalization. Furthermore, IU [International Union] influence helps explains the differences among the partially revitalized locals; those that have made more changes ... acknowledge significance influence by the IU...\textsuperscript{120}
\end{quote}

Voss and Sherman’s research demonstrate that the transformation of unions is not necessarily just a “bottom-up” process; the top union leadership can greatly contribute to unions adopting social movement unionism.

Moreover, these examples of International union leadership helping to revitalise Locals in a leftist direction demonstrate that it is not necessarily the case that the rank-and-file are more militant than the union leadership (either at the Local or International level). John Kelly supports this position. Kelly in \textit{Trade Unions and Socialist Politics} forcefully dismissed the notion that the rank-and-file are necessarily more militant. In an analysis of British unions, he came to the following conclusion:

\begin{quote}
... there is no convincing evidence that union officials, on the whole, are more ‘conservative’ than their memberships... Clearly there are ‘conservative’ officials and militant workers, but there are also militant officials and conservative workers, and the precise balance between these groups is likely to vary with circumstances.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{119} Voss and Sherman, p.325.  \\
\textsuperscript{120} ibid., pp.337-8.  \\
\textsuperscript{121} Kelly, p.182.
\end{flushleft}
One can easily point to unions such as the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the United Auto Workers in certain periods of their existence to demonstrate that the rank-and-file are more militant than the union leadership. However, the opposite is also true. Union leaders of, for example, the United Electrical Workers (see Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion of the militancy of the UE leadership), and International Longshoremen and Warehousemen’s Union have often been as militant, if not more so, than the rank-and-file. Admittedly, these unions were/are known as Communist-led unions, especially during the 1930 and 1940s. This is because of their militant policies and their alleged ties to the Communist Party. Nevertheless, they do demonstrate that union leaders can be militant. Likewise there are numerous examples of British union leaders being more militant than the rank-and-file.122

Moody is correct to argue that the rank-and-file have a crucial role in organising, unions adopting social movement unionism, and being militant more generally. However, by Moody underplaying the role of professional organisers, union leadership and International Unions this undermines his account of social movement unionism, which continually emphasises the importance of the rank-and-file. By only focusing on the rank-and-file Moody is painting half a picture.

Conclusion

Through an overview of Moody’s publications, this chapter has outlined his account of social movement unionism. Moody’s social movement unionism is one of militancy and anti-collaboration. His publications have continually highlighted strikes in the US and rank-

122 Ibid., pp.156-61.
and-file revolts against conservative and corrupt union leaders. In *Workers in a Lean World*, Moody noted that union militancy in the 1960s and 1970s led to an increase in union members worldwide, and because of a disgust in union leadership, ‘opposition and leadership challenges’ occurred in an increasing number of US unions.\(^\text{123}\) In addition, Moody has constantly criticised the AFL-CIO for its belief in a corporatist arrangement between itself, the Democratic Party and business.

While *Workers in a Lean World* provided a description of Moody’s social movement unionism, but his other works, even if he does not explicitly use the term, contributed to the development of his approach. The contributions included greater detail on how class consciousness occurs, the link between union democracy and organising, the different ways unions can become democratic, and how social movement unionism can occur.

Moody’s account of social movement unionism concentrates on the rank-and-file, with them being crucial to the implementation of social movement unionism and the revival of the North American labour movement. Throughout his works, Moody argues that it is the union bureaucracy which prevents unions from becoming militant, and waging effective struggle against capital. The bureaucracy is happy in their position, and constantly undermined rank-and-file upsurges. If the rank-and-file gain power and there was union democracy and rank-and-file involvement in all aspects of the union, this would result in an increase in organising, militancy and potentially transforms unions into social movement unions. I determined that while Moody does underplay the role of professional organisers in organising drives and the potential militancy and role of union leaders in union revitalisation, there is reason to doubt the iron law of oligarchy. The rank-and-file are an important element in the revitalisation of the labour movement, but not as crucial as Moody

argues and he is wrong to ignore or downplay the contribution of professional organisers and the union leadership at all levels.

Moody also claims that workers participating in struggle and a decline in economic and living conditions can lead to an increase in class consciousness and hence the potential for social movement unionism, especially in recent years as the current ‘... workplace problems are social problems in that they affect much of the working class’. However, as I argued, a decline in economic conditions can also result in the far right gaining power. Nevertheless, as I will argue in Chapter 3, a decline in economic condition and other factors may well result in the rise of social movement unionism.

Moody’s social movement unionism is clearly within the Marxist tradition on the theory of trade unionism. Moody has incorporated Marx and Engels’, and Trotsky’s analysis of trade unionism into his own work. These include the union bureaucracy undermining rank-and-file uprisings, and trade union struggles potentially leading to an increase in worker class consciousness. In addition, many characteristics that Marx and Engels argued unions should adopt, such as union democracy, rank-and-file involvement, labour internationalism, and the need for a working class political party Moody also advocates.

Thus, while business unionism is conciliatory and accepts the status quo, Moody’s account of social movement unionism argues for the overthrow of the status quo. Nevertheless, that Moody’s account of social movement unionism is so clearly located within the Marxist theory of trade unionism demonstrates that while social movement unionism is the new “in-term”, others have been long arguing that unions should adopt similar policies and practices.
Chapter 3

OTHER THEORISTS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Peter Waterman, Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster, and Kim Scipes wrote on the term social movement unionism. As noted in Chapter 1, an increasing number of people are using the term social movement unionism, without realising that there is considerable debate over it. This chapter outlines and partially analyses Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes’ theories of social movement unionism. I examine the scholars’ work in this order because Waterman was the first to write on social movement unionism, followed by Lambert and Webster, and finally Scipes.

Peter Waterman’s Theory of Social Movement Unionism/New Social Unionism

Peter Waterman is currently a pensioned but unretired researcher/writer. During the 1960s, he was an employee of the World Federation of Trade Unions. He edited the Newsletter of International Labour Studies from 1978-90, as well as working at the Institute of Social studies in The Hague. After retiring from the Institute, he has written prodigiously on the
labour movement, social movements, and most recently the World Social Forum. During the late 1980s and 1990s Waterman was part of the broad current of scholars who were enthusiastic about the potential of new social movements in transforming society. It was during this time that Waterman coined the term social movement unionism. However, it was not until 1993 that Waterman published an article which outlined his theory (he had previously used the term in working papers).

In ‘Social Movement Unionism: A New Union Model for a New World Order?’ Waterman stated that the ‘...concept of social-movement unionism ... is intended to relate to and be appropriate for our contemporary world’. He constructed his theory of social movement unionism by referring to classical socialist trade union theory as outlined by John Kelly (see Chapter 1 for an overview of Kelly’s theory). He argued that there were five problems with Kelly’s approach. First, in relation to Kelly’s definition of class consciousness (‘... theoretically informed practice fusing economic and political behaviour amongst workers’), Waterman claimed that ‘[g]iven the increasing fragmentation of Marxism as a theory’, it was uncertain what form of Marxism, ‘... should inform economic and political practice’. Second, Kelly did not define ‘... the meaning of “coalition”’ (Kelly claims the socialist project would be carried through by a “coalition” of forces, such as workers, environmentalists, and pacifists), and there was no reason why unions should be the main component of the coalition and not simply one of its parts. Third, ‘[t]he relationship between self-interest (economic?) and progressive (political?) values [of people within the “coalition”] is dealt with only for workers, so that one is obliged to ask whether the “progressive” values of women, gays, and environmentalists mean the necessary adoption of the workers’ theoretically informed practice (i.e. somebody’s Marxism’). Fourth, Kelly did not outline the type of mass socialist party that was necessary.

1 Waterman, ‘Social Movement Unionism’, p.246.
to build on militant unionism, nor did he analyse ‘... the problematic history of party-union relations internationally’. Fifth, there was no guarantee that economic crises would result in progressive values coming to the fore. Economic crises have led to fascism in Germany and Italy, and ‘terroristic communism’ in Cambodia. These problems led to Waterman arguing that trade union theory built upon nineteenth and early twentieth-century Marxism was necessarily flawed. Instead, as Marx had responded ‘... to the major progressive social movement of his day’, it was necessary to do likewise today and embrace new social movements.2

In a recent paper, Waterman provides a detailed overview of how he formulated his theory of social movement unionism:

It was a synthesis of socialist trade-union theory with that of ‘new social movement’ (NSM) theory, as the latter was shaping up in the 1980s. To this I added ideas on informatization drawn from radical sociologists and communications specialists. From socialist trade-union theory I took the significance of capitalist work, of class contradiction, of worker self-organisation; and of class struggle as both subversive of existing capitalist relations, and essential for international solidarity and human self-emancipation. From NSM theory I took the significance of radical-democratic identity movements, the equivalence of different radical-democratic struggles, of networking as movement form, of the socio-cultural as an increasingly central arena of emancipatory struggle. From radical communications theory I took ideas on the potential of the information and communication technology for emancipatory movements. The kind of internationalism with which this was articulated was a post-nationalist kind, which I eventually conceptualized as the New Global Solidarity. Evidently this amounted to a critique of socialist trade-union theory, in so far as that school proposes, as does Kim Moody, the vanguard role of the working-class amongst social movements - and in advancing internationalism. But it also amounted to a reminder, to the often class-blind New Social Movement theorists, of the continuing importance of work and unions to social emancipation.3

2 Ibid., pp.250-1.
3 Peter Waterman, ‘Whatever Happened to the ‘New Social Unionism’?’, p.6.
In ‘Social Movement Unionism: A New Union Model for a New World Order?’, before he listed his ten propositions of social movement unionism, Waterman devoted a section to the development of social movement theory. Here he noted that David Slater’s analysis of new social movements in Latin America revealed three crucial characteristics. First, new social movements were involved in ‘... new forms of struggle in relation to new forms of subordination and oppression’. Second, these new forms of subordination and oppression were not necessarily anti-capitalist, and the proletariat was not necessarily involved. Third, new social movements were democratic, respected differences, and placed primary emphasis on the ‘... empowerment at the base of society’. Waterman implied that the first two characteristics demonstrated that class-based struggle between labour and capital is not the only form of struggle, and that there are many different struggles attempting to end subordination and oppression not involving either labour or capital. The third characteristic of new social movements demonstrates the difference between them and the traditional union movement. The union movement only respects white heterosexual males, with the labour bureaucracy benefiting and not the rank-and-file.

Moreover, Waterman claimed that Alberto Melucci identified four new structural characteristics that distinguish new social movements from the labour movement. These were: ‘(1) the centrality of information (the struggle for that which is concealed, the struggle over the meaning of what is revealed), (2) new forms of organization (e.g. informal, democratic, self-empowering), (3) the integration of ... the personal and the political and (4) a “planetary” consciousness (a new kind of global awareness)’. This led Waterman to state that

... the very recognition and assertion of their importance certainly differentiates the NSMs [new social movements] from traditional

---

5 Ibid., pp.253-4.
OTHER THEORISTS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM

labor organizations – customarily centralized and bureaucratic bodies, dominated by their leaderships and/or outside forces, commonly seen as instrumental to other ends (Economic Political Development, Independence, the Revolution, Socialism).\(^6\)

However, Waterman further noted Melucci admitted that the nineteenth century labour movement had the four “new” structural characteristics that allegedly distinguish new social movements from the labour movement. Thus, there are similarities between the nineteenth labour movement and new social movements. Waterman argued this had three important consequences. First, the common characteristics ‘... establishes or re-establishes’ a link between the labour movement and new social movements. Second, Leninism ... is not so much out-dated as originally one-dimensional. The one-dimensionality comes out of Lenin’s political – not to say instrumental – view of unions. They were means to higher ends, a foundation for a structure built in his mind, “transmission belts” to and from the Party, “schools of Communism”. The new approach would enable us to view trade unions as social: i.e. either prior to, or beyond, or more than, but in any case distinct from, the political.\(^7\)

Third, the nineteenth and early twentieth-century labour movement was unaware that it possessed these characteristics. For example, while it was ‘... involved in highly original and specific forms’ of international communication, the labour movement did not reflect on it. Waterman argued that it was ‘... only with the development of the “information phase of capitalism” that it becomes possible ... to theoretically examine the historical roots, innovations, and limitations of traditional international labor communication’.\(^8\)

Furthermore, in the section on the development of social movement theory, Waterman argued that new social movements have an international focus, and the new kind of labour internationalism, such as the British miners’ strike of 1984-85 was ‘... frequently

---

\(^6\) Ibid., p.254. [Emphasis in Original].

\(^7\) Ibid., p.257 [Emphasis in Original].

\(^8\) Ibid., pp.257-8.
interwoven with the internationalism of the new social movements'. In addition, new social movements need a political party that ‘... would serve and support rather than leading and dominating'; i.e. a “rearguard” party.9

Waterman combined the characteristics and structure of new social movements (such as their international focus, and a need for a “rearguard” political party), with unions’ goals (such as the liberation from work) and used this to delineate his theory of social movement unionism. However, instead of providing a definition, Waterman listed ten propositions. He repeats them almost word for word throughout his work when outlining social movement unionism. Indeed, he also used the same propositions, with two additions, when he abandoned social movement unionism in favour of new social unionism (see below). Social movement unionism was:

1. Struggling within and around waged work, not simply for better wages and conditions but for increased worker and union control over the labor process, investments, new technology, relocation, subcontracting, training and education policies; such strategies and struggles should be carried out in dialogue and common action with affected communities and interests so as to avoid conflicts (e.g. with environmentalists, with women) and to positively increase the appeal of the demands;

2. Struggling against hierarchical, authoritarian and technocratic working methods and relations, for socially useful products, for a reduction in the hours of work, for the distribution of that which is available and necessary, for the sharing of domestic work, and for an increase in time for noneconomic activity for cultural self-development and self-realization;

3. Intimately articulated with the movements of other nonunionized or nonunionizable working classes or categories (petty-commodity sector, homeworkers, technicians and professionals);

4. Intimately articulated with other non- or multiclass democratic movements (base movements of churches, women's, residents', ecological, human-rights and peace movements, etc);

5. Working for the continuing transformation of all social relationships and structures (“economic”, “political”, “social”, “residential”, “domestic”, “sexual”) in a democratic and cooperative direction;

9 Ibid., pp.258-60.
6. Intimately articulated with political forces (parties, fronts, and states) with similar orientations (i.e. which recognize the value of a plurality of autonomous social forces in an transformatory project);

7. Intimately articulated with other (potential) allies as an autonomous, equal, and democratic partner, neither claiming to be, nor subordinating itself to, a “vanguard” or “sovereign” organization or power;

8. Taking up the new social issues within society at large, as they arise for workers specifically and as they express themselves within the union itself (struggle against authoritarianism, bureaucracy, sexism, racism, etc.);

9. Favoring shop-floor democracy and encouraging direct horizontal relations both between workers and between the workers and other popular/democratic social forces;

10. Favoring direct shop-floor, grass-roots and community contacts and solidarity internationally, both with workers and with other popular or democratic forces, regardless of social system, ideology or political identity.\(^\text{10}\)

Waterman conceded that this ‘... specification has its own limitations’; namely, it ‘... may suggest that any union or worker movement has to fulfil the Ten Conditions’ for it to a social movement union. Furthermore, Waterman does not note which propositions are necessary or required, and what propositions are just merely desirable. For example, if a union adopts nine of the propositions, but is undemocratic with little involvement by members, is it still a social movement union? Waterman argues that union democracy is important (see below), thus, one would assume that an undemocratic union could not be a social movement union. However, as Waterman failed to state how many propositions a union must incorporate in their policies and practices to be a social movement union, and what, if any, of the propositions are necessary, one can only speculate on the question above and other questions like it.

A second limitation that Waterman identified in his own approach is that he was unsure what the term ‘intimately articulated’ means.\(^\text{11}\) For example, to what extent must

\(^{10}\) Ibid., pp.266-8.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., p.268.
unions have alliances with social movements and political forces? Does a union fulfil the
criterion if it only has an occasional *ad hoc* alliance with these groups, or is there a need for
the union to be very closely intertwined with the groups?

Nevertheless, Waterman argued, the value of his concept was that social movement
unionism was equally applicable to labour movements in the "... semi-industrialized
authoritarian countries ... [and] [i]t can also ... be a product of the struggle against de-
industrialization and antidemocratic developments under highly industrialized liberal-
democratic conditions", such as in the US. He concluded the article on a cautious, yet
optimistic note:

As the labor movement is increasingly recognizing, neither socialism nor nationalism ... has proven capable of emancipating
workers, people, and peoples. Perhaps social movement unionism offers an alternative, worldwide, and continuously renewable
project?

Waterman's theory of social movement unionism is almost impossible to place within
the theoretical categories outlined in Chapter 1. Indeed, there is arguably no category where
Waterman's theory fits. This is largely because Waterman has taken very diverse aspects of
different theories and has combined them to form his theory of social movement unionism.
Waterman has stated that his theory has aspects of socialist trade union theory, new social
movement theory, and radical communications theory. This is a very eclectic combination,
and as a result, Waterman's theory of social movement unionism does not conform within
the existing boundaries of theories of trade unionism.

12 Ibid., pp.268-9.
13 Ibid., p.275.
**Social Movement Unionism to New Social Unionism**

In 1999, Waterman published ‘The New Social Unionism: A New Union Model for a New World Order’, which is an abbreviated and updated version of his 1993 article on social movement unionism. Waterman argued that ‘... even the most successful of the ‘social movement unions’, in Brazil and South Africa, are struggling to come to terms with at least semi-liberal democracy’.  

In the article, Waterman abandoned the term ‘social movement unionism’ in favour of ‘new social unionism’. Waterman claimed that he changed terms because

... a number of writers on trade unionism in the third world (mis)understood social movement unionism to mean an alliance between unions and ‘communities’. The latter were understood to be local and/or national-popular communities, and to exist primarily in the third world. Since my own notion was not intended to be either populist or thirdworldist, I have ... abandoned it to them.  

He outlined why new social unionism was the appropriate model for the union movement to adopt in the struggle against capitalism. Waterman argued that the ‘information revolution’ within capitalism has led to the ‘... computerized production of computerized goods, services, information and culture ... [being] the leading edge of capitalism’. Thus, a ‘... geographically concentrated and socially homogenous industrial working class of semi-skilled factory labourers [on which the traditional union model is based] is being increasingly replaced by socially diverse and geographically dispersed labour forces – homeworkers, part-timers, sub-contractees, in towns, villages and distant

---


15 Ibid., p.247.
countries'. Moreover, globalisation has led to the internationalisation of capital, politics, ‘... domestic patterns (the nuclear family), and culture’. However, unions that traditionally privileged national workers over internationalism have had little influence on global capitalism. Likewise, Marx’s notion of an economic base and dependent superstructure was not relevant (indeed, it never was) to globalised capitalism. However, ‘... the increasing dependence of the reproduction of capitalism’ in other spheres, such as culture and the family, resulted in ‘... the increasing relevance of cross-class or non-class struggles’. Waterman claimed that cross-class and non-class struggles included struggles over human rights, peace, and freedom of sexual choice. Consequently, globalised capitalism ‘... may reduce the centrality of the labour/capital conflict’ and it has led to a reduced and geographically fragmented labour movement, but was vulnerable to cross-class or non-class struggles. However, unions that fought for non-class issues could ‘... broaden the appeal of unionism and increase the number of their allies’. Unions should not just become allies of new social movements (which Waterman now terms new alternative social movements), they should also potentially adopt their organisational forms (e.g. informal, democratic, self-empowering), ‘... and modes of struggle’, such as networking, which contrasts with the iron law of oligarchy of ‘... self-continuation of leadership and top-down control’. Waterman further criticised “traditional” unions as he argued

[1]he terrain of struggle increasingly spreads from ‘economics’ and ‘politics’ to ‘society’ as a whole, and it equally shifts from the national level both downwards to the local and upwards to the global. Conventional labour movements ... typically prioritize ‘economic struggle’ (against capital) or ‘political struggle’ (against the state), or varying combinations of the one and the other... This made sense in the period of the capitalist nation-state, or of ‘nation-state-dependent’ capitalism. But the new or revived notion of ‘civil society’ indicates another new terrain of struggle – that of

16 Ibid., p.249.
17 Ibid.
18 However, as I argued in Chapter 2, there is great doubt whether there is indeed an iron law of oligarchy.
popular self-organization outside, or independent of, capital and state.\textsuperscript{19}

However, "conventional unions" focus on the national level, and they have been unable to ‘...operate at these new, increasingly important, social levels’.\textsuperscript{20}

Waterman is arguing there has been a revolution within capitalism, which has led to the decline of labour/capital conflict, and conventional industrial unions that prioritise the national over the international are unable to effectively respond to the challenges that all working people now confront. However, this new form of capitalism has led to an increase in other forms of conflict, which new social movements were in a position to confront. Nevertheless, unions are still valuable if they align themselves with new social movements, adopt their organisational forms and operate at the international level, i.e. unions should become new social unions if they want to remain relevant. I analyse these claims in Chapter 4.

For the remainder of the article, Waterman outlined the development of a theory of social movements, propositions of new social unionism, and the value of his concept of new social unionism. These sections repeat his 1993 article on social movement unionism.

The only major difference was that Waterman added two additional propositions. New social unions were:

1. Active on the terrain of education, culture and communication, stimulating worker and popular culture, supporting initiatives for democracy and pluralism both inside and outside the dominant institutions or media, locally, nationally, globally;
2. Open to networking both within and between organizations, understanding the value of informal, horizontal, flexible conditions, alliances and interest groups to stimulate organizational democracy, pluralism and innovation.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., pp.250-1.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p.251.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p.261.
The only other change from his characteristics of social movement unionism to his theory of new social unionism, apart from minor rephrasing of the other points, was that Waterman replaced the phrase “intimately articulated” with simply “articulated”.

**The Decline of Full-Time Semi-Skilled Industrial Workers?**

While Waterman believes that home workers, part-timers, and sub-contractees, are replacing semi-skilled industrial workers, as such, weakening the contemporary labour movement, this view is mistaken. Between 1995 and 2001, in twelve Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (including the US and Canada), the number of industrial workers increased. It decreased in nine countries and in one it was steady. More recent figures are not available, but ‘... the number of industrial workers [in the South] rose from 285 million in 1980 to 407 million by 1994’.22

There are an increasing number of service workers relative to industrial workers. However, on average, industrial workers work longer hours and there are fewer part-time jobs in industrial occupations. Therefore, the number of service workers is inflated. For example, in the US in 2001, the average hours worked per week in industrial jobs ranged from 39.2 in construction (with 8.9 per cent of workers part-time) to 43.4 in mining (3.3 per cent of workers part-time). In comparison, the number of hours worked in retail trade was 28.8 (27.6 per cent of workers part-time). In services as a whole, it was only 32.7 hours per week, with 20.3 per cent of the workforce part-time.23 In addition, ‘... the industrial workforce also includes ... workers in transportation, and telecommunications, who show

---

up in the service-sector columns of official statistics. Many of the "services" provided by these workers, however, have become part of the production process itself as industry has altered technologically, decentralized, and internationalized.\textsuperscript{24} If these workers are included as industrial workers, this increases the number of industrial workers in the US by over 7 million.\textsuperscript{25}

It is crucial that the left not abandon the industrial working class as a potential emancipator. As Fernando Gapasin and Edna Bonacich argued,

\textit{... the surplus value of capitalism is generated from the exploitation of workers in \textit{production}. Production includes agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation. Service sector workers are also exploited in the sense that they are not paid the value that they produce, but they are part of the distribution system and are paid out of the surplus value that is generated in production.}\textsuperscript{26}

Furthermore, contrary to claims made by Waterman that temporary and part-time employment is becoming the dominant working paradigm in the industrialised world, this type of work only accounts for approximately 6 to 7 per cent of a country’s workforce. While this type of employment is growing faster than the workforce as a whole, much of this growth is of the voluntary kind; i.e. individuals who only want part-time work and are not looking for a full-time job. For example, in the US part-time employment between February 1992 and April 1998 grew by 609,000. However, this growth was voluntary, with non-voluntary part-time work decreasing by 2.6 million.\textsuperscript{27} Furthermore, there is no dominant trend concerning the level of temporary jobs worldwide. Since the early 1980s,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} Moody, \textit{Workers in a Lean World}, p.187.
\item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{Monthly Labor Review}, July 2002, p.81.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Fernando Gapasin and Edna Bonacich, \textit{The Strategic Challenge of Organizing Manufacturing Workers in Global/Flexible Capitalism} in Bruce Nissen (ed.) \textit{Unions in a Globalized Environment}, M. E. Sharpe, Armonk NY, 2002, p.166. [Emphasis in Original]
\end{itemize}
there has been little or no increase in the share of temporary jobs in the majority of OECD countries; there have been increases in only four countries, with a decrease in three others. Moreover, as David Broad argued:

Although capital might make new uses of them, part-time work, contract work, self-employment, and the informal economy to which they are articulated are not really new. These forms of work can be found throughout the history of capitalism and have constituted the majority of women's paid work, even in the center.

Thus, it is the case that there has not been a dramatic increase in part-time and temporary work, or that it is something new.

**The Emergence of Social Movement Unionism/New Social Unionism**

In ‘Social Movement Unionism: A New Union Model for a New World Order?’ Waterman implied that union democracy led to unions embracing different perspectives, and as such could become social movement unions. He stated that ‘... experience in South Africa suggests that the process of internal democratisation and opening out do accompany one another'. Unfortunately, Waterman did not expand on this point. However, in another section Waterman gave further details about how social movement unionism may emerge. He stated his theory of social movement unionism

... has been drawn from new social movements and new trade-union experiences... Such movements, it is true, have taken most dramatic form in the context of semi-industrialized authoritarian countries – with Poland and South Africa as leading examples. But not all dramatic worker movements under such conditions *necessarily* give rise to SMU [social movement unionism].

---

OTHER THEORISTS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM

Vanguardist or reformist political parties (locally based or foreign sponsored) may dominate the political scene and shape the new worker movements in traditional ways.\(^3^1\)

Waterman revised his thinking on the emergence of new social unionism in ‘Needed: A New Language to Contribute to a New ‘International Social-Movement Unionism’. While the article was a critique of Moody’s account of social movement unionism, Waterman also argued that for social movement unionism or new social unionism to occur there has to be a social movement within unions. He claimed that ‘... under contemporary conditions ... what is required (and often anyway present) is the unionist who is simultaneously and equally a feminist, an ecologist, an anti-militarist, a radical-democrat and an internationalist’.\(^3^2\) He makes no mention whether this change would be a top-down process or a bottom-up process, but as Waterman places great emphasis on grassroots democracy, it is safe to assume that he believes it is the rank-and-file who transform their unions into new social unions. Nevertheless, Waterman did not discuss how a union member becomes a ‘feminist, and ecologist, an anti-militarist, a radical-democratic and an internationalist’ in addition to being an active union member.

This was the last time Waterman discussed what is required for social movement unionism (or new social unionism) to occur. Instead, he stated that he understood social movement unionism as a project, thus ‘... the sympathisers would be likely to act in one, three or five different ways, or make a particular contribution (such as the struggle for democratisation)’.\(^3^3\) In other words, there is no specific way that unions might be changed in the desired direction nor is there a specific agent who would transform unions.

\(^3^1\) Ibid., p.268. [Emphasis in Original]


\(^3^3\) Email from Peter Waterman to author, October 7, 2003 in author’s possession.
In many ways, this is like someone saying world peace is desirable, but he/she does not know how it will occur. While world peace is desirable, and he/she wishes that it would happen, they are uncertain how it will happen. Instead, they just list a set of propositions stating what the world would be like if there was world peace. However, without the agents to lead us to this better life, talk of world peace is just a utopian dream. Without any analysis of the agent(s) that will perform the transformation to social movement unionism/new social unionism, or how the agent(s) will achieve this task, Waterman has just provided us with a set of utopian propositions that are desirable, but do not particularly help people trying to transform unions.

Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster’s Theory of Social Movement Unionism

During the 1970s, Rob Lambert was a trade union organiser in South Africa. He is currently an Associate Professor at the University of Western Australia and coordinator of the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights. Eddie Webster is a Professor of Sociology and Director of the Sociology of Work Unit at the University of Witwatersand in South Africa, and has a long history of involvement in South Africa’s independent labour movements. He was also a founder and member of the Editorial Board of the South African Labor Bulletin, which was arguably the most important labor-focused journal in South Africa that supported the new unions’ struggle against apartheid. As Waterman noted, the South African Labor Bulletin

... developed, exchanged and shared, certain common strategies, political goals and an underlying worldview (a view of the world in both the political and theoretical sense). This worldview ...
Lambert and Webster's theory of social movement unionism emerged within a specific context in South Africa when unions were involved in the struggle against apartheid.

In the 1988 article, 'The Re-emergence of Political Unionism in Contemporary South Africa?', Lambert and Webster, implicitly generalising from South Africa, claimed that there were three types of trade unionism: orthodox, populist, and political or social movement unionism. The article was published at the same time as Moody released *An Injury to All* and 9 years before he developed his account of social movement unionism in *Workers in a Lean World*. Lambert and Webster use the terms political and social movement unionism interchangeably, but as Scipes uses the term political unionism to define what they term a populist union, I will only use the term social movement unionism.

Lambert and Webster defined orthodox unionism as

... a form of trade unionism which concentrates almost exclusively on workplace issues; fails to link production issues to wider political issues; and finally encourages its members to become politically involved without necessarily engaging itself in the wider political arena, believing that this is best left to other organisations more suited to the task. The political content of such unionism varies widely, but in each instance what is common to this orientation is an accommodation and absorption into industrial relations systems, which not only institutionalises conflict, but also serves to reinforce the division between economic and political forms of struggle so essential to the maintenance of capitalist relations in production, in the community, and in the state.\(^\text{35}\)

---


Lambert and Webster's orthodox unionism is very similar to business unionism. While an orthodox union does engage in some political activity, its primary concern is to achieve better pay and working conditions for its members through the industrial relations system. An orthodox union does not challenge capitalism; instead, it accepts a place in the capitalist system. Lambert and Webster did not provide examples of orthodox unions.

For Lambert and Webster, populist unionism was where

\[ \text{trade unionism and struggles in the factory are downplayed... [It] is a tendency that neglects struggles over wages, supervision, managerial controls at the workplace and job evaluation. It places in its stead a political engagement that only serves to dissipate shop floor struggles.} \]

Populist unions are primarily concerned with political issues, usually to the detriment of their members. Frequently located in the Third World, populist unions' primary purpose is either to help keep the government (usually not democratically elected) in power, in part by repressing workers. Alternatively, if the union is allied with an oppositional political party, its primary purpose is to overthrow the government. Lambert and Webster did not provide examples of populist unions.

Lambert and Webster defined social movement unionism as a form of unionism that

\[ \text{... attempts to link production to wider political issues. It is a form of union organisation that facilitates an active engagement in factory-based, production politics and in community and state power issues. It engages in alliances in order to establish relationships with political organisations on a systematic basis... [It] attempts to link ... struggles [over workplace issues] with community and state power issues. Unlike syndicalism, it does not negate the role of a political party, but rather asserts the need for a co-ordinating political body that is democratic in its practices and therefore able to relate to political unionism in a non-instrumental manner.} \]

36 Ibid., p.21.
37 Ibid [Emphasis in Original].
Lambert and Webster’s definition has four key components. First, social movement unions fight around everything that affects working people both at the workplace and in the wider community. Second, they have alliances with social movements and community groups that are involved in some form of political struggle. Third, they link struggles over workplace issues ‘… with community and state power issues’. Fourth, social movement unions have alliances with political organisations as part of their fight against community and state power issues that are negatively affecting workers and the wider community.

**Social Movement Unionism in South Africa**

Lambert and Webster implied that unlike orthodox and populist unionism, social movement unionism would greatly contribute to the fight against apartheid in South Africa while not subordinating workers’ interests to a political agenda. Orthodox unions are primary concerned with their members’ “bread-and-butter” issues. Populist unions primary concentrate on political struggles. Social movement unions do both.

Lambert and Webster argued that the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in December 1985 accelerated the trend toward social movement union.38

Unions from three political traditions formed COSATU. These were ‘… industrial unions drawn from the shop-floor tradition’. Lambert and Webster stated that a new sense of collective power emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s because of the ‘… democratic character of … shop floor struggles [by industrial unions], and the union’s commitment to the longer-term goal of worker control of the production process’. In other

38 Ibid., pp.30-2.
words, union democracy led to the empowerment of workers. The main feature of industrial unions was that they ‘... eschewed political action outside production’. Industrial unions took this course of action because they ‘... believed that it was important to avoid the path taken by SACTU [South African Congress of Trade Unions] in the 1950s, arguing that its close identification with the Congress Alliance and its campaigns was the cause of its demise in the 1960s’. Industrial unions thought that their political contribution would be, at least initially, limited and they had ‘... everything to lose by adopting a confrontationist stance’. Instead, the industrial unions focused on building strong democratic shop floor structures. They believed this would increase their chance to survive state oppression, as the oppression would be initially focused on union leaders.39 From Lambert and Webster’s overview of industrial unions, it is clear that they believe that ideological factors led to them adopting this form of unionism. Lambert and Webster also implied that the industrial unions were similar to orthodox unionism.

The second tradition within COSATU was from ‘... the general unions drawn from the multi-democratic tradition’. These unions argued that national-democratic struggle, rather than class struggle, was the appropriate action under apartheid. The general unions had alliances with the African Nation Congress (ANC) and ‘... all sectors of the oppressed masses and sympathetic whites’. Through their brief overview of general unions, Lambert and Webster implied that these unions were similar to populist unions.

The strikes at Fattis and Monis in Cape Town and at the Ford plant in Port Elizabeth in 1979 led to an ideological division between different unions. The Fattis and Monis strike was won partly because of community involvement, while the strike at Port Elizabeth occurred because a community leader working at the plant was forced to resign. This led to some unions (general or community unions) believing that building strong community

39 Ibid., pp.22-3, 25.
organisations was the correct path to take in the struggle against apartheid. However, other unions criticised community unionism ‘… for being populist and for neglecting workers’ interests on the shop floor’. Instead, they emphasised building strong shop floor structures (industrial unions). As with industrial unions, ideological factors led to the general unions embracing community unionism.

The third political current in COSATU was ‘… the National Union of Mineworkers, [which had] recently broken from the black consciousness tradition’. Black consciousness unions were similar to the multi-democratic unions, in that they argued that ‘… racial oppression is a manifestation of national oppression’. However, they did not have alliances with whites and their ‘… emphasis on racial structures and identities virtually excludes class relations from … [their] analysis’.

The above demonstrates that Lambert and Webster believe ideological factors are crucial in determining why different forms of unions emerge and have particular characteristics. For example, industrial unions avoided political action outside of production because of the belief that political action led to the demise of the SACTU. Likewise, workers’ belief in the importance of community organisations in the fight against apartheid led to particular unions adopting community unionism.

At the same time, Webster in ‘The Rise of Social-movement Unionism: The Two Faces of the Black Trade Union Movement in South Africa’ implied that material factors are also important in unions’ having different characteristics. He claimed that unions have two different sides: an economic dimension (unions trying to achieve increases in wages, and better working conditions for their members) and a political dimension (unions become

41 Fine and Webster, pp.257-61.
involved in the political system). He stated that '... it was the decline in living standards accompanying the economic recession [in South Africa] that brought these two faces of unionism together'. Likewise, Lambert and Webster noted that the economic crisis in South Africa during the early 1980s led to '... unprecedented levels of mobilisation and resistance in the factories and communities over economic and political issues'. In other words, the economic crisis made workers more militant. As I previously noted, this is a long-standing Marxist position.

However, as I argued in Chapter 2, a change in economic conditions alone are not of paramount importance in determining a union's characteristic because if this was true a different labour movements within a country will all embrace the same type of unionism and this is not the case in countries such as South Africa and the Philippines. Nevertheless, ideological factors combined with a decline in economic conditions would certainly push unions into a certain direction (as Lambert and Webster imply). For example, if a union is right wing with fascist sympathies, an economic crisis could have the effect of moving the union further to the right. I discuss the potential of ideological factors being crucial in union's adopting a particular form below.

In the early 1980s, South Africa was in crisis. Since 1982 the economy was in recession which resulted in '... closures, retrenchments and mass unemployment, a falling rand ... and high interest rates which ... prevented new investments and recovery'. The crisis led to increased levels of militancy by workers and community groups; this eventually resulted in the 1984 stayaway (a mass general strike). This was crucial to the eventual formation of COSATU. Lambert and Webster argued that the stayaway '... involved co-ordinated action between trade unions and political organisations. It was the

---

42 Webster, p.176.
43 Lambert and Webster, p.27.
beginning of united mass action between organised labour and student and community organisations, with unions taking a leading role'.

COSATU’s policies and practices initially corresponded with Lambert and Webster’s four key criteria for social movement unionism. This is not surprising as Webster later claimed that his theory of social movement unionism grew ‘... out of empirical evidence from South Africa’. Because of this, I will only provide a brief overview of the claim that COSATU is a social movement union under Lambert and Webster’s theory.

First, COSATU fights for everything that affected working people both in the factory and in the wider community. By 1988, ‘COSATU increasingly adopted the role of the leading representative of the black working class. This constituency potentially included all non-white workers, unemployed and dependents, even beyond the approximately 6 million non-agricultural black workers (1987 figures) from whom just over one million union members were largely drawn’. It launched a living wage campaign for all workers, not just union members, it advocated full employment, and COSATU workers funded programmes for the unemployed.

Second, COSATU has alliances with social movements and community groups. Philip Hirschsohn noted that

COSATU’s Executive Committee encouraged affiliates to strengthen their community ties, arguing that the problems faced at work and in their communities were inextricably linked to the struggle for democratic control of their lives. To address problems with rent, transport and poor living conditions, workers were urged to take the lead in establishing street committees in the townships to build democratic organization, unity and strength.

44 Webster, p.189; Lambert and Webster, p.30.
Lambert and Webster claimed it was COSATU’s largest unions that were at the forefront of forming alliances with social movements and community groups as instead of ‘... debating whether or not alliances are in the interests of the working class’ as other unions did, the larger unions increasingly set out to form alliances with these groups.\(^{48}\)

Third, COSATU links struggles over workplace issues with those against oppression and exploitation in general. Hirschsohn argued that ‘... through interaction with community groups and the UDF [United Democratic Front], COSATU activists helped to shape the discourse of the broad opposition, giving a distinctive class character to political demands against exploitation, domination and discrimination and making working-class inclusion a basic goal’.\(^{49}\) For example, at the local union level, ‘... shop-steward locals, very much an innovation associated with the shopfloor tradition, were opened up to community organisations either on a consultative basis or more permanently, as active participants in the locals’.\(^{50}\)

Fourth, COSATU has an alliance with the African National Congress. Glenn Adler and Webster noted that in the fight against apartheid, COSATU ‘... committed itself to participation in the national democratic struggle under the leadership of the ANC’.\(^{51}\) While this alliance has always been somewhat controversial, during the first few years of the alliance, the ANC fought for democracy, and the overthrow of apartheid, which, in part, were also COSATU’s goals. Moreover, the working class gained major benefits over the first few years of ANC rule. For example, South Africa’s Bill of Rights incorporated

\(^{48}\) Lambert and Webster, pp.33-4.
\(^{49}\) Hirschsohn, p.656.
\(^{50}\) Fine and Webster, p.263.
workers’ rights, and the ANC ‘... ratified several international labour conventions’. However, COSATU’s alliance with the ANC has become very controversial, in part, because the ANC has adopted neoliberal policies (see Chapter 4).

While COSATU has alliances with social movements and community groups, and links struggles over workplace issues with those against oppression and exploitation in general, there was a debate between “workerists” and “populists” in COSATU, about whether unions should get involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. Workerists ‘... emphasised the significance of independent working-class organisation, especially in the unions’. Conversely, populists argued ‘... that the unions, like other popular organisations, should see themselves as part of a broad democratic alliance of all the oppressed’. Indeed, it was not until 1987, when ‘COSATU’ s second congress adopted the Freedom Charter, the ANC’s main programmatic document’, that the populist forces within COSATU gained a crucial victory over workerists. As Callinicos argued, this was a ‘... decisive victory for the ‘populist’ supporters of the ANC inside the unions in their struggle with ‘workerist’ opponents of union involvement in political alliances’. It was from this point forward that COSATU became closely tied with the ANC and the anti-apartheid struggle.

COSATU’s policies and practices correspond with the key characteristics of a social movement union according to Lambert and Webster. In addition to arguing that COSATU was a social movement union, Lambert claims that the Philippine labour organisation Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) is a social movement union. Webster also briefly mentioned in

---

53 Alex Callinicos, South Africa between Reform and Revolution, Bookmarks, London, Chicago and Melbourne, 1988, p.60.
54 Ibid., pp.172.
an article on South African trade unions that ‘... social movement unionism emerges in authoritarian countries such as the Philippines’. However, he did not expand on this point.55

In the section on Scipes’ theory of social movement unionism, I provide an analysis of the KMU, so I will not give a detailed overview of the KMU here. However, it is important to note why Lambert believes the KMU is a social movement union. He stated it is because it has alliances with community groups and it links ‘... day to day struggles over immediate material conditions to the lived experience of deprivation in the community and the wider issue of state power, rather than counterposing the political and the economic’.56 In recent years, Lambert and Webster also argue that unions from non-authoritarian countries can become social movement unions.

Social Movement Unionism Worldwide

In Lambert and Webster’s analysis of the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR), they imply social movement unionism can help facilitate socialism becoming the dominant economic system (Lambert made a similar claim in relation to the KMU).57 They argued that while SIGTUR is ‘... fighting for a socialist transformation ... a maximum and minimum program giving content to social emancipation still needs to be forged’.58

SIGTUR, which formed in March 1999, is an organisation of “Southern” labour organisations and unions including, amongst others, COSATU, KMU, and Indian, Korean,

55 Webster, pp.194-5.
57 Lambert, pp.272-3.
Brazilian and Australian (Southern geographically) trade unions. Its main goal is to ‘... enkindle a new labour internationalism, one that seeks to learn from history, transcend the fatally divided past and seize cyberspatial opportunities’.  

SIGTUR has five organising principles. The first is democratic and independent unionism. Second, SIGTUR is an alliance of Southern Unionism (both geographically and as an area where workers’ rights are being violated). SIGTUR’s third organising principle is global social movement unionism. Lambert and Webster claimed that global social movement unionism

... may be said to exist when unions move beyond their traditional workplace boundaries to form alliances with other civil society movements within the nation state, whilst at the same time creating a new global union form. The latter transcends the nation-state by linking internationally with similar unions with the express goal of global campaigning as a new form of resistance to globalisation...

[Moreover, global social movement unionism] is realised when nationally based sectoral unions create enduring organisational linkages across national boundaries that aim to impact on national workplace and political strategies.  

There are two major differences between Lambert and Webster’s original theory of social movement unionism and this version. The first is that they have added an international dimension. Lambert and Webster claimed that Moody introduced the notion of global social movement unionism.  

However, in 1992 Scipes included an international dimension in his theory because Lambert and Webster had failed to do so in their original definition (see below). Second, and more importantly, they claimed that labour market change, such as downsizing, outsourcing and casualisation, combined with the ‘... impact of market rationalism on all spheres of society’ produces the drive for social movement

---

60 Ibid., p.46 [Emphasis in Original].
61 Ibid, footnote 14, p.56.
unionism. This is in contrast to Webster’s earlier claim that social movement unionism emerges in authoritarian countries. Lambert and Webster now argue that neoliberalism can result in unions embracing social movement unionism.\footnote{Ibid., pp.46-7.}

SIGTUR’s fourth organising principle is ‘... global action as the pathway to global social movement unionism’. Arguably, this has been SIGTUR’s most important contribution to labour internationalism. For example, SIGTUR unions have campaigned against the multinational Rio Tinto, with protests against the company in Australia, Brazil, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the US. In the Pakistani protest, ‘... the All Pakistan Federation of Trade Unions was joined by the Working Women’s organisation mobilizing men and women workers from a range of sectors’. Lambert and Webster argued that the Rio Tinto campaign demonstrated the ‘... emancipatory potential of cyberspace networking linked’ to unions.\footnote{Lambert and Webster, ‘Social Emancipation and the New Labour Internationalism’, p.33.}

Cyberspace networking is SIGTUR’s fifth organising principle. Lambert and Webster stated that ‘SIGTUR’s essential policy position includes commitment to ... the fullest possible exploitation of cyberspace communications systems in propagating and coordinating global action’.\footnote{Lambert and Webster, ‘Southern Unionism and the New Labour Internationalism’, p.42.} Apart from the campaign against Rio Tinto, other global action that SIGTUR undertook included the attempt to organise a common May Day, and support for general strikes in India, South Africa, and South Korea. While each national labour federation was responsible for the strikes, ‘SIGTUR’s role was to utilize cyberspatial communication to ensure that all participant unions learnt of the actions and

\footnote{Ibid., pp.46-7.}
\footnote{Lambert and Webster, ‘Social Emancipation and the New Labour Internationalism’, p.33.}
\footnote{Lambert and Webster, ‘Southern Unionism and the New Labour Internationalism’, p.42.
communicated them to their memberships'. However, while SIGTUR views "cyberspatial communication" as a crucial aspect of internationalism, it still does not have a website.

**Trade Union Theory**

From the overview of Lambert and Webster’s work, their theory of social movement unionism is to some extent similar to John Kelly’s theory of trade unionism. As I outlined in Chapter 1, Kelly argues that unions were an important component in radicalising workers and in class struggle. While not all strikes radicalise workers, a series of strikes can increase worker’s class consciousness, as can periods of economic and political crisis. As I noted above, Lambert and Webster argue that the economic crisis in South Africa during the 1980s led to ‘... unprecedented levels of mobilisation and resistance in the factories and communities over economic and political issues’. Moreover, Lambert and Webster claim that both the KMU and SIGTUR are fighting for a socialist transformation. Likewise, Kelly claims that unions are vital if there is ever to be a socialist transformation, but a coalition of forces will be involved. As part of this coalition, there will be people who see themselves as “women”, “environmentalists”, “pacifists” etc. In other words, unions need alliances with such organisations as community groups and new social movements (as well as a mass socialist party) if there is to be a socialist transformation. Lambert and Webster while focusing on unions also argue that social movement unions need alliances with community groups and social movements that are involved in political struggle, and with a ‘co-ordinating political body’. The close similarities between Kelly’s theory of trade

---

65 Ibid., p.51.
66 My thanks to Peter Waterman for pointing this out to me.
unionism and Lambert and Webster’s theory of trade unionism demonstrate that Lambert and Webster’s theory is a form of a Marxist theory of trade unionism.

**The Emergence of Social Movement Unionism**

In addition to arguing that ideological and material factors are important in determining why unions have different characteristics, Lambert and Webster claim that structural transformations are important for the emergence of social movement unionism. They argue that social movement unionism first emerged in South Africa in the 1950s within the SACTU. However, social movement unionism ‘... hardly had time to consolidate before it was pre-empted by the state repression of the early and mid 1960s’. During the 1970s and early 1980s, an embryonic form of social movement unionism began to re-emerge. Lambert and Webster stated that ‘... structural transformations in the South African economy have created this potential’ for social movement unionism. These structural transformations were:

1. The establishment of effective structures of collective bargaining through the growth and consolidation of nationwide mass based industrial trade unions in most sectors of the economy.
2. Accompanying this has been the growth of fully proletarianised working class communities, including large numbers of militant students and unemployed youth without adequate social infrastructure.
3. The intervention of the state ... into a range of areas of social life, combined with the lack of political incorporation of the black population, has ensured that localised grievances are soon translated into confrontation with the state.  

---

68 Ibid., p.38.
South African unions were able to grow and consolidate because of the government’s implementation of the Wiehahn Commission recommendations in 1979. However, the government believed that by implementing the recommendations it would be able to effectively control the unions.\(^69\) As Alex Callinicos argued, the Commission ‘... recommended that Africans should be permitted to form trade unions registered under the Industrial Conciliation Act, which, *inter alia*, makes strikes effectively illegal, bans shop stewards and the involvement of unions in political activity and has encouraged the development within the white labour movement of a trade-union bureaucracy incorporated in the state machine’. Callinicos, quoting the report, claimed that unregistered unions ‘... in fact enjoy much greater freedom than registered [white] unions, to the extent that they are free if they so wished to participate in politics’.\(^70\) Furthermore, the Wiehahn Commission envisaged that by registering the black trade unions the unions would be less hostile to the capitalist system. The report argued that registration ‘... would have the beneficial effect of countering polarisation and ensuring a more orderly process of collective bargaining, in addition to exposing black trade unions ... [to] the existing institutions, thus inculcating a sense of responsibility and loyalty towards the free market system’.\(^71\) However, the reforms had the opposite effect. Between 1980 and 1983, union membership increased from 220,000 to 670,000 (with the independent unions witnessing dramatic growth), with a corresponding increase in strikes.\(^72\)

Gay Seidman also claims that structural conditions led to the rise of social movement unionism in South Africa. She argued social movement unionism in both Brazil and South Africa


\(^70\) Callinicos, p.40.

\(^71\) The Wiehahn Commission report quoted in ibid., p.40.

\(^72\) Ibid., pp.90-1.
[s]eems to have emerged from the crucible of authoritarian industrialization, where rapid industrialization strategies reshaped the working class and working-class communities, while it altered the relationship between authoritarian states and industrialists. During periods of rapid growth, state policies designed to attract investment into heavy industry had been linked to policies designed to control labor, and to policies whose consequences included impoverishment of the urban poor ... those policies were successful only as long as international capital and markets continued to flow. In both South Africa and Brazil, slowed growth ended elite consensus. 73

Likewise, Arvil Joffe, Judy Maller and Webster claimed that social movement unionism was a response to racial Fordism. Racial Fordism was where ‘... consumption was geared to the higher-income, mainly white market and production was based on principles of mass production’. 74 Seidman further argued that semi-skilled workers used the fracture of elite consensus by pursuing, not just an increase in wages and working conditions, but also a more radical agenda in both the factory and the community:

Spreading beyond factories, popular organizations escalated their demands, not only for higher wages, but also for improved living standards for the majority of the population: authoritarian states faced disruption at the workplace. Gradually overcoming regional differences and strategic disagreements, surviving attempts at repression and division, broad opposition movements emerged, demanding improved wages and living standards for working-class constituencies, and expanded possibilities for political participation and citizenship. 75

Thus, the rise of social movement unionism in South Africa was a result of industrialisation strategies and elite consensus rupturing. Unions took advantage of these conditions to pursue a radical agenda.

73 Seidman, p.263. [Emphasis Added]
75 Seidman, p.263.
Moreover, as I noted above, Lambert and Webster later argued that unions in the developed and Third World could adopt social movement unionism to combat the spread of neoliberalism; a structural transformation could lead to social movement unionism.

Ian Robinson concurred with Lambert and Webster's claim. He argues that neoliberal restructuring can promote social movement unionism in the developed world (specifically, Canada and the US). He defined neoliberal restructuring as '... changes in economic institutions, rules, and dynamics that can be directly traced to neoliberal economic policies.' In a far-reaching study, he concluded that neoliberal restructuring (NLR) has changed the conditions in which U.S. unions operate in ways that have promoted a shift away from the long dominant business unionism toward SMU [social movement unionism]. NLR is not the only factor responsible for this shift; the changing demographics of the workforce [increasing number of women and people of colour, especially Latino immigrants] are also very important, and these are only partly determined by NLR. Nor do structural changes dictate any particular response from unions. The business union culture remains strong within some unions and may continue to do so whether or not it “works” as measured by union membership growth or power. For some leaders, any other orientation is unacceptable, even if the failure to change seems likely to doom the organization to decline or even obliteration.

For this reason, the shift toward SMU, in the United States as in Canada, is likely to be both less universal and less rapid than many who favor SMU would hope.

As Robinson correctly noted, there is no guarantee that neoliberal restructuring will lead to social movement unionism becoming the dominant union practice. Nevertheless, the rise of neoliberalism does offer a potential chance for Northern unions to embrace social movement unionism. However, as already noted, economic conditions by themselves, is unlikely to lead unions toward social movement unionism. There also need to be ideological factors at work (see below).

77 Ibid., pp.223-4.
Kim Scipes’ Theory of Social Movement Unionism

Kim Scipes is a former printer (and member of Graphic Communications International Union, AFL-CIO), high school teacher, office worker, and a US military veteran who has recently completed a PhD in Sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Scipes is a long-time activist, with most of his work focusing on the labour movement, both in the US and internationally (especially in relation to the Philippines). Scipes developed his theory of social movement unionism in direct response to the initial series of papers by Waterman, and Lambert and Webster.

In his 1992 article, ‘Social Movement Unionism and the Kilusang Mayo Uno’, Kim Scipes provided an overview and analysis of Lambert and Webster’s, and Waterman’s theories of trade unionism. Following Lambert and Webster, he argued that there were three different types of trade unionism. These were economic (which corresponds to Lambert and Webster’s orthodox unionism), political (corresponds to Lambert and Webster’s populist unionism), and social movement unionism. However, unlike Lambert and Webster, Scipes added an international dimension to the different types of unionism.

Scipes defined economic unionism as

... being unionism which accommodates itself to, and is absorbed by, the industrial relations system of its particular country; which engages in political activities within the dominant political system for the well-being of its members and its institutional self but generally limits itself to immediate interests; and which can and sometimes does engage in international labor activities which are largely but not totally designed to help maintain the well-being of its country’s current economic system, ostensibly for the well-being of its members, and these international activities are usually opposed to any type of system-challenging trade unionism.78

---

Economic unions are primarily concerned with the interests of their members, whether “bread-and-butter” or wider; for example working-class communities. Economic unions attempt to satisfy their members’ interests either through the industrial relations system (collective bargaining) or through the political system. Examples of unions using a political strategy include urging their members and the wider community to elect a labour-friendly government and/or trying to persuade the existing government to implement labour-friendly policy. In the international arena, economic unions undertake international solidarity and alliances primarily for their own interests, and not for the benefit of workers worldwide.

Scipes argued the main difference between his definition of economic unionism and Lambert and Webster’s orthodox unionism, apart from the international dimension, was that Lambert and Webster were mistaken to claim that orthodox unions did not ‘... necessarily engage in the wider political arena’. He argued that almost all unions (if not all) participate in this arena, to some extent. Like Lambert and Webster, Scipes did not provide examples of economic unions. However, based on his definition, it seems Scipes considers the majority of Western unions to be economic unions.

In an earlier article – ‘Trade Union Imperialism in the US Yesterday’ – Scipes claimed that there were two types of unions in the US: social unions (which he now terms social justice unions) and business unions. Scipes later claimed that these two types were subsets of economic unionism (see the Introduction to Part II). Scipes stated that business unions were only interested in “bread-and-butter” issues. He claimed that ‘... business unionism both accepts the domination of capitalism over society and the unions, and replicates the relations of domination within the unions’, with the rank-and-file being subservient to leaders. Scipes noted that the lack of education programmes for the rank-

79 Ibid.
and-file demonstrated the hierarchal nature of unions under business unionism. If there was such a programme, it was limited ‘... to shop floor issues; it does not look at trade unions’ positions and activities within the context of larger society.’ As I shall highlight below, Scipes argues that union democracy can lead to unions becoming radicalised and that education programmes can help the rank-and-file embrace social movement unionism.

Scipes defined political unionism as

… unionism which is dominated by or subordinated to a political party or state, to which leaders give primary loyalty – this includes both the Leninist and “radical nationalist” versions. This results in [unions] generally but not totally neglecting workplace issues for “larger” political issues. These unions can and sometimes engage in international labor operations which are designed to support unions affiliated with political parties/states which are allied with their party/state.81

This is very similar to Lambert and Webster’s definition of populist unionism. Scipes claimed that there are two differences between the theories. First, he believed that political unions placed greater emphasis on the state or political party they were aligned with than their members’ interests. However, under Lambert and Webster’s definition, populist unions concentrate on political issues rather than struggles relating to its members’ interests. Thus, there is little, if any difference between the two theories on this point. Scipes claimed that the second difference was ‘... where these unions exist within a state socialist system, they can and sometimes [do] engage in international labor operations which are designed to support unions affiliated with political parties or states which are allied with their dominant party/state’. As with his overview of economic unionism, Scipes did not provide examples of political unionism.

81 Scipes, ‘Social Movement Unionism and the Kilusang Mayo Uno’, p.127.
82 Ibid., p.126.
Scipes stated that the ‘... key aspect to recognize in both economic and political unionism is that they do not link production issues with issues of political power. In other words, economic unionism only focuses on production issues and accepts a country’s economic system. Conversely, political unionism focuses on political power, but workers’ interests are neglected to the goal of either overthrowing the government or keeping the government in power. In contrast to these two types of unionism, social movement unionism focuses on both.

Unlike his relatively brief synopses of economic and political unionism, Scipes gave a very detailed analysis of social movement unionism, including a long definition:

Social movement unionism specifically rejects the artificial separation between politics and economics which is accepted by the other types of trade unionism. Social movement unionism sees workers’ struggles as merely one of many efforts to qualitatively change society, and not either the only site for political struggle and social change or even the primary site. Therefore, social movement unionism seeks alliances with other social movements on an equal basis, and tries to join them in practice when possible, both within the country and internationally.

Social movement unionism is trade unionism based in the workplace and is democratically controlled by the membership and not by any external organization, and recognizes that the struggle for control over workers’ daily worklife, pay, and conditions is intimately connected with and cannot be separated from the national socio-political-economic situation. This requires that struggles to improve the situation of workers confront the national situation – combining struggles against exploitation and oppression in the workplace with those confronting domination both external from and internal to the larger society – as well as any dominating relations with the unions themselves. Therefore, social movement unionism is autonomous from capital, the state, and political parties, setting its own agenda from its own particular perspective, yet willing to consider modifying its perspective on the basis of negotiations with the social movements with which it is allied with and which it has equal relations.

83 Ibid., p.127.
84 Ibid., p.133.
Scipes identified five basic components of his definition of social movement unionism in a paper published only on the Internet: ‘Social Movement Unionism: Can We Apply the Theoretical Conceptualization to the New Unions in South Africa – And Beyond?’. First, workers’ struggles are only one of many efforts to change society. Thus, it is important that unions have alliances with social movements. Second, democratic unionism is essential. Third, unions struggle against workplace exploitation and oppression, and against ‘... domination both external from and internal to the larger social order’. Fourth, unions struggle for control over “bread-and-butter” issues are ‘... intimately connected with and inseparable from the national political-economic situation’. Fifth, unions are independent from ‘... capital, the state and political parties’. However, their alliances with social movements could lead to unions adopting new perspectives on various issues. Scipes claimed that ‘... any labor organization that largely incorporates these components into the self-conceptualization on which it acts qualifies as implementing social movement unionism’. He argued that his theory of social movement unionism has three important ramifications:

First, it again consciously conceives of workers’ struggles as being directed against dominative power, and consciously joins workers with all other people in the struggle for emancipation. Second, it sees workers’ struggles as integrated with all other struggles against dominative power – thus the separation of labor from other social movements is ended. And third, it does not limit this model of trade unionism to workers in the LEDCs [Less Economically Developed Countries], it is one which allows workers anywhere to adopt it.

85 Kim Scipes, ‘Social Movement Unionism: Can We Apply the Theoretical Conceptualization to the New Unions in South Africa – And Beyond?’, 2001, p.47.
86 Ibid.
Social Movement Unionism in the Philippines and South Africa

Scipes argues that the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) or the May First Movement is an example of a social movement union. The KMU does not use the term social movement union to describe itself. Nevertheless, both Scipes and Lambert argue that the KMU was a social movement union.\(^8^8\) Seven unions formed the KMU on, as it name implies, May 1 1980. KMU’s initial membership was 50,000 (35,000 workers under collective bargaining agreements, 15,000 without collective bargaining agreements). By 1990, the KMU had 750,000 members (350,000 workers under agreements, 400,000 without agreements): spectacular growth in a relatively short period.\(^8^9\) Scipes argued that the KMU managed to ‘... survive the repression of a dictator’ (Ferdinand Marcos) and achieved its dramatic growth because of its social movement unionism. He noted that the KMU is a democratic organisation. Scipes quoted an unnamed KMU leader: ‘... the KMU is run by its members. The members are given all information and decide the policies which run the organization’.\(^9^0\) Based on the extensive research he has undertaken, including attending union meetings, Scipes concluded that the KMU is democratic.\(^9^1\)

An important aspect of Scipes’ theory of social movement unionism is that unions form alliances with social movements. The KMU is allied with other Philippine social movements to fight for all oppressed Filipino people. The KMU and social movements conducted a welga ng bayan in 1984 ‘... in response to increased military operations and brutality’, and in 1987 ‘... in response to an oil price hike by the government’. The welga ng bayan translates to “strike of the people” and in addition to a general strike by workers,

\(^8^8\) Ibid., footnote 22, p.135.
\(^9^0\) Ibid., p.88.
\(^9^1\) Ibid., pp.93-4.
‘... all public transportation is stopped, all shops and stores are closed, and community members set up barricades to stop still-operating private vehicles or they join workers on their picket lines’.92

The KMU has an extensive education programme. This is important in teaching union members the importance of its brand of unionism. It includes education about political economics, labour history, and the difference between the KMU’s form of trade unionism and “yellow” unionism – ‘... whether of the “bread and butter/rice and fish” version or its more collaborationist form... [Moreover, during the programmes,] workers discuss the struggle for national and working class liberation’.93

Another basic component of Scipes’ theory of social movement unionism is that such unions are independent ‘from capital, the state and political parties’. However, it has long been alleged that the KMU is a front for the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Scipes noted that if it is a front for the CPP, ‘... then the KMU should more properly be typed as a political union and not a social movement union’. Nevertheless, he stated that the KMU is run by its members and ‘... despite the charges, no one has ever proven that the KMU is controlled by the CPP; even Ferdinand Marcos, with all his powers and having a subservant judiciary at his disposal, could not prove this allegation’. Moreover, he noted that a ‘... substantial number of organizations and leaders within the KMU came from political positions to the right of the KMU’.94 I analyse whether the KMU is a front for the CPP in Chapter 4.

While not one of the five basic components of his definition of social movement unionism, Scipes does place great emphasis on labour internationalism. As I noted, he argues that a major problem with Lambert and Webster’s theories is that they did not

---

92 Ibid., pp.91-2.
93 Ibid., pp.89-90.
94 Ibid., p.93-4.
include an international dimension.\textsuperscript{95} Thus, Scipes approvingly stated that the KMU has international alliances and tries to help facilitate international labour solidarity. The KMU has had support from ‘… national labor centers in Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, and from the CGIL in Italy and the CGT and CFDT in France, and numerous local unions in Europe’. Moreover, since 1984, the KMU has hosted the International Solidarity Affair (ISA) to which it invites workers and union leaders from other countries to gain first-hand knowledge of the Philippines’ working conditions.\textsuperscript{96} Scipes claimed that the ‘ISA is a model for successfully building international solidarity on a rank and file basis. The program removes labor solidarity from the hands of labor bureaucrats and allows workers to learn first-hand about conditions facing workers in another country.’\textsuperscript{97} Scipes argued that his case study of ‘… the KMU has shown that it is neither an economic nor political type of labor movement; it is one example of what I call social movement unionism’.\textsuperscript{98}

Scipes also argued that COSATU was a social movement union. This was because COSATU viewed

\ldots trade unions as only one site of struggle, not necessarily the only one or even the pre-eminent site, although they would probably argue that the unions are the “most important” site, and they ally with other social movements when possible; they see unions as being controlled by their members and not by any external organizations; they see conditions in the workplace as being intimately linked with the national political-economical situation; they fight exploitation and oppression in the workplace along with domination from within and without the larger social order; and they are autonomous form other political organizations.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{95} Scipes, ‘Social Movement Unionism and the Kilusang Mayo Uno’, p.126.
\textsuperscript{97} Scipes, ‘Social Movement Unionism and the Kilusang Mayo Uno’, p.147.
\textsuperscript{98} Scipes, ‘Understanding the New Labor Movements in the “Third World”’, p.96.
\textsuperscript{99} Scipes, ‘Social Movement Unionism: Can We Apply the Theoretical Conceptualization to the New Unions in South Africa – And Beyond?’, p.47-8.
Scipes claimed in the paper 'Social Movement Unionism: Can We Apply the Theoretical Conceptualization to the New Unions in South Africa – And Beyond?' that as both the KMU and COSATU are social movement unions, and ‘... by demonstrating ... [social movement unionism’s] existence in South Africa, in addition to Philippines, I have strengthened arguments for the validity of this conceptualization’.

**Trade Union Theory**

As I noted in Chapter 1, there are competing theories about why unions form and their nature. Scipes claimed, however, that ‘... it makes more sense to try to understand how the workers – particularly activist workers – have looked at labor movements rather than how the theorists have looked at them: it is the activists who play a key role in the creation of unions and labor movements, and not theorists'. Building on the work of Larson and Nissen, Scipes stated that

... workers can see labor movements as being (1) agents of social change, (2) means to improve their economic situation; (3) initiators of industrial democracy; (4) forces that improve the psychological well-being of workers; and (5) vehicles of moral and spiritual reform. Further, a particular worker can see a labor movement serving one or more purposes at any one time and, of these purposes, this worker might differently prioritize the importance of one or more at any particular time.

While I generally agree with Scipes’ list, workers also can see the labour movement as an agent of social change in a revolutionary sense, or as an agent of change without attempting to replace the existing political and economic order. In addition, workers can view unions

---

100 Ibid., p.51.
in a negative light; not all workers regard unions as a positive benefit to themselves and/or society. Thus, slightly modifying Scipes’ list, I would argue that workers can view the labour movement as (1) an agent of revolutionary social change; (2) an agent of social change without disrupting the existing political and economic order, (3) a means to improve their economic situation; (4) initiator of industrial democracy; (5) a force that improve the psychological well-being of workers; (6) a vehicle of moral and spiritual reform; and (7) an antisocial, destructive monopoly.

It is, nevertheless, important to place Scipes’ theory of social movement unionism within the theoretical history of trade unionism. From the preceding analysis, it is somewhat difficult to place Scipes’ theory amongst one of the existing theories of trade unionism. For example, Scipes does view the labour movement as an agent for extending industrial democracy, but unlike other industrial democracy theorists, he does not believe that unions exist simply to protect workers’ economic interests. However, he also claims that social movement unionism is an emancipatory force as it struggles against exploitation and domination, but workers struggles are only one of many struggles to change society, and not necessarily the most important one. As such, Scipes’ theory cannot be placed within the Marxist tradition. Likewise, while Scipes does not believe that unions form because of people’s reaction to an individualist society (as such, does not claim that unionists are trying to regain something that has been lost) as some psychological theorists do, he does argue that unions protect workers’ economic interests and its others goals depend on the group psychology of the workers.

Scipes argues that activists are important in forming unions. In ‘Social Movement Unionism: Can We Apply the Theoretical Conceptualization to the New Unions in South Africa – And Beyond?’ Scipes’ stated that it was
... the ideological conceptualization of trade unionism by activists who mobilize workers to unite and form labor collectivities that plays the central role in determining the type of trade unionism that will guide particular labor movements. In other words, while it may be material conditions that motivate some workers to rebel or even to act collectively to create and/or join labor collectivities, it is the ideological conceptualization of trade unionism by activists within the collectivities, and their abilities to convince co-workers and supporters of the superiority of their approach, that determine the direction of each collectivity.\textsuperscript{102}

In his PhD thesis, which is an analysis of the United Steelworkers of America and the United Packinghouse Workers of America, Scipes clearly demonstrates that activists are essential to union development. He stated:

Union development is the result primarily of internal factors. Key to union development are the interactive processes within the unions, and central to these processes is the creation of collective identity. Activists work to create groups and to build a collective identity so as to build group cohesion and feelings of solidarity. Over time, a successful group expands to include more that just the initial actors and, with the creation of a formal organization, attention must be turned to the three-way interactive relationship between informal leaders (activists), formal leaders and rank and file members; it is not sufficient to just consider leaders, members, or even the two-way relationship between leaders and members.\textsuperscript{103}

Scipes’ analysis corresponds with arguably the most influential psychological theorist, Robert Hoxie. Hoxie claimed that unions do not form because of individuals’ reaction to individualist society. Instead, as Larson and Nissen noted, Hoxie argued: ‘Unions are formed and respond according to the social psychology of workers; since workers in different situations have different psychological outlooks, they will develop unions with widely varying structures and functions’.\textsuperscript{104} This corresponds with Scipes’ claims. Thus, while Moody, and Lambert and Webster’s theory of trade unionism can be placed within the Marxist tradition, Scipes’ theory is a form of a psychological theory of trade unionism.

\textsuperscript{102} Scipes, ‘Social Movement Unionism: Can We Apply the Theoretical Conceptualization to the New Unions in South Africa – And Beyond?’, p.12.
\textsuperscript{103} Scipes, Activists, Collective Identities, Conceptualizations and Trade Union Behaviors.
\textsuperscript{104} Larson and Nissen, p.208.
As I noted in Chapter 2, Scipes claims that if material conditions are paramount in determining union characteristics, different labour movements in the same country will embrace the same type of unionism, but this is not the case in Brazil, the Philippines, South Africa, and South Korea. For example, '... within the province of KwaZulu-Natal [in South Africa], there has been extensive conflict between the United Workers Union of South Africa ... a center based upon political unionism, and COSATU'.

Scipes’ position is very similar to that of Lambert and Webster. They all argue that ideology is very important in determining why unions have particular characteristics (although Lambert and Webster do argue that material conditions also matter). However, Scipes takes this further by arguing that while material factors are important, they are contextual, not determinative. Instead, the interaction between the rank-and-file and activists determines a union’s characteristics. If a union has already formed, this interaction would also include union officials. Ralph Darlington and John Kelly respectively, support Scipes position. Darlington noted that

... a number of sociologically-inspired empirically-based workplace case studies over the last 25 years have provided rich narrative accounts of the events, actions and arguments that take place between shop stewards and their members about management, their jobs, the union and strikes. These studies, whilst not ignoring structural factors and institutional collective bargaining arrangements, focus attention on the social processes of workplace industrial relations. Most of them confirm that activist leadership is crucial in articulating workers' sense of grievance, targeting it at employers and organising rank-and-file action.

105 Scipes, ‘Social Movement Unionism: Can We Apply the Theoretical Conceptualization to the New Unions in South Africa – And Beyond?’, p.12.
It is usually a small, but crucial number of activists (whether formal or informal leaders) who mobilise workers into a collective. Basing his work on Rick Fantasia's case studies in *Cultures of Solidarity*, Kelly argued that there are four aspects to this:

... first, they help construct among workers a sense of grievance or injustice. Second, they promote group cohesion and identity: group identity encourages workers to think about their collective interests... Third, it is leaders [activists] who urge workers to take collective action, a process of persuasion that is assumed to be essential because of the costs of such action and the inexperience of many people with its different forms and consequences. Finally, leaders will have to defend collective action in the face of countermobilizing arguments that it is illegitimate. 107

Darlington's and Kelly's research focuses on the type of action that activists take once a union is formed. Nevertheless, the same process is applicable to the formation of a union's collective identity. Activists will shape the union in the direction of their own ideological conception of trade unionism.

Scipes is correct to argue that activists have a crucial role in determining a union’s characteristics. This is not to argue that the rank-and-file and union leaders do not contribute to the transformation of unions. Indeed, without successfully mobilising the rank-and-file, activists cannot change a union’s identity. Nevertheless, through an interactive process with the rank-and-file and leaders, activists are an important component in determining a union’s identity.

Scipes briefly identifies two factors that can lead to unions embracing social movement unionism. First, education programmes, such as those by the KMU, can result in union members accepting social movement unionism. Second, in his works, Scipes implied

---

that democratic unions are more militant. Union democracy also led to South Africa unions having increased strength on the shop floor and strike power, in addition to adopting all of their members' demands even if they were not of the traditional "bread-and-butter" kind. For example, Scipes through an analysis of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa stated that it '... was through rank and file democracy and accountancy of leaders to members on the shop floor that resulted in the union's addressing women's specific issues'.

Scipes recently clarified his position on how unions can become social movement unions. He stated that this is possible through a combination of union democracy and education programmes, which espouse the benefits of social movement unionism targeted to all members and not just leaders and/or shop stewards. For example, the KMU

... try to get workers to consider their situations, and then recognize that they cannot be meaningfully address within the confines of the current social order – and hence, they need to struggle for a change in the current social order and the global political-economic-cultural networks their country is enmeshed within.

He further argued:

Real rank and file democracy would be absolutely a requirement for a substantive change to have a chance to take place. But that is not enough. I think it would be necessary for educators to have a "larger" picture – what in the past might have been referred to as "socialism" or "communism," but today, would require some understanding in detail of the global political-economy.

---

109 Scipes, 'Social Movement Unionism: Can We Apply the Theoretical Conceptualization to the New Unions in South Africa – And Beyond?', pp.33-4.
Nevertheless, Scipes stated that even if a non-social movement union became democratic and adopted education programmes for all workers, this will not guarantee the union will become a social movement union, but he did not note why this was the case.\textsuperscript{110}

Scipes' belief in the role of education programmes assumes that the union officials want the union to be a social movement union. If they do not, I would suggest that Scipes would argue that activists (assuming they want the union to be a social movement union) would attempt to democratise the union (if it was not already) and try to force officials to implement education programmes that would espouse the benefits of social movement unionism.

Worker education programmes implemented by the Brazilian Labour Federation Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT) – which Moody argues is a social movement union (see Chapter 2) – have led to an increase in worker participation. Mark Langevin argued:

\begin{quote}
While current data does not allow for conclusions, clearly the growth of CUT and its educational project since 1990 would indicate a steady trend toward greater number of unions providing labour education to their directors, union employees, and the rank and file. Because of the new directions in labor education, more workers and unionists have the opportunity to participate in their labor organizations and the social movement which attempts to advance their collective interests.\textsuperscript{111}
\end{quote}

Likewise, the Canadian Auto Workers' education programmes have helped it in its goal of being a social movement union (see Chapter 5). The Canadian Auto Workers and CUT education programmes demonstrate that it is possible through unions adopting such

\textsuperscript{110} Private Email from Kim Scipes to author, October 8 2003 in author's possession.

\textsuperscript{111} Mark Langevin, 'Replacing the State: New Directions in Brazilian Labor Education', \textit{Labor Studies Journal}, vol.19, no.1, Spring 1994, p.70. The new directions in Brazilian labour education involve the attempted linkage between 'the articulation of workers' demands with the formulation and pursuit of political strategies to advance class-wide interests...'. Ibid., p.61.
programmes this will help facilitate the spread of social movement unionism. This further validates Scipes' theory.

Theories of Social Movement Unionism

This chapter has outlined the different theories of social movement unionism developed by Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes. I noted that Waterman contrasts his theory with Kelly's theory of socialist trade unionism while Lambert and Webster, and Scipes contrast social movement unionism with other trade union theories (Lambert and Webster with orthodox and populist; Scipes with economic and political).

Under Waterman’s theory, social movement unions (or new social unions) are unions that, amongst other things, have grassroots democracy and are articulated with other social movements. They fight for new social issues, such as racism and sexism, and are involved in grassroots internationalism. Furthermore, social movement unions or new social unions are articulated with political forces with the same outlook, and with non-unionised or non-unionisable sectors of the working class. Waterman implies that social movement unionism or new social unionism potentially emerges through union democracy, dramatic worker movements and through a social movement within unions. However, he recently claimed that there is no specific means that social movement unionism (new social unionism) emerges.

\[112\] For examples of US unions using worker education programmes in an effort to revitalise Locals, see Voss and Sherman, pp.322-4. Worker education programmes have often been used throughout the history of the US labour movement. For examples of successful worker education programmes in the early part of the twentieth century, see Clyde W. Barrow, 'Counter-Movement Within the Labor Movement: Workers' Education and the American Federation of Labor, 1900-1937', *The Social Science Journal*, vol.27, no.4, 1990.
The crucial aspects of Lambert and Webster’s theory of social movement unionism are: unions fight for everything that affects working people in the workplace and community and have structural alliances with social movements. They link struggles over workplace issues with community and state domination and exploitation, and have an alliance(s) with political parties. Social movement unionism emerges partly because of structural conditions in a particular country, such as the growth in the number of industrial unions, state intervention in all facets of society, and neoliberal restructuring. Moreover, ideological factors as well as material conditions lead to different unions adopting different forms of unionism.

Under Scipes’ theory, social movement unions are democratic, have alliances with other social movements on an equal basis as they realise that the workplace is not the primary site of struggle. They fight for the well being of all, not just union members. Moreover, social movement unions are independent from capital, the state, and political parties, and realise the struggle for control over workers’ rights is part of the struggle against a country’s social and political order. Scipes believes that the ideological conceptualisation of activists determines what form of trade unionism which unions will adopt. He also claims that union democracy can lead to unions becoming radicalised and education programmes can help the rank-and-file embrace social movement unionism.

From the preceding overview, it is clear that Moody’s, and Lambert and Webster’s theories of social movement unionism are the most similar. The similarities include labour being the “privileged” emancipator; social movement unions having alliances with community groups and social movements, with the emphasis on workers; having alliances with political parties; and fighting for everything that effects working people both in the factory and in the wider community. This is not surprising since, as I noted in Chapter 2,
Moody based his initial account of social movement unionism on Gay Seidman’s work, who in turn based her work on Lambert and Webster’s theory.

Furthermore, as I argued above, both Moody’s, and Lambert and Webster’s theory of trade unionism correspond to a Marxist theory of trade unionism. While Moody’s theory is within the Trotskyist tradition, Lambert and Webster’s theory is comparable to John Kelly’s trade unionism. In contrast, Scipes’ theory is compatible with the psychological tradition, while the eclectic nature of Waterman’s theory prevents it being categorised within any existing school of trade union theory.

Nevertheless, despite the theories of social movement unionism being in separate theoretical traditions, in relation to how a worker would view a union if he/she were a member of a social movement union the accounts are similar. A social movement union under any of the accounts could be an agent of revolutionary social change; an agent of social change without disrupting the existing political and economic order; a means to improve workers’ economic situations; initiator of industrial democracy; a force that improve the psychological well-being of workers; and a vehicle of moral and spiritual reform.

However, Moody, Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes place different emphasis on a social movement union’s role. For example, both Moody, and Lambert and Webster view unions as an agent of revolutionary social change to a much greater extent than either Waterman or Scipes (however, Moody only very rarely makes a link between social movement unionism and challenging a state’s economic and political order (see the Introduction to Part II)). Conversely, Waterman strongly emphasises social movement unionism (new social unionism) as an initiator of industrial democracy and moral and spiritual reform compared to the others. Waterman’s propositions of social movement unionism specifically state that social movement unions struggle ‘... for increased worker
and union control over the labor process, investments, new technology, relocation, subcontracting, training and education policies...’ (initiator of industrial democracy), and ‘... for an increase in time for noneconomic activity for cultural self-development and self-realization’ (vehicle of moral and spiritual reform).\(^\text{113}\) Thus, while people argue that social movement unionism can revitalise North American unionism, it is clear that there are different theories of social movement unionism. I further analyse the different theories of social movement unionism in the following chapter.

\(^{113}\) Waterman, ‘Social Movement Unionism’, p.266-8.
Chapter 4

SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM: AN EVALUATION

The last two chapters have outlined and partially evaluated Moody, Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes’ theories of social movement unionism. This chapter will further assess the different theories of social movement unionism in four areas. These are: union democracy; union alliances with new social movements and community groups; labour internationalism and; alliances between social movement unions and political parties.

Union Democracy

Moody, Waterman, and Scipes all argue to a varying degree that union democracy and rank-and-file participation could lead to unions embracing social movement unionism, or at the very least become more militant and move to the left. This is an especially crucial characteristic in Moody’s account and Scipes’ theory.¹

The notion that union democracy and rank-and-file participation leads to unions becoming militant is supported by C. Wright Mills. He stated that ‘[f]or the union to become an instrument of social transformation ... [its members must] think of it as their
creature; they must want to know all about it and want to run it in as much detail as possible. Through rank-and-file participation, there is a transformation of the union into a political community that does not necessarily readily agree with the accepted order.

In their analysis of CIO unions, Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin conclusively demonstrated that union democracy leads to unions being more militant. They stated: ‘A union with a democratic constitution, organized opposition, and an active membership tends to constitute the workers’ immediate political community, sustaining both a sense of identification between them and their leaders and class solidarity, as a result, the union also tends to defy the hegemony of capital in the sphere of production.’

Militant left-wing North American unions throughout history have more often than not been very democratic with extensive rank-and-file involvement. Whether the United Electrical Workers (see Chapter 6), the Longshoremen, the Knights of Labor, or the Industrial Workers of the World, they all had one common characteristic, union democracy combined with rank-and-file participation. A recent example is the Canadian Auto Workers. While not as militant as the unions cited above, the CAW is much more democratic and confrontational than the UAW (see Chapter 5). Likewise, as David Wellman, in a study of an International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Local, argued:

The experience of community teaches San Francisco longshoremen to be moral, not just economic actors. The principled behavior called for by their ethical code applies to all workers, not just brothers on the docks. The “us” that this community practices, which is reinforced by the daily fights with
employers, is sometimes extended beyond the waterfront to workers in other industries and nations...

Disagreements with management also extend considerably beyond job issues to questions of personhood, citizenship, and authority. The process of defensible disobedience teaches longshoremen how to argue with their employers, how to act when they think they are right and have been wronged. They are taught not to accept an order simply because it is issued by powerful people. They learn to ask the powerful, by what right is an order issued?\(^6\)

In other words, union democracy and rank-and-file participation results in workers' questioning the existing order and become more militant. Thus, Moody, Waterman, and Scipes are correct to argue that union democracy can help unions embrace social movement unionism.

**Unions and New Social Movements**

While Moody, Waterman, and Scipes concur that union democracy and rank-and-file participation are important, they diverge over the notion that there is a difference between the politics of the contemporary labour movement and new social movements. Unlike, Moody, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes, Waterman believes that there is a difference between the “new” politics of social movements and the “old” politics of the current labour movement.\(^7\)

However, evidence does not support Waterman’s proposition. As Boris Frankel, an Australian sociologist, argued:

> New social movement organizations have tried to implement, with mixed success, a ‘new politics’. But they are also plagued by ‘old politics’ problems: bureaucratic tendencies, tension between the

---


\(^7\) See Chapter 3.
rank-and-file and the leaders or media 'stars', intolerance of dissenters or ideological divisions, funding crises, and co-option into neo-corporatist policy-making processes. 8

Verity Burgmann agrees with this position. She stated that '... new social movements continue to proclaim their superiority over the old ... [but they] confuse their relative political weakness with greater purity of purpose and actions'. 9 These statements, and examples like the French anti-racist movement 10, demonstrate that there is little difference between the “new” politics of social movements and the “old” politics of the contemporary labour movement.

Nevertheless, many new social movements have decentralised structures with an apparent absence of leaders (unlike unions). As I noted in the previous chapter, Waterman praises this feature. Stephanie Ross stated that new social movements comprised a large proportion of the anti-globalisation movement. An ‘... important section of the anti-globalization movement is based on one central value: running throughout the analysis of a variety of groups is a critique and rejection of hierarchy’. 11

This rejection of hierarchy has a major negative implication for the anti-globalisation movement and hence new social movements. They are ill equipped to deal with long battles because of their institutional structure, or more to the point their lack of one. 12 Historian


10 See Gibb, ‘Leadership, political opportunities and organisational identity in the French anti-racist movement’.


Barbara Epstein noted that a parallel existed between the non-violent direct action movement in the US in the 1970s and the anti-globalisation movement. Both movements were/are based on consensus decision-making and a refusal to acknowledge leadership. However, the decentralised structure led to the decline of the non-violent direct action movement. As she claimed:

"Anti-leadership ideology cannot eliminate leaders, but it can lead a movement to deny that it has leaders, thus undermining democratic constraints on those who assume the roles of leadership, and also preventing the formation of vehicles for recruiting new leaders when the existing ones become too tired to continue."\(^{13}\)

Likewise, in an analysis of the US women’s liberation movement, the long-time feminist Carol Hanisch argued that ‘... more structured forms are necessary to assure the development of the organised strength needed to accumulate and eventually take power – assuming the goal is to take women’s fair share of power to meet the needs of all, not just to ‘empower’ individuals’.\(^{14}\) In other words, a decentralised structure with an apparent absence of leaders is not necessarily something that should be lauded.

Nevertheless, Waterman claimed that the current crisis of trade unionism is due in part to ‘... the union form, which is still primarily organizational/institutional at a period in which both capitalism and the global justice and solidarity movement are taking the network form’.\(^{15}\) He argues that networking and decentralisation are more democratic than current union structures. However, this is not necessarily true. I have already criticised the notion that there is an iron law of oligarchy.\(^{16}\) Moreover, decentralisation may encourage participation, but there is no guarantee that it is more democratic. As Ross argued, while on the surface a decentralised structure seems to result in greater democracy, domineering

\(^{14}\) Hanisch, p.93.  
\(^{15}\) Waterman, ‘Whatever Happened to the ‘New Social Unionism’?’, p.7. [Emphasis in Original]  
\(^{16}\) See Chapter 2.
individuals within the group and unequal power relations between groups can easily undermine democracy. She further claimed:

It is not entirely clear that the structures of decentralized coordination are sufficient to ensure equal and effective participation. Consensus produces its own tyranny, that of **endurance**, in which ‘the last ones left at the table get to make the decision’. The conditions and resources required to engage in consensus decision-making – especially time and energy – are themselves not equally distributed. 

The organisational structure of new social movements, where the focus is on consensus decision-making and an absence of leaders, means that they are difficult to sustain over time. Furthermore, while Waterman praises new social movements’ network structures, which could lead to an increase in participation, it does not necessarily result in greater democracy. There is no reason to suggest that a networking structure is preferable to the traditional union structure with considerable rank-and-file involvement.

However, this is not to claim that social movement unions should not form alliances with social movements and community groups, and adopt cross-class and/or non-class issues, such as ‘... struggles for human rights [and] ecological sustainability’. Indeed, they should form alliances in a bid to, as Waterman claimed, ‘... broaden the appeal of unionism and increase the number of their allies’. While all the advocates of social movement unionism I analysed argue that unions should have alliances with community groups and social movements, both Scipes, and in particular Waterman, continually stress the need for links between the groups.

Indeed, union alliances with social movements and community groups, and the rise of these groups were crucial in the success of social movement unionism in other countries. In Brazil, union alliances with social movements and community groups strengthened unions.

---

17 Ross, p.292. [Emphasis in Original]
Seidman claimed that 'through donations to strike funds, and by refusing to replace striking workers, neighborhood residents helped ensure that workers and their families could survive strikes that dragged on for weeks'. For example, community groups had a large role in the success of the Metalworkers Union in São Bernando do Campo. Community support prevented the Brazilian government from removing the Metalworkers Union leaders during a strike in 1980, '... while churches provided meeting spaces and community volunteers made up food parcels for strikers' families'.

A major factor in Brazilian unions incorporating non-class issues was the increasing number of women joining unions in the 1970s. Between 1970 and 1978 over two times as many women joined unions compared to male workers. Corresponding to the increase in female union membership was an increase in women joining social movements. Seidman noted that

[w]omen participated actively in the movement for amnesty for political exiles and in the small, but visible, feminist movement; women from primarily working-class backgrounds led the Cost of Living Movement, as well as local campaigns for daycare centers and health clinics. Perhaps for the first time in Brazilian history, working-class women entered into public debate and successfully mobilized community support, as visible leaders in Christian base communities, in Catholic Mother’s Clubs, and in campaigns for improved social services.

The increasing number of women joining unions and social movements in Brazil accompanied the rise of social movement unionism as unions began adopting non-traditional demands as part of their agenda.

In South Africa, the rise of social movement unionism also coincided with the formation of an increasing number of social movements. As Philip Hirschsohn stated, social movements ‘... thrive during periods of social and political instability, when the political system is seen as having lost its legitimacy, and the status quo is vulnerable to

19 Seidman, pp.208-9.
20 Ibid., pp.220-1.
outsiders demanding inclusion in the polity'.

He further claimed that the '1976 Soweto uprising marked the resurgence of black protest and stimulated the emergence of a wide range of localized, uncoordinated grassroots SMs [social movements]'. By the 1980s, social movements engaged in widespread protest against the state in a bid to end apartheid. The formation of the United Democratic Front clearly demonstrates the huge number of social movements: '... over 600 grassroots SMs and organizations, united more by their opposition to Apartheid and the state's reform agenda than by an adherence to a particular ideology, formed a broad alliance to coordinate mobilization'.

Stayaways illustrate the benefits unions receive from alliances with social movements. The November 1984 stayaway saw approximately 800,000 workers and 400,000 students not attending work and school respectively. This stayaway led to unions forsaking their '... previous strategy of remaining aloof from township struggles' and the strengthening of alliances between unions, students and community groups. The South African Labour Monitoring Group's analysis of the stayaway noted '... that where trade union and community-student organisation coincided, the stayaway was most effective'.

Thus, alliances with social movements and community groups strengthened unions and led to unions adopting non-traditional demands. This further contributed to the rise of social movement unionism in Brazil and South Africa.

Nevertheless, one could argue that Brazilian and South African examples are not relevant to North America. However, there was a similar situation in the US. There was a link between the dramatic increase in public sector union membership after World War II and the rise of new social movements. Sociology Professor Stanley Aronowitz claimed that

---

21 Hirschsohn, p.643.
22 Ibid.
‘President John F. Kennedy’s celebrated Executive Order 10988, granting bargaining rights to federal employees’ did contribute to the rise of public sector unionism. However, he argues it was only a partial explanation. It ignores the fact that many ‘... state and local governments were reluctant to follow Kennedy’s lead’. It was the resolve of union organisers, who were inspired by the civil rights movement, which led to many state and local governments enacting similar legislation. He went on to state that

[...] the brilliant move of many who led the organizing drives was to link traditional union appeals to public issues, especially civil rights and the feminist movement. In the post offices and many state municipal agencies, blacks and Latinos invoked the iconography of these movements – Martin Luther King was the patron saint of the New York Hospital Workers and, more fatefully, of the Memphis Sanitation Workers – integrated minority and women’s issues into bargaining, and encouraged members to participate in peace, feminist, and civil rights demonstrations.\(^25\)

Likewise, Kim Voss and Rachel Sherman in a study that analysed factors which revitalised American unions argued union organisers and leaders who were social movement activists had a large role in transforming unions. As a union organiser stated about what differentiated progressive unions from business unions:

I would say a big part of it is a lot of activists from the ‘60s... Similar to [former CIO President] John Lewis saying “let’s bring in the Communists ‘cause they know how to organize”... I think SEIU realized that let’s bring in these activists who were involved in the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement ... some sort of political organization, some sort of socialist organization, even, who are actively committed to building the union movement, and have some new ideas about how to do that, and will use the strategies developed in the civil rights movement, and the welfare rights organizations, the women’s rights movements, all these different organizations, and get them plugged in and involved... And where unions have done that, there’s been more militancy.\(^26\)


\(^{26}\) Hotel and Restaurant Employees organiser ‘Mike’ quoted in Voss and Sherman, p.328.
A recent example in the US of unions adopting “non-class” issues to ‘broaden the appeal of unionism and increase the number of their allies’ is the Stamford Organising Project. The organising Project is a multi-union drive ‘... not just to address workplace issues, but also to lead community-wide struggles for better housing’. Stamford is an affluent suburb that is the third most expensive place in the country for housing costs. While there is public housing, the Stamford Housing Authority decided by the mid-1990s ‘... not to build more affordable housing, but rather to “rehabilitate” existing units: remove the tenants and improve the buildings, then privatize, rent at market rates, or convert housing to “moderate-income” units’. This would have would have resulted in rents dramatically increasing. For low-income workers, it was increasingly difficult to find affordable accommodation.

The four unions involved in the Stamford Organising Project (HERE, the New England Health Care Employees Union District 1199, SEIU, and the UAW), while not always successful in its fights to keep affordable housing, have become valued members of the community. This has helped them in their organising drives. Janice Fine argued:

> Because unions have acted boldly to block the demolition of housing, they are seen as advocates for the poor and the working class, and have built a good name for themselves among those they seek to organize. In a field where the work force is tightly segregated by immigrant group and where people live in tightly condensed areas, word about the union travels fast. Indeed, organizers have found that residents they encountered during the housing fight are also working at facilitates they are organizing.

Likewise, the reputation the UAW gained in the fight for affordable housing helped it in its campaign to organise childcare workers. A UAW official noted:

> We go in and talk to a group of workers in the child care center for example, who are mostly African American and poor and live in the projects, and they know who we are... They’ve heard their

---

pastors talk about the union and unionization for months, and they’ve seen the fights, very public fights, that union members have waged around public housing, and it’s all fresh, they’ve seen it happen. So that’s been a slam dunk.  

The Stamford Organising Project demonstrates the benefits to unions in adopting non-class issues and forming alliances with social movements and community groups. Not only are the unions involved attempting to keep affordable housing for all, but also the fight improves their standing in the community, which can then result in a greater chance of success in organising drives and during collective bargaining. 

Thus, while the rise of social movements did not correspond with a rise in social movement unionism, as in Brazil and South Africa, it did accompany a dramatic increase in US public sector unionism. In addition, union organisers and leaders, who were (or still are) members of social movements, partly contributed to the revitalisation of some American unions. Likewise, unions adopting non-class issues have resulted in tangible benefits to them, as well as communities as a whole. It is possible that current wave of anti-globalisation movements and increase in new social movements more generally will correspond with a rise in social movement unions in North America. Therefore, Moody, Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes are correct to espouse the benefits of social movement unions having alliances with social movements and community groups.

---

29 Clawson, p.117. 
30 For an example of the UAW benefiting during collective bargaining part because of its work in the Stamford Organising Project, see Fine, pp.20-1. The CAW is also fighting for affordable housing in its campaign against homelessness; see Chapter 5.
Labour: An International or National Movement?

All the theories of social movement unionism/new social unionism, place considerable importance on labour internationalism. While Waterman’s theory of new social unionism already had an international dimension, he greatly expanded on it in *Globalisation, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms*. Waterman argued that unions should embrace ‘new labour internationalism’ in the fight against capitalism. Waterman claimed that his new labour internationalism assumed the following:

1) The weak position of the labour movement in a period of world economic crisis, the introduction of new technologies and products, and of the repeated restructuring of the labour force nationally and internationally;
2) A rejection of the general response of the state and inter-state organs to these crises;
3) A critique of the inadequacy of the dominant traditional union, labour and socialist organisations and ideologies in confronting this situation;
4) It comes, more positively from reflection on the successes booked by the internationalism of the ASMs [alternative social movements] and ... [successful examples of international] labour [solidarity].

As with his theories of social movement unionism and new social unionism, Waterman did not define new labour internationalism. He only listed its characteristics. These include: ‘face-to-face relations’ at the grassroots or local level by union officials and the rank-and-file. However, ‘... there is no single site or level of international struggle’, as all levels are important... [L]abour is not the privileged bearer of internationalism, [but] it is essential to it, and therefore [it should link] up with other democratic internationalisms’. Moreover, ‘... the development of a new internationalism requires contributions from and discussion with

31 See Chapters 5 and 6 for more examples.
labour movements in the West, East and South, as well as within and between other socio-geographic regions.  

There is considerable debate about whether the revitalisation of the labour movement should occur at the national or international level. Many on the left, including Waterman, argue that with the advent of globalisation any challenge to capitalism must occur at the international level. Waterman claimed that globalisation has led to ‘... a revolution within capitalism’ and ‘... the transformation from the internationalization of capital to the globalization of society’. However, this has undermined the labour movement – which prioritised struggles within the nation-state – and as such was unable to challenge capitalism. Moreover, Waterman stated that social movement unionism had ‘... been over-identified with one or more of the following: the waged working class; the union form; socialist ideology/theory. This means, in practice, an over-identification with the national-industrial (even the specifically Fordist) working class, union form and ideology/theory’.  

In contrast, Moody, through his analysis of the international economy, claimed that the idea that business can relocate offshore in an instant is largely “globalonely”. Moreover, he stated the ‘... most basic feature of an effective internationalism ... is the ability of the working class to mount opposition to the entire agenda of transnational capital and its politicians in their own backyard’. However, at the same time, Moody considers international struggles as crucial. Likewise, Lambert and Webster argue that international struggles were very important, but it is important to still focus on national struggles. Scipes claims that labour internationalism is essential, but he does not “privilege” international

---

33 Ibid., pp.72-3.  
struggles over national struggles or vice-versa. He stated, ‘... both are important and linked, although one may get primacy at one time, but not another’. Thus, Moody’s, Lambert and Webster’s, and Scipes’ position are similar, as they focus on both national and international struggles, but Moody, and Lambert and Webster have more of an emphasis on the nation-state.

Waterman criticised the internationalism of Moody, and Lambert and Webster (Waterman has only briefly commented on Scipes’ theory). He claimed that they focused too much on the national level and has termed their form of internationalism ‘national-internationalism’. A national-internationalism was ‘... the winning of social-democratic rights and standards within the liberal-democratic state-nation and the gaining of such state-nations for those workers previously denied them (apartheid South Africa, communist Poland)’. However, Waterman admitted that a major problem with all previous attempts at socialist internationalism had been their chronic underestimation of the power of nationalism, especially its tendency to subordinate national to class interests. These failures to understand nationalism led Leninist states to embrace militarism and nationalism if they ‘... serve the class struggle of the national or international proletariat’. Waterman claimed, ‘... it is one of history’s more bitter ironies that the most ambitious attempt to systematise

and even codify a principled internationalism, in the Comintern, led to the most extreme and far-reaching subordination to nation-statism in the history of the labour movement'.

Nevertheless, instead of "national-internationalism" Waterman argued that

[within social movement discourse, internationalism is customarily associated with 19th century labour, with socialism and Marxism. It may be projected backwards to include the ancient religious universalism or the liberal cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment. And it should be extended, in both the 19th and 20th century, to include women's/feminist, pacifist, anticolonial, and human rights forms. Insofar as it is limited to these two centuries and to what has customarily been thought of as a "world of nation states", we need a new term for the era of globalisation. Some talk of transnationalism. I prefer global solidarity, insofar as it is addressed to globalisation, its discontents and alternatives.]

Waterman further claimed that the labour internationalism of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Trade Secretariats and World Federation of Free Trade Unions was outdated because all these international labour organisations had a nationalist focus. Conversely, the new labour internationalism was '... of the grassroots, shopfloor, community kind revealed by the British miners' strike of 1984-5 or the Liverpool docks dispute of 1995-7. The new labour internationalism is, significantly, frequently interwoven with the internationalism of the new social movements'.

Another example of new labour internationalism that Waterman provided involved Guatemalan Coca-Cola workers. Waterman noted that the western unions gained nothing from becoming involved, except helping the Guatemalan workers win their fight. The workers were involved in nearly a decade long struggle with the company '... for their jobs, their trade union and their lives'. In addition to the involvement of Churches and social movements, western unions '... acted forcefully at local, national and international (TNC)

41 Waterman, 'Trade Union Internationalism in the Age of Seattle', p.15. [Emphasis in Original]
42 Ibid., pp.8-11.
level; ... addressing themselves to public opinion (using union-made films), to the Guatemalan state (threatening arms, aid and tourist boycotts) and to the company (hitting production through strikes, and sales through consumer boycotts). However, despite that examples quoted above, Waterman provided very few practical examples of labour internationalism.

Furthermore, Waterman, like Moody, argues that the old international labour bodies will not help to revive the labour movement and that there should be a greater focus on grassroots internationalism. Where they differ is that Waterman argues that labour internationalism is often combined with new social movements' internationalism and labour should increasingly concentrate on international struggles, such as the introduction of labour rights or standards in international trade agreements.

In Revolution and World Politics, Fred Halliday argued that by their very nature, revolutions and uprisings were in some sense international. There are four reasons for this. First, revolutions appeal to general abstract principles '... i.e. ones that are not, whatever their origin, specific to a particular country or nation', such as equality and justice. For example, in relation to the battle against capitalism, labour movements argued against the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, while the Zapatistas in Mexico argue for the dignity of people. Second, the ‘oppressors’ or enemy is international. In relation to the labour movement’s fight against capital, the enemies include the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and multi-national companies. Third, all protest movements have a practical need to build alliances internationally. As Halliday argued,

44 Waterman, Globalisation, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms, pp.68-71.
... in a situation of continuing domestic conflict, and with threat from abroad ... revolutionary movements and regimes seek to strengthen their own position: they aim to weaken that of their enemies, by building international alliances, and, if possible, assisting such movements to come to power.47

Finally, the realm of revolutionary ideas is international. Long before the Internet and globalisation, many uprisings have had their bases in previous revolutions and struggles. These include, in Latin America alone, the Cuban revolution and uprisings in Bolivia, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.48

It is impractical to believe, however, that labour movements will form internationally without first having a strong national base. The first phase of the revitalisation of the labour movement must occur at the national level because this is where individuals live and work. It is important to remember that while capital may be very mobile, labour is almost the exact opposite. Only 1.5 per cent of individuals ‘... work in countries outside of those of their citizenship’, with 50 per cent of these individuals ‘concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East’.49

Concentrating on national struggles, while developing international linkages was something for which Marx and Engels argued. An exclusive focus on the last lines of The Communist Manifesto (‘Working men of all countries, unite!’), suggests that Marx and Engels’ concerns were primarily international.50 However, sections of the Manifesto clearly indicate that struggle at the national level is paramount. For example, ‘[t]hough not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a

48 Ibid., pp.63-4.
50 Halliday, p.80.
national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.\(^{51}\) In addition, as Halliday claimed, just as *fraternité* was at that time used to denote solidarity within France, the ‘unite’ at the end of the *Manifesto* refers not to any international action, but to the organisation of workers within each state. The German original ‘*Arbeiter aller Welt, vereinigt euch*’ could as well be rendered ‘Workers of Each Country, Get Organised’.\(^{52}\)

Nevertheless, Waterman argues his new social unionism is a better strategy than those of Moody, and Lambert and Webster because they still concentrate on the industrial working class and privilege the nation-state. Waterman argued that a ‘... geographically concentrated and socially homogenous industrial working class of semi-skilled factory labourers is being increasingly replaced by socially diverse and geographically dispersed labour forces – homeworkers, part-timers, sub-contractees, in towns, villages and distant countries’.\(^{53}\) While he did not make it explicit, Waterman implies that the growth of transnational companies (TNCs) is resulting in the fragmentation and decline of the ‘industrial working class of semi-skilled factory labourers’.

The size of TNCs is impressive: the largest 35,000 TNCs have 150,000 affiliates, and have foreign investments worth $1,700 billion.\(^{54}\) However, TNCs still rely heavily on their home state. For example, over two thirds of TNC sales goes to their home country. In the manufacturing sector, United States’ (US) TNCs in 1993 sold 65 per cent of their products locally; in Japan, it was 75 per cent, while United Kingdom (UK) and German TNCs sold 65 and 75 per cent of their products locally. In the services sector, the figures are even higher, with US TNCs selling 79 per cent and Japanese and the UK TNCs selling 77 per


\(^{52}\) Halliday, p.80. [Emphasis in Original]


cent of their services to their respective domestic markets. Moreover, as James Petras argued, ‘... most of industrial output, both in the Third World and the imperial countries, is for domestic consumption and is produced by domestic owners’.

Likewise, TNCs retain most of their assets in their home country. In the manufacturing sector, US TNCs had 73 per cent of their assets locally, which is an increase from 66 per cent in 1990. UK TNCs had 62 per cent of their assets locally, up from 48 per cent. While Japanese TNCs had 97 per cent of their assets situated locally. In the services sector, US TNCs had 77 per cent of their assets locally, while for UK and Japanese TNCs the figures were 69 and 77 per cent respectively. These figures illustrate that TNCs largely rely on their home country. Also, the trend in the 1990s revealed that TNCs were becoming more dependent on their home country, which is opposite to what is expected if the pace of globalisation is becoming more pronounced.

Globalisation advocates argue, however, that TNCs over time would abandon their home countries and move their production facilities offshore. Susan Strange claimed that ‘[t]he offers from governments in newly industrializing countries (NICs) are likely to be more generous and seductive than those from governments of developed countries ... [and] the competition among the [NICs] is apt to have an eroding effect on two important sources of state authority: the power to tax and the power to regulate markets, including labor and financial markets’. Thus, TNCs which are presumably only concerned with profit margins will relocate their production plants overseas.

This argument, however, is mistaken in a number of important respects. First, new technology reduces the importance of variable costs such as wages, while adding extra

57 Hirst, p.417.
58 Strange, p.60.
importance to fixed costs, such as equipment and machinery. Moreover, as the international economy expert Linda Weiss noted, knowledge-intensive labour is increasingly being treated as a fixed cost and new technology reduces the savings to be made by relocating offshore.\textsuperscript{59} US low-tech manufacturing companies highlight this. For example:

Oneida, a New-York-based firm that is the world’s largest manufacturer of steel cutlery, invested in new machinery for its domestic factories even as many of its peers moved overseas in search of cheaper hands. Two-thirds of the firm’s cutlery is made in the United States. At Maybrook [a leading US light bulb maker], labour accounts for only 20% of the cost of each fluorescent light.\textsuperscript{60}

In other words, new technology can reduce labour costs, so that they only comprise a fraction of the total cost of a product. Second, time is often more important than labour costs in deciding where to produce, especially in the textile, clothing and retail industries. Nike’s 1997 misadventure highlights this. As Nike orders shoes from its Asian retailer’s months in advance, it has to rely on fashion remaining stable for a period. However, in 1997, US teenagers abandoned sportswear. Nike was unable to sell hundreds of thousands of sneakers.\textsuperscript{61} Third, TNCs benefit from being located in major industrialised countries. Important export sectors in the US profit from research and development assistance, from being in key districts like Silicon Valley where major industries are situated and by having the protection of commercial law for patents and trademarks.\textsuperscript{62} Fourth, many major companies have been protected by trade barriers or have been saved by their home government. For example, despite the North American Free Trade Agreement, US sawmills, through a lumber accord, still receive protection from cheaper Canadian

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{The Economist}, p.73.
\textsuperscript{62} Hirst, p.419.
producers. In addition, as Winfried Ruigrok stated, ‘... among the top 100 [companies in the 1993 Fortune Global 500 list] virtually all appeared to have sought and gained from industrial and/or trade policies at some point. At least 20 companies ... would not have survived as independent companies if they had not been saved in some way by their governments’.64

While it would be a mistake to deny that many TNCs do depend on overseas markets and production facilities, their level of involvement overseas is not as pronounced as some would have us believe. As Robert Wade argued:

... the point is not just that [T]NCs do have a home base to which they are closely tied and generally more loyal than to other locations. It is also that, except for the most routinized assembly operations, they are much less than perfectly footloose with respect to any location once they have invested there. They face a variety of sunk costs, which constitute barriers to exit. These include initial startup costs, the costs of learning over time about a particular environment, and the costs of building reputation, gaining acceptance among government, and other firms regarding their ability as producers, employers, and suppliers in each market. Knowledge and information are not fully codifiable or completely fungible between places; trust and reputation are even less so.65

While TNCs still largely rely on their home bases, this is not to argue that TNCs are not powerful or large and influential employers. As Moody claimed, a successful international campaign against TNCs would have a flow on effect to workers worldwide because of their size and the number of their affiliates: TNCs ‘... dominate many nominally independent employees, set the world-wide trend in working conditions, and preserve the unequal wage levels that perpetuate completion among workers even in the same TNC’.66

He further claimed that the different unions which had members within a TNC should

---

63 The Economist, p.73.
66 Moody, Workers in a Lean World, p.280.
conduct coordinated bargaining. The idea behind this is not a '... single contract or even identical contracts' for workers in different countries, but to help facilitate international solidarity. Thus, a successful campaign against TNCs would benefit many workers worldwide and contribute to international solidarity.67.

However, while TNCs are very powerful players in both the national and international economy, it is important to remember that the '... mobility of medium and small firms – which still employ the majority of workers worldwide – is typically confined to the national or subnational levels'.68 Moreover, in an analysis of the impact on the US economy by globalisation Dan Clawson concluded:

Not only is two-thirds of employment ... relatively insulated from globalization, but that is even more true of the fastest growing jobs. Of the thirty occupations with the largest job growth, I would classify only four as vulnerable to globalization... Excluding general managers and top executives as not relevant to a union analysis, the other twenty-five occupations with the largest job growth all appear to be relatively insulated from the pressures of globalization.69

It is not the case that TNCs are leading to a fragmented labour force or relying on their home country to a less degree. Thus, a strategy that focuses on building strength at the national level, while not neglecting international struggles, as Moody, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes argue, is a strategy that the labour movement should undertake.

Likewise, Waterman is correct to argue that the Liverpool docks' dispute was an impressive example of labour internationalism. However, at the same time, the international campaign was flawed and national unions had an important role. As Noel Castree argued:

67 Moody and McGinn, p.55.
69 Clawson, pp.141-3.
... dockers in non-British ports were approached almost exclusively through their respective national and local union representatives in order to maximize the numbers of them who might support the Liverpool work force. In this sense, then, the international campaign was grass-roots instigated and coordinated (by the Liverpool dockers) but, in sheer quantitative terms, operationalized by dockers beyond the United Kingdom working within their established union frameworks.70

Moreover, Castree noted that there were problems with the dockers’ internationalism. He stated that concerted coordination of the campaign did not always occur. Similarly, ‘... despite the number of ports involved and the variety of shipping lines targeted, at no point did the international campaign succeed in coordinating action against all or most port of Liverpool users in a way that might have caused the ... [company] serious concern’. Also, the international campaign was thwarted by the lack of International Transport Federation support. He went on to argue that the local and national aspect of the campaign was actually the most successful part of the dispute. He stated ‘... it was arguably the weaknesses of the international campaign which meant that local and national organizing – often thought increasingly ineffectual in a globalizing world – were in fact key in ensuring not only that the dispute continued as long as it did but also in establishing its potential (if not actual) success’.71 Thus, one should not necessarily claim that the Liverpool docks’ dispute is a leading example of new labour internationalism.

The Liverpool docks’ dispute and the campaign to help Guatemalan Coca-Cola workers highlights a weakness in Waterman’s account of new labour internationalism; namely, distinguishing between national and international struggles. For example, does a struggle within one country become international if workers in other countries support it (e.g financially and/or by taking industrial action)? The two examples above suggest that it does. However, it is difficult to argue, just say, that the Teamster strike at UPS in 1997 was

70 Castree, p.281.
an international struggle. Unions in Belgium, Italy, Germany and Spain did take industrial action in support of striking Teamsters’, and the Teamsters sought support from new social movements. Nevertheless, the strike was over US workers’ wages and working conditions. While the Teamsters cultivated international support, it was a national struggle. Indeed, the Teamster strike is an example of what Waterman terms national-internationalism: ‘... the winning of social-democratic rights and standards within the liberal democratic’ nation-state. Likewise, the Liverpool docks’ dispute and the campaign to help Guatemalan Coca-Cola workers both were about national wages, working conditions, and jobs. Yet, Waterman labelled them as examples of new labour internationalism. Thus, the question is when does a national struggle become an international one. Waterman does not provide an answer to this question.

Social Movement Unions and Political Parties

While Waterman disagrees with Moody, and Lambert and Webster’s labour internationalism strategy, as I have outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, they all argue that unions should have alliances with political parties. However, while there are positive benefits in this, social movement unions’ links with political parties have undermined unions in South Africa, the Philippines and in the US.

Since its formation, COSATU has been considered one of the leading examples of social movement unionism in the world. However, COSATU’s alliance with the ruling ANC has become very controversial since the end of apartheid and the introduction of a democratic government in South Africa. This has potentially undermined COSATU’s claim

71 Ibid., p.273.
to be a social movement union. The alliance has become more controversial because the ANC has embraced neoliberalism.

There have been increasing calls for COSATU to abandon its alliance with the ANC following the ANC’s election victories and its move to the right. Labour academics Patrick Bond, Darlene Miller and Greg Ruiters claimed that

... by the late 1990s debates raged whether an alliance with the ruling ANC liberation movement (decidedly neoliberal in economic policy terms) was helping workers, or stunting their further mobilization and development. In practice, however, the union movement has increasingly lost internal vibrancy and has become more of an appendage of the ANC. 72

Likewise a report by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry and the South African National NGO Coalition noted that while COSATU is ‘... in formal alliance with the ANC and politically dependent on it ... [its capacity] to change government policy is limited’. 73

The experience of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy certainly vindicates the Community Agency for Social Enquiry and the South African National NGO Coalition’s belief that COSATU has a limited ability to change ANC policy. The RDP was an attempt ‘... to forge a functional relationship between the state and its institutions, and various organisations that have vitalised civil society’. Webster and Adler claimed that the original formulation (there were eventually seven drafts) of the RDP saw as its first goal ‘... to meet the basic needs of people: jobs, land, housing, water, electricity, telecommunications, transport, a clean and healthy environment, nutrition, health care, and social welfare’. 74 On

---


the surface, these seem laudable goals, but in the RDP’s final formulation, they were to be achieved through neoliberal policies. It is wrong to assume that the original document was free from right-wing ideas even though the RDP did move to the right with each redrafting. The document included a wide spectrum of proposals. Right wing ideas included ‘... maintaining strict limits on state expenditure generally (with a projected stagnation in the education budget in particular), the promotion of international competitiveness and the endorsement of an independent Reserve Bank insulated from democratic policy inputs’. While left wing ideas included ‘... mutually supportive means within the RDP to ‘decommodify’ (remove from the market) and ‘destratify’ (make universal) basic need goods, in addition to other radical reforms’.75

However, the original RDP document gave way to a much more neoliberal paper as the ANC began to listen more closely to national and international financial powerbrokers and less to COSATU. Graeme Götz, a South African Management academic, noted that a ...

COSATU opposed some right wing ideas in the RDP, but accepted ‘... the fiscal discipline at the heart of the RDP’ without a fight.77 This is not to suggest that sections within COSATU were happy with the outcome. The COSATU affiliate, the South African

---

Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union condemned the revised RDP, as it did not prevent '... those elements in the (government) ... [operating] against the interests of the working-class and the poor'. Nevertheless, the complaints had very little effect. The final version of the RDP was a '... long-term strategic vision to realign all government effort around clearly stated economic targets, leaving little room for labor-driven or, indeed, civil society-driven change'. The ANC further redrafted the RDP into a formal policy paper: the National Growth and Development Strategy. However, the ANC never released the paper and following the devaluation of the rand against leading foreign currencies, attempted to please national and international financial powerbrokers by essentially abandoning the RDP.

Instead, the ANC heralded its new policy: Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR). Paul Williams and Ian Taylor claimed that

[although GEAR was justified as a continuation of the RDP by other means, the RDP is only referred to in the GEAR policy document on four occasions. Furthermore, in contrast to the RDP, GEAR explicitly posited 'redistribution as a by product of growth instead of an integral part of its economic strategy'... GEAR privileged the position of mobile capital (both foreign and domestic) within South Africa and relied on it to empower the disadvantaged through increased private investment. This dynamism was to be achieved by cutting state spending in an attempt to lower the budget deficit to 3 per cent by 2000; maintaining a low inflation rate; reducing corporate taxes; phasing out the remaining exchange controls; promoting wage demand restraints by labour; creating a more 'flexible' labour market; and pushing for the privatisation of state assets.]

In other words, GEAR is a neoliberal policy. Of particular concern to COSATU was GEAR's stated goal of creating a more 'flexible' labour market and curbing wage

---

77 Webster and Adler, 'Towards a Class Compromise in South Africa', p.365.
78 Götz, p.172.
79 Webster and Adler, 'Towards a Class Compromise in South Africa', p.365.
81 Paul Williams and Ian Taylor, 'Neoliberalism and the Political Economy of the 'New' South Africa', New Political Economy, vol.5, no.1, 2000, p.34.
increases. This led COSATU to criticise GEAR. COSATU’s President John Gomomo called the policy “reverse GEAR”, while COSATU’s General Secretary Sam Shilowa claimed the policy would result in hardship for both workers and South Africa as a whole, and he publicly noted that the ANC had moved to the right. Rank-and-file activists criticised COSATU’s alliance with the ANC following the announcement of GEAR.

In the lead up to the sixth COSATU Congress in 1997 the expectation was that there would be vigorous debate about the tripartite alliance. However, the opposite occurred. The sixth Congress only witnessed debate ‘... around how COSATU could strengthen the Alliance’. This was unlike the two previous congresses where affiliates called for the formation of an independent “Workers Party” and for COSATU to leave the Alliance. Nevertheless, any criticism of GEAR by COSATU and the South African Communist Party (SACP) (a member of the Tripartite alliance with COSATU and the ANC) angered the ANC. South African President Nelson Mandela stated at the SACP’s annual conference that ‘GEAR ... is the fundamental policy of the ANC. We will not change it because of your pressure. If you feel you cannot get your way, then go out and shout like opposition parties. Prepare to face the full implications of that line’. Like the SACP, COSATU was not prepared to abandon the Alliance. Instead, as COSATU’s Congress demonstrated, it sought ways to strengthen it.

COSATU’s alliance with the increasing right-wing ANC severely undermines claims that it is still a social movement union. Neither Moody nor Lambert and Webster’s respective accounts of social movement unionism (they both argue that COSATU is a social movement union. Scipes argues that COSATU was a social movement union before

---

1992, but he is unsure whether it should still be classified as one because of the changes in South Africa) would encompass a union that is contributing, albeit unwillingly, to the further spread of neoliberalism.

While the ANC’s move to the right negatively effected COSATU, in the Philippines, the Kilusang Mayo Uno’s (KMU) links with the Communist Party of the Philippines led to a split within the KMU.

There is little doubt that the KMU fulfils many of the criteria of a social movement union regardless of the definition used. Even though he did not mention the KMU in *Workers in a Lean World*, in an interview Moody suggested that the KMU was a potential social movement union. He had reservations because of the alleged ties between the KMU and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). 85

Before I investigate whether there are links between the KMU and CPP, I will first examine the claim that there is a gap between the KMU’s leadership and the rank-and-file. This is because it will demonstrate that the KMU’s political agenda has led to a decline in union democracy.

All the theories of social movement unionism I analyse place great emphasis on union democracy, with extensive rank-and-file involvement. However, sociologist Lois West claimed that during the 1980s the KMU leadership ‘… had lost touch with the politics of its rank and file over the possibility of elections and democratic reform’. In the lead up to the 1986 Philippine Presidential election, the KMU leadership argued that its members should boycott the election. It stated that Presidential challenger Corazon Aquino ‘… is a landlord, and she is not facing the genuine issues of the Philippines. It will not change, so we have to

85 Interview with Kim Moody, September 23, 2002.
The KMU believed that Marcos would retain power following the election, which in turn would lead to a massive uprising. The KMU’s position corresponded with the CPP. A CPP cadre (like the KMU, the CPP urged people to boycott the election) claimed that following a Marcos win a ‘... significant portion of ... [Aquino’s] supporters will be so radicalized they will be open to armed struggle’. However, while there was a massive uprising following Marcos’s attempt to claim victory, it was ‘... led by Aquino, not the left’; indeed, Aquino was thoroughly hostile to the left. There was a clear division between KMU’s leadership and the rank-and-file over the boycott decision. West claimed:

The higher up the [leadership] ranks one went, the greater support the KMU decision had. The further removed from the rank and file leadership got, the more it held to the ideological line of the national democratic movement and the less it was able to represent the positions of the rank and file.

She noted that ‘... of 53 KMU/KMK [Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (Women Workers Movement)] leaders 83 percent agreed, 17 percent disagreed [with the boycott decision]; Local Union Leaders: 55 percent agreed, 45 percent disagreed; Rank and File Members: 38.5 percent agreed, 61.5 percent disagreed’. This example of a gap between the KMU’s leadership and the rank-and-file over political reform is a symptom of a wider problem that engulfed the KMU: namely, its alleged links with the CPP.

While Scipes’ claims that the KMU is not a front for the CPP (see Chapter 3), there is little doubt that the KMU has very close ties to it. Indeed, it is likely that the CPP created the KMU. The Philippines expert Kathleen Weekley argued that in 1979 ‘... a number of top CPP intellectuals formed a group known as Le Monde ... [with] its most significant

---

88 West, p.104.
89 Ibid., p.220. The KMK is the KMU women’s organisation.
achievement ... [being] the establishment of a national trade union centre'. *Le Monde*’s leader, Isagani Serrano, claimed that there was opposition to forming a national trade union centre, as the CPP did not ‘... have so many trade unions under ... [its] influence’. However, Serrano’s arguments eventually convinced the top CPP officials and in ‘May 1980 the Kilusang Mayo Uno ... was officially launched as the “genuine” union movement in contrast to the government-sponsored Trade Union Congress of the Philippines’.90 Ben Reid, a lecturer in Human Geography, has supported this analysis. He has stated that the CPP ‘... expanded its legal organising through the creation of a number of mass based sectoral organisations. Most prominent among these was the establishment of the Kilusang Mayo Uno...’.91

One could argue, however, that while the CPP did form the KMU, over time the KMU became independent of the Party. However, a KMU official admitted that there was cooperation between the KMU and the Communist controlled guerrilla group the New People’s Army (NPA) during the 1980s. He stated that

> [t]here is now occasional tacit cooperation between us [KMU] and the NPA, because many legal groups like ours are under harassment from the military. Although this is not officially said, of course, there is natural cooperation between the legal groups and the underground. In certain areas where we have trouble organizing, the NPA puts pressure on company goons and the [police] officers.92

There are numerous examples of individuals joining the guerrilla movement from the National Federation of Sugar Workers (a KMU labour federation), which the Philippine’s government claimed was ‘... infiltrated by the communists’.93 These examples do not

---

92 KMU official quoted in Chapman, p.129.
prove that the CPP controls the KMU, but it does demonstrate that there are close links between them. There are also allegations that the KMU diverted funds to the CPP. Professor of Business and Economics at De La Salle University Leopoldo Dejillas stated that

[b]etween 1982 and 1989, the KMU reportedly received funding from the International Church Coordination Commission for Development Projects ... a Protestant-Catholic aid group that dispenses a large amount of the Dutch government aid grants to the Third World. At least 20 percent, or around 47.4 million pesos, of aid from the Dutch government and Holland-based groups meant for Philippine labor unions was diverted to the CPP-NPA for arms purchases through the NDF [National Democratic Front] and local “legal left” groups like the KMU. \(^{94}\)

In addition, the Philippine’s military uncovered ‘... video tapes of lectures delivered by former CPP chairman Jose Maria Sison and his wife Juliet, who admitted the linkages between the CPP and KMU ... ‘ \(^{95}\)

Another example of the ties between the two occurred in 1989. The KMU issued a press release supporting the actions of the Chinese government over the Tiananmen Square massacre. \(^{96}\) The CPP also supported the Chinese government’s actions. Scipes noted, however, following widespread criticism the KMU claimed that the statement did not come from the leadership, but two staff members from the Public Affairs Bureau. The KMU fired the staff members and sided with the Chinese workers and students. \(^{97}\) The truth behind the statement is difficult to ascertain. However, given the other evidence it is entirely possible the KMU leadership, following the CPP, authorised the press release not expecting the amount criticism that followed. It was only following this criticism that the KMU fired the

---


\(^ {95} \) Ibid., p.82.

\(^ {96} \) West, p.178.

staff members as a form of damage control. Nevertheless, the above clearly demonstrates that there are very close linkages between the KMU and the CPP.

The links between the KMU and the CPP are not necessarily something to criticise. However, a split within the CPP had a major negative influence on the KMU. In July 1993, the CPP Manila Rizal leadership declared autonomy from the national leadership, with other regional leaders following suit. This led to many legal movements splitting along the same regional lines as occurred in the CPP; the first was the Philippine Peasant Movement. One month later, '... members of the ruling council for Metro Manila and Rizal of the ... KMU ... broke [with] its national federation, whose leaders they accused of being corrupt and divisive'. The breakaway group formed a new labour federation: United Workers for Change. The following month the National Federation of Labor, the National Federation of Labor Unions and the United Workers of the Philippines also left the KMU.

Irrefutable proof was not uncovered that the KMU splintered because of the break-up of the CPP. However, as the Director of the Institute of Popular Democracy in Manila Joel Rocamora noted, the joint statement by the three labour federations on why they left the KMU expressed similar sentiments to those expressed by the groups which left the Philippine Peasant Movement. Moreover, as The Manila Chronicle argued, it was '... not coincidental that the factional power struggles within the KMU ... were initiated by ... [its] Metro-Manila components', the same region where the local CPP leadership declared autonomy from the national party. In other words, the split in the KMU was because of the split in the CPP.

100 Rocamora, p.207.
Another example of a social movement union's ties with a political party damaging the union occurred in the US. As I will highlight in Chapter 6, whether there were any formal links between the United Electrical Workers (UE) and the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA) is difficult to determine, but there is little doubt that many leading members of the UE were also CPUSA members. The alleged ties between the two led to an anti-communist group breaking away from the UE and forming a rival union. This had a major negative impact on the UE. In addition, in 1955 the CPUSA issued a statement urging its cadres to join unions that were members of the AFL-CIO. This led to the UE losing more than half its membership in two years; the UE never recovered from this action.

Social movement unions' links with political parties can end up being a double-edged sword. These can benefit the union, for example, ANC's implementation of labour-friendly policy during its first term in office. However, it can also hurt the union. Thus, while Moody, Waterman, and Lambert and Webster argue that social movement unions should have alliances with political parties, political alliances can badly damage social movement unions.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has further evaluated Moody, Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Waterman's theories of social movement unionism. In relation to which theory of social movement unionism is better, I would suggest that this is not an either/or question. None of the theories of social movement unionism are without flaws. This chapter and the previous two chapters have highlighted strengths and weaknesses of all the theories. For example, Moody continually claims that a decline in economic conditions can lead to an increase in
class consciousness, but it can also lead to an increase in support for the far-right. In addition, social movement unions links with political parties can negatively affect the union. However, he is correct to focus on a labour internationalism that does not ignore national struggles.

Lambert and Webster's theory demonstrates that structural conditions partially led to the rise of social movement unionism in South Africa, and that neoliberalism may result in unions increasingly adopting social movement unionism. However, as with Moody's account, alliances between social movement unionism and political parties have damaged unions. As such, their emphasis on COSATU being a social movement union is not necessarily still true today.

Scipes is correct to argue that the ideological conception of activists determines a union's characteristics. Likewise, his belief that union democracy and worker education programmes could lead to unions adopting social movement unionism is certainly possible. Moreover, the KMU and COSATU (before 1992) do demonstrate, at the very least, that Scipes' theory of social movement unionism is/was applicable to two major unions in the South and gives credence to his theory.

Waterman's theory highlights the potential benefits of unions adopting a networking structure like new social movements. However, while a networking structure would possibly lead to greater participation, it does not automatically result in greater democracy compared to the traditional union model. Nevertheless, Scipes and Waterman are correct to argue there are benefits for unions to adopt non-class issues as a way to '... broaden the appeal of unionism and increase the number of their allies'. However, overall Waterman's theory of social movement unionism is weaker than the others. In addition to his belief that unions should adopt a networking structure, Waterman is also mistaken to
argue that home workers, part-timers, and sub-contractees are replacing semi-skilled industrial workers; and the labour movement should concentrate on international struggles. Despite his emphasis on internationalism, he also does not clearly distinguish between national and international struggles. Furthermore, by just listing a set of propositions that social movement unions/new social unions should adopt without stating how and by whom unions would be transformed in the desired directions, this does not help people trying to transform unions into social movement unions. Thus, while there are strengths and weaknesses of all the respective theories of social movement unionism, Waterman’s theory has more weaknesses than the other three.

PART II

SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM IN NORTH AMERICA
The previous chapters outlined and analysed some theories of social movement unionism. Social Movement Unionism theory suggests that certain kinds of union structures and activity will be more effective in defending and improving members welfare and bringing about social change than alternative (and dominant) union structures and activities, such as business unionism. Moreover, in some cases, it is challenging the entire structure of society: the social order itself.

The following three chapters will analyse social movement unionism in North America empirically by analysing unions that Moody argues are social movement unions. Out of the scholars I discuss, only Moody analysed social movement unionism in North America. Waterman did not analyse or even mention examples of social movement unions or new social unions. Lambert and Webster, and Scipes devoted almost their entire attention to southern unions (Lambert and Webster do analyse the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR), which includes Australian unions, while in his PhD dissertation, Scipes analysed the United Packinghouse Workers of America and the United Steel Workers of America in Chicago from 1933-1955. However, the dissertation is not an analysis of social movement unionism in the US).

In addition, only Moody makes a link between social movement unionism and collective bargaining. In North America, unquestionably the success or otherwise of a
union's negotiations/collective bargaining agreements with employers is one of its most crucial functions in the eyes of its members. Collective bargaining is about the ability of the union to improve and/or defend members' wages and working conditions, and to defend jobs. Moody recognised the importance of this as he specifically mentioned a union's strategy in collective bargaining in his understanding of social movement unionism. He argued that social movement unionism was '... militant in collective bargaining in the belief that a retreat anywhere only leads to more retreats – an injury to one is an injury to all'.

In contrast, Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes do not mention collective bargaining when discussing social movement unionism/new social unionism.

Moreover, Scipes stated that no North American union corresponds to his category of social movement unionism. Instead, he claimed there are North American unions that can be classified as social justice unions. He defined social justice unionism as

... one form of the economic type of trade unionism [the other being business unionism]. While its internal decision-making processes can range from a top-down, results-oriented model to a bottom-up, process-oriented and democratic model, its scope is broad, seeing the necessity of addressing the needs and concerns of all its members, in the union, in the workplace and in the community. In short, these self-defined interests are integrated with those of working people as a whole. It builds support through solidarity with other people-focused organizations and projects, working in mutual efforts to improve the well-being of all concerned. It is a form of trade unionism ultimately based on collectivity and mutual respect.

There are three major differences between social movement unions and social justice unions. First, as social justice unionism is one type of economic unionism, social justice unions operate largely within the industrial relations system; social movement unions do

---

3 Ibid.
not. Second, social justice unions largely focus on workers' struggles to change society, but they are also involved in community struggles; as such, they have alliances with social movements and community groups. Under Scipes' theory of social movement union, workers' struggles are only one of many efforts to change society; for any meaningful change, unions must have alliances with social movements. In other words, there is more focus on different kinds of struggles. Third, and most importantly, social justice unions do not actively attempt to challenge a country's economic and political system; social movement unions do this.

Nevertheless, social justice unions are not only concerned with "bread-and-butter" issues, but with everything that affects the interests of its members in the community and in the workplace. Social justice unions are also interested in the well-being of all working people, irrespective if they are union members. Moreover, these unions form alliances with other groups in an attempt to improve the life of all. In other words, Scipes' social justice unionism is very similar to Moody's account of social movement unionism. As I shall demonstrate, the North American unions that Moody claims are social movement unions also closely resemble social justice unions.

However there are two important differences between Scipes' social justice unionism and Moody's account of social movement unionism. First, Scipes' definition is very broad. It can include unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) with its focus on organising members, but then continuing business union practices of limited rank-and-file involvement in the affairs of the union apart from organising (see Chapter 1). The crucial aspect of Moody's account of social movement unionism is rank-and-file democracy. Rank-and-file involvement is an important aspect of all the theories of social movement unionism. As I shall note, there is a difference between the democratic practices

---

4 Scipes agrees with me on this point.
of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), United Electrical Workers (UE) and Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), and the top-down approach of the SEIU. Second, Moody argues labour internationalism is very important. Scipes' definition of social justice unionism, unlike his definition of social movement unionism, does not have an international dimension. I shall demonstrate that the CAW and UE are trying to improve the life of all working people both nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, despite these differences, Scipes' social justice unionism and Moody's social movement unionism are very similar.

In relation to Waterman, as already noted, he did not provide examples of social movement unions or new social unions. However, it is very unlikely that there are North American unions which correspond with Waterman's theory. First, no North American union has an organisational structure that corresponds with a new social movement structure. Second, all North American unions operate within their own countries' national industrial relations system and do not operate on the '... new terrain of struggle – that of popular self-organization outside, or independent of, capital and state'. Third, Waterman claimed that social movement unions/new social unions were '... working for the continuing transformation of all social relationships and structures ("economic", "political", "social", "residential", "domestic", "sexual") in a democratic and cooperative direction'. No North American union or indeed, one could argue, no union worldwide, does this. As I shall note in the following chapters, the North American examples of Moody's social movement unionism do not have these characteristics.

I claimed in Chapter 3 that there are close similarities between the accounts of social movement unionism of Moody, and Lambert and Webster (although all the authors I analysed regard social movement unions as having similar characteristics). The main

---

difference between Lambert and Webster, and Moody's accounts is that in both their
definitions of social movement unionism (the original, and in relation to SIGTUR) Lambert
and Webster specifically argue that such unions engage in political struggle, whether this is
national or international. In contrast, Moody argues that by adopting social movement
unionism, US unions would regain their former strength. This is not to claim that Moody
does not view social movement unions having an important role in challenging the state or
any leftist upheaval. However, it is a rare that Moody makes a link between social
movement unionism and challenging the state. Conversely, Waterman, Lambert and
Webster, and Scipes explicitly make this link.

Scipes recently gave a detailed explanation on what challenging the existing order
means for the day-to day reality of unions. Scipes stated:

It means these unions were challenging the anti-democratic
dominance of the state by the elites and their allies, and the
propagation of policies and operations that were intended to
hinder, if not attack, the well-being of working people (including
peasants, women, and the urban poor) of their respective countries.
Key to this challenge was the establishment and development of
member-run, popular democratic trade unions and other pro-people
organizations. These organizations, in turn, focused resistance
against employers, contractors, land lords, the urban police and the
elite-based state itself and, at best, suggested radical alternatives to
the current social order for the benefit of all working women and
men.6

Social movement unions challenging the existing order is the crucial difference
between Moody's account of social movement unionism and those of the other three.
Furthermore, as the following chapters will demonstrate, the North American social
movement unions (according to Moody) are vastly different from social movement unions
such as COSATU and the KMU because of one important characteristic. Both COSATU
and the KMU as part of their everyday activities were actively fighting for major changes

in the national economic-political structure in South Africa and the Philippines respectively. In contrast, the CAW and UE focus on achieving good collective bargaining agreements and organising new members, while also trying to improve the well-being of all people. Likewise, TDU focuses on reforming the Teamsters and getting Teamster members to join its ranks. As I shall claim, the North American social movement unions, especially the UE, do criticise unfettered capitalism. However, fighting for a leftist upheaval is not part of their everyday activities. Admittedly, this may be largely due to the political situation in Canada and the US, compared to that of the Third World. Nevertheless, by not challenging the existing order, there is a big difference between social movement unions in North America and those in the Third World. Thus, while there are similarities between all four versions of social movement unionism (hence the North American social movement unions have characteristics of all the different versions), when I analyse whether the North American unions are indeed social movement unions I will only do so on the basis of Moody’s account. However, due to the close similarities between Moody’s account of social movement unionism, and Scipes’ theory of social justice unionism, I will also determine whether the unions can be considered as social justice unions.
Chapter 5

THE CANADIAN AUTO WORKERS

This chapter assesses Moody’s argument that the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) can be understood as a social movement union. I use the CAW’s and the United Auto Workers’ (UAW) 1979-1984 collective bargaining agreements with the Big Three automakers (Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors), the 1996 negotiations with General Motors (GM), and the CAW’s response to Japanese production methods and lean production with a focus on its successes and failures at the Canadian-American Manufacturing Inc (CAMI), as empirical case studies of the validity of Moody’s argument. I observe that while the CAW has been very successful in collective bargaining agreements, it has been relatively powerless in preventing corporations from firing workers when there are downturns in business.

The CAW is one of the pre-eminent North American examples of Kim Moody’s account of social movement unionism. Moody argued that ‘... social-movement unionism can guide the actions of today’s typical, merged general unions, as the case of the CAW indicates’. However, Moody did not go into any detail about why the CAW was a social movement union. Nevertheless, he is not alone in claiming that the CAW is a very progressive union. The CAW itself argues that it is a social or movement union. It stated that ‘... social unionism means unionism which is rooted in the workplace but understands

1 Moody, Workers in a Lean World, p.290.
Likewise, Sam Gindin, who was the assistant to the national CAW President, asserted that the CAW had begun to discuss the issue of movement unionism in 1995. He stated that movement unionism means making the union into a vehicle through which its members can not only address their bargaining demands but actively lead the fight for everything that affects working people in their communities and the country. Movement unionism includes the shape of bargaining demands, the scope of union activities, the approach to issues of change, and above all, that sense of commitment to a larger movement that might suffer defeats but can’t be destroyed.

Likewise, CAW President Buzz Hargrove has argued that the CAW embraced social unionism:

Social unionism stresses the broad well-being of all working people, not just the narrow economic interest of our own members. It positions the union movement not as a narrow “special interest,” but as an economic and political weapon that can be wielded on behalf of all workers, and all the downtrodden.

As these quotes indicate, Moody’s account of social movement unionism and the CAW’s rhetoric of social or movement unionism are very similar. Nevertheless, it is necessary to determine whether the CAW’s rhetoric matches, or comes close to, its practice.

It is important to note that Moody does not explicitly list aspects that a union must embrace to be a social movement union. Nevertheless, as I stated in Chapter 2, while Moody’s account of social movement unionism remains vaguely defined, the outlines of it are clear. I determined that there are five crucial aspects of his account: (1) Union

---

4 Buzz Hargrove, CAW Education Department, Paid Education Leave Program [training manuals], vol. IV, CAW Canada, Willowdale quoted in D.W. Livingstone and Reuben Roth, 'Workplace Communities and
democracy/extensive rank-and-file involvement; (2) Undertaking to organise the unorganised; (3) Fighting for everything that affects working people in their communities and having alliances with the local community; (4) Labour internationalism; (5) Undertaking independent political action. In addition, while not a crucial aspect of his account, Moody noted that women and/or people of colour have greatly contributed in transforming and revitalising unions.

The CAW

The National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada, more commonly known as the Canadian Auto Workers, formed in 1985 after breaking away from the United Auto Workers (see below for a detailed overview of the negotiations with the Big Three automakers that led to the split with the UAW). The CAW is Canada’s largest private sector union representing workers in the auto, retail, hospitality and fisheries industries amongst others.5

Since its formation, the Canadian United Auto Workers (CUAW) (the CAW’s name before it became an independent union) had a strong left caucus. In its early years, the caucus comprised Communists, and a wide range of left militants. The then UAW President Walter Reuther set out to destroy the left caucus in the 1950s by eliminating Communists and all “suspect” individuals, including left-wing militants, from the UAW. However, while the purge was successful in the US, it was less so in Canada. This was because the CUAW viewed Reuther’s purge ‘... as a challenge to Canadian autoworkers’


5 'The CAW: A Dynamic Union’, CAW Website,
control over their own union'. Moreover, the CUAW’s left caucus ‘... had a much wider base of support amongst activists’ than the UAW’s did because it emphasised Canadian nationalism and rank-and-file democracy in the fight against the UAW bureaucracy. While the left caucus went in decline in the 1960s it was not eliminated, and economic instability in the late 1960s and 1970s led to its renewal. Falling corporate profits and productivity marked this period. The automakers responded ‘... with a strategy based on increased exploitation of the existing workforce through speedups of the assembly line and compulsory overtime’. This led to increased militancy on the shop floor, but the CUAW leadership did not support the rank-and-file. Instead, the leadership disciplined workers into accepting the automakers strategy. As a result, there was a revolt against the leadership, which led to the left gaining strength throughout the 1970s. Furthermore, during the 1960s and 1970s

... many of ... [the CUAW/CAW’s] top leaders and activists were introduced to the union at this time. They surfaced at a time of shop-floor militancy and social protest, and this atmosphere shaped, even if it did not determine, their future attitudes. The CUAW/CAW’s left-wing tradition continues to the present day.

The CUAW/CAW’s Negotiations/Collective Bargaining Agreements with the Big Three

As I previously noted in the Introduction to Part II, Moody specifically mentions collective bargaining in his social movement unionism definition. Thus, by comparing the CAW

---


7 Yates, pp.81, 85.

(which I will argue is a social movement union) with the UAW (tending towards business unionism), I am able to determine the benefit, or otherwise, of social movement unionism in collective bargaining agreements.

The negotiations between the UAW and the CUAW with the Big Three automakers between 1979 and 1984 were the catalyst that led to the Canadian branch of the UAW breaking away and forming the CAW.

A major reason why the CUAW left the UAW was the UAW’s business unionism and its refusal to fight for its members during collective bargaining. Stephen Herzenberg characterised the UAW’s negative strategy against business:

First, UAW strategy remained focused on wage and benefit bargaining with the Big Three. Second, on the shop floor, UAW leaders continued to let local unions fend for themselves or supported management initiatives thought necessary to enable companies to pay pattern wages and benefits. Third, outside the Big Three, the increasingly nonunion and low-wage independent parts-supplier industry received little of the union’s resources and attention. Fourth, in the political arena, union activity in an admittedly hostile climate remained focused on bureaucratic lobbying.  

### 1979 Negotiations/Collective Bargaining Agreements

As Queen’s University labour academics Pradeep Kumar and John Holmes noted, ‘... most commentators view the 1979 negotiations between Chrysler and the UAW as the beginning of the ‘era of concession bargaining’ in the North American auto industry’.  

Chrysler claimed that if it was to stave off bankruptcy, workers had to accept wage and benefit

---


concessions amounting to $203 million per year for three years.\textsuperscript{11} While the UAW accepted the concessions, the CUAW was initially against them. However, following a brief strike in Canada, the CUAW reluctantly accepted the concessions as it did not want to break the uniformity of contracts between Chrysler’s US and Canadian workers.\textsuperscript{12} However, less than a month later, Chrysler demanded that the UAW renegotiate their contract in the hope of winning more concessions. The US government demanded these concessions as it made its $3.5 billion bailout of Chrysler conditional on workers accepting additional concessions. The UAW agreed to Chrysler’s demand, which amounted to an additional $230 million over and above the original concessions, as it believed the concessions would prevent Chrysler from declaring bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{13}

The CUAW, however, rejected Chrysler’s demand for concessions. This stance put the CUAW at odds with Chrysler and the UAW. The then UAW President, Doug Fraser, issued an ultimatum. As John Holmes and A. Rusonik noted, Fraser stated ‘... the Canadians would either accept the concessions, or else they would be denied coverage under future international Chrysler master-collective agreements which would leave the small Canadian Chrysler section (Chrysler had only 14,000 workers in Canada) to the mercy of the large corporation in 1982’ when the current contract expired.\textsuperscript{14} In an attempt to resist the concessions, the CUAW lobbied the Canadian government to make a loan to Chrysler (Chrysler asked for a loan during the initial round of bargaining) conditional on no additional concessions. The CUAW’s position was enhanced when the ruling minority Conservative government lost office after only being in power for less than a year. The

\textsuperscript{11} All figures are in US dollars unless otherwise indicated.
\textsuperscript{13} Holmes and Rusonik, p.21.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p.21.
CUAW spent a substantial amount of time and money in the subsequent election campaign. ‘It set up eighteen phone banks, through which forty-five thousand autoworkers were reached and twenty thousand NDP [New Democratic Party; a left-wing Canadian political party] supporters were identified’. The election results saw the NDP gain four seats overall, and the conservatives lose power to the Liberal Party, which campaigned on ‘... greater state intervention and Canadianization of the economy’. The Canadian government eventually reached a deal with Chrysler, after it sought the CUAW’s input in the negotiations. Chrysler received a $250 million (Canadian) loan on the following conditions:

1. ‘An agreement by Chrysler not to close any existing facilities without approval of the minister of industry’.
2. ‘Corporate commitments to invest approximately $1 billion [Canadian] in Canada between 1980 and 1985’.
3. ‘Job guarantees’. Thus, while the US government tried to force UAW workers to accept concessions, the Canadian government forced Chrysler to protect workers jobs, to further invest in Canada, and no additional concessions.

The 1979 negotiations marked a turning point in relations between the UAW and the CUAW. Chrysler and the US government pressured the UAW to accept concessions; the UAW did not attempt to fight and almost automatically accepted the concessions. Moreover, as labour historian Nelson Lichtenstein argued:

The Chrysler bailout ... had a twofold consequence: the concessionary bargaining in what had once been a flagship firm of American industry offered a powerful model that quickly spread to other firms, where blue-collar wages fell; of equal importance, the fragmentation of the collective-bargaining process implicit in the bailout gave to many union-management relationships a quality not far different from that of Japanese enterprise unionism, in which

---

15 Yates, *From Plant to Politics*, p.196.
16 Ibid., p.197.
workers are given powerful incentives to identify their economic well-being with the fate of their own firm and its management.\textsuperscript{17}

In recent years, the UAW has furthered the inclination of workers to identify with their firms by allowing local unions to bid against each other for contracts (see below). In contrast, the CUAW drew a line in the sand and refused to accept more concessions after initially accepting concessions so there would be continued uniformity between Chrysler workers in the US and Canada. The Canadian government’s support was crucial in allowing the CUAW to resist concessions. Nevertheless, the CUAW’s willingness to fight both Chrysler and the UAW was instrumental in the Canadian government attaching conditions on its loan to Chrysler, and in the CUAW’s future success. Moreover, as the CUAW fought against Chrysler’s demand for concessions despite the UAW’s wishes, the UAW denied the CUAW coverage under future Chrysler international bargaining agreements. However, as the following sections demonstrate, this had no affect on the ability of the CUAW to achieve good collective bargaining agreements with Chrysler.

\textbf{1982 Negotiations/Collective Bargaining Agreements}

The 1982 negotiations with the Big Three by the UAW and the CUAW further contributed to the break up of the UAW, as the UAW once again agreed to concessions, while the CUAW, for the most part, successfully fought against them.

In 1981, Chrysler again asked the UAW to reopen their contract. The then Chrysler President, Lee Iacocca, arrogantly told the union ‘... you’ve got until morning to make a decision. If you don’t help me out, I’m going to blow your brains out. I’ll declare

bankruptcy in the morning and you’ll all be out of work. You have eight hours to make up your minds'.\(^\text{18}\) The UAW reopened the contract, and eventually agreed to concessions. Likewise, the CUAW leadership agreed to the concessions as they argued that ‘... these demands were not the result of a congressional decision but were based on the very real possibility of bankruptcy and loss of jobs at Chrysler’.\(^\text{19}\) A slim majority of workers in both the US and Canada ratified the agreement, which led to Chrysler gain ‘... concessions worth a further $622 million from its workers’.\(^\text{20}\)

Early in 1982 at the height of the US recession, both Ford and GM demanded that the UAW reopen their contracts. The UAW agreed to Ford and GM’s request, while the CUAW refused. The UAW’s negotiations with Ford and GM led to the UAW accepting concessionary contracts. The contracts resulted in the ‘... freezing [of] wages and pensions, postponing cost of living adjustment, [workers] giving up nine paid personal holidays and allow[ed] local unions to bid against each other for certain jobs before they were offered to outside sub-contractors’. In return for the concessions, the companies ‘... promised increased job security against plant closures due to outside contracting’ and increased benefits for laid-off workers.\(^\text{21}\)

After the UAW accepted concessions from both GM and Ford, the CUAW’s negotiations with the Big Three began. The CUAW decided to negotiate with GM first. The negotiations occurred at a time when ‘... industry layoffs and downtime were at peak levels’. GM threatened the CUAW by claiming it would move all of its production facilities out of Canada if the CUAW did not accept the concessions agreed to by the UAW. As Canadian labour academic Charlotte Yates noted, ‘... this threat was all the more

\(^{18}\) Lee Iacocca quoted in Holmes and Rusonik, p.22.

\(^{19}\) Yates, p.204.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., p.204; Holmes and Rusonik, p.22.

real because it came days after GM laid off 1,540 Ontario autoworkers. However, the CUAW largely resisted concessions despite the threat and the UAW’s attempt to undermine the CUAW’s negotiations with GM. While Canadian workers were forced to give up nine paid personal holidays, the deal ‘... gave the average worker over $2100.00 [Canadian] more in wages over the life of the contract, and improved benefits’. In addition, GM agreed not to change local work-rules, which would have given it ‘... greater flexibility in assigning workers’. Because of these negotiations, for the first time Canadian GM workers received better pay and conditions than their counterparts in the US did.

Once the contract was finalised, the CUAW commenced negotiations with Ford. Ford insisted that the CUAW accept concessions and refused to accept a similar contract to the one the union negotiated with GM. Furthermore, Ford wanted concessions from its office workers as well as production workers. The CUAW refused to accept Ford’s request for concessions. Instead, it stated that all union members at Ford would go on strike for a decent collective bargaining agreement for production workers and the office workers. The then CUAW President Bob White claimed that he was not sure whether the production workers would had gone on strike for the office staff, but he convinced the Ford negotiating team that they would. Eventually, just before the strike deadline, Ford agreed to almost the exact same contract that the CUAW negotiated with GM.

The settlements between the UAW, and CUAW with and GM and Ford once again demonstrated that the CUAW’s policy of resisting concessions was overwhelmingly

---

23 See Bob White, *Hard Bargains: My Life on the Line*, McClelland and Stewart, Ontario, 1987, p.203 for White’s claim that the UAW was attempting to undermine the CUAW’s negotiations with GM.
24 Yates, *From Plant to Politics*, p.209; Holmes and Rusonik, p.25.
25 Ibid., p.209; White, p.209.
26 White, pp.210-2.
successful. Even in the face of plant closures, the CUAW, while giving up nine paid personal holidays, managed to win substantial pay rises for its members. In comparison, the UAW quickly submitted to Ford and GM’s demands and accepted concessions. The negotiations with Ford and GM demonstrated the CUAW’s success in collective bargaining, and it was to gain further success in its negotiations with Chrysler.

In 1982, Chrysler yet again sought concessions from the UAW and offered its workforce a paltry $0.25 per hour wage rise. The UAW leadership quickly accepted this offer. However, an overwhelming number of workers (70 per cent) rejected the contract. Chrysler UAW workers agreed ‘... to continue to work under the terms of the old contract until bargaining resumed ... after a ‘cooling-off’ period’. 27

In contrast, the CUAW leadership refused to accept Chrysler’s demands for concessions. Moreover, it sought a $1.15 (Canadian) per hour increase for its members. This would have restored what was lost in the 1981 agreement. 28 During one meeting, Bob White exploded after he listened to Chrysler’s President’s right-hand man – Gerry Greenwald – lecture the CUAW on the state of the Canadian economy. He told Greenwald that Chrysler management had made no sacrifices:

... this equality of sacrifice is bullshit. You’ve sacrificed nothing. There are workers in Windsor who have been laid off for months. They’ve loaded their families into cars and driven to Alberta looking for jobs. And you’re telling us we’re not going to get more money? The hell with that. If we don’t get more money, you’re not going to get any goddamned cars. It’s that clear and it’s that simple. 29

Chrysler did not believe that the CUAW was willing to strike over the issue: it was wrong. The strike, which lasted for five weeks, cost Chrysler an estimated $4 million per day. It eventually led Chrysler to accept the CUAW’s demand for a $1.15 (Canadian) per

27 Holmes and Rusonik, p.23.
28 Ibid., p.23.
hour wage rise, and at the same time agreed to offer Chrysler’s US workers a US $0.75 per hour increase. However, instead of the usual three-year contract, the contract was only a one-year agreement. Nevertheless, after it agreed to open contract negotiations with Chrysler early the following year, the CUAW achieved a two-year contract after only a few days of negotiations. This led to parity returning for all CUAW workers in the Big Three. Chrysler’s Canadian workers received approximately an extra $5 (Canadian) per hour compared to what they received in 1982.

The CUAW’s 1982 contract negotiations with the Big Three illustrates the effects of militancy and pro-worker ideology, two components of Moody’s account of social movement unionism, during contract negotiations. By refusing to accept concessions, and willing to go out on strike to achieve its goals, the CUAW successfully fought concessions. Moreover, it won improvements in its members’ wages and working conditions. In contrast, the only success that the UAW had during the negotiations was with Chrysler. It is doubtful whether the UAW would have achieved that if the CUAW accepted concessions from Chrysler. The same pattern continued in the 1984 negotiations with GM.

1984 Negotiations/Collective Bargaining Agreements

The UAW first targeted GM in the 1984 Big Three negotiations. The contract that the UAW agreed to was vastly different from all its previous collective bargaining agreements with the Big Three. After a limited strike in which the UAW only targeted a few GM

29 White, p.221.
30 Ibid., pp.236-7; Holmes and Rusonik, p.23; Yates, From Plant to Politics, pp.209-10; Benedict, p.31.
31 White, pp.250-1.
plants, the UAW traded concessions for job security; workers ratified the contract by a 58-42 per cent margin.\textsuperscript{32}

The contracts surrendered the traditional 3% AIF [Annual Improvement Factor] and COLA [Cost of Living Adjustments]. In its place there was to be a $0.23 per hour increase in the base rate, ... no base increases either in the second or the third year, and lump sum increases of $600 in the first year and $300 in the final year of the contract... In return[...] the company agreed to put $1 billion, over a six-year period, into a ‘Job Opportunity Bank’ to provide assistance to workers for retraining or for transfer to new plants. [In addition, GM agreed] ... to provide longer-term income security to laid-off workers.\textsuperscript{33}

Despite GM’s insistence that workers accept concessions, GM offered bonuses to its top officials of over $1 million, with Chairman Roger Smith receiving a $1.5 million bonus.\textsuperscript{34}

Ford agreed to the same contract that the UAW negotiated with GM.

GM’s proposal to the CUAW was not similar to the one that the UAW agreed to; it was worse, as GM demanded numerous concessions. Not surprisingly, the CUAW rejected GM’s proposal and eventually went on strike. However, in addition to fighting GM, the CUAW had to deal with the spoiling tactics of the UAW. These included the UAW President Owen Bieber threatening to withhold strike authorisation, and Bob White noted in his autobiography that he believed that ‘GM was getting a message from Bieber that the corporation didn’t have to worry about yielding on wage increases’.\textsuperscript{35} After White realised this he stated to GM negotiators:

Someone ... thinks that this strike is going to be taken away from us. That’s not going to happen... I want to tell you ... that when we go out to the membership this weekend, and I wrap myself in the Canadian flag and talk about Roger Smith’s executive bonuses and stock options, we won’t have to meet with them again for another six or eight weeks. They’ll be so charged up they’ll be


\textsuperscript{33} Holmes and Rusonik, p.26.

\textsuperscript{34} Benedict, p.32.

\textsuperscript{35} White, p.271.
ready to strike until hell freezes over. Better get that message to Detroit.\textsuperscript{36}

The CUAW did not have to strike until hell froze over. It reached a settlement with GM after a twelve and a half day strike. The settlement was a success for the CUAW, with Canadian GM workers receiving on average a 2.25 per cent wage increase. Furthermore, there was ‘... no elimination of COLA and AIF, although for political reasons it was now called special Canadian adjustment, and workers recovered some of their paid personal holidays’ lost during the 1982 CUAW-GM collective bargaining agreement.\textsuperscript{37} The agreement also contained subsidised childcare for GM workers, affirmative action programmes, and a ‘... prepaid legal service to which General Motors contributed three cents an employee for every hour worked’.\textsuperscript{38}

The settlement was a stunning victory for the CUAW in the face of pressure from both GM and the UAW to settle for substantially less than it eventually achieved; Ford accepted the same contract without a fight.\textsuperscript{39}

However, the GM negotiations led to the break up of the UAW. The CUAW initially demanded greater autonomy within the UAW. This was because the CUAW wanted to conduct ‘... its own collective-bargaining strategy, independent of any US strategy ... [and] strike authorization would be automatic upon a request from a Canadian director’.\textsuperscript{40} The UAW rejected the CUAW’s demand for more independence by a vote of twenty-four to one (Bob White voted for the motion). Following its rejection, White proposed that the

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p.272.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., pp.278-9; Yates, \textit{From Plant to Politics}, p.227; Holmes and Rusanik, p.26; Perusek, pp.274-5; Benedict, pp.34-5.
\textsuperscript{38} White, p.279; Benedict, p.35; Yates, \textit{From Plant to Politics}, p.227.
\textsuperscript{39} White, p.279.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p.281.
CUAW break away from the UAW. Somewhat surprisingly, the motion passed seventeen votes to seven, which led to the formation of the Canadian Auto Workers.41

The 1979-1984 Negotiations: Does Militancy Matter?

There is considerable debate over the 1979-1984 CUAW-Big Three, UAW-Big Three collective bargaining agreements. The debate focuses on whether the CUAW achieved better contracts because of its militancy and ideology or through the healthier state of the Canadian economy in comparison to the US economy. Throughout his works, Moody argues that militancy is crucial. Indeed, in his definition of social movement unionism he specifically stated that such unionism ‘... is militant in collective bargaining in the belief that retreat anywhere only leads to more retreats – an injury to one is an injury to all’.42

It is true that the Canadian economy was in a healthier state than the US economy, but does this alone explain the substantial different in the contracts? Kumar and Holmes argued that ‘... while the differences in ideology and political culture had relatively inconsequential effects on the bargaining outcomes during the 1960s and 1970s when employment and real wages were rising steadily on both sides of the border, they suddenly assumed a new significance in the recessionary climate of the 1980s’.43 Likewise, Yates admitted that economic factors combined with government policies in Canada and the US partly explained the success of the CUAW’s collective bargaining agreements in comparison to the UAW’s.44 For example, in 1979 the US government agreed to bail out Chrysler, but this was conditional on Chrysler’s US workforce accepting concessions.

41 Ibid., pp.288-90.
42 Moody, Workers in a Lean World, p.4.
43 Kumar and Holmes, p.170.
Conversely, the Canadian government agreed to grant Chrysler a loan, on condition that Chrysler invested approximately $1 billion (Canadian) in Canada over five years and provided job guarantees. However, while the UAW accepted the concessions from Chrysler without a fight, the CUAW mounted a huge electoral campaign against the concessions. Moreover, the CUAW "... sought widespread union and community support for its no-concessions policy ... [and] adopted a strategy of openness and availability to the media in order to place its agenda before the public and into national debates on economic restructuring". 45

Yates argued that despite the varying health of the US and Canadian economies, three factors explained the difference in the contracts. First, the democratic organisational structure of the CUAW as this allowed Local union leaders access to the national union leaders through the Canadian Council (see below for an overview of the CUAW/CAW's organisational structure). This made it very difficult for the leadership to accept concessions without a backlash from the rank-and-file. "The independence of the Canadian Council from executive or administrative control meant that it could be used to mobilize concerted opposition to leaders while at the same time keeping leaders in touch with the pulse of the membership". UAW local leaders did not have this level of access to the UAW leadership in the US. 46 Bob White paid tribute to the Canadian Council. He claimed it was "... a unique institution; it makes UAW in Canada different and its leadership accountable. It has proven its worth ten times over in the past few years". 47

The CUAW's democratic structure and rank-and-file involvement corresponds with Moody's account of social movement unionism. Indeed, as I argued in Chapter 2, union

---

47 Bob White quoted in Benedict, p.37.
democracy and rank-and-file participation is the key aspect of his account. Moody stated:

'Social movement unionism is one that is deeply democratic, as that is the best way to mobilize the strength of numbers in order to apply maximum economic leverage'.

The second factor was that the UAW's '... collective identity was articulated around nativist US culture and language... This worldwide view identified workers' interests with US interests, including those corporations such as the Big Three'. Conversely, while the CUAW leadership was prepared use nationalism, such as White threatening to wrap himself in the Canadian flag to increase its chances of achieving a good contract, they did not see itself as an ally of business, but as a competitor to it. Third, the CUAW's struggles against the Big Three in the late 1970s '... had prepared the ground work for the 1980s'. In comparison, the UAW accepted concessions without a fight, and the UAW leadership attempted to silence dissidents.

Nevertheless, despite Yates' claim, it is important to analyse the respective states of the US and Canadian economies and auto industries. Canadian labour studies academic Donald Wells noted that in Canada, the assembly and parts segments of the auto industry expanded during the 1980s; in the US both contracted. Between 1975 and 1990, Canada's share of North American vehicle production rose from 13.9 percent to 15.5 percent while the US share fell from 86.1 percent to 78 percent. Whereas 340,000 US jobs (one-third of the workforce) were lost in the 1979-82 auto industry shakeout, fewer than 15,000 Canadian jobs (one-fifth of the workforce) were lost. Differences in job security widened thereafter: Canadian automotive employment grew throughout the 1980s whereas it fell more than 16 percent between 1987 and 1990 in the US... [Moreover,] 14 Big Three plants closed in the US but none closed in Canada.

48 Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*, p.4
50 Ibid., p.231.
Both Wells, and Thomas Hyclak and Michael Kolchin argued that there were two main reasons why Canadian workers enjoyed greater job security compared to their US counterparts, and hence the CUAW could achieve better contracts. First, the 1965 Canada-US Automotive Agreement which was a ‘... managed trade agreement which protected [Canadian] jobs by requiring the Big Three to maintain balance between sales and production in Canada’.\(^{52}\) Second, labour costs were approximately $8 per hour cheaper in Canada compared to the US.\(^{53}\) Wells noted that as the Canadian economy slumped, with the auto industry particularly hard hit, and the implementation of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement in 1989, the Canadian labour movement as a whole, including the CAW became less militant. For example, there was a major reduction of person days lost because of strikes in ‘Ontario’s transportation equipment sector, which includes the auto industry. By 1994 there were only six stoppages involving 395 workers in the entire sector. In 1995 there were nine stoppages’. This compared to 400,000 person days lost in 1984, and approximately 280,000 in 1987.\(^{54}\)

The above partially validates the argument that the state of the economy is a factor in determining the level of labour militancy. However, at the same time, it is important to note that the UAW traded concessions for job security. Yet, as Wells stated, between 1979-1982 340,000 jobs were lost in the US auto industry, while between 1987-1990 US automotive employment fell 16 per cent. Thus, the UAW was not successful in preventing job losses. It was a lose-lose situation for UAW workers. There was deterioration in their wages and working conditions, as well as a decrease in job security. While the weak state of the US

\(^{53}\) Wells, pp.175-6; Hyclak and Kolchin, p.268.  
\(^{54}\) Wells, pp.180-1.
economy did partly lead the UAW accepting concessions, during the same period, it is wrong to assume that the Canadian economy was in a healthy state.

As previously mentioned, the 1982 CUAW-GM negotiations occurred at a time when ‘... industry layoffs and downtime were at peak levels’, with GM laying-off over fifteen hundred Ontario workers a few days before the negotiations with the CUAW began. The success of the CUAW’s collective bargaining agreements with the Big Three in 1982, including a stunning victory against Chrysler, cannot just be because of the healthier state of the Canadian economy. As Yates argued about the 1979-1984 negotiations as a whole:

There is little doubt that the recovery of the auto industry in mid-1983 bolstered the CUAW’s no-concession fights against Chrysler, GM, and others in the post-1983 period. But considering that the CUAW’s no-concession strategy was articulated in 1981 during the darkest days of the recession and at a time when Chrysler really did look to be on the verge on bankruptcy, it is unlikely that slightly less depressed economic conditions gave Canadian autoworkers more courage to resist this and other companies’ demands.55

Moreover, Canadian auto plants export the majority of vehicles they produce to the US. For example, in 1985, ‘GM Canada assembled 841 446 vehicles ... in Canada, only 183 721 of these vehicles [approximately 22 per cent] were actually sold in Canada, the rest being exported for sale in the USA’.56 Thus, weak economic conditions in the US, irrespective of the state of the Canadian economy, would affect the CUAW/CAW’s bargaining strength in addition to the UAW’s bargaining strength, as there would be less demand from US consumers for new vehicles. Cheaper labour costs in Canada would favour the CUAW/CAW in comparison to the UAW. However, if the state of the economy is the crucial factor in collective bargaining agreements, the weak US economic conditions during the 1979-1984 negotiations should have led to the CUAW accepting concessions in

55 Yates, From Plant to Politics, p.229.
56 Holmes and Rusonik, p.15.
an attempt to protect its members' jobs. That it did not, and achieved wage rises for its members, further demonstrates that a union's militancy and ideology, such as social movement unionism, is crucial in collective bargaining agreements.

The CAW: A Social Movement Union

The CUAW was by in large a very democratic union throughout its existence. This tradition has continued under its new name. A key component of the CAW’s Statement of Principles is that

[Unions are voluntary organizations. We can only be effective if the membership knows the union truly belongs to them. This means a union which reflects the goals of its membership, allows the members full participation, and encourages workers to develop their own skills and understanding.]

The CAW’s organisational structure is a crucial element in its approach to democratic unionism. Under the CAW’s constitution each Local, of which there are over seven hundred, must have ‘... several standing committees including, Education, Environment, Women’s, and Political Education ... [as] a way of encouraging member involvement in their union – either through contested elections to fill such posts or through executive appointments to do the business of these committees’. Each CAW Local elects one delegate for a three-year term to sit on the CAW Council or the Quebec Council. The CAW Council and the Quebec Council are parallel organisations. The Quebec Council covers the Quebec region, while the CAW Council covers the rest of Canada. The CAW Council and

---

57 CAW, ‘Statement of Principles’.
Quebec Council meet two times a year. At these meetings, there is discussion of all issues affecting the CAW. As Ann Frost argued:

It is through these meetings that the CAW’s mission of being a member-driven, responsive organization is realised. They also enable members to share in important ways what the union does. Decisions are made at these meetings by delegate vote and since all delegates are elected by their fellow rank-and-file members, considerable control rests in the hands of the CAW’s local members.59

In addition, the CAW and Quebec Councils provide a forum where the CAW leadership can be kept informed of the rank-and-file’s response to key issues. It is also used as a ‘... means of mobilizing the rank and file behind a chosen course of action and monitoring local conformity with union policy’.60 Directly above the CAW and Quebec Councils in the CAW’s organisational structure is the CAW Council Executive. It is comprised of seven elected members that administer the CAW and Quebec Councils. The seven member Council Executive is also part of the National Executive Board: the CAW’s chief decision-making body. The National Executive is comprised of ten part-time members (the seven member Council Executive and three other individuals chosen from CAW Council and Quebec Council delegates or the rank-and-file) and three full-time members (the President, Secretary-Treasurer, and Quebec Director).61 If a union member has a dispute with the National Executive, he or she can ask the Public Review Board to adjudicate on the matter. The Board oversees ‘... the conduct of the National Executive Board’ and is comprised of five people who are not members of the CAW.62

The UAW provides a contrast to the CAW’s democratic unionism. The UAW Executive Board has twenty-four full-time members, with no representation from the Local

60 Yates, p.83.
62 Frost, ‘Union Involvement in workplace decision making’, p.277.; ‘The CAW Constitution: Your Democratic Rights Guaranteed’, CAW Website,
level. Since ‘... the late 1940s, when a caucus led by Walter Reuther won a bitter factional fight, UAW internal debates have been carefully controlled by the leadership’.

The UAW’s Public Review Board argued that ‘... executive board officers had a right to expect absolute loyalty from those below them because the union is “a one party state”’. The UAW hierarchy’s belief that the union is a one party state led it, for example, to refuse the dissident New Directions movement from speaking at the 1992 UAW Convention. This demonstrates the differing approaches to union democracy of the CAW and the UAW, and that the CAW’s practice of democratic unionism fulfils a key characteristic of Moody’s account of social movement unionism.

The CAW’s Education Department is an important facet in the union’s goal of continued rank-and-file involvement and for it to be a social union. The CAW claimed that the role of the Education Department is to ‘... provide basic education to new members about the structure and role of our union’. The Education Department is to ‘... create the programs and material to help activists get a handle on what is happening in the world, put it into the context of our history and philosophy and move ahead towards social unionism’. As Reuben Roth noted, ‘... the theme of “social change” is often repeated in CAW literature... The goal of politicizing trade union activists and raising working class consciousness is not a subterfuge, but an implicitly stated, hoped-for outcome of their educational programs’. The Paid Education Leave programme is one of the most important CAW education programmes. The programme is a four-week course that covers


63 Herzenberg, p.322.


... labour history, sociology, political science and economy as well as public speaking, communications and media literacy’. Over 5500 CAW members have completed the course since its inception, with a majority now occupying ‘... leadership positions within the union’. Through its Education Department programmes, the CAW is training its future leaders and members more generally, to value rank-and-file involvement in the union, union democracy, and to embrace social unionism as the core strategy of the CAW. This is especially crucial for the CAW, as thousands of workers join the union each year who may not be committed to social unionism.

Since it seceded from the UAW, the growth of the CAW has been staggering. In 1984, a year before its secession, the CAW had 120,000 members; in 2001 it had 250,000 members and, on average, has organised more than 6000 new workers per year. In contrast, the UAW for the decade after the split lost one-third of its membership, and between 1979 and 1995, lost half of its members. Nevertheless, the UAW still organises more new members than the CAW. From 1998 to 2002, the UAW organised 51,782 workers or approximately 13,000 workers per year. However, the UAW has 710,000 members, which is three times the size of the CAW.

Like the UAW, the CAW has not been immune to membership losses. Between 1985 and 1995, the closure of two hundred and fifty unionised production facilities resulted in a loss of approximately twenty-eight thousand CAW members. In addition, because of

68 Ibid.
downsizing, approximately ten to fifteen thousand CAW members lost their jobs. Gindin noted that ‘... these losses would have cut the union’s size by over one-third to under 80,000’.72 However, successful organising drives have led many workers to join the CAW. For example, between 1985 and early 1996, approximately 50,000 additional workers became CAW members.73 These new members neutralised the loss of membership because of plant closures and downsizing. While the CAW was successful in organising a substantial number of workers, the real growth of the CAW was because of union mergers. Between 1985 and early 1996 union mergers led to almost 100,000 workers becoming CAW members, and allowing for job losses and retirements, workers who became CAW members since ‘1985 constitute about 65% of current membership and an estimated 50% of union activists’.74

While the majority of new CAW members are because of union mergers, Gindin claimed that the CAW’s profile as a social union influenced many unions to merge with the CAW. He asserted that ‘... the CAW was an attractive potential partner to many sectors because of its high profile, strong servicing reputation, independence from the Americans, and stance on concessions and fighting the corporate agenda’.75 Thus in addition to organising the unorganised, the CAW, through mergers, has brought existing union members under its banner of social unionism.76

In addition to organising the unorganised, Moody stated that social movement unions, indeed all unions, should have international alliances. As with its commitment to union

76 However, this is not to argue that the mergers have not brought tensions within the CAW. For more on the problems that the CAW faces because of union mergers see Yates, ‘Unity and Diversity’.
democracy and organising the unorganised, the CAW is at the forefront of labour internationalism. Moody noted that the CAW was involved in a noteworthy example of labour internationalism in the telecommunications industry with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in the US, and the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) in Britain during the early 1990s. The alliance formed when, during collective bargaining negotiations, Air Canada threatened the CAW that it could ‘... move ticket-reservations phone calls to the US’. At the same time, Air Canada management threatened the Teamsters that it could ‘... move US reservations work to Canada’. However, instead of accepting Air Canada’s demands for concessions, ‘... the CAW and Teamsters, joined by the ... [TGWU] ... and facilitated by the transport workers’ ITS [International Trade Secretariat] forged this unique cross-border pact’. The pact stated ‘... that the reservations made in each country were the work of the union workers in that country... [Moreover,] the three unions agreed that they would refuse to take reservations calls from each other’s countries, should the company try to reroute them’.77 By working together, unions in three different countries stood up to management threats while at the same time forging closer links with workers worldwide.

1996 CAW-GM/UAW-GM Negotiations/Collective Bargaining Agreement

As I outlined above, the CUAW achieved better collective bargaining agreements than the UAW in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The CAW’s and UAW’s respective contracts with the Big Three throughout the rest of the 1980s and 1990s continued this trend. In the 1987 agreements with the Big Three, the CAW attained indexed pensions for the first time with

77 Moody, Workers in a Lean World, p.242.
Chrysler. AIF and COLA were retained in the Chrysler agreement and the special Canadian adjustment for Ford and GM, while workers' base wage rate increased by 3 per cent for the first year and 25 cents (Canadian) per hour in the second and third year of the contracts. In comparison, the UAW achieved a 3 per cent increase in the base pay rate, with lump sum payments in the second and third year of the agreements, expansion of the job opportunity bank, profit sharing, and '... employment and income protection provisions'.

However, US workers' lump sum payments and profit sharing were less than Canadian workers' base pay increases, and new workers received a lower pay scale than existing workers did.

Likewise, in the 1990 contracts, the CAW, after a strike at Ford, achieved a base pay rate increase of 3 per cent for the first year and 2 per cent for the second and third years of the contracts. Moreover, the contract contained '... sweeping job and income-security provisions' including Ford giving the CAW one-year advance warning of any plant closures. Chrysler and GM also agreed to the contract the CAW negotiated with Ford. The UAW's 1990 collective bargaining agreements with the Big Three included a 3 per cent increase in the base pay rate for the first year of the contract, and a 3 per cent performance bonus in the second and third years, and profit sharing.

In the 1993 agreements, the CAW again achieved base pay rate increases, while the UAW secured a combination of a base pay rate increase for the first year, and lump sum payments in the second and third year of the contracts. The CAW achieved an increase in the base pay rate of 2 per cent for the first year of the contracts, 1.5 per cent for the second year, and 1 per cent for the third year. In comparison, the UAW achieved a 3 per cent base pay rate increase in the first year, and a three per cent lump sum payment in the second and third years. However, the UAW

---

78 Yates, From Plant to Politics, p.226.
sacrificed '22 cents of its COLA ... to help cover the cost of health benefits. The net result is that the real annual increase is close to 2 per cent.' Moreover, while lump sum payments give workers 'immediate cash', there are no increases in the base pay rate. Thus, there was '... no increase in payments for overtime, shift differentials, cost-of-living allowance, vacation pay or other benefits'. In other words, workers are usually better off with base pay rate increases. The 1996 CAW-GM and UAW-GM negotiations/collective bargaining agreements further continued the trend of the CAW achieving better contracts than the UAW. It also further demonstrates that militancy and a union's ideology are crucial in collective bargaining.

In 1996, the US economy was in a healthier state than the Canadian economy. For example, the Canadian unemployment rate was 9.7 per cent, compared to the US unemployment rate of 5.4 per cent. Canadian GDP grew by 2.1 per cent in 1996, while the US GDP grew by 2.7 per cent for the corresponding period. Thus, while neither economy was buoyant, the US economy was healthier.

The key provision in the UAW's collective bargaining agreements with Chrysler guaranteed '... to keep the number of union jobs at 95% of the company's current 105,000 member US hourly work force'. The UAW allowed Chrysler to reduce the number of unionised jobs, and the same situation occurred with Ford as the company previously agreed to the 95 per cent level. The UAW began negotiations with GM following its settlement with Chrysler. Industry analysts predicted that it was unlikely GM could match the contract provision in which Ford and Chrysler agreed to not reduce its workforce by more than five per cent. The main obstacle during the negotiations was that GM did not

---

want to include twelve plants it was planning to close in the 95 per cent level. Following
strikes at key GM production plants, GM agreed to match the Ford contract, including the
95 per cent of the existing workforce provision. While on the surface the contract appears
a “victory” for the UAW, a closer examination reveals otherwise. Numerous loopholes
allowed GM to reduce its workforce by more than five per cent. The contract provisions
allowed GM to do this and not be in breach of the contract if it reduced ‘... jobs as it makes
factories more efficient, if market share declines, if it sells uncompetitive plants, or if it
goes ahead with previously announced plant closings’. Moreover, the UAW agreed to ‘...
renew its “living agreement” approach, whereby top management and the pinnacle of the
union hierarchy can change local working conditions (flexibility) at will, and to permit
unbounded overtime and outsourcing, they also agreed to introduce a new element of wage
flexibility granted earlier to Ford, allowing the pay of workers in its part plants to fall
behind those in assembly over time’. The contract allowed GM to reduce the unionised
workforce by more than five per cent, for the further implementation of lean production
methods, and the UAW agreed to an unequal wage level for its GM workers. The collective
bargaining agreement was hardly a success for UAW GM workers. Indeed, the UAW’s
only success was achieving a $2000 ratification bonus for its GM workforce, and a 3 per
cent increase in the base wage rate for the second and third years of the contract. Thus, ‘...
marking the first time in over a decade it has won annual pay increases for more than one
year’. During the same period, in every collective bargaining agreement with the Big
Three, the CUAW/CAW had achieved an increase in the base pay rate for each year of the
contracts.

85 The Washington Post, October 31 1996.
87 The Wall Street Journal, November 7 1996.
88 Moody, Workers in a Lean World, p.108.
The CAW negotiations with GM began after the CAW reached an agreement with Chrysler in which Chrysler agreed not to reduce its workforce. Outsourcing was the main issue during the negotiations. The CAW hoped to limit the number of jobs that GM outsourced.\textsuperscript{90} While analysts believed that GM could successfully deal with a strike because of the company's financial reserves and the limited CAW strike fund, this did not deter CAW GM workers. They voted overwhelmingly (92 per cent) to give the CAW leadership strike authorisation.\textsuperscript{91} GM refused to accept the same deal the CAW negotiated with Chrysler, and the CAW refused to compromise, which led to CAW GM members going on strike.

To help striking workers, a CAW convention approved the doubling of dues for non-GM members for the duration of the strike, and the United Steelworkers provided financial assistance to the CAW.\textsuperscript{92} The CAW employed militant tactics as part of its strategy. When GM attempted to move production equipment from a struck plant to resume production elsewhere, CAW members staged a sit-in. This action had widespread community support and was ultimately successful. As CAW official Dave Robertson noted:

\begin{quote}
We ... saw solidarity in how the community responded. We were not seen as an isolated aristocracy of labor, but as a social movement that was fighting to preserve communities. And that has to do with how we defined the union.\textsuperscript{93}
\end{quote}

The two sides eventually compromised after a twenty-one day strike. Under the terms of the settlement, GM reversed its decision to outsource 814 jobs in Ontario and Quebec. It extended the life of one plant, which led to the retention of a 1000 jobs and the creation of another 400 jobs, but GM could sell two plants that employed 3500 CAW members.

\textsuperscript{90} Tom Fennell, 'Upbeat on the line', \textit{MacLean's}, October 28 1996, p.36; \textit{The Globe and Mail}, July 15 1996.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{The Globe and Mail}, September 19 1996; \textit{The Financial Post}, October 5 1996; \textit{The Toronto Star} August 26 1996.
\textsuperscript{93} Dave Robertson quoted in Moody, \textit{Workers in a Lean World}, p.278.
However, while the CAW allowed GM to sell the plants, the contract stated that the new owners of the plants must abide by the CAW-GM contract. Workers who wished to retire were ‘... offered lucrative early-retirement packages’ and workers who remained at the plants were ‘... guaranteed the same pension benefits as GM employees’ for nine years.\textsuperscript{94} GM Workers received a 2 per cent increase in their base pay rate for each year of the contract, plus cost-of-living provisions. Moreover, GM agreed to provide ‘... health-care benefits for the live-in partners of gay and lesbian employees’. Under the terms of the contract, ‘... same-sex partners of GM’s 26,000 Canadian hourly employees can receive the health-care benefits already offered to workers’ married spouses or heterosexual partners’. This provision in the contract was groundbreaking because in the US, GM did not provide these benefits to live-in partners of GM workers if they are the opposite sex, let alone the same sex.\textsuperscript{95} Ford accepted the same contract without a fight.

Thus, the UAW agreed to grant management greater flexibility, and allowed GM to reduce its workforce. Conversely, the CAW achieved an agreement that led to funded redundancies through retirement packages, and the creation of jobs. The UAW allowed wage differentiation between its assembly line and its auto-part plants workers. The CAW, even where it allowed GM to sell two plants, ensured that its contract with GM covered the workers in those plants. There is no comparison between the two agreements. Despite the healthier state of the US economy, the CAW achieved a superior contract from GM (and Chrysler and Ford) compared to the UAW. The UAW’s only success in comparison to the CAW was securing higher wage rises for the second and third year of the contracts (3 per cent to 2 per cent). However, as the CAW achieved a 2 per cent increase for each year of the contract it matched the total increase the UAW gained (6 per cent). Moreover, while

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{The Toronto Star}, October 23 1996; \textit{Los Angeles Times}, October 23 1996.
\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Los Angeles Times}, October 23 1996; \textit{The Dallas Morning News}, October 24 1996.
UAW workers got a $2000 ratification bonus, CAW workers through an increase in payments for ‘overtime, shift differentials, cost-of-living allowance, vacation pay or other benefits’ would have come close to equalling or surpassing the $2000 bonus through their 2 per cent increase in the first year of the contract. The 1996 collective bargaining agreements further demonstrates that while the state of the economy may have some bearing on collective bargaining agreements, a union’s militancy and ideology, and its preparedness to stand up in the face of threats by employers is the most important factor. The CAW’s social movement unionism ideology and its militancy in collective bargaining negotiations with the Big Three was an undoubted benefit to its members. As Moody argued, the lesson learnt by the CAW’s struggle against concessions and lean production while the UAW embraced them, was that ‘... resistance matters, particularly when the union leadership is willing to stick to its guns, and that elements of lean production or competitiveness the company sees as essential can be stopped or modified’. 96

CAW as a Social Movement Union 1996-

The CAW has continued to be a very progressive union since the mid-1990s. An important aspect of Moody’s account of social movement unionism is that unions have alliances with the local community and lead the fight for everything that effects workers in their community. This is also an important part of Scipes’ theory of social justice unionism, and is the goal of the CAW’s social unionism. Buzz Hargrove stated that ‘... social unionism stresses the broad well-being of all working people, not just the narrow economic interest

96 Moody, Workers in a Lean World, p.108.
of our own members'. Likewise, CAW official Dave Robertson noted that during the CAW’s strike against GM in 1996, the union was ‘... not seen as an isolated aristocracy of labor, but as a social movement that was fighting to preserve communities’. A somewhat surprising CAW campaign is the fight against homelessness. However, with housing prices rising dramatically in comparison to people’s income, this is an important fight for unions. The CAW noted that a ‘... single worker employed full time in Canada’s largest city on a minimum wage of $6.85 an hour will fall about $3,000 short of the poverty line at the year’s end’. In other words, workers on minimum wage may have to choose between paying rent and other essentials, such as food or clothing, with the situation even worse for the unemployed. The CAW argued urgent steps had to be taken to stem the problem of homelessness. Amongst its recommendations were for the implementation of a national housing strategy, for the Federal government to spend an extra 1 per cent of all government spending ‘... to meet basic housing needs in Canada’ and for the government to restore effective ‘rent control legislation’.100

Another community campaign that the CAW is involved in is the fight for adequate childcare. On November 14 2001, The Toronto Star leaked a report, which stated that the Ontario government planned to cut the managed childcare budget by 45 per cent. The CAW aligned with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care as it attempted to stop the massive cuts. The CAW, which was at the forefront of including childcare issues in collective bargaining agreements (see above and below for details), stated that ‘... we cannot sit back and watch the system developed over the last 60 years be wiped out in one

---

97 Buzz Hargrove, CAW Education Department, Paid Education Leave Program [training manuals], vol. IV, CAW Canada, Willowdale quoted in D.W. Livingstone and Reuben Roth, ‘Workplace Communities and Transformative Learning’, p.13
98 Dave Robertson quoted in Moody, Workers in a Lean World, p.278.
stroke. The government of Ontario needs to hear NOW that thousands of Ontarians want significant increases to child care funding – NOT CUTS'.

The CAW’s campaigns against homelessness and childcare cuts are only a couple of examples of the CAW fighting for everything that affects working people in their communities. Other examples include its involvement in the Days of Action (see Chapter 2 and below for details), its fight against the Canadian-American Free Trade Agreement, where CAW President Bob White was ‘... generally viewed as a central leader and spokesperson for the anti-free trade coalition’, and the fight to stop electricity deregulation in Ontario.

During the late 1990s, the CAW also continued its policy of labour internationalism, with it forging links with workers in the South, particularly in Mexico. For example, the CAW joined with UAW Local 879, in support of Cuautitlan Ford workers when Ford broke its contract with the Mexican workers. Ford refused to pay a Christmas bonus – ‘... a significant part of Mexican workers’ yearly wages’ – and participate in profit sharing. Moreover, it fired over seven hundred and fifty union members. In response to Ford’s actions, workers ‘... from all three countries have met on several occasions [and] in a symbolic gesture of solidarity, they have worn black arm bands to commemorate the death of ... a Ford worker killed by CTM [Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos] goons’.

100 Ibid.
103 Robin Alexander and Peter Gilmore, ‘The Emergence of Cross-Border Labor Solidarity’, NACLA Report on the Americas, vol. xxviii, no. 1, July/August 1994, pp.47, 51. The armed CTM (the dominant Mexican trade union) goons who were ‘clad in Ford uniforms, were allowed in the [Ford] factory where they shot and killed one worker and wounded eight others’, ibid., p.51.
In an effort to cover the costs of labour internationalism, the CAW established a Social Justice fund. The fund operates through ‘... contract language obligating employers (about 100 in all) to pay a per capita amount into the fund – three cents an hour in the case of Big Three contracts, down to one cent for smaller firms’. This generates approximately $2.5 million (Canadian) per annum and is an ingenious way to make employers contribute to the fight for decent pay and working conditions for workers in both the North and South.104

The CAW is committed to labour internationalism, whether in protecting its members jobs, or through supporting workers in the South against the unethical behaviour of multinational companies. In addition, the CAW through its Social Justice Fund, redirects the cost of engaging in labour internationalism to business, and in the example of the CAW's alliance with Ford Cuautitlan workers, makes Ford contribute to the cost of labour internationalism directed against itself.

While labour internationalism is important under Moody’s account of social movement unionism, he argued that ‘... most of the struggles against the structures and effects of globalization necessarily occurs on a national plane’.105 Thus, unions should undertake independent political action to fight the effects of neoliberal globalisation. Moody argued that where working class parties were in existence, workers had a ‘... higher level of both organization and class awareness of political questions’, and the existence of working-class parties in Canada and Europe had slowed neoliberal reforms.106 Moreover, he stated that social movement unionism was ‘... political by acting independently of the

105 Moody, Workers in a Lean World, p.274.
106 Moody, An Injury to All, pp.343-5.
retreating parties of liberalism and social democracy, whatever the relations of the union with such parties'.

The CUAW/CAW traditionally has backed the social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP). For example, as previously noted, in 1979, the CUAW spent a substantial amount of time and money during the Canadian election campaign in an attempt to help the NDP gain seats. However, since the NDP’s shift to the right following its election victory in Ontario, the CAW began to focus on new forms of working class politics. Instead of continuing its support for the NDP because there was no alternative, the CAW devoted ‘... more political energy to social movements and extra-parliamentary political action’, such as the Days of Action. The Ontario Days of Action were a 2-day protest against the ruling Ontario NDP’s shift to the right, involving unions (including the CAW) and community groups. While the Ontario Days of Action did not change government policy, ‘... the protests led to new alliances against capital, and it generated debate about the merits of capitalism’. To facilitate this process, the CAW formed ‘A Task Force on Working Class Politics in the 21st Century’ in December 1999. The goal of the Task Force was ‘... to establish the future role of our union in electoral politics as well as non-electoral politics, i.e. issue-oriented campaigns’. The introduction to the Task Force forcefully demonstrated the CAW’s theory of politics. It stated that

[w]e generally think of politics as being about who gets elected and what they do – that is about governments. But even though this is how it’s normally expressed, the essence of politics is really about power and change; whose interests and values get attention and results, and how people organize to affect that. So politics is really about society and not just government. No matter who gets elected, as long as power in society remains basically in the hands of a

---

minority, our lives are shaped and limited by that minority’s control (power) over production, investment, finances and communications.¹⁰⁹

The Task Force considered issues, such as the CAW’s ties with the NDP and electoral reform, but one of the most important, if implicit, goals of the Task Force was to strengthen the CAW’s social unionism. For example, the Task Force reported that ‘... when CAW members feel informed on political issues and see common concerns among their co-workers, they support social unionism’. Likewise, the Task Force noted that the membership ‘... felt it was important for the union to re-connect with the membership on political issues and renew the union’s commitment to social unionism’.¹¹⁰

This is where the Education Department has a crucial role. Gindin argued that ‘... within the CAW a group of staffers working in research and education have been trying to flesh out an alternative direction’. The key was ‘... moving beyond questions of distribution, and working through the implications of shifting capitalism’s focus on the accumulation of capital and control over labour power, to socialists’ concern with the accumulation of capacities and democratic intervention’.¹¹¹ The CAW’s education programmes have led to a change in workers’ attitudes. Gindin claimed that workers emerged from the programmes ‘... affected by the general orientation towards an independent working class perspective, the emphasis on thinking about capacities, the broadening of the theme of democracy and a new self-consciousness of their history’. In addition, the people who taught the programmes ‘... have emerged as a new layer of ideologically-confident activists’.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Ibid.
¹¹² Ibid., p.97.
One has to take into consideration, however, that Gindin is a socialist, and as the title of the article ('Socialism with Sober Senses') and the journal the article appeared in (*The Socialist Register*) indicate, the article was written for a far-left audience. Furthermore, Gindin was employed by the CAW when he wrote the article. Nonetheless, D. W. Livingstone, a professor of sociology at OISE/UT, and Ruben Roth confirmed his conclusions. They analysed the organised and informal learning methods of CAW members in relation to economic justice issues at the GM plant at Oshawa. As part of their study, they conducted interviews with workers at the plant who completed the Paid Education League Programme. One worker stated that while he could not remember the actual specifics of an anti-racist and anti-capitalism education course, he ‘... came back into the plant with an immense socialist vigour especially against racism’. Another worker felt sympathy for laid off workers in a nearby plant. He claimed that the workers had ‘... been jerked around by a corporation that’s making a lot of money and there’s no reason for it’. The workers’ responses supported Gindin’s findings that the CAW’s Education Department is changing workers’ attitudes.

These examples demonstrate that the CAW is hostile to unbridled capitalism and, through its Education Department, is trying to change workers’ attitude to reflect the CAW’s view. The CAW’s example also lends credence to Scipes’ claim that worker education programmes can help transform, or in the CAW’s case maintain, a union into a social movement union (see Chapter 3).

The final aspect of Moody’s social movement unionism is the equal treatment of minorities by unions. This is not an essential aspect of Moody’s account of social movement unionism. Nevertheless, he asserted that so-called minorities, such as women

---

113 Livingstone and Roth, ‘Workplace Communities and Transformative Learning’, p.17.
114 Ibid., pp.19-20.
and/or people of colour, greatly contributed in transforming and revitalising unions. Moody noted that the growth of Latino members within the International Brotherhood of Teamsters ‘... intersected with the growth of the TDU’, and Latinos were developing new union tactics and ideas, such as forming alliances with the local community. Thus, a union with minorities playing an active part, or at the very least, treated equally with other workers, is more likely to be a progressive union.

The CAW’s treatment of minorities mirrors its social union tradition. CAW President Buzz Hargrove recognised the importance of the eliminating discrimination against minorities. He stated in 1992 that ‘... there is no issue more pressing for our union that the recognition and rights of visible minorities, and the problems of racism and sexism in our communities, in our workplaces and in our local unions and national union’. The CAW has a long history of action over these issues, especially affecting women. It was the first private sector union to ‘... negotiate subsidized child care in 1984 with the Big Three auto makers ... and secure funds to build an on-site child care centre in Windsor, Ontario’. In negotiations with the Big Three automakers (Ford, GM, Chrysler), it insisted on ‘... no-discrimination clauses, human rights training, and employment-equity provisions’. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the 1996 contract included a provision where the same-sex partners of GM workers received the same health-care benefits as partners of heterosexual GM workers.

In addition to the above initiatives, the CAW has implemented courses on racism, sexual harassment, sexism, and human rights. It recognised in 1992 that there was a dramatic increase in women and people of colour in the union, yet the leadership was mostly comprised of white males. To reverse this problem, between 1992 and 1995, ‘... nine of the twenty-one staff members hired ... were women and/or workers of colour’, and the CAW Constitution required that the thirteen person CAW National Executive Board must include at least two women and a person of colour.

As the above indicates, the CAW is taking a leading role in the elimination of racism and sexism from the union, and in the wider community through its education programmes. In collective bargaining agreements, the CAW has no-discrimination clauses, making automakers subsidise childcare, the equal treatment for the partners of heterosexual and homosexual GM CAW workers, and its National Executive Board must have “minority” representation. These examples further demonstrate the CAW’s progressive orientation and give further credence that it is a social movement union under Moody’s account.

Lean Production

Arguably, the biggest challenge North American auto unions have recently faced is how to respond to Japanese production methods and lean production. The UAW has embraced them and is a keen advocate of labour-management partnerships. In contrast, the CAW,

---


through its social unionism (or social movement unionism) ideology, is hostile to them. However, the CAW has a somewhat contradictory stance as it allowed the Canadian-American Manufacturing Inc (CAMI), a joint venture between Suzuki and GM, to implement Japanese production methods, including lean production in return for management allowing it to represent CAMI employees. In this section, I will analyse the CAW’s response to Japanese production methods and lean production, and the CAW’s successes and failures at CAMI.

The CAW’s Response to Japanese Production methods

In 1989, the CAW released a statement on Japanese production methods, including lean production. It was hostile to these management initiatives:

As we mobilize against regressive taxation, the weakening of unemployment insurance or plant closure legislation, we are reminding our members that the “team” they are on is not the same team as their employer, and the “adversary” is not other workers but those who are on the other side of these issues.\(^{120}\)

This reiterated the CAW’s ideology of social movement unionism where the overriding principle is that of us (labour) versus them (business). The CAW statement rejected, amongst other things:

- ‘Japanese production methods which rigidly established work standards and standard operations thereby limiting worker autonomy;
- The use of techniques such as Kaizening (pressure for continuous ‘improvement’) where the result is speedup;
- Workplace changes which limit mobility; weakened transfer rights and erode seniority provisions;

• Team concepts or quality circles. 121

However, the statement acknowledged that it was not the case that labour-management partnerships are inherently bad, indeed ‘... there may be some advantages’ to them. 122

Four years after this statement, and following the CAW’s involvement at CAMI, the CAW released a new statement on Japanese production methods and lean production. Titled ‘Work Reorganization: Responding to Lean Production’, the statement outlined what the CAW believed the goals of lean production are:

• To reduce the number of jobs.
• To reduce labour hours to intensify the work effort.
• To eliminate non-value added parts of the work.
• To increase management control.
• To undermine the independence of the union. 123

However, despite the CAW’s opposition to lean production and its attempt to eliminate it, the union is willing to participate in production facilities where lean production methods operate in an attempt to change it from within. Likewise, the CAW is willing to work with management. The CAW stated ‘... we are not interested in becoming junior partners in production but we do want to develop an effective working relationship with management which improves the conditions of work for our members as well as the productive capacity of the workplace’. 124 Kumar argued that the CAW’s position on lean production reiterated its notion that there is an adversarial relationship between labour and management. At the same time, it accepted ‘... management goals of improvements in productivity and quality’. 125 This contradictory stance was implemented at CAMI.

124 Ibid. [Emphasis added].
125 Kumar, pp.58-60.
Canadian-American Manufacturing Inc.

The Canadian-American Manufacturing Inc, more commonly known as CAMI, is a joint venture between General Motors and Suzuki located in Ingersoll, Ontario, which began production in 1989. It employs Japanese production methods, such as team concepts, quality circles, and just-in-time delivery (all of which the CAW rejected in its 1989 statement on Japanese production methods). However, as early as 1986, Suzuki and the CAW reached an agreement for the union to represent CAMI workers once the plant was operational in exchange for the CAW's agreement that the plant could use Japanese production methods. The CAW claimed '... that while CAMI has a number of Japanese-style production methods, they co-exist with numerous features in union auto contracts, such as a grievance procedure, union security, standard seniority rights and full-time elected union officials.'

CAMI management argues that CAMI is 'one big team', with workers and management equally as important as each other were. CAMI workers have a different view. After conducting interviews with CAMI workers, James Rinehart, Christopher Huxley and David Robertson reached the following conclusion:

First, a substantial minority, and in some cases a majority, of respondents exhibited skepticism about CAMI's values and practices. Second, with each subsequent interview this skepticism was expressed by a growing proportion of workers. By the final round ... nearly 90 percent of the sample viewed CAMI as no different from other companies; over 90 percent felt common cafeterias, uniforms, and parking areas were smoke screens that masked differences in power; almost three-quarters regarded

---

128 The Toronto Star, April 1 1990.
CAMI as undemocratic, and over 80 percent viewed it as competitive and stressful.\textsuperscript{129}

This demonstrates workers had a very different view of management’s claim that CAMI was ‘one big team’. Over time, there were an increasing number of ‘... work slow downs, and work refusals’. The CAW Local at CAMI supported workers in an increasing number of disputes.\textsuperscript{130}

Thus, in 1992, with the original collective bargaining agreement set to expire, it was no surprise when CAMI workers overwhelmingly gave the union strike authorisation if the union and CAMI management could not reach an agreement, especially since CAMI had ‘... the lowest wage and economic package of any assembly plant in North America’.\textsuperscript{131}

However, as Rinehart et al argued, ‘... in-plant conditions – RSIs [repetitive stress injuries], workloads, team leader selection procedures, lack of relief workers, strict absenteeism policy, and arbitrary management decisions – assumed a special significance in light of the package of ideals and values professed but not delivered by the company’.\textsuperscript{132}

With negotiations deadlocked, CAMI workers went out on strike on September 14 1992. This marked the first ever strike against a Japanese transplant assembly plant in either Canada or the US. The \textit{London Free Press} argued that ‘... the strike this week at the CAMI auto plant in Ingersoll may seem absurd, given the recession and the number of jobs already lost in the auto industry’.\textsuperscript{133} CAMI management denied in-plant conditions had a major role in workers going out on strike. It claimed that the strike was purely over wages. CAMI management further argued that the CAW Local and itself could quickly reach a


\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., pp.115-6.


\textsuperscript{132} Rinehart et al, ‘CAW, Worker Commitment, and Labor Management Relations’, p.117.

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{London Free Press}, September 15 1992 quoted in Rinehart et al, \textit{Just Another Car Factory}, p.3.
settlement (in Japan, collective bargaining is usually the domain of Locals and not the national union), and interference from the national CAW was holding up a settlement. In other words, CAMI management believed that it could achieve a more pro-business contract if it did not have to negotiate with both the national CAW leadership as well as Local union leaders.

The CAW and CAMI achieved an agreement after a five-week strike. While a gap remained between the wages of CAMI and Big Three workers, it would close to 40 cents (Canadian) per hour at the end of the agreement, compared to almost $2 (Canadian) per hour under the old contract. Moreover, '... in-plant gains included a one year ‘experiment’ with elected team leaders, limitations in job standards and line speeds, beefed-up union involvement in health and safety matters, and the establishment of product support groups to provide pools of relief workers'.

In 1995, the same issues almost contributed to another strike. The CAW was willing to shut down CAMI if CAMI management refused to close the wages gap between CAMI workers and Big Three workers. A strike was averted when CAMI management agreed to increase wages, and workers also gained '... three extra days off annually, a legal services plan, better pension benefits and more financial protection if the company implements layoffs or closes the plant'. Rinehart et al noted that the contract called for the formation of a ‘... mechanism to regulate and place limits on workloads, and provided union resources to fight excessive workloads. This was a major accomplishment in a lean environment, since it directly attacks the principle of kaizen’. This is because the kaizen principle demands continuous improvements in productivity. By placing limits on

---

134 Rinehart et al, Just Another Car Factory, pp.5-6.
137 Rinehart et al, Just Another Car Factory, p.192.
workload, the CAW managed to prevent this occurring at CAMI. These agreements were an excellent result for the CAW. It managed to improve its members’ wages dramatically, and it “rolled back” lean production methods at CAMI. This occurred during a recession when a number of auto industry jobs had been lost. This further demonstrates that while the state of the economy does have some bearing in collective bargaining, a union’s militancy and ideology, such as social movement unionism, are the major factors in unions achieving good collective bargaining agreements.

However, a question remains, namely, to what extent did the CAW’s social movement unionism ideology, and its education programmes, contribute to worker dissatisfaction at CAMI. Rinehart et al argued their study at CAMI demonstrated that major philosophical differences between the CAW and UAW are important, but they do not decisively shape local union politics. Certainly, the CAW’s rejection of labor-management cooperation and its critique of lean production have influenced Local 88 [CAW Local at CAMI] leaders and members. But apart from the strike itself, developments at CAMI are quite similar to those at Mazda [a Japanese transplant plant located in Flat Rock, Michigan organised by the UAW]. If anything, Mazda workers have manifested greater shop floor militancy than CAMI workers. 138

One must question the usefulness of the CAW devoting significant resources in an attempt to educate its members on the negatives of lean production, if it could achieve the same result without education programmes.

The initial UAW Local leaders at Mazda were in favour of labour-management partnerships and Japanese production methods. However, there was great dissatisfaction with their performance, and they were eventually ‘... replaced through elections by a more militant slate’. 139 In the lead-up to the 1991 contract negotiations, the UAW Mazda workers voted 94 per cent in favour of a strike if the union and Mazda could not reach a

139 Ibid., p.120.
settlement.\footnote{140}{Steve Babson, ‘UAW, Lean Production, and Labor-Management Relations at AutoAlliance’ in William C. Green and Ernest J. Yanarella (eds.) \textit{North American Auto Unions in Crisis}, State University of New York, NY, 1996, pp.93-4.} The parties reached an agreement just before the previous contract was set to expire. The negotiations were a success for the Mazda workforce: ‘[s]ubstantial gains were achieved, including relief workers, improved training, a more liberal policy on transfers and the right to elect team leaders’.\footnote{141}{Rinehart et al, ‘CAW, Worker Commitment, and Labor Management Relations’, p.121; Babson, ‘UAW, Lean Production’, pp.94-5.}

While a national union’s ideology does not necessarily contribute to militancy on the shop floor, the crucial aspect is what the national union does with that militancy. As I noted, the UAW has been historically weak on solidarity and commitment to shop floor activism, and it allows ‘... local unions [to] fend for themselves or supported management initiatives thought necessary to enable companies to pay pattern wages and benefits’. Herzenberg argued that the lack of commitment to shop floor militancy might have prevented it from organising other transplant plants. For example, ‘UAW conciliation toward management ... makes the benefits of union representation ambiguous to transplant workers’.\footnote{142}{Herzenberg, pp.315, 324-8.} However, like the UAW, the CAW has been unsuccessful in organising other Japanese and East Asian transplant plants. For example, the CAW was unable to organise the Toyota plant in Cambridge, and the Honda plant in Alliston. In addition, the CAW ‘... applied to the Quebec labor commissioner for union certification’ at the Hyundai plant in Bromont in 1993, but its effort was in vain when ‘Hyundai management announced that the ... factory would cease automobile production’.\footnote{143}{Ernest J. Yanarella, ‘The UAW and CAW Under the Shadow of Post-Fordism: A Tale of Two Unions’ in William C. Green and Ernest J. Yanarella (eds.) \textit{North American Auto Unions in Crisis}, State University of New York, NY, 1996, pp.58-9; William C. Green, ‘The Transformation of the NLRA Paradigm: The Future of Labor-Management Relations in Post-Fordist Auto Plants’ in William C. Green and Ernest J. Yanarella (eds.) \textit{North American Auto Unions in Crisis}, State University of New York, NY, 1996, pp.173-4.} Management was very hostile to the CAW’s attempt to organise the plant, but it is doubtful that Hyundai withdrew from
Bromont because of the organising drive, as the production facility was already inactive at the time of the announcement. Thus, despite the CAW's social movement unionism and the UAW's business unionism, neither has been able to organise other Japanese and East Asian transplant plants.

It is true, however, that the CAW provides more assistance to its Locals than the UAW does, and has generalised local strikes into national issues. For example, during the 1998 Flint Michigan strikes, the UAW continued '... to insist that the issues in all the plants lined up to strike are simply "local"', despite overwhelmingly evidence to the contrary. ¹⁴⁴ In comparison, the CAW is more than willing to generalise a strike during collective bargaining negotiations, such as its fight against concessions in 1979. Likewise, the CAW provided its Local at CAMI with tremendous support. Ann Frost noted that the CAW Local at CAMI in negotiating the 1992 collective agreement '... drew on the knowledge gleaned by the national union from negotiations in the broader automotive industry ... [and this allowed it] to negotiate a softening of the lean production systems as well as comparable contract provisions [to the Big Three agreements]'. ¹⁴⁵ The support from the national leadership potentially made CAMI workers more confident that the national union would assist their action, which in turn led to a dramatic increase in workers' wages and a "roll-back" of the lean production methods at the plant. However, despite the CAW's success in collective bargaining agreements at CAMI, the CAW was seemingly powerless to prevent CAMI from reducing workers' hours and laying off workers because of a downturn in business.

The Downturn at CAMI

Production levels at CAMI peaked in 1995 with almost 184,000 vehicles produced and the facility seemingly in good shape. However, the first sign of trouble for CAMI workers occurred in February 1996, when CAMI management announced that because of bloated inventories it was slashing production by approximately 20 per cent. At the time, CAMI management claimed that jobs were not threatened. By April, however, CAMI announced that it was axing 270 jobs (10 per cent of its workforce) because of poor sales, while in June, it announced that it was cutting production on its sports utility model, with workers’ hours cut in half. In November 1997, CAMI closed production at the plant for a short time, which effected CAMI’s workforce of 1800 (CAMI’s workforce was 2700 in 1996) because of weak sales and bloated inventories. Job losses forced the CAW in its 1998 collective bargaining agreement with CAMI to include a ‘$35 million [Canadian] fund to help laid-off workers... The previous fund had a limit of $10 million [Canadian]’. In addition, the CAW guaranteed that there would be ‘... labour peace until September 2001’.

1998 was not a good year for CAMI workers. CAMI was closed for 16 weeks during the middle of the year, with production for the first seven months of the year only 27,075 compared to almost 184,000 for the full year in 1995. However, in October 1998 CAMI workers received some good news when GM announced that CAMI would produce its Delta small car programme. CAW President Buzz Hargrove claimed that the CAW’s guarantee of industrial peace at CAMI for the next three years was a factor in GM’s choice

146 The Globe and Mail, February 22 1996.
of CAMI to build the new model.\textsuperscript{151} The good news did not last, as GM announced in June 1999 that it was delaying production of the Delta.\textsuperscript{152} However, in January 2001, GM once again announced that CAMI would build a new GM vehicle, though it did not say what the product would be. Then a few months later, GM indefinitely shelved its Delta small car programme. In March 2002, CAMI officials were confident that CAMI would build a new GM wagon, although there had yet been no official word from GM.\textsuperscript{153} However, like with the Delta small car programme, CAMI did not end up producing a GM wagon. Despite CAW officials expecting that CAMI would only be in operation for two-thirds of the next two years, this did not stop them from trying to gain wage increases for CAMI workers. The negotiations were a success for workers, as the CAW gained a three per cent wage increase that matched the Big Three settlements.\textsuperscript{154}

CAMI workers received some further good news in September 2002 as GM announced that CAMI would build a new Chevrolet compact sports utility vehicle beginning in 2004.\textsuperscript{155} However, this announcement did not prevent the elimination of one of the three shifts at CAMI in March 2003, which resulted in 'rotating layoffs' for CAMI workers.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{150} The Toronto Star, September 1 1998; The Toronto Star, September 2 1998.
\textsuperscript{151} The Globe and Mail, October 2 1998.
\textsuperscript{152} The Globe and Mail, June 15 1999.
\textsuperscript{154} National Post, September 8 2001; The Canadian Press, September 17 2001; The Globe and Mail, September 18 2001.
\textsuperscript{155} The Canadian Press, September 3 2002; National Post, September 4 2002.
\textsuperscript{156} The Toronto Star, February 25, 2003.
Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that the CAW’s practice of social unionism is very similar to Moody’s account of social movement union to the extent that they can be regarded as congruent. The CAW is a very democratic union, with extensive rank-and-file involvement and it implements training programmes to continue the tradition of rank-and-file involvement in the union. The CAW organises the unorganised and has grown substantially since its secession from the UAW. It fights for many things that affect working people in their communities, has alliances with local communities in addition to alliances with unions and workers worldwide. Despite the CAW’s historic links with the NDP, the NDP’s shift to the right led to the CAW organising protests against the party culminating in the massive Days of Action. It also set up a task force on the future role of working class politics that strengthened the CAW’s commitment to social unionism. Finally, the CAW actively attempts to eliminate all forms of racism and sexism, whether through its Education Department or through collective bargaining agreements with employers. There is little doubt that the CAW is a social movement union according to Moody’s account.

Moreover, as I previously argued, there are close similarities between Moody’s social movement unionism and Scipes’ theory of social justice unionism. The CUAW/CAW further validates this argument. It is not only concerned with “bread-and-butter” issues, it fights for everything that affects all working people in the workplace and the wider community whether they belong to the union or not, and it has alliances with social movements to achieve this. These are all aspects of Scipes’ social justice unionism. However, the CAW is a very democratic union. There is a difference between the CAW’s emphasis on the rank-and-file in all aspects of the union, and the SEIU’s top-down
approach, with little rank-and-file involvement, apart from organising (Scipes claimed that a social justice union could be top-down). Moreover, the CAW is not a social movement union under Scipes' theory because it does not actively attempt to challenge Canada's economic and political system. The CAW is certainly hostile to unbridled capitalism and the unequal power balance between labour and business and through its education programmes is attempting to educate workers on how capitalism benefits only a select few. However, unlike social movement unions such as COSATU and the KMU, the CAW does not attempt to challenge the existing social order.

This crucial aspect also prevents the CAW from being a social movement union under Lambert and Webster's theory. Even though there are very close similarities between Moody, and Lambert and Webster's theory of social movement unionism, the fundamental difference between the two is that social movement unions under Lambert and Webster's account engage in political struggle as part of their everyday activities. As highlighted above, the CAW does not do this, but it has engaged with non-industrial issues and disputes.

Finally, it is safe to say that the CAW is not a social movement union/new social union under Waterman's account. The CAW does not have an organisational structure that is similar to the structure of new social movements, it operates within Canada's industrial relations system and not on '... that of popular self-organization outside, or independent of, capital and state', and it is not '... working for the continuing transformation of all social relationships and structures... in a democratic and cooperative direction'.

Thus, while the CAW is a social justice union under Scipes theory and a social movement union under Moody's, it is not a social movement union under the other theories of social movement unionism.
The CAW is an excellent example of Moody's social movement unionism in practice. The CAW has a relatively good record in organising the unorganised. Its membership has increased quite dramatically since its split from the UAW (although a large proportion of its new members is because of mergers with smaller unions), while the UAW's membership has declined. Furthermore, by comparing the CAW with the UAW I am able to determine the benefit of social movement unionism in collective bargaining. The 1979-1984 UAW and CUAW/CAW collective bargaining negotiations with the Big Three automakers, and with GM in 1996, demonstrate that the CUAW/CAW consistently achieved better contracts for its members than the UAW. The healthier state of the Canadian economy and the involvement of the Canadian and US governments did contribute to the CUAW's successes and the UAW's failures during the 1979-1984 negotiations. However, it is a mistake to believe these were the crucial factors in explaining the differences in the contracts. As I demonstrated, the crucial factor for the period 1979-1984 was the CUAW's militancy during collective bargaining and its us versus them mentality when it came to dealing with business, which led it refusing to accept concessions and to fight for a decent contract for its members. In comparison, the UAW leadership quickly accepted concessions and refused to fight for better wages and working conditions for its members. The CAW achieved further success in the Big Three negotiations after 1984.

It was the CAW's preparedness to struggle for better wages and working conditions for its members that led to it, after initially agreeing to Japanese production methods and lower wages compared to the Big Three, to fight for its members at CAMI. It is open to debate the extent that the CAW's social movement unionism influenced militancy at the shop floor level. However, it is undoubtedly true that the CAW used the militancy that Japanese production methods bred and supported its workers, eventually winning
substantial wage improvements and a "roll back" of Japanese production methods. Nevertheless, despite this militancy and social movement unionism, the CAW was unable to prevent job losses and a reduction of workers' hours at CAMI because of bloated inventories and weak sales. In an effort to keep jobs at CAMI and help laid-off workers, as part of its 1998 collective bargaining agreement, the CAW agreed to industrial peace for three years, and included a provision where CAMI management would dramatically increase the amount of assistance it would provide to laid-off workers. Yet, at the same time that CAMI was cutting its workforce and with the production facility idle, the CAW still managed to win substantial pay rises to make CAMI workers' wages in line with those at the Big Three. This demonstrates that the CAW's social movement unionism has been successful for its members.

However, like the UAW, the CAW's power to prevent job losses and plant closures is limited. This is not to argue that the CAW has no power. Indeed, it has been successful in minimising job losses and plant closures on occasions. For example, in 1979, Chrysler, after the Canadian government intervened, in a large part because of the CAW's substantial electoral campaign, agreed to increase its investment in Canada and offered CAW workers job guarantees. Likewise, in the 1996 CAW-GM collective bargaining agreement, GM agreed to extend the life of an unionised production plant. However, as CAMI and the Hyundai plant at Bromont demonstrated, it is very difficult for unions to prevent job losses and plant closures.

Nevertheless, the CAW demonstrates, at the very least, that a social movement union under Moody's account has had success in organising proportionally more new members, and achieving better collective bargaining agreements than a business union.
Chapter 6

THE UNITED ELECTRICAL WORKERS

This chapter gives a chronological overview of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE). I provide an outline of the UE’s history, focusing on the UE’s general record, its attempt to organise the General Electric (GE) Schenectady plant, the 1946 general strike, and its collective bargaining agreements with Westinghouse in the 1950s. Moody stated that a current of social movement unionism was ‘... already at hand in unions such as ... the United Electrical Workers in the US’. However, he did not go into any detail. I argue that the UE’s polices and practices match the key components of Moody’s account of social movement unionism. Moreover, the UE consistently won pro-labour contracts for its members. However, by analysing the ideological conflict within the UE, union raids and government harassment of it, and in recent times, its campaigns to keep Stewart-Warner’s Chicago plant open and to keep Steeltech operating, I conclude that the UE was relatively powerless in relation to government and business (apart from in collective bargaining).

The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, more commonly known as the United Electrical Workers, is a small union with approximately 35,000 members. The UE is an independent union, as it has not been affiliated with the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO) since it withdrew from the CIO in 1949. The UE is a very (in)famous union because of its alleged ties with

---

the Communist Party of the USA. As US labour historians Roland Filippelli and Mark McColloch noted, the ‘... IUE [International Union of Electrical Workers], which probably had access to FBI information, claimed that 200 Communist or former Communists were on the UE payroll in 1950’. However, they go on to argue that ‘[i]n most cases there was no way to determine whether a person actually belonged to the Communist Party ... [as] [m]ost of the Party members hid their affiliation with the blessings of the Party’.2

The Early Years

The 1930s was an important period for organised labour in the US. From the formation of the CIO to the sit-down strike at General Motors, the decade was marked by massive upheaval and great success by organised labour. Indeed, ‘[b]etween 1933 and 1937 American unions recruited about 5 million new members, at least half coming during just a handful of months in 1937’.3 Unlike the AFL whose affiliates were still only organised by craft, the CIO embraced industrial unionism (organising by industry). Moreover, the CIO utilised rank-and-file intensive tactics, such as “sit-ins”, while ‘...providing the national coordination and leadership that enabled the new unions to confront’ big business.4 As a *New York Times Magazine* report on the United Mine Workers stated:

Seizing plants by sit-down strikes regardless of their legality and massing thousands of pickets from other C.I.O. unions in other cities and States in front of the gates, it has defied the police and the courts to dislodge them and return the property to the owners until their demands are met...

---

3 Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, p.52.
4 Ibid., pp.44-5.
[The CIO’s centralised form of organisation] enables ... [it] to bring all its resources of men, money and machines to bear upon any given situation...

The same resources enable it to hire intelligent, well-paid organizers, [and] to send experienced men from the United Mine Workers wherever they may be needed ... [including] to any place where mass picketing is necessary to help one of the C.I.O. unions.5

The number of sit down strikes clearly demonstrated the CIO’s militancy. For example, '... in the first six months of 1937, more than four hundred thousand workers participated in 477 sit-down strikes'.6 However, while “bread-and-butter” issues were important for CIO unions and their members, the unions also emphasised “workers' control”. Using a broad definition of “workers’ control”, Robert Zieger claimed that ‘... such practices as union participation in job evaluation, careful regulation of seniority lines, closely calibrated pay scales according to job content, protection from arbitrary discipline, and so forth, external control – ‘workers’ control’ ... was indeed at the heart of the CIO’.7 In other words, CIO unions challenged capitalists “unfettered” authority to arbitrarily control workers’ lives; thus, contesting the unequal power relationship between capitalists and workers.

The United Electrical and Radio Workers of America came into existence during this great upsurge by US unions. US labour historian Ronald Schatz noted that

Local union leaders ... formed a series of coalitions in an attempt to unify the burgeoning union movement in electrical manufacturing and ancillary industries. These efforts resulted in the formation of the United Electrical and Radio Workers of America [in March 1936]. As the full name of the organization indicated, the UE was a product of an alliance between two distinct groups of peoples or union locals. Some came from electrical factories ... others from radio and home appliance shops... The UE membership at this time amounted to but 15,000 of the 300,000 workers in the industry.8

---

6 Wellman, The Union Makes Us Strong, p.41.
7 Zieger quoted in ibid., p.40.
By November 1936, the UE had joined the newly formed CIO.

The UE expanded dramatically the following year, partially because of James Matles. While not the President, Matles ‘... exercised effective control’ of the Machine, Tool and Foundry Workers union as he was the only full-time official. The union merged with the AFL affiliated International Association of Machinists (IAM) in 1935 as Matles hoped that the merger would result in an ‘AFL industrial charter in electrical manufacturing’. However, almost immediately Matles became disillusioned with the union. Amongst Matles’ concerns were the AFL’s refusal to grant the union ‘... an industrial charter’, the union’s refusal to allow African Americans to become members, and its hostility to, amongst others, Communists, radicals and Jews. After ‘... he received encouragement from the Communist Party to leave the IAM and join the newly formed UE ... Matles resigned and took fourteen lodges with him [approximately 15,000 workers]. His old group of Machine, Tool and Foundry Workers came with him, as did most of the new shops he had organized’. The UE responded to this gesture by changing its name to the United, Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America. It also created ‘... a new national-level post, the job of director of organization, to which Matles was elected’.

Since its formation, the UE has been a very democratic union with the rank-and-file playing a crucial role; this clearly corresponds to Moody’s account of social movement unionism. Filippelli and McColloch stated that

\[\text{from the beginning, the UE’s structure provided for broad participation by the membership. Each year the international union and each district met in their representative conventions. The UE’s constitution ensured strong district and local autonomy. District officers received their salaries from the district, not the international, and the general executive board could not remove district presidents from office... International representatives were appointed by the general executive board with “due deference}\]

---

10 Schatz, p.64.
given to the wishes of the membership of the district,” but they were paid by the District. [Moreover,] Local, district, and national officers stood for election annually.\textsuperscript{11}

UE Locals adopted their own constitutions. The constitutions outline ‘... the rights and duties of the membership, how the local will be governed, and how the local activities will be governed’. The only constraint is that the Local constitution cannot contradict the ‘National constitution, especially in the areas of union democracy, finances, and the right of all workers to belong to a union’. This is to ensure that all workers, regardless of, amongst other things, race, sex, and political beliefs, could belong to the union and to deprive give bosses of ‘... yet another tool with which they can divide workers’.\textsuperscript{12} The UE’s constitution allows the rank-and-file to vote on all key issues, including contract proposals. The members also elect delegates to the National Convention and District Councils.\textsuperscript{13} There are seven UE District Councils, which cover the entire US geographically. The District Councils are funded by UE Locals through a monthly per capita payment, and meet either two or three times a year to discuss issues affecting the UE and set policy. The District Councils ‘... elect District Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Secretary Treasurers, Executive Boards, and District Trustees to one-year terms’. Any UE member of good standing is eligible for election.\textsuperscript{14}

The annual National Convention is the ‘... highest decision-making body in the UE’. It is comprised of delegates ‘... elected by members of their local unions, plus two delegates from each District Council’.\textsuperscript{15} The delegates set UE policy for the forthcoming year, with all Locals and District Councils able to submit policy resolutions. The National Convention elects the UE’s National Officers (General President, Secretary-Treasurer,

\textsuperscript{11} Filippelli and McColloch, p.9.
\textsuperscript{12} ‘UE Aims and Structure’, \textit{UE Website}, \url{http://www.ranknfile-ue.org/aimscls.html} accessed on April 24 2002.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, \url{http://www.ranknfile-ue.org/aimscoun.html} accessed on April 24 2002.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, \url{http://www.ranknfile-ue.org/aimsconv.html} accessed on April 24 2002.
Director of Organisation) and three Trustees (they audit the ‘UE’s books and records four times a year and safeguard the property of the National Union’). As with positions on the District Councils, any UE member of good standing is eligible to stand for these positions. Unlike the majority of unions worldwide, the UE Constitution states that the three National Officers ‘... shall be paid a salary not to exceed the highest weekly wage in the industry’. In other words, the National Officers do not receive a wage much higher than the rank-and-file. The National Officers, UE District Presidents and District Secretaries comprise the General Executive Board which meets three times a year. They deal with all issues and carry ‘... out the policies and programs of the union between the National Conventions’. The National Officers also oversee the UE’s organisational work, collective bargaining, political action, education and publicity, and international solidarity, which are the five crucial areas of UE activity. The UE’s democratic practices are in contrast to a top-down union like the SEIU.

Organising the Schenectady General Electric (GE) plant in 1936, which was GE’s largest plant, was one of the UE’s first major successes. Since 1932, unions had attempted to organise the plant without success. This was mainly because of the company organised Work Council. The UE Local President William Turnbull noted that while the Work Council posed a problem, twelve years of company unionism led to many grievances being unresolved, and that the ‘... grievances were the keystone on which an organization was to be built’. In an attempt to gain certification at the plant, the UE Local publicised the national unions and its own successes to Schenectady workers.

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
19 See Chapter 1 for an overview of the SEIU.
We issued leaflets at the rate of at least one a week. And we made extensive use of the official organ of our international union, filling the workers in on general news of UE accomplishments and providing local details as well. We distributed thousands of copies of the paper weekly, reaching into every department.\textsuperscript{20}

Combined with the UE’s rank-and-file tactics to spread its message, the UE was buoyed by the surge in class consciousness when Franklin Roosevelt captured Schenectady County as part of his 1936 US Presidential triumph. Roosevelt was critical of big business, and his victory was ‘... the first time in the century that a Democratic candidate had won a majority vote in Schenectady County and the greatest landslide in the nation’s history’.\textsuperscript{21} Two weeks after Roosevelt’s success, the UE asked the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to hold a certification election at the Schenectady plant. In a result that surprised ‘almost everybody’, UE Local 301 gained certification by a margin of 5111 votes to 4033. The result was especially surprising since it only had 922 members out of a workforce of 10,000. Following its victory, the UE signed up an overwhelming majority of workers in the plant.\textsuperscript{22}

After its victory at the GE Schenectady plant, the UE went from strength to strength. Within four months, GE agreed to the UE’s request for a national contract, which led to 29 new UE Locals at GE plants. Likewise, after a years-long struggle and following a NLRB ruling that Westinghouse ‘... was violating the legal responsibility to bargain’, Westinghouse agreed to a national contract with the UE in 1941 covering 19 plants.\textsuperscript{23} UE membership grew from less than 50,000 in 1939 to 432,000 during the middle of World

\textsuperscript{21} Schatz, pp.71-2.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.72; \textit{People’s Press (Schenectady Edition)}, November 21, 1936, p.4; \textit{People’s Press (Schenectady Edition)}, December 19, 1936, p.5.
War II (WWII) and by VJ day, the UE had 750,000 members.\textsuperscript{24} The improvement in the US economy helped the union’s organising efforts to organise workers.\textsuperscript{25} Moreover, it was the UE’s belief in the benefits of organising the unorganised and its rank-and-file unionism that contributed to the remarkable gains in membership. The Report of the General Officers to the 8\textsuperscript{th} UE Convention in 1942 argued that the UE should organise the unorganised.\textsuperscript{26} Likewise, at the 1946 CIO convention, UE Director of Organising James Matles stated that

\[\text{[a]ll men are created equal – and we propose to fight for that principle... And if we continue to organize this movement of ours on that principle, then the overwhelming majority of the unorganised workers will rally to us. They will join us. And our ranks will be tremendously increased.}\]\textsuperscript{27}

The only unions which achieved growth compared with the UE’s during the war years were the United Auto Workers (UAW) (165,000 to 1 million), and the United Steel Workers of America (USWA) (its membership increased three-fold to 700,000).\textsuperscript{28} In 1946, the UE was successful in 84.1 per cent of NLRB certification elections, which was the highest rate for any US union. That year the CIO organised 350,000 workers, with 20 per cent organised by the UE.\textsuperscript{29} The UE organised the unorganised, thus it had another crucial characteristic of Moody’s account of social movement unionism.

As it organised thousands of new members the UE then built links with the local community; another important aspect of Moody’s account of social movement unionism. For example, in St. Louis during the 1930s and 1940s the UE Local President, William Senter (who admitted that he was a member of the Communist Party), claimed that while the UE was interested in the livelihood of its members, it was also ‘... interested in the

\textsuperscript{25} Matles and Higgins, p.127.
\textsuperscript{26} Report of the General Officers to the 8\textsuperscript{th} UE Convention reprinted in \textit{UE News}, September 12, 1942, p.5.
\textsuperscript{27} Matles and Higgins, p.163.
\textsuperscript{28} Zieger, p.145.
\textsuperscript{29} Matles and Higgins, pp.162, 164.
effects of their economic status on our community’. In other words, where workers received higher wages, it was likely that the local community would be vibrant. The UE Local’s belief in the benefit of labour-community alliances helped in a campaign to prevent the Emerson Electrical Company moving its production plant from St Louis in late 1939-early 1940. The *St. Louis Star-Times* claimed that the UE

... deserves a full measure of credit for its civic spirit and initiative in starting a campaign to keep Emerson ... from leaving St. Louis... Its attitude, as shown in its literature, is intelligent, sympathetic and constructive.31

The UE’s campaign was eventually successful, but at the cost of agreeing to cooperate with management. Nevertheless, the UE’s campaign led it to become a respected organisation in the community. This helped the Local during a five-month strike at Century Electric in 1940, which led to a good settlement.32 Likewise, during WWII, the Local hosted a convention involving UE members, business representatives and ‘... prominent figures in St. Louis public life’ that debated the course industrial relations should take following the end of the war.33

The UE managed to organise hundreds of thousands of workers and have links with the local community even though its position on WWII was for the most part contrary to prevailing opinion, but in line with the Communist Party of the USA. At the beginning of the war, the UE was strongly anti-Nazi. However, the UE changed its position following the Soviet-Germany nonaggression pact. Four days after *The Daily Worker* announced that the Communist Party of the USA stated there should be no US involvement in the war, a *UE News* editorial criticised ‘Wall Street’s attempt to lead the nation into war for excessive

31 St. Louis Star-Times quoted in ‘How a Union Saved 1500 Jobs, a $2,000,000 Payroll and the Business they Create for St. Louis’, March 1940, pp.5-6, *United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America Archive [UEAJ]*, University of Pittsburgh, Box 1430, FF6.
32 Feurer, pp.108-12.
33 *UE News*, August 5, 1944, pp.6-7.
profits’. Seven days later, *UE News* ‘... strongly came out for neutrality, blaming the war on big business and protesting the use of the working man as “cannon fodder”’. Likewise, through using the First World War as an example, the UE argued that only big business benefit during the war.\(^{35}\) However, following Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union, the UE argued that the US government should provide ‘... all possible aid ... to Great Britain, the Soviet Union, China and other nations resisting Hitlerism’.\(^{36}\) After Pearl Harbour, the UE quickly supported the idea of US involvement in WWII. While UE policy on WWII mirrored the Communist Party’s, it is important to note that the CIO’s policy on WWII was the same as the UE’s. Likewise, after the war began, but before Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union, the AFL opposed US involvement in the war.\(^{37}\)

The UE claimed that the ‘... attack of axis-partner Japan came as a shocking surprise to many Americans, but not to the labor movement, which has viewed it as Hitler’s junior partner for years’. While the UE viewed Japan with suspicion for years, it argued that it is wrong to racially insult the Japanese: ‘... the colour of Japanese people’s skin is irrelevant to the war’.\(^{38}\) The idea of a second front to help the Soviet Union rapidly spread throughout the UE. However, as Filippelli and McColloch noted, ‘... in the pages of *UE News* the war was primarily against Germany. There was little mention of Japan, which had not declared war on the Soviet Union’.\(^{39}\) Nevertheless, following Germany’s defeat, the UE argued that

---

\(^{34}\) Filippelli and McColloch, pp.44-5; See *UE News*, September 2, 1939, p.2, *UE News*, September 9, 1939, p.2 and *UE News*, June 22, 1940, p.8 for other examples of the UE arguing that there should be no US involvement in the war.

\(^{35}\) *UE News*, September 30, 1939, p.2; *UE News*, November 25, 1939, p.2.

\(^{36}\) *UE News*, September 6, 1941, p.6.


\(^{38}\) *People’s Press*, July 24, 1937, p.6; *UE News*, December 13, 1941, p.2; *UE News*, January 10, 1942, p.8.

the US must fight the war to the end and defeat Japan militarily. World War II demonstrates the extent to which UE policy on international events mirrored that of the Communist Party of the USA.

However, one former UE leader who defected to the IUE argued that foreign policy issues did not concern the rank-and-file. The issues they cared about were ‘... how much do I get in my pay envelope and don’t increase the dues’. From its inception, the UE was hostile to capitalism, but this hostility, in the main, was implicit rather than explicit. That the UE was only implicitly hostile to capitalism and did not actively challenge the existing political and economic order precludes it, like the CAW, from being a social movement union under Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes’ respective theories.

The UE opposed prevailing opinion during the late 1940s. In the 1948 Presidential campaign, the CIO Executive Board endorsed the Democrat candidate Harry S. Truman and instructed its member unions to do likewise. However, the UE claimed that ‘... as an autonomous organization it would make its own political determinations’. Eventually, the UE endorsed no candidate, but the National Officers endorsed Henry Wallace who belonged to a new US political Party: the Progressive Party. Moreover, Wallace spoke at the 1947 UE Convention and UE President Albert Fitzgerald was named as permanent chairman of the Progressive Party convention. The UE’s support and endorsement of a third US political party occurred before the Communist Party of the USA endorsed the Progressive Party.

---

41 Harry Block quoted in Filippelli, p.222.
Unlike its uneven tradition of independent political action, the UE has a relatively
good record in its treatment of so-called minorities and adopting issues affecting them. As I
noted in Chapter 2, while this is not a crucial component of Moody’s account of social
movement unionism, he argues that “minorities” can revitalise unions. From its inception
until WWII, women only had a minor role in the UE. This was mainly because women only
comprised 14 per cent of the UE’s membership in the lead-up to the war. Historian Lisa
Kannenberg asserted that ‘... while some exceptional women did take active, leadership
roles in the early organizing, the UE leadership was predominantly male and women’s
issues had no discernable place on the UE agenda’. With US involvement in WW II,
women comprised almost 50 per cent of electrical workers, compared to one-third before
the war (not all women employed in the electrical industry were represented by the UE).
With their increased presence in the electrical industry, the UE placed greater emphasis on
its women members. It conducted women’s leadership classes and it led the fight for
demands affecting women, and had success in a number of instances. For example,

By the end of the war, there were over 260,000 UE women members. This corresponded to
40 per cent of the UE’s membership.46

44 Lisa Kannenberg, ‘The Impact of the Cold War on Women’s Trade Union Activism: The UE Experience’,
Labor History, vol.34, no.2-3, Spring-Summer 1993, pp.310-1.
45 Filippelli, p.227; See UE News, August 14, 1943, p.5 for an overview of the UE women’s leadership
classes. See UE News, September 29, 1945, pp.1, 6-7 and UE News, December 22, 1945, p.3 for an
overview of the Wage Labor Board’s ruling.
While the UE’s record on women was very good, its record on African-American issues for the period 1930-1960, despite its claims, was weaker. One delegate at the 1942 UE convention noted that the

UE’s record on racial discrimination has been second to none. Unfortunately, much of this record ... has remained on paper. Very little has been done to effectuate the fine resolutions that have been passed by every convention of the UE on this question. 47

It is often claimed that the main reason that African-Americans did not make large strides within the union during WWII was that African-American comprised only five per cent of the UE’s membership at the end of the war. Thus, African-American issues were not deemed very important. 48 However, in a study of CIO unions, Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin convincingly argued that the relative size of the African-American membership barely made a difference to union’s policies towards them. 49 Instead, they suggested that the UE did not have as a good record on African-American issues as women because it was fighting tooth-and-nail for women’s issues, and was not able to ‘... engage in a conflict on a second front, that is, fighting against employers who ... were even more resistant to hiring blacks than employers in other mass-production industries’. 50

What the true reason is is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, conditions for UE African-American members often varied from Local to Local. For example, UE Local 601 that represented workers at ‘... the flagship of the Westinghouse chain’ hired an African-American woman to work in its office. However, white UE members pressured the union to fire her. The UE Local’s full-time officer claimed ‘... it was terrible. It was just terrible. We had to dismiss her. It wasn’t a question of [her ability to perform] a job. She was black

48 Ibid., p.235; Filippelli and McColloch, p.81.
49 Stepan-Norris, Zeitlin, Left Out, pp.245-6, 259-60.
50 Ibid., pp.224-5.
and therefore she had no right to work in a union office'. Likewise, at the UE Local at the 'Philco plant in Philadelphia, an enduring pattern of racial segregation and discrimination existed for many years'. This Local was led by the UE's right-wing and was one of the first Locals to secede from the UE and join the IUE, where its racism continued unabated.52

However, not all UE Locals were racist. For example, UE Local 1225 in New York pressed companies to hire minorities including African-Americans. Likewise, UE Districts in the New York-New Jersey and St. Louis areas were very active in African-American issues, partly because of the high number of African-Americans working in the electrical industry in their districts. Yet at the same time, 'Communist were leaders in these districts and being politically conscious of social issues, pressed the black question'.53

Moreover, the UE led the fight for no-discrimination clauses in collective bargaining agreements. In 1950, GE agreed to a no-discrimination clause. However, during the 1950s, Westinghouse refused to adopt such a clause. As the UE noted, '[i]n spite of wide public support our campaign received in 1958, Westinghouse continued its opposition. Congressmen and Senators, as well as outstanding Negro and white Civil Rights leaders, supported our campaign, but no other union in the industry took up the cause'.54 Finally, in 1963 Westinghouse agreed to the clause. The UE claimed:

... we are gratified that we have finally won it, not only for the plants we represent, but for all Westinghouse plants. Because UE has scored this breakthrough, the no-discrimination clause can now be included in all union contracts with Westinghouse. The clause prohibits discrimination because of race, creed, color, religion, or national origin.55

51 Schatz, The Electrical Workers, p.128.
53 Critchlow, pp.234-7; Feurer, p.115; Stepan-Norris, Zeitlin, Left Out, pp.216-7, 218-23.
While the UE has a relatively good history on so-called minorities, as with union democracy, collective bargaining is an area that the UE’s record was superb. For example, during WWII, the US government regulated wages. Between 1940 and 1945, wages ‘... were not permitted to increase by more than 15 percent ... [but,] ... over the same period the cost of living went up by 45 percent’.\(^{56}\) Hence, following the war, workers wanted a dramatic increase in their wages. The Big Three CIO unions (UE, UAW, USWA) demanded substantial increases, with the UE seeking a $2 per day increase (25 cents per hour); a 24 per cent increase. The UE had overwhelming support from its workers at GE, General Motors (GM), and Westinghouse to strike if the companies did not meet its demands.\(^ {57}\) In a precursor to the upcoming strike, in September Westinghouse briefly locked out 36,000 workers who were demanding wage increases from its East Pittsburgh, Lima, Cleveland, and Sharon plants.\(^ {58}\) GE and GM offered the UE a ten cents an hour increase which was promptly rejected. GM offered 13½ cents an hour in December 1945, which the UE also rejected. UE members at GE, GM and Westinghouse overwhelmingly voted for strike action if the parties could not reach an agreement.\(^ {59}\) As there was no settlement before the strike deadline, in January 1946, some 200,000 UE workers went on strike at GE, GM and Westinghouse, with the UAW on strike at GM, and 800,000 steelworkers striking a week later. ‘Labor had effectively, for the first time, closed down the heart of America’s industrial might’.\(^ {60}\) As Schatz noted, the ‘1946 strikes were the first national strikes in the electrical manufacturing industry and the first major strikes GE and Westinghouse had known since 1918’.\(^ {61}\)

\(^{56}\) Matles and Higgins, pp.138-9.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., p.139; Filippelli and McColloch, p.84.
\(^{58}\) *UE News*, September 22, 1945, pp.1, 3; *UE News*, October 6, 1945, p.1.
\(^{59}\) *UE News*, December 22, 1945, pp.1, 5.
\(^{60}\) Matles and Higgins, pp.141-2; Filippelli and McColloch, pp.86-7; *UE News*, December 15, 1945, p.6.
\(^{61}\) Schatz, ‘The End of Corporate Liberalism’, p.199
On February 12, the UE negotiated an 18½-cent an hour wage increase for its GM workforce. As the UAW sought a 19½-cent an hour increase at GM, it condemned the UE for selling out. However, in January, the UAW had agreed to an 18-cent and an 18½-cent increase from Ford and Chrysler respectively. Thus, it is difficult to conclude that the UE “sold out” as the UAW already had agreed to the same amount with the other two big automakers. A month later, the UE also achieved an 18½-cent increase for its GE workforce. Two months after that, through what the UE called ‘... the magnificent courage and union solidarity displayed by 75,000 Westinghouse workers ... [the UE] won a tremendous victory for Westinghouse workers’. The company, after initially refusing ‘to make any wage offer’ and then only offering approximately a 9-cent an hour increase, finally agreed to a 19-cent increase.62

GE’s insistence that while men would receive an 18½-cent increase, women should only receive 15 cents complicated the UE’s negotiations with the company.63 UE Secretary-Treasurer James Matles noted that GE

[said] we’ll improve our offer but we will not give the bobby-soxers [GE’s name for women] the same as we give the men... So the fight then was for equality in the settlement in cents per hour. So we stayed out another four weeks. Then [in the final settlement] it was eighteen and a half cents across the board for everyone in the plants including the bobby-soxers.64

Likewise, in the UE’s settlement with Westinghouse, the 19-cent an hour increase included ‘... a fund of one cent per hour per worker, to be applied to the equalization of women’s

62 Matles and Higgins, pp.145-7; Filippelli and McCulloch, pp.87-8; Filippelli, pp.228-9; Zieger, pp.220-4; UE News, February 16, 1946, pp.1, 3; UE News, March 23, 1946, pp.1, 3; ‘Organizational Report by Director of Organization For the Months of November, December 1945 and January 1946’, 1946, p.2; UEA, Box 1523; ‘To All UE Westinghouse Members’, May 7, 1946, UEA, Box 1431, FF 139; UE News, May 11, 1946, p.5.
63 Matles and Higgins, p.147.
rates'. The GM settlement included '... an 80-cent minimum hiring rate for both men and women in the auto giant's electrical division'.

All the strikes were a success for the UE. While it did not achieve its initial demand of a $2 a day increase, it achieved substantial pay rises for both male and female members and was a step towards equal pay.

The UE's record in consistently winning pro-labour contracts matches its success in organising workers. Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin in their comprehensive study of CIO unions' contracts with employers from 1938 to 1955 argued that the UE contracts were more pro-labour than other unions. For example, they concluded that

[an examination of the local agreements of each of these Big 3 Internationals [UE, UAW, USWA] reveals that those won by UE Locals were more systematically pro-labor ... than were the UAW's; the USWA was a distant third in pro-labor provisions. The same pattern appears in these unions' national contracts... [T]he agreements between UE and General Electric over the years were consistently pro-labor; those between UAW and General Motors less so; and those between the USWA and Carnegie-Illinois (which became US Steel in late 1950) were the least pro-labour.]

They noted that '... not one of the UE/GE national contracts ... ceded management rights or prerogatives'. Among Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin's findings were that the collective bargaining agreements negotiated by Communist-led unions, such as the UE were more pro-labour than agreements by centre and right-wing unions. This confirms findings in

the previous chapter where I compared the collective bargaining agreements of the

---

65 Milkman, p.185; 'Organizational Report by Director of Organization For the Months of May, June and July 1946', 1946, p.4, UEA, Box 1523.
66 Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin determine whether a contract is pro-labour in the following areas: management prerogatives; the right to strike; contract term; trade-off provisions; and grievance procedure, see Judith Stepan-Norris, Maurice Zeitlin, 'Union Democracy, Radical Leadership, and the Hegemony of Capital', American Sociological Review, vol.60, no.6, December 1995, pp.839-40.
67 Ibid., p.844.
CUAW/CAW and UAW with the Big Three automakers. The CUAW/CAW is not a Communist-led union, but it is a left union, while the UAW is a centre-right union. I will return to this point in the Chapter 8.

Following the 1946 mass strike against GE, GM and Westinghouse, the ideological conflict within the union, and government oppression led to a dramatic decline in the UE. I do not intend to provide a detailed analysis of this period, but an overview is necessary to illustrate the relative powerlessness of a union in the face of a campaign by the government, employers and other unions to weaken or destroy it.

The Decline of the UE

Rival unions, business and the US government alleged many UE leaders were Communists or had links with the Communist Party. Ideological conflict had always raged within the UE between left-wing and right-wing factions. However, the end of WWII and the beginning of the Cold War brought this conflict to a head. Within the UE, a right-wing opposition caucus – UE Members for Democratic Action (UEMDA) – formed in August 1946. It claimed that ‘... the choice of the [UE] membership lies between (1) returning the UE to the ranks of respectable CIO unions with sound union objectives, or (2) allowing the UE to hurry along its own destruction as a front for the American Communist Party and its program. There is no middle road’.70 Aiding the UEMDA was the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU). It campaigned against communist influence in trade unions and was a very vocal critic of the UE. For example, a member of the ACTU ‘... served as a conduit by which [CIO President Phillip] Murray transferred funds to ... the UE’s right-

70 'Statement of Principles: Issued by UE Members For Democratic Action', UEA, Box 1858, file: Miscellaneous.
wing forces'. Moreover, the 1947 CIO convention passed an anti-Communist resolution. The resolution rejected '... the efforts of the Communist Party or other political parties and their adherents to interfere in the affairs of the CIO'. Following this resolution, the UEMDA '... won control of six locals in New York, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut'.

Further aiding the right-wingers in the union was the anti-labour Taft-Hartley Act, which the US House of Representatives passed in 1947. The UE argued that the Taft-Hartley Act '... seeks to accomplish the domination or destruction of the American labor movement... [I]t will be used by Big Business as a club over the heads of workers – a club to reduce wages, increase speed-up and rate cutting and eliminate hard-won wage gains in working conditions'. The Taft-Hartley Act

... effected major changes in federal labor law. Among other changes it excluded security personnel in an establishment from other workers' bargaining units, made unions as well as employers liable to penalties for “unfair labor practices,” and permitted states to enact laws banning “union-shop” agreements – i.e., contracts which require workers to join a union as a condition of employment.

A key clause in the Act was union officials had to sign an affidavit declaring that they were not communists. Not surprisingly, the UE General Executive Board refused to comply with the Act.

At the UE’s national conventions in 1946, 1947 and 1948, the UEMDA attempted to pass right-wing resolutions and elect right-wing candidates to the UE’s national office.

---


72 ‘Organizational Report by Director of Organization For the Months of February, March and April 1947’, 1947, p.1, UEA, Box 1523.

73 Schatz, *The Electrical Workers*, p.178.

They were defeated, but the right wing continued to gain strength.\textsuperscript{75} Union democracy, however, was one area where the UEMDA rarely criticised the UE. Indeed, despite the ideological conflict within the UE, '... virtually no charges of electoral improprieties were raised against the incumbents' at the Local, District, and National level.\textsuperscript{76}

Union raids also hurt the UE. Despite some opposition from the UEMDA – it disapproved of the raids because it wanted to change the UE from within (although the UE alleged that the UEMDA aided the UAW's attempt to raid UE Locals) – '... between the passage of Taft-Hartley in the summer of 1947 and the withdrawal of UE from the CIO in the fall of 1949, rival unions conducted more than 500 raids on UE locals'. Among the unions which conducted raids were the UAW, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the AFL Jewelry Workers, the Glass, Ceramic and Silica Union and the AFL Carpenters.\textsuperscript{77} In an attempt to stop the raids, UE leaders decided to sign the anti-Communist affidavits as required by the Taft-Hartley Act.\textsuperscript{78}

The factional battle within the UE reached a climax at its convention in September 1949. The right-wing delegates believed that they had enough support to defeat the Executive Board. However, a UE\textsuperscript{a} editorial before the election refuted the UEMDA's claim that the only way it would lose was if the left-wing faction rigged the election. At the convention, the Board won re-election in a closely fought race. The right-wing forces refused to accept the result as they claimed that the election was fixed (this was a rare instance of the right-wing claiming that UE elections were rigged). As Filippelli and McColloch argued, it is difficult to determine whether this was true, but it was likely there

\textsuperscript{75} Schatz, \textit{The Electrical Workers}, p.184.
\textsuperscript{76} Filippelli and McColloch, p.9.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., pp.119-21; UE\textsuperscript{a} News, March 27 1948, pp.3, 7; Matles and Higgins, pp.192-4.
\textsuperscript{78} Filippelli and McColloch, pp.133-4.
were voting ‘irregularities’ on both sides. Moreover, the US government barred entry to the
country to 81 delegates from 26 Canadian UE Locals because the government claimed they
were Communists.79 At the convention, the left-wing faction noted that it had received
telegrams from every one of these Locals signed by every one of the delegates stating that
if they (the delegates) were present at the convention they would have ‘... supported the
UE constitution and policies and they would have voted for [the incumbents] Albert
Fitzgerald for President, [Secretary Treasurer Julius] Emspank for Secretary, Matles for
Director of Organization’.80

Following the convention, the UEMDA called for secession from UE. This came to
fruition at the CIO convention in November 1949. At the convention, the CIO expelled the
UE. However, the UE had effectively withdrawn from the CIO before the convention as it
withheld ‘... per capita [dues] from the CIO “until such time as the CIO returns to the
principles of free, democratic industrial unionism”’.81 The UE boycotted the convention
after the CIO refused to guarantee that CIO unions would not conduct any more raids on
UE Locals. It is important to note that the UE’s withdraw from the CIO was contrary to the
Communist Party’s position for all “red” CIO unions.82 This further demonstrates that the
UE did not just blindly follow Communist Party policy.

The CIO convention witnessed the formation of a new union: the International Union
of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE).83 The IUE almost immediately conducted
raids on UE plants. The IUE was very successful because of red-baiting and with the CIO, spent over $5.5 million on its campaign to destroy the UE. By the end of 1950, the UE had

79 Ibid., pp.136-7; UE News, September 5 1949, p.2; Schatz, p.184. For results of the election, see ‘1949 UE
81 Quote from Filippelli and McClooch, pp.138-9; Schatz, The Electrical Workers, pp.184-5; UE News, May
2 1949, p.9; UE News, October 3 1949, p.9; Matles and Higgins, pp.194-5; UE News, November 14 1949,
p.5.
82 Stepan-Norris, Zeitlin, Left Out, p.302.
83 Filippelli and McClooch, p.140; Schatz, The Electrical Workers, p.185.
lost 152,000 members and was the minority union at GE and Westinghouse. By 1952, the
UE had 215,000 members compared to the IUE’s 231,000 members. Filippelli and
McColloch argued that the greater the seniority of UE members the greater the likelihood
they would remain with the UE. Women and African-Americans split about 50-50 on
whether to stay loyal to the UE or switch to the IUE. The main factor that determined the
IUE’s ability to raid a UE plant was its capacity to win over the Local union leadership. If
the leadership defected to the IUE, the IUE usually defeated the UE.

During this period, the UE sustained a massive anti-Communist attack by the US
government. In addition to the anti-Communist clause in the Taft-Hartley Act, the Atomic
Energy Commission ordered all companies not to ‘... recognize unions that were labelled
as security risks; the UE thereby lost its bargaining rights at the Knolls Atomic Power
Laboratory in Schenectady, New York.’ The US government scheduled House
Committee of Un-American Activities sessions at the same time as union representation
election were planned. It forced UE leaders and members to testify about their alleged
Communist links, while local newspapers reported on the “Red UE.” Filippelli and
McColloch noted that a

... massive, sustained campaign of red-baiting was directed against
the UE by the government and corporations. While anti-communist
charges had been a part of the union’s history since its inception,
they appear sporadic and restrained by comparison with the attacks
of the decade of McCarthy. These red-baiting efforts were
continually utilized to smear the union and ... tip the balance in
close NLRB representation elections. The attacks also necessarily
tied up substantial amounts of union time and energy, and
threatened, at points, to put top union officers in prison. Finally,
there were several attempts ... to outlaw the UE entirely.

84 Filippelli and McColloch, p.148; Dennis A. Deslippe, “Rights, Not Roses”: Unions and the Rise of
85 Filippelli and McColloch, pp.149-50.
86 Oshinsky, p.519.
87 Matles and Higgins, pp.201-2; 210-4; Stepan-Norris, Zeitlin, Left Out, p.282.
88 Filippelli and McColloch, p.152.
The UE did not accept the red-baiting campaign without a fight. It argued that McCarthyism was Hitlerism, as it was ‘... an attack on the freedom of religion, the freedom of belief, the freedom of speech ... [and] the freedom of people to freely associate together. Moreover, at a US government “executive session”, Matles told McCarthy that ‘... when you accuse me of spying, and when you accuse decent working people [in UE organised plants] in Lynn and Schenectady of spying and sabotage, you are lying, Senator McCarthy. You are a liar’. 89

Nevertheless, because of the attacks by the US government and the raids by rival unions the UE’s membership declined rapidly. By 1954, the UE’s membership was only 164,000.90 In comparison, the IUE’s membership increased to over 300,000. The UE, however, managed to survive these actions and membership was starting to stabilise in the mid-1950s.

Women’s issues remained an important part of the UE’s programme, in part, because of the anti-Communist attacks on the UE. The UE held a national conference on the problems of working women. In an attempt to counter rival unions’ raids on its membership, the UE leadership paid particular attention to the needs of its Locals, in which women were a significant portion of the membership. Further, because of its weakened power, the UE concentrated its bargaining strategy at the ‘... local level, where women were more likely to play an active role’.91 Moreover, the UE argued that discrimination against women favoured business. It claimed that companies discriminate against women ‘... because it pays off to the bosses in billion of dollars in extra profits’. For example:

According to the US 1952 census the average wage for women in factories was $1,468 a year less then men (men averaged $3,615, women $2,147). This difference of $1,468 when multiplied by the

89 UE News, October 5 1953, p.2; James J. Matles quoted in UE News, November 30 1953, p.1
90 Filippelli and McColloch, p.157.
91 Kannenberg, p.316.
4,182,000 women employed in factories that year, makes the staggering total of 6.1 billion dollars. There’s the answer – in one year US corporations made six billion one hundred million dollars in extra profits from their exploitation of women.\(^92\)

While UE membership was starting to stabilise, in part because of its focus on its Locals, it was to suffer a crippling blow in 1955. The Communist Party of the USA issued a directive to its “union cadres” to join unions within the newly merged AFL-CIO. This led to the UE losing half its membership. Many UE Local leaders, who were either Communist Party members or supporters, persuaded their Local to certify an AFL-CIO union as the bargaining agent. For example, “[f]our UE district presidents and thirty staff members and local union business agents announced that the UE was “finished,” proclaimed it time to find a “haven in the “mainstream,” and … prevailed on their members to seceded from the UE’. However, the haven that the leaders sought often turned out to be not quite as they imagined, as many were expelled from the union that they joined.\(^93\)

UE membership declined to 75,000 in 1957, and it fell even further to 58,000 in 1960, while the IUE’s hovered around 300,000.\(^94\) Arguably, this action by the Communist Party of the USA’s “union cadres” demonstrated the true influence of the Communist Party on the UE. While the UE’s trade union performance cannot be questioned, it is likely, as the UE’s policy on WWII demonstrated that Communist Party members or supporters strongly influenced its political positions. It is equally likely that Communist Party influence on the UE dramatically declined after the exodus as its members and supporters transferred to AFL-CIO unions. However, as the managing editor of UE News Peter Gilmore noted, there were Communist Party members and cadre who stayed loyal to the UE. Having survived

\(^92\) ‘How To Tackle Job And Rate Discrimination Against Women’ (file: Facts on Women Workers) undated (approx 1955), p.2, UEA, Box 2062.
\(^93\) Stepan-Norris, Zeitlin, Left Out, p.322.
the McCarthy hearings and the persecution of the UE, usually at great personal cost, they did not want the Communist Party or any other organisation telling them what union they should belong to. The number of Communist Party members within the UE is open to question. While some UE leaders such as William Sentner, James MacLeish (‘president of District 4 in New York’), David Davis (‘business agent for Local 155 in Philadelphia’), and Nat Cohen (‘executive board member of Local 474’) admitted belonging to the Communist Party, other UE leaders such as Secretary Treasurer Julius Emspak and Director of Organisation James Matles continually denied belonging to the party. However, it is important to note that recent research by historians with access to the Kremlin’s files ‘... have not found a single Communist who was active in the leadership of a CIO union, at any level, whom they could even insinuate to have acted in any way to endanger “national security”’.  

Attacks by the US government, raids by rival unions, and the Communist Party’s betrayal more than devastated the UE: between VJ Day and 1960, the UE lost almost 700,000 members, although the membership losses suffered by the UE was partly because of the decline in the arms industry. The UE managed, however, to survive, and continued to achieve good collective bargaining agreements for its members. Indeed, at Westinghouse in the 1950s, the UE achieved better contracts for its members than the IUE did.

The UE and IUE at Westinghouse in the 1950s

95 Interview with Peter Gilmore September 10, 2002.
96 Filippelli and McColloch, pp.6-7.
97 Stepan-Norris, Zeitlin, Left Out, pp.21-2 (footnote 49).
The UE signed a national contract with Westinghouse and organised a majority of Westinghouse workers during the 1940s. Beginning with its national contract in 1941, each UE contract with Westinghouse included substantial improvements for its members. However, following red-baiting and the formation of the IUE, the UE represented less than 20 per cent of Westinghouse workers, with the IUE representing approximately 73 per cent of Westinghouse's workforce during the 1950s.99

Schatz claimed that 'UE leaders tended throughout the 1950s to grasp at any acceptable terms offered by ... Westinghouse'.100 However, the facts do not support Schatz's assertion. In October 1950, the IUE and Westinghouse reached agreement on their first full contract. The contract allowed Westinghouse to conduct time studies in an attempt to increase productivity. The IUE also agreed to eliminate '... the protective clause explicitly allowing grievances' over time studies. In comparison, the UE contract with Westinghouse, which the two parties agreed to a month later, while losing ground '... in some areas where the IUE contract had retreated', managed to save elements of the grievance procedure. *UE News* claimed that the settlement '... won with great difficulty after the ... IUE-CIO had sold out long-standing contract protections, preserved without fundamental change all the basic features and protections which Westinghouse workers had won over the years in their UE contracts'. In addition, the UE '... won improvements in the holiday and vacation provisions' compared to the IUE contract.101 Subsequent contracts by the UE and IUE with Westinghouse in the early 1950s '... largely reflected a continuation of the positions won or lost in the 1950 agreements'.102

---

99 Ibid., p.184.
100 Schatz, *The Electrical Workers*, p.232.
102 McColloch, pp.188-90. For an overview of the 1951 UE and IUE Westinghouse contracts see, 'Organizational Report by Director of Organization For the Months of May, June and July1951', 1951, p.11, *UEA*, Box 1524. For an overview of the 1954 UE and IUE Westinghouse contracts see,
difference between the contracts. But, considering the UE’s size in comparison with the IUE, that it managed to win slightly better contracts was a major achievement.

In 1955, Westinghouse demanded that the UE and IUE ‘... accept a serious cut in wage levels, work standards etc, and then commit suicide by accepting contractually the theory that the union[s] had no say whatever in regard to work standards, methods of wage payment etc’. Furthermore, Westinghouse wanted ‘... the right to restudy and reset incentive rates at any time; the right to time study dayworkers and impose production quotas on them; and the acceptance by the UE of a productivity/speedup clause’. The parties reached a settlement following a 156-day strike, in which the striking workers received support from 16 city mayors and 5 state governors, with unity between UE and IUE workers (though the IUE leadership refused to cooperate with the UE). Both UE and IUE workers received wage rises and better pensions than Westinghouse initially offered. However, the UE achieved a better contract with Westinghouse than the IUE. Both the UE and IUE agreed that

Westinghouse could conduct time studies of day workers under certain conditions, but the UE contract limited this to “measuring or improving production, method analysis or for budget purposes,” in other words, no measured daywork. The IUE clause allowed Westinghouse to apply individual production standards to “direct dayworkers,” those who did easily measured production tasks, as opposed to “indirect,” such as janitors, crane operators, tool room workers, who made up about one-third of the nonincentive workforce, and agreed to a very explicit productivity clause for them.

UE Local 107 in South Philadelphia, however, was still on strike. In April 1955, the Local told Westinghouse that it ‘... opposed rate-cutting and speedup schemes’, while in

103 Organizational Report by Director of Organization For the Months of May, June and July 1954”, 1954, pp.2-3, UEA, Box 1524.
104 McColloch, p.191.
July the Local successfully fought Westinghouse’s attempt to introduce time study for day workers. However, in August 1955, Westinghouse told the Local, but no other UE or IUE Local, that it was, ‘... effective as of midnight, October 14, 1955 ... terminating all local supplements covering the hourly and salaried employees’ of the Local. Instead, there would be a new wage payment system, which would have led to, on average, a 50-cents per hour wage reduction for workers. Not surprisingly, UE Local 107 went on strike on October 14 following authorisation from its members. During the strike, five Philadelphia area congressmen ‘... praised UE Local 107 for conducting its side of the dispute in the most orderly and peaceful manner and expressed concern over the effects in the area if the company succeeded in its demands to cut wages ... [and] leaders from both [political] parties blamed Westinghouse for the continued strike’. Following a 10-month strike, the UE Local was victorious. Westinghouse agreed to retain the Local supplement, and with the Local ratifying the national contract already agreed to, its members instead of having their wages reduced, received a pay rise.

Another area where UE members benefited compared to IUE members at Westinghouse was over seniority clauses. Seniority provisions were very important to workers. Schatz noted that ‘... employed workers made enormous gains as a result of the inclusion of seniority provisions in union contracts’. Seniority provisions gave workers ‘... enhanced standing relative to foremen and other low-ranking supervisors’, as foreman could no longer ‘... distribute overtime among individuals and ... make recommendations to personnel officers regarding selection of individuals for layoff’. Moreover, seniority was important for promotions, layoffs ‘... or rehiring and of great importance for job bidding

[i.e. applying for a new job within the company]. At the major electrical and machine plants, including Westinghouse, UE seniority clauses included the ‘... automatic restoration of service to employees rehired after a period of layoff which does not exceed continuous service; and recall rights of up to five years for laid off employees’. 

McColloch argued that the 1950 IUE-Westinghouse contract ‘... codified a significant retreat on seniority’. Amongst the retreats, the IUE allowed Westinghouse to exempt 1 to 2 per cent of workers in any unit from seniority and it ‘... explicitly favored layoffs over work sharing in times of economic downturn’. In comparison, ‘... none of these provisions were present in the UE contract’. However, the IUE allowed Westinghouse ‘... to set up a super seniority list giving special preference to one percent of its employees whom it will designate because of special skill, etc’. The UE was forced to adopt the super seniority list, but was able to ‘... negotiate additional restrictions and protections to limit’ Westinghouse’s power.

US labour historian Dennis Deslippe argued, however, that UE leaders favoured the security that seniority clauses provided compared to IUE leaders because of the composition of the union’s leadership. The greater the seniority of workers, the greater the likelihood that they stayed loyal to the UE. These workers, and hence union leaders, remembered ‘... the breakup of craft unionism following World War I and the devastating effects of the Great Depression on jobs and benefits, [thus they] emphasized employment security’. In contrast, the majority of IUE leaders ‘... assumed power in the late 1940s,

112 McColloch, p.195.
having come of age during a period of growing prosperity’; hence, they favoured higher wages over seniority.\textsuperscript{114}

Nevertheless, the clause that allowed Westinghouse to exempt a small percentage of workers from seniority, potentially allowed the company to refuse seniority to militant workers. Likewise, IUE workers did not necessarily receive higher wages in return for relinquishing seniority clauses. For example, IUE workers’ ‘... rates were cut at the IUE stronghold in Mansfield Ohio ... [as] ... workers did “not want to stick their necks out” in the existing climate of red-baiting and inter-union rivalry ... [and] ... guaranteed rates at the UE’s stronghold at Lester, Pennsylvania, ranged from 8 to 33 percent higher than those at the IUE’s East Pittsburgh plant’.\textsuperscript{115} Moreover, the IUE’s national contracts with Westinghouse ‘... did not discriminate against women in seniority provisions. However, many of the supplements reached by its locals did’, for example at IUE Local 502 in Springfield, and at IUE plants in Pittsburgh and Sharon Pennsylvania. Conversely, no UE contract as it related to seniority discriminated against women.\textsuperscript{116}

Despite its small size, the UE achieved better collective bargaining agreements with Westinghouse compared to those achieved by the IUE. While there was not a large difference, UE members were definitely better off, especially in the areas of time studies and seniority. Far from grasping at any acceptable terms offered by Westinghouse, the UE fought for its members’ interests, and for the most part, was successful.

1960-Present

\textsuperscript{114} Deslippe, p.103.
\textsuperscript{115} Filippelli and McColloch, pp.163-4.
In the mid to late 1960s, the UE ‘... experienced its biggest organizational surge since the 1940s... Some shops lost earlier in the decade were won back’, with other organising victories across the US.\textsuperscript{117} This was because there were fewer anti-Communists attacks on the union by the US government, companies and rival unions.

In 1969, the factional war within the electronic industry was partly healed as the IUE agreed to cooperate with the UE in the forthcoming GE and Westinghouse negotiations. This was in part because of the UE’s and IUE’s continued failure in negotiations with the companies.\textsuperscript{118} In the 1969 negotiations, GE tried to remove long-standing agreements, such as the right of unions to bargain national contracts. Following a deadlock in negotiations, GE workers went out on strike (16,000 UE members were on strike out of a total workforce 170,000). This was the first time since 1946 that the entire GE workforce struck together. The unions had support from community groups, politicians, and students. A UE Local leader summed up the UE’s position:

[General Electric have] been trying to tell ... [the workers] ... there are three separate groups in GE: the company, the employees, and the union. That’s what they’ve based themselves on. We have to show them they’re wrong. The UE represents the workers. The workers are the union. We have to show them there are not three groups but just two: the company and the union. Them and Us.\textsuperscript{119}

The strike was successful. GE agreed to withdraw its demands for an end to national contracts. Workers received wage increases, and ‘... improvements in pensions, sick pay, vacations, hospitalisation, weekly sickness and accident benefits, life insurance, and nonhospital medical expenses’.\textsuperscript{120} The UE argued that the success of the strike was partially because of the support it received from the Teamsters, UAW and the International

\textsuperscript{117} Filippelli and McCulloch, pp.170-1; Stepan-Norris, Zeitlin, \textit{Left Out}, pp.324-5.
\textsuperscript{118} Filippelli and McCulloch, pp.173; Matles and Higgins, pp.260-1.
\textsuperscript{119} Filippelli and McCulloch, p.173; Matles and Higgins, p.286; \textit{UE News}, November 3, 1969, pp1, 9; quote from Matles and Higgins, pp.286-7.
\textsuperscript{120} Matles and Higgins, p.281.
Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union. Moreover, a ‘... key factor in the success of the strike was the unity of the UE and IUE at the negotiating tables, a unity which was strengthened and continually reinforced by the determination of the rank and file of both unions to cast aside anything which interfered with winning the fight’.\textsuperscript{121} This strike was arguably, the UE’s last great triumph. As the success against GE occurred at the end of 1969, there was renewed hope for the decade to follow. However, the downturn in the US economy severely hampered the UE. Despite some organising victories, UE membership continued to decline, and by 1975 was only 67,000.\textsuperscript{122}

The UE during the 1960s and 1970s was still undertaking independent political action; a key characteristic of Moody’s account of social movement unionism. The UE was actively involved in the civil rights movement. It condemned the jailing of Martin Luther King. It ‘... sent an exceptionally large delegation to the 1963 March on Washington [it was one of the sponsoring organisations], and the union pushed hard for the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act’.\textsuperscript{123} UE President Albert Fitzgerald claimed that the Act was ‘... the most crucial piece of legislation now pending, perhaps the most important bill of the past ten years, we must take special measures to mobilize our membership to insure its passage’.\textsuperscript{124} Likewise, the UE condemned the Vietnam War. A resolution adopted at the 1966 UE Convention argued that many men, including UE members, were fighting and dying 9000 miles away from home. The resolution gave an anti-capitalist tone to the UE’s opposition to the war. It noted that in the US, the ‘... cost of living has been rising rapidly,
taxes have been going up and the fight against poverty is being sacrificed, while corporations are wallowing in the greatest profits in history'.

In electoral politics, the UE continued to be independent of the two main political parties, though it sometimes endorsed the Democrats at the national level. The UE backed the Democrat candidate in US Presidential elections in 1944, in 1964, in 1972 and in 1988 following Ronald Reagan’s assault on labour and Michael Dukakis’ support for the UE’s campaign to save Morse Cutting Tools. In recent years, the UE was a founding affiliate of the US Labor Party, and in the 2000 US Presidential election, it endorsed Ralph Nader. The UE argued that both the Democrats and the Republicans are parties of big business, and while it was ‘... unlikely that Ralph Nader will take up residency in the White House in January ... [he] is the candidate who best reflects UE’s position on nearly every issue’. Likewise, the UE has been a vocal critic of the US government’s economic and foreign policy. For example, in 1984, the UE argued US intervention around the world was a tool to prop ‘... up anti-union repressive governments that keep their people in poverty to serve as cheap labor for US-based multinational corporations’. The UE stated that through the invasion of Granada, ‘... its bankrolling of the brutal government in El Salvador, and its open threats to invade and overthrow the government of Nicaragua, the Administration has shown its eagerness to intervene in Central America in opposition to democracy and in support of the privileged elite’.

In the current era of globalisation, the UE strongly opposes neoliberalism and free trade. It argues that they are ‘... further examples of imperialistic policies that exploit peoples around the world for the benefit of local elites and Western consumers... The

126 UE News, April 29, 1944, p.5; Filippelli and McColloch, pp.172, 183; Interview with Peter Gilmore, September 10, 2002.
economic exploitation of the mass of human beings for the benefit of a few is not inevitable’. The 2001 UE Convention noted the UE ‘... actively supports organizations that are attempting to create an alternative globalization based on a worldwide fellowship and not on the continued exploitation of one segment of the world’s population for the benefit of another’. At the same time, like Moody, the UE believes that the deteriorating economic and working conditions of workers worldwide can lead to a rank-and-file revolt. James Matles and James Higgins, in the final paragraph in their book on the history of the UE, argued that ‘... seeds for change in the labor movement are sown among rank-and-file workers by the conditions forced upon them. It is from this ground, from among these seeds, that new leadership springs to lead the struggle for change’. The UE’s stance on such issues as civil rights and the Vietnam War and its independence from the Democratic Party (unlike the majority of US unions), clearly demonstrate that the UE in recent years undertakes independent political action.

However, since 1970 the UE’s history is one of “treading water”. For example, the 1970s was such an uneventful period for the UE that in their authoritative history of the UE, Filippelli and McColloch devoted less than 10 pages to the UE’s activities in the 1970s.

The 1980s and 1990s were a bittersweet period for the UE. The union largely resisted concessions in collective bargaining agreements, and led the fight against plant closings, but its membership halved (see below for details). This led the UE to increase its efforts to organise the unorganised. The UE argued that ‘... the survival of our union depends on our ability to organize’. In addition, it recognised that if there was to be a fundamental change in the fortune of workers, organising was crucial:

130 Matles and Higgins, p.304.
The success of our movement and the prospects for progressive political change in our nation are directly linked to our ability to amplify workers’ voices through organization. Because it is the lifeblood of our union and our movement, organizing must be the work of the whole union and not just a few.\textsuperscript{131}

In 1980, while the UE only had 65,000 members, it organised 5000 new workers, which as Filippelli and McColloch noted, was ‘... no small feat in the midst of one of the worst periods in the annals of organized labor’.\textsuperscript{132} In the period 1972-1984, the UE’s success rate in NLRB certification elections was 60.4 per cent, with only the American Federation of Teachers having a higher success rate (63.8 per cent) amongst all major unions. In comparison, in the electrical industry, the IBEW had a 51.2 per cent, and the IUE only had a 43.4 per cent success rate.\textsuperscript{133} Likewise, in 1994, the UE had the best record of any US union in gaining first contracts with companies, and in the period 1996-98 consistently achieved wage increases above the average for all US unions.\textsuperscript{134}

The UE has had recent success in organising new members, albeit on a much smaller scale than in the past. In 2000, the UE organised new 1600 workers, which was the eighth consecutive year that the UE organised more than a thousand workers.\textsuperscript{135} While not at the level of its organising successes in the 1940s, and unlikely lead to a revival in the UE’s fortunes, the union’s recent organising efforts are noteworthy considering the size of the union. In comparison, the CAW, which has more than seven times the membership of the UE, only organises approximately 6000 workers per year, which is still a good achievement in itself. The UAW has over 20 times the members of the UE, but only organises 13,000 new workers per year.

\textsuperscript{132} Filippelli and McColloch, p.178.
\textsuperscript{135} ‘2000 UE Convention Resolutions: Organizing the Unorganized’.
Despite the UE’s recent organising efforts, membership has slumped to its current level of 35,000. The major contributor to the UE’s slump has been the health of the US economy, and multinationals moving production abroad. The US recession in the early 1980s led to thousands of UE members losing their jobs. Thus, by ‘... the mid 1980s, the UE was no longer a significant factor in Westinghouse negotiations’, although the union still had some power at GE.\textsuperscript{136} However, the IUE suffered an equally dramatic decline. In 1979, the IUE had 243,000 members, but by 1993, the union’s membership was only 143,000.\textsuperscript{137}

Partly because multinationals have moved production plants from the US, the UE is forming alliances with unions and workers worldwide. Indeed, the UE is at the forefront of labour internationalism in the US. UE has recently stated:

\begin{quote}
It is no exaggeration to say that UE’s international solidarity work in its various forms is an example to the rest of the labour movement. Our work is guided by the principle of commitment to action. For the rest of the [US] labor movement, many may talk about solidarity, but few do anything about it. That is not true of our work. We ask for concrete assistance, we receive it, and we extend it when asked to do so. In our new global economy, we have no choice.\textsuperscript{138}
\end{quote}

While the UE’s statement may seem like hyperbole, it is true. Moody noted that ‘... probably the most active and ambitious cross-border alliance is the “strategic organizing alliance” between the United Electrical Workers ... and the Authentic Labor Front [Frente Autenico del Trabajo (FAT)] set up in 1992’.\textsuperscript{139} FAT, in Mexico, is like the UE in that it is ‘... independent of political parties, business and government’, unlike other Mexican labor

\textsuperscript{136} Filippelli and McColloch, pp.179-81.
\textsuperscript{139} Moody, \textit{Workers in a Lean World}, p.241.
federations. The alliance was formed in response to multinationals moving production plants from the US to Mexico. The UE’s International Representative David Johnson noted that in ‘General Electric alone, we’ve lost over 10,000 jobs in the last few years. They’ve moved ... [mainly] to Mexico... To put it a little simplistically, either our wages and conditions are going to go down to the level of Mexico, or we’re going to figure out ways to help Mexicans raise their wages and conditions up to our levels’. While of course there is self-interest involved in the UE’s commitment to international solidarity, this is not its only concern in such alliances. The UE argues that corporate-led globalisation would lead to a global race to the bottom, with no concerns for labour and the environment. It noted that there is a ‘... polarization of wealth [and] environmental degradation... Instead of the race to the bottom, we must pull working people throughout the world to the top’.

The UE provides FAT with ‘... financial support, research capability, and the prospect of rank and file action’ in the US in support of Mexican organising drives. In return, FAT helps the UE in its organising drives. For example, FAT ‘... provided Mexican organizers, whose work with Mexican employees in a ... virulently anti-union Milwaukee foundry was vital to the UE’s successful unionisation drive there’. As part of the strategy to organise the foundry workers, the Mexican organiser distributed a leaflet to workers. It stated that ‘... the UE and the FAT fight for the same ideals... I feel proud to see my countrymen demanding their union rights. And it’s moving to see workers of all races and

nationalities joining forces... Keep on, brothers and sisters. The way to the future is the union!  

While the UE is at the forefront of labour internationalism and independent political action, it was still a male-dominated union. For example, in the early 1980s, there was a decided lack of women in leadership positions. In 1984, only one woman was on the 15-member General Executive Board. However, this changed dramatically in subsequent years. In 1985, three women were elected to the Board, and by 1991, there were six women Board members, which exceeded ‘... the female percentage of union membership’. Thus, while the UE does not have a perfect record on women’s issues and the role of women in the union, it does have a very good tradition.

Likewise, while the UE’s record on African-Americans was far from perfect during WWII, it has improved in subsequent years. As previously noted, the UE condemned the jailing of Martin Luther King and was very active in the 1963 March on Washington, and campaigned for the ‘... passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act’. Similarly, an increasing number of UE Locals are leading the fight against racism. For example, UE Local 150 in North Carolina has a ‘... multiracial membership and black leadership’. Moreover, in 2001 the UE co-sponsored a march and rally in Raleigh State, North Carolina in an attempt to promote African-American and ‘Latino unity in the South’.

The UE at Stewart-Warner and Steeltech

146 Filippelli and McColloch, p.182.
147 Ibid., p.172.
The UE has an excellent organising record; it has great success in achieving good collective bargaining agreements, and it is at the forefront of efforts to build international labour solidarity. However, the UE’s campaign to keep Stewart-Warner’s Chicago plant open in the 1980s, and for union recognition at Steeltech in the 1990s, demonstrate the lack of power the UE (or indeed, any union) has in comparison to business in bad economic conditions. It is also an example of the decline of the industrial sector in the US. The IBEW was the certified bargaining agent at the Stewart-Warner Chicago plant. However, following worker dissatisfaction with the union, the UE eventually gained certification at the plant in 1980. In 1985, following financial difficulties at Stewart-Warner, the UE formed the Coalition to Keep Stewart-Warner Open (CKSWO). Amongst its members were the UE, other ‘... labor activists, church groups, the University of Illinois at Chicago ... and aldermen from the Chicago city council’. In 1986, Stewart-Warner announced that it was to transfer 150 jobs to its Johnson City plant. However, the UE demonstrated ‘... that in the longer term some twenty-five hundred jobs were at stake ... [because of] ... underlying weakness in the company’s wage and financial policies’. In 1987, Stewart-Warner merged with the British multinational British Thermoplastics and Rubber. Reverend Jesse Jackson urged all Chicago workers to help in the fight to keep Stewart-Warner in Chicago. He claimed that the reduction of US jobs was ‘... just another form of economic violence that must be ended the same way we ended racial violence about 20

150 Ibid., p.337.
years ago'. However, later that year, Stewart-Warner announced that in 1988 it would axe approximately a quarter of its Chicago workforce. In June 1989, the company revealed that its Chicago plant ‘... may be on the endangered species list because high operating costs at the plant make it difficult for the firm to compete’. Andrew Jonas, a Reader in the Department of Geography at the University of Hull, noted that the campaign to save Stewart-Warner was built around a well-organized community base and was linked to a wider political movement to transform economic policy in Chicago. In this respect, the CKSWO’s concerns and goals fed into a broader program of action to protect inner-city neighborhoods from manufacturing displacements... Opportunities to link with political movements beyond the city limits also came up during the course of the struggle.

Moreover, in an attempt to keep the plant open, Stewart-Warner workers agreed to concessions, which would have saved the company $2.5 million per year. Stewart-Warner’s management rejected the offer as inadequate. On November 4 1989, Stewart-Warner announced that it was shutting its Chicago plant ‘... and moving its operations to Mexico in two years’. However, the Stewart-Warners’ Chicago plant remained open to mid-1995. During this time, the UE managed to achieve a contract without concessions, and wage rises for the few remaining employees. But, despite alliances with the local community and politicians, the UE was unable to keep Stewart-Warner’s Chicago plant open.

There was a similar outcome at Steeltech. Steeltech Manufacturing commenced operation in Milwaukee in 1990. It was an African-American ‘... owned company with a majority African American workforce, [and] the plant received more than $15 million in

---

156 *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 4 1989.
public funding and loan guarantees from city, county, state, and federal governments. In November 1993, the UE announced that it wanted the NLRB to conduct a certification election at Steeltech. The UE narrowly lost the election in December. However, in June 1994, the NLRB ruled that because of election violations by Steeltech another certification election would be held. In the second ballot, and following rank-and-file solidarity and community involvement, the UE was successful. However, Steeltech did not recognise the union as the company claimed that the UE forced workers to vote for it. The UE received community support for its fight to obtain recognition. For example, eight Milwaukee aldermen wrote a letter to Steeltech which stated: '[we] urge management to enter into negotiations with the UE local... [B]ecause public funding is involved in Steeltech operations, including significant investment by the city of Milwaukee, we are concerned about these investments being used by Steeltech to stop its workers exercising their rights to unionize and negotiate a contract.' Likewise, the Milwaukee Mayor wrote to Steeltech imploring the company to negotiate with the UE. In the campaign for recognition, the UE utilised rank-and-file tactics. Katherine Sciacchitano, a former labour lawyer and organiser, and currently a lecturer at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, noted that

[c]ommunity participation was anchored in a broad range of organizations and groups. More significant than the array of organizations, however, was the fact that involvement took place as much through the direct participation of individuals as through the organizations themselves. Union members showed the extent to which they were “in their communities” by speaking to friends,

relatives, fellow church members, and allies about the Steeltech struggle.\textsuperscript{162}

In a great victory for the UE, in June 1995, Steeltech recognised the UE as the bargaining agent for its employees. Furthermore, there was hope that Steeltech would turn a profit. However, in February 1996, Steeltech laid-off workers because of a cash-flow crisis, and by February 1998 despite finally being profitable, Steeltech had a mountain of debt.\textsuperscript{163}

Nevertheless, in June 1998, the UE Local negotiated a 4 per cent wage rise effective July 1 and a further 3 per cent from January 1 1999. After it held meetings with several politicians and company officials, the Local claimed that the short-term future of Steeltech was assured.\textsuperscript{164} In 1999, however, Steeltech was on the verge of bankruptcy, and had not paid its workers for two months. It was no surprise that the company declared bankruptcy later that year, with workers losing their entitlements.\textsuperscript{165}

The Stewart-Warner and Steeltech campaigns demonstrate that in specific circumstances the UE’s power is weak in comparison to that of business. The UE’s attempt to keep Stewart-Warner open and campaign for a first contract at Steeltech utilised labour-community alliances, alliances with politicians, and in the case of Stewart-Warner even offered wage concessions. However, the UE was unable to keep Stewart-Warner in Chicago, and eight months after recognising the UE as a bargaining agent for its workers, Steeltech laid-off part of its workforce, with the company declaring bankruptcy three years later.

The UE’s experiences at Stewart-Warner and Steeltech were not isolated events in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, in 1982 UE Local 610 defeated a concessionary contract

\textsuperscript{162} Sciacchitano, p.161. \\
\textsuperscript{164} UE News, August 23, 1998, p.9. \\
and achieved contract gains following a 205-day strike at American Standard’s Westinghouse Air Brake and Union Switch and Signal, in which the striking workers received strong community support. However, by 1985, and despite strong labour and community support, American Standard decided to shut the plant.\(^{166}\) There was a similar situation at Morse Cutting Tools. The UE defeated a concessionary contract in 1982, but management decided to close the plant in May 1987.\(^{167}\) However, two months later, and following a UE-community campaign, Morse Tools reopened amid much fanfare. But, there was not to be a happy ending. Morse finally closed its operations for good a few years later.\(^{168}\) Nevertheless, that the UE and community groups managed to reopen a closed plant, and provide UE members with good wages for a few extra years was a substantial achievement.

**Conclusion**

The UE’s polices and practices correspond to the key components of Moody’s account of social movement unionism. The UE is a very democratic union, with extensive rank-and-file involvement. It organises the unorganised, and with its alliance with the FAT, the UE is at the forefront of international labour solidarity. The UE undertakes independent political

\(^{166}\) *UE News*, November 9, 1981, p.3; *UE News*, April 19, 1982, p.3; *UE News*, June 7, 1982, pp.6-7; *UE News*, September 16, 1985, p.4; *UE News*, December 30, 1985, p.3.


action, is hostile to capitalism, and has alliances with the local community. Finally, while not perfect, the UE’s record on minorities is good.

Likewise, the UE’s policies and practices are consistent with Scipes’ theory of social justice unionism. The only differences is that the UE is a very democratic union (under Scipes’ theory, social justice unions do not necessarily have to be democratic with rank-and-file involvement) and fights for working people in the US and worldwide (Scipes does not mention international solidarity in his social justice unionism definition; this is in contrast to his theory of social movement unionism). However, because the UE, despite its undoubted hostility to capitalism, does not actively challenge the US’s economic and political order it cannot be considered a social movement union under Scipes’, Waterman’s, and Lambert and Webster’s theories of social movement unionism. Furthermore, the UE is not a social movement union under Waterman’s theory because, apart from not challenging the state, it does not have an organisational structure that is similar to the structure of new social movements, it operates within the US’s industrial relations system and not on ‘... that of popular self-organization outside, or independent of, capital and state’. Moreover, while the UE does have a progressive orientation towards many issues, it is not ‘... working for the continuing transformation of all social relationships and structures... in a democratic and cooperative direction’.

Like the CAW, the UE has a very good record in collective bargaining. As the study by Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin demonstrated, the UE’s agreements were more pro-labour than any other CIO union throughout the CIO’s existence as a separate labour federation. Even though it was the minority union at Westinghouse, the UE achieved better contracts than the IUE in the 1950s. Likewise, the UE has a very impressive organising record, with a very high NLRB certification election win rate. However, the UE was unable to stave off the ideological conflict that raged within it. The anti-Communist attacks from within its
ranks, from other unions, the CIO, and by the US government, and the Communist Party’s betrayal decimated the UE. UE membership in recent years has remained relatively steady at around 35,000, as its organising successes have been negated by its relative powerlessness to prevent plant closures, as its campaigns at Stewart-Warner and Steeltech demonstrate. Nevertheless, that the UE has managed to survive is testament to the success of the UE’s brand of trade unionism. Indeed the UE managed to survive the IUE as a stand-alone union. IUE’s membership continued to decline throughout the 1990s. By 2000, its membership had slumped to 113,000. In the same year, the IUE merged with the Communications Workers of America in 2000. As Filippelli and McColloch argued in relation to collective bargaining, ‘[p]erhaps the best testimonial to UE’s trade union performance lies in the fact that throughout the civil war in the union, the right wing never raised a telling criticism in this sphere’. The UE, despite its faults, is one of the great examples of the benefits of rank-and-file unionism, or to use another term, Moody’s social movement unionism. The UE, while not being a perfect example of a social movement union, is the best example of a social movement union in the US.

170 Filippelli and McColloch, p.187.
Chapter 7

TEAMSTERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION

This chapter examines Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) as an organisational expression of a strategy of social movement unionism in Kim Moody’s account.

Moody continually emphasised the importance of union democracy and militancy. These have been the main goals of oppositional caucuses within US unions, such as the New Directions group in the United Auto Workers, New Directions caucus in the Transport Workers Union of America, and the Longshore Workers’ Coalition in the International Longshoremen’s Union. Moody argued that the material for social movement unionism was present ‘... in oppositional and reform movements within unions’.¹ His prime example was TDU.

For example, in An Injury to All, Moody commended TDU’s efforts to democratise the Teamsters and he approvingly noted TDU’s endeavours to develop future union leaders. Moody stated that TDU’s annual conventions

... were educational events drawing on experts of all kinds and activists from other unions with experience relevant to the Teamsters. Through its Teamster Rank & File Educational & Legal Defense Foundation, TDU developed a series of manuals for organizers, stewards, and members... Additionally, both TDU’s International Steering Committee and the many local chapter

¹ Moody, Workers in a Lean World, p.289.
steering committees became important focuses for leadership training and development.\textsuperscript{2}

In \textit{Workers in a Lean World}, Moody implied that the Teamsters became more militant in 1991 after the election of the reform candidate Ron Carey, who was supported by TDU, as president of the Teamsters. In ‘Unions, Strikes, and Class Consciousness Today’, Moody argued that during the 1997 United Parcel Service (UPS) strike TDU members offered a working class ideology that provided an alternative to UPS’s business ideology. He noted that although the strike was over material issues and demands, working class ideology and solidarity were also evident. In ‘The Rank and File Strategy’, Moody argued that TDU had a central role in the democratisation of the Teamsters and the 1997 UPS victory.\textsuperscript{3}

\section*{The Teamsters: A Brief History}

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) is arguably the best known and infamous union, not only in the US, but also in the world because of corruption and its ties with organised crime. Beginning in the 1930s, the Teamsters were characterised by conservative business unionism combined with rank-and-file militancy. As Dan La Botz claimed:

\begin{quote}

The Teamsters had been founded back in the 1890s as a craft union ... made up of local cartage drivers. Under the leadership of Dan Tobin, the Teamsters formed an important part of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). But Tobin was a conservative leader, dedicated to the AFL’s craft union model, uninterested in organizing immigrants, African Americans, or industrial workers whom he called riff-raff. The Teamsters’ heroic years began in 1934 when rank-and-file truck drivers and warehouse workers from Minneapolis, Minnesota led a series of strikes, culminating in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{2} Moody, \textit{An Injury to All}, p.233.
a city-wide truck-drivers' strike. The leader of that strike was Farrell Dobbs, a socialist ... who went on to organize over-the-road freight drivers and other dock workers and warehousemen throughout the Midwest. In this way Teamsters underwent a transformation from a craft union to a kind of industrial union of the transport industry...⁴

Dobbs' strategy resulted in the union becoming the largest private sector union in the US by 1940; it is still one of the largest today. However, the Teamsters expelled Dobbs and other socialists in the lead-up to World War II. The union leadership consolidated top-down control, which resulted in future leaders like David Beck and Jimmy Hoffa.⁵

Under their Presidencies, the Teamsters were corrupt. Beck was contemptuous of rank-and-file control. He stated that '... unions are big business. Why should truck drivers and bottle washers be allowed to make big decisions affecting union policy? Would any corporation allow it?"⁶ Moreover, Beck was corrupt. He used Teamster funds for personal gain and '... had many business relationships with employers'. Eventually, in 1957 under investigation by the McClellan Committee, which was examining union racketeering, Beck announced that he would not stand for re-election. Hoffa replaced him as IBT President.⁷

As Moody argued, in addition to further cementing top-down control, Hoffa not only built '... a more centralized bureaucratic union, he created an alliance with organized crime and other Teamster leaders tied to it'.⁸ Soon Mafia members and Mafia-connected union officials had prominent places within the Teamsters. In addition, 'Hoffa and the corrupt

---


union officials he supported or put into power cut dirty deals with employers, including payoffs for labor peace. He also bought trucking companies in his wife’s name and became an employer. During Hoffa’s reign, the AFL-CIO expelled the Teamsters in 1957 until they could ‘… eliminate corrupt influences from positions of leadership’. Eventually Hoffa was jailed for jury tampering and misappropriating members’ pension funds. However, Mafia influence continued to grow under the man who replaced Hoffa, Frank Fitzsimmons, and his successors. Nevertheless, as La Botz stated:

Under Tobin, Beck and Hoffa the Teamsters had become the corrupt, bureaucratic institution it was in 1976 when TDU began, dominated by the Mafia, manipulated by the government and collaborating with the companies. Contrary to myth, the corruption of the Teamsters was not due to the fact that Jimmy Hoffa had invited the Mafia into the union. The union had been perverted from its original purpose because along the way Tobin, Beck and Hoffa had come to accommodate employers, adapting to the values of the employers, and to the employers’ sense of who should run things.

In other words, before the formation of TDU the Teamsters was a corrupt business union.

**TDU: An Embryonic Social Movement Union**

Moody made no mention of the notion of an “embryonic” social movement union in any of his works. However, in an interview he did agree that TDU could be considered as an embryonic social movement union. TDU cannot of course be considered as a social movement union because it is not in fact a union. However, a reform movement can be

---

9 La Botz, *The Fight at UPS*. For an excellent overview of corruption in the Teamsters, see Witwer, *Corruption and Reform in the Teamsters Union*.


11 Belzer and Hurd, p.345.


classified as an embryonic social movement union if it is attempting to transform its union into a social movement union and is already engaging in practices it advocates for the union as a whole.

It is important to note that TDU cannot be considered an embryonic social movement union under the other theories of social movement unionism. This is because it is not trying to transform the Teamsters into a union that would challenge the existing social and political order. In addition, as previously noted, the other theories do not specifically mention militancy in collective bargaining, unlike in Moody’s account of social movement unionism.

TDU was formed in 1976 from Teamsters for a Decent Contract (TDC). Teamsters belonging to the International Socialists (IS) created TDC in August 1975. The IS argued that ‘[a]t this point the forces involved in TDC are far beyond what we could have accrued through patient local work. While many of the individuals and groups involved locally are weak, as a national grouping the sum equals more than its parts’. TDC’s goal was for the Teamsters to achieve a good Master Freight Agreement in 1976. TDC managed to gain considerable support in a short period of time: it ‘... won thousands of supporters by holding a series of coordinated national demonstrations in cities across the country, including one in front of the IBT’s “Marble Palace” in Washington ... that received national media attention’. TDC’s activism led the Teamsters’ President, Frank Fitzsimmons, to call a four-day official national strike against the freight companies. This resulted in a substantially improved Master Freight Agreement. However, TDC’s success infuriated the Teamsters’ leadership. Fitzsimmons claimed that ‘... no damned Communist

---

15 Fisk, Socialism From Below in the United States; Brenner, pp.126-7.
16 Fisk, Socialism From Below in the United States.
group is going to infiltrate this union’. Furthermore, a group of Teamsters physically attacked Pete Camarata ‘... the lone convention delegate TDC had managed to elect, in front of a Los Vegas hotel’ during the 1976 Teamster national convention. \(^\text{17}\) While the IS was pleased with its work in TDC, TDC was not entirely successful. The IS noted:

The most serious failing of the TDC was that it did not build a worker leadership... Despite our attempt to put workers forward on every possible occasion ... there resulted a kind of substitutionism... [T]oo often IS members with less base, less credibility, fewer years in the union were forced to shoulder all of the leadership responsibility, making virtually all of the decisions unilaterally. \(^\text{18}\)

While the TDC did not lead to the formation of a broad rank-and-file leadership, the success of TDC in helping the Teamsters achieve a good Master Freight Agreement resulted in the IS deciding to form a permanent reform movement within the Teamsters: Teamsters for a Democratic Union. \(^\text{19}\)

Since its formation, TDU emphasised militancy and fighting against concessions in collective bargaining agreements. As I noted in Chapter 2, this is also a crucial characteristic of Moody’s account of social movement unionism. TDU’s militancy was partly because of the International Socialists’ influence. Nick Davidson commented that ‘[f]ighting the boss has always been part of the “TDU personality”’. \(^\text{20}\) Although not always successful, TDU ‘... led many battles, involving thousands of teamsters in collective struggle, including job actions, bylaws campaigns, strikes, union elections, worker education, legal defense, and contract campaigns’. \(^\text{21}\) These battles paved the way for TDU’s future successes. Its first major victory occurred with the 1983 National Master

---

\(^{17}\) Brenner, p.127.


\(^{19}\) Brenner, p.127.


\(^{21}\) Brenner, p.129.
Freight Agreement. Teamsters President Jackie Presser had agreed to a rider that would have allowed the Freight companies to pay lower wages and benefits to employees hired after layoffs. This would have resulted in rehired Teamsters receiving a reduction in pay of anywhere between 18 and 35 per cent compared to other employees. Great secrecy surrounded the contract as one-third of Teamsters under the Agreement were currently unemployed. Only members of the union’s National Freight Negotiating Committee during its scheduled meeting had access to the contract, but they had to return the contract at the end of the meeting. However, one copy did reach TDU, which publicised the agreement and its likely adverse effects. At the same time, TDU released a list of Teamster leaders and their children who earned more than $100,000 per year. It revealed that Presser’s income over the course of the year increased by 43 per cent to $565,000. TDU’s campaign was successful, as the Teamsters’ membership overwhelmingly rejected the rider by a margin of 94,086 votes to 13,082.22

TDU continued the fight against concessions during the 1980s, with an increasing number of Teamsters supporting its campaigns. However, IBT Presidents continually defied the wishes of the members. Eventually, the rank-and-file gained enough strength to ensure that future Teamster Presidents accepted members’ wishes. La Botz noted that in 1987:

53 percent of the Teamsters voted as urged by TDU against the UPS contract proposed by Jackie Presser. Presser nevertheless imposed the contract. Then in 1988, the freight contract was defeated by a vote of 64,01 [should be 64,101] to 36,728 (a no vote of 64 percent). Acting General President Weldon Mathis then imposed the contract. By July 1988 [with increasing agitation amongst the rank-and-file], when the carhaulers rejected their contract by 9,220 to 3,535, Mathis and his successor [William J.] McCarthy dared not impose it.23

23 La Botz, Rank-and-File Rebellion, p.293.
Moreover, Teamster members (with TDU support) tried to annul the ratification of the 1988 Freight contract in the US District Court. The IBT settled the case by agreeing to majority rule for National and Local contracts and strike votes, but ‘... more than half of the eligible members must cast a ballot for majority rule to govern’.24

TDU’s main goal is to democratise the Teamsters and give the rank-and-file an active role in the union. Likewise, arguably the crucial characteristic of Moody’s account of social movement unionism is that unions are democratic with extensive rank-and-file involvement. TDU’s founding constitution stated that ‘... the object of this organization is to build a national unified movement of rank-and-file Teamsters that is organized to fight for rank-and-file rights on the job and in the union. We aim to bring the Teamsters union back to the membership’.25 However, the IS argued:

We [through involvement in TDU] are not trying to build a “union reform movement” – i.e. a movement which focuses primarily on replacing corrupt officers by honest ones and getting a more democratic constitution. This is not only because we are not concerned with union reform for its own sake – it is because we know that, in practice, we will not be able to get significant changes in unions to turn them into fighting instruments against the bosses unless and until we get significant movements against the bosses.26

Nevertheless, beginning in 1976, TDU had success in its efforts to democratise the Teamsters despite its small size (in 1979 TDU had 6000 members compared with approximately 2 million IBT members) by changing the laws of union Locals. The new bylaws would have allowed the rank-and-file to ‘... elect union stewards and business agents’. While TDU failed to change the bylaws in the majority of Teamsters’ Locals (in part because any change required a two-thirds majority), it was successful in some. These

25 TDU constitution quoted in La Botz, Rank-and-File Rebellion, p.78.
Democratising Teamster bylaws is still one of TDU’s main goals. Its current ‘Rank & File Bill of Rights’ declares that ‘... all business agents and stewards should be elected. Vacancies in office should be filled by special election within three months. Local union committee [members] should be elected’. Moreover, as Dan La Botz, a founding member of TDU, noted ‘... in the late 1970s and early 1980s TDU campaigned successfully in many areas against the International’s so-called model bylaws – ‘reforms’ that would actually have reduced what union democracy still existed’. TDU was to gain much greater success in democratising the Teamsters in future years.

In addition to its goal of union democracy and militancy in collective bargaining, TDU also called for an end to discrimination against minorities. This is not a characteristic of Moody’s account of social movement unionism, but he argued that it benefits unions. This is through so-called minorities greatly contributing to the revival of unions, as well in unions adopting progressive policies.

While TDU’s members are mostly white males, this has not stopped it from adopting a progressive agenda in relation to minorities. For example, at its first national convention, TDU passed a resolution stating that

... racial discrimination and the division which results from it have long been used by employers and unscrupulous officials to divide and weaken the rank and file. To be successful, we must be united. To win participation and loyalty of the hundreds of thousands of minority Teamsters, TDU must pursue and support vigorous policies to overcome discrimination.

---

30 TDU resolution quoted in La Botz, _Rank-and-File Rebellion_, p.79.
Likewise, its current ‘Rank & File Bill of Rights’ states that TDU opposes discrimination in all forms, supports ‘... affirmative action to correct past injustices ... [and] employers should bear the cost of their past discrimination, not the members’. TDU formed a ‘Women and People of Color Committee’ as part of its efforts to eliminate discrimination against minorities. The Committee focuses on ‘... raising issues of race and gender on the job and in the union, and to encouraging leadership among these groups’. However, very few members of minorities have joined the group. Nevertheless, in both policies and practices TDU is attempting to end discrimination against minorities. It was, however, to gain its greatest success in its attempts to democratise the Teamsters.

In 1986, the US government had begun investigations into the Teamsters through the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), believing that the Teamsters was corrupt and had ties with the Mafia. Indeed, from 1957 to 1990 ‘... every president of the teamsters, save Billy McCarthy, has been convicted and sentenced for one or another federal offense’. The government considered placing the Teamsters under trusteeship, giving ‘... complete control of union affairs, including finances and even contract negotiations, and enforcement’ to a government appointed official. TDU opposed such a move on the following grounds:

Big questions are raised about the Justice Department plans to put our union in trusteeship. It is unlikely that it would even be workable. Removing the eighteen top officers of the IBT would leave over 99% of full-time Teamster officials in place. It would also leave in place the current method of choosing top officers and changing the constitution... The power brokers who installed

31 TDU, ‘Rank & File Bill of Rights’.
32 Davidson, p.10.
Presser, and have kept him there, would just pick whoever they wanted at the next convention despite the trusteeship.\textsuperscript{35}

Instead, TDU argued that the government should monitor Teamster elections, and that members should directly elect the President and other leading union officials. While the US Labor Department continually disregarded TDU, in 1986 the President’s Commission on Organised Crime report noted that the Teamsters’ election methods for Local delegates were illegal: ‘... the Commission recommends that union members have the right to vote for delegates to their union’s convention’. A \textit{New York Times} editorial also supported this view.\textsuperscript{36} TDU campaigned around the US, gathering 100,000 signatures in support of members directly electing the Teamsters’ leadership. It held rallies across the US, and many TDU members persuaded their Locals to adopt TDU’s position. The campaign was ultimately successful.\textsuperscript{37} In March 1989, the US government and the Teamsters reached an agreement. The government dropped the RICO charges in return for the democratisation of the Teamsters. Among the key points were:

(i) ‘Government involvement to weed out corruption and mob influence
(ii) Direct vote for national leaders
(iii) Direct vote for delegates to the international convention
(iv) Nominations to be made at the national convention
(v) Secure nominations for candidates receiving 5 percent of delegate support through a secret ballot
(vi) Independent auditor’s review of the international books
(vii) Government-supervised elections in both 1991 and 1996\textsuperscript{38}

Without government intervention, these changes would not have occurred as quickly. Nevertheless, TDU’s national campaign against trusteeship and for Teamster members to directly elect the top union officials influenced the US government to implement this strategy.

\textsuperscript{37} La Botz, \textit{The Fight at UPS}; Moody, ‘Who Reformed the Teamsters?’, p.25.
\textsuperscript{38} Tillman, p.142.
TDU decided not to field a candidate for the 1991 IBT Presidential election instead endorsing Ron Carey because he supported union democracy and militancy in collective bargaining. TDU President Ken Paff, argued that TDU backed Carey because he ‘... had been a Teamster official in the capital of Teamster corruption, New York City[,] ... had never sought to rise in the hierarchy, had a modest salary, [and] stood up as a militant for his members, including opposing national contract settlements repeatedly’. TDU organised meetings in support of Carey; its members provided places for Carey to stay as he toured the country, and ‘... passed out literature, made phone calls, organised rallies and got out to vote’. This effort paid dividends. In December 1991, Carey ‘... and his entire slate won a three-way race, receiving 48 percent of the vote and a five-year term’. In addition, through TDU efforts, the 1991 IBT convention saw 275 reform delegates elected (15 per cent of the total delegates). However, this demonstrates the extent that old hierarchy remained in office at different levels as there were 1900 delegates elected in total.

Under Carey’s leadership, the Teamsters supported many of TDU’s goals; it moved to the left and acquired more features of a social movement union. Carey was ‘... the leading voice against the North American Free Trade Agreement’ (NAFTA) and he increased the organising budget, while reducing union officials’ salaries. Likewise, ‘... he increased education for stewards and rank and file members, putting emphasis on contract campaigns, local unions, and shop floor organising’. These are all important aspects of Moody’s account of social movement unionism. In addition, Teamsters finally endorsed the Democratic Party despite a long history of supporting the Republican Party. However, the

Teamsters did not endorse Bill Clinton in the 1996 US Presidential election because of Clinton’s support of NAFTA. In other words, the Teamsters began on the path towards independent political action – another aspect of Moody’s account – despite its long ties with the Republican Party, although it has a long way to go.

TDU, however, was not entirely happy with Carey’s Presidency. It was disappointed that Carey refused to discontinue a union pension plan for union officers (‘... most of whom ... [were] already covered by one of two other retirement funds’). The plan cost the Teamsters one-seventh of its annual revenue. Likewise, TDU was frustrated because Carey did not authorise mail-out ballots in Local officer elections. It believed that mail-out ballots would ‘... increase voter turn-out and limit the influence of machine politics and intimidation’.

TDU’s independence suffered under Carey’s Presidency. It was afraid to criticise him, as it thought this would give the Old Guard grounds to attack Carey’s reforms. Thus, under Carey’s Presidency, ‘TDU and its Convoy-Dispatch newspaper became completely identified with Carey’.

Teamster-UPS Negotiations/Collective Bargaining Agreements

As TDU is an embryonic social movement union under Moody’s account, the Teamsters can serve as an empirical test of Moody’s approach by comparing the Teamsters before and after Carey’s reforms and under Jimmy Hoffa Jr’s Presidency. I concentrate on the Teamsters negotiations/collective bargaining agreements with UPS, as this is the Teamsters

44 Davidson, p.8.
45 La Botz, ‘Rank And File Teamsters’, p.18.
highest profile campaign and the USA’s largest collective bargaining agreement. I focus on the 1997 and 2002 negotiations/agreements, but I provide a brief overview of the 1990 and 1993 agreements to put the 1997 agreement in context.

**1990 UPS Collective Bargaining Agreement**

The 1990 UPS collective bargaining agreement demonstrates that it is very difficult for the Teamsters to achieve a good contract with UPS. It further demonstrates that without a long preparation, union members will often accept a substandard contract rather than fight.

From small beginnings in 1907 in Seattle, UPS by the ‘1990s ... had become a multinational company with operations not only in the United States but in a number of countries throughout the world’. UPS, however, does not provide a happy working environment. As La Botz noted:

> The UPS worker’s every move is planned precisely by company managers, from picking up the keys to loading the package... The day begins with a management pep talk and ends in exhaustion... Workers are pushed to their physical and psychological limits, leading to a high incidence of accidents, injuries and occupational illnesses. The pressure to perform is so great that some workers even donate their unpaid time before and after work or work through their lunch break to meet production goals.\(^{46}\)

The 1990 UPS negotiations served as a backdrop to the Teamsters’ Presidential campaign. Reform candidate Ron Carey attempted to defeat the incumbent William McCarthy. McCarthy personally took charge of the negotiations as he sensed the importance a good settlement would have for his re-election chances. Likewise, TDU argued that the ‘1990 UPS agreement has great historic potential. Bargaining patterns and pensions for hundreds of thousands of Teamsters, and elections for a vital new Teamster

\(^{46}\) La Botz, *The Fight at UPS.*
leadership are all at stake’. The negotiations were bound to be difficult, as UPS’s profit margins had been declining since 1987. UPS management initially offered the Teamsters an 11 per cent increase over three years, but McCarthy told Local Teamster officials that he would reject the deal. This led UPS management to increase its offer by over 25 per cent in an attempt to prevent a strike. Under the revised offer, UPS workers would have received a 50-cent an hour increase for each year of the contract and a $1000 signing bonus. McCarthy, TDU, and Carey recommended that UPS workers reject the improved offer.

UPS mounted a ‘... well-organized campaign [in which it] held numerous work-site meetings to boost the proposed pact’ in an attempt to persuade workers to accept the contract. Nevertheless, TDU believed that UPS workers would reject the offer. However, the rank-and-file voted 65,463 to 53,091 (85 per cent turnout) to ratify the contract against the recommendations of McCarthy, Carey, and TDU. McCarthy argued that the members voted for the contract because UPS conducted a fear campaign. He stated: ‘I believe that many of the company’s employees were frightened by management’s ability to use permanent replacement workers, or scabs, in the possible event of a strike’. While TDU agreed with McCarthy’s assessment, it also claimed that he failed to adequately counter UPS’s campaign. The rank-and-file’s acceptance of the contract damaged McCarthy’s re-election chances as he personally took charge of the negotiations. However, as both TDU and Ron Carey urged the membership to reject the contract the only winner was UPS. Nevertheless, Carey had an opportunity to orchestrate the next UPS negotiations after the Teamsters’ membership elected him to office in 1991.

47 Convoy Dispatch, no.95, April 1990, p.1.
48 Houston Chronicle, August 5, 1990; Aaron Bernstein and Todd Vogel, ‘A Game of Chicken between the Teamsters and UPS – A leadership race and thin profits have both sides driving a hard bargain’, Business Week, August 6, 1990, p.32.
Although the 1993 contract was an improvement on 1990, it further demonstrates how difficult it was for the Teamsters to achieve a good UPS collective bargaining agreement. The 1993 UPS negotiations were a key test for Carey’s leadership. TDU believed that a good UPS contract would strengthen the reform movement. A TDU spokesperson claimed ‘... it’s very important that ... [Carey] prove himself and come through with a good contract... If he does well, his stock is way up. If he screws up, well, we all hate to think about that’. TDU believed that the most important issues in the negotiations were transforming part-time jobs into full-time ones and maintaining benefits, with wages being open for discussion. However, UPS and the Teamsters were far apart on wages. UPS management initially offered the Teamsters a 6-year contract with a 35-cent an hour increase for each year. The Teamsters wanted a 3-year contract with a $1.10 an hour increase for each year of the contract. UPS workers overwhelmingly voted to give the Teamsters’ leadership strike authorisation if UPS and the union could not reach a settlement. The Teamsters only had $30 million in its strike fund, but the AFL-CIO guaranteed the Teamsters a $50 million loan.

During the negotiations, Carey promised militancy. He stated that unlike previous years, ‘UPS is faced with a union leadership that’s not going to operate in the interests of corporate America’. Moreover, the Teamster leadership ‘... for the first time in recent

---

52 TDU Spokesperson quoted in Atlanta Constitution, August 27, 1993.
memory, kept rank-and-file members involved through bulletins and meetings'. After the Teamsters rejected UPS's initial proposal, UPS management offered a five-year contract with a 45-cent an hour increase for four years and a 50-cent increase in the fifth year. However, the Teamsters rejected this too. The union decided to extend the terms of the current contract, which expired on July 31, during the later stage of contract negotiations in the hope that it could reach a settlement (a common situation in collective bargaining negotiations). However, in September the Teamsters' leadership withdrew the contract extension in preparation for a possible strike. Three days later, the two sides reached a settlement.

The parties agreed to a four-year contract, with workers receiving a 60-cent an hour increase in the first year, and a 55-cent an hour increase in subsequent years. UPS also agreed to '... pay an additional $1.80 an hour over the life of the agreement for health, welfare and pension plans for union members'. However, the agreement did not transform part-time jobs into full-time ones and the ratio between the two stayed the same. Understandably, this disappointed part-time workers. Carey believed that the rank-and-file would overwhelmingly ratify the agreement. TDU also supported him. Teamster UPS workers voted 61,387 to 30,640 to ratify the agreement by a 2 to 1 margin, but only 56 per cent of UPS members voted. While the membership did ratify the contract by a large margin, Carey and his supporters were hoping 80 per cent of the membership would vote for the agreement. Thus, neither Carey nor TDU could be entirely happy.

Three months later, UPS announced that it planned to increase the maximum weight limit of parcels to 150 pounds from 70 pounds. The proposed increase would have had

57 Labor Notes, October 1993, p.7.
60 The Commercial Appeal, November 9, 1993.
negative implications for UPS employees, as it would make them lift much heavier loads. The Teamsters claimed that it was willing to strike over the issue. After negotiations failed, the Teamsters '... advised its [UPS] workers to defy a court order' and go on strike. UPS workers were on strike for one day, with the Teamsters claiming that 80 per cent of members walked off the job. UPS management claimed that a more realistic figure was 50 per cent. Carey argued that the strike was a success. In the settlement, the 150 pound weight limit remained, but

... union members ... [would] be entitled to get help and appropriate equipment in lifting packages that weigh more than 70 pounds. Such packages must also be labelled by customers. UPS also agreed not to discipline any of the strikers and to drop its effort to have the union fined and leadership held in contempt for violating the federal court order.

The 1993 collective bargaining agreement with UPS was not a success for the Teamsters. Wages only increased slightly, and the ratio of part-time to full-time employees remained the same despite it being a key point in the negotiations. Moreover, UPS more than doubled its parcel limit three months after UPS workers ratified the contract. Thus, neither the 1990 nor 1993 UPS agreements were a major success for the union. This makes the 1997 UPS contract all the more remarkable.

1997 UPS Negotiations/Collective Bargaining Agreement

The 1997 negotiations/collective bargaining agreement demonstrates the benefits of using social movement unionism tactics in collective bargaining. As the 1993 UPS contract failed to meet member expectations, the Teamsters implemented many new campaign tactics. The

---

63 Los Angeles Times, February 8, 1994.
Teamsters prepared well in advance for the 1997 negotiations. The union decided to implement TDU’s idea for a contract campaign. As TDU argued, ‘[b]argaining moves on two fronts. One is at the bargaining table. An equally important front is in the field – a contract campaign in which union members support our bargaining committee, work to unite all Teamsters, and show management we won’t settle without a fair contract’. The Teamsters conducted a survey of its UPS members in the lead-up to the contract negotiations. It asked for a list of contract priorities and activities workers were willing to undertake, such as passing out leaflets and attending local union meetings, to achieve a good contract. The key issue for 90 per cent of part-time workers was the conversion of part-time jobs into full-time positions. This became the Teamsters’ number one goal during the negotiations. In addition to the survey, the Teamsters ‘... distributed cards that thousands of individual members, many of them in locals where their leaders [i.e. Carey’s opponents] showed little interest in the campaign, mailed back to the international union headquarters, so that they could become directly involved’. This way the rank-and-file of all Teamster Locals could become involved even if conservative officials headed their Locals. Another Teamster initiative was holding rallies in targeted cities ‘... one day before union and company negotiators exchanged proposals’. Six weeks before the old contract was set to expire, ‘... the organization and unity built by the member-to-member networks paid off as more than 100,000 Teamsters signed petitions telling UPS that “We’ll Fight for More Full-time Jobs”’.  

64 Convoy Dispatch, no.158, March 1997, p.4.  
66 La Botz, The Fight at UPS,  
68 Witt and Wilson, ‘The Teamsters’ UPS Strike of 1997’.  
The Teamsters' efforts built unity between full-time and part-time workers. This was crucial to the negotiations and subsequent strike. As one UPS driver stated:

"Feeder drivers would sit over here and have their own break room and package car drivers would sit over there and part-timers over there. But early on this year we were talking together and I learned about other people's issues. By the end, we had enough reasons that we could all stick together."

The Teamsters fought for three key issues during the negotiations. The first was the number of part-time workers UPS employed. Approximately 58 per cent of UPS's employees were part-time, and in the period 1993-1997, 38,000 out of 46,000 new jobs at UPS were part-time. The starting rate for part-time employees had not risen in fifteen years, with UPS seeking to extend that for another five years. Moreover, while many UPS workers were part-time, they worked a full-time schedule. UPS preferred part-time employees as it paid them less than full-time workers. The second issue was pensions. The Teamsters

... wanted increased contributions to its multi-employer pension and health funds. The company responded with a proposal to increase pension benefits for its workers by an average of 50 percent in exchange for pulling out of the multi-employer funds.

All Teamsters received the same benefits irrespective of the company they worked for under the multi-employer pension fund. As a very profitable company, UPS did not want to subsidise the Teamsters' pension fund. The third issue was the Teamsters' demand that UPS limit the amount of work that UPS could subcontract. In preparation for the negotiations, Carey formed a fifty-person UPS bargaining committee. The committee included, amongst others, officials '... from locals unsympathetic to Carey', several TDU

---

69 Ibid.
72 Associated Press Newswires, August 7, 1997
73 Ibid.
activists, and ‘... four UPS rank and filers and part-timers, something virtually unknown in union bargaining committees’. 74

TDU played an active role in the lead up to the negotiations. As US labour writer Jane Slaughter argued

... it was TDU’s plan for a contract campaign against UPS that Carey adopted. Most important, TDU had a strong base at UPS. Over the years, shop floor leaders there had been trained in fighting the boss. In locals where local officials were lukewarm, these rank and filers were the ones who carried the ball. 75

As part of its contract campaign, the Teamsters sought international alliances, partly because UPS was planning to expand its overseas operations. In the UPS plant in ‘Gustavsburg, Germany, workers handed out leaflets and stickers, wore white socks as a symbolic show of unity, and blew whistles like those being used by Teamster members at actions in the US’. 76 Other international action included ‘... a one-hour strike at half of the UPS facilities in Italy, a two-hour strike in Spain at the Madrid hub, and a protest at UPS European headquarters in Brussels’. 77

While it is difficult to determine the effect campaign tactics had on UPS’s management, UPS offered the Teamsters a “last, best and final” contract, which included an extra $1 an hour increase, for a total increase of $2.50 an hour for full-time workers (the company initially offered a $1.50 an hour increase). It would begin a profit-sharing plan, and ‘... would ensure 10,000 full-time opportunities for part-time workers’. However, UPS refused to contribute to the Teamsters’ multi-employer pension plan. 78 In the 1990 and 1993 negotiations, the Teamsters accepted UPS’s “final” offer, with the membership

74 Moberg, p.13; La Botz, The Fight at UPS.
76 Witt and Wilson, ‘The Teamsters’ UPS Strike of 1997’.
77 Moberg, p.14.
ratifying the agreement on each occasion. This time the Teamsters rejected the offer, and the Teamsters conducted a national strike at UPS beginning on August 3.

As Matt Witt and Rand Wilson noted, ‘UPS launched a million-dollar ad campaign at making management appear reasonable to UPS workers, customers, and the news media’, while attempting to portray the strikers as greedy. However, the issue of part-time workers resonated strongly with the US public. UPS Vice Chairman John Alden stated, ‘[i]f I had known that it was going to go from negotiating for UPS to negotiating for part-time America, we would’ve approached it differently’. UPS, however, tried to convince the public that it was a victim. Nevertheless, UPS’s campaign did not work. A USA Today-CNN-Gallup poll showed 55 per cent supported the Teamsters and only 27 per cent supported UPS. Likewise, ‘75 per cent of respondents opposed UPS’ plea that President Clinton declare a national emergency and order the Teamsters back to work’.

Helping the UPS workers’ public image was that they ‘... travelled their regular delivery routes to visit customers and explain why it became necessary to interrupt service’, and rank-and-file Teamsters were often spokespeople in news conferences. In addition, the Teamsters had support from community groups. For example, Jobs with Justice (an organisation that attempts to mobilise unionists and their supporters in national campaigns) organised protests against companies which urged President Clinton to order the Teamsters back to work. Witt and Wilson stated that ‘[l]ocal Coalitions for Occupational Safety and Health planned news conferences and demonstrations highlighting how UPS had paid academics to help attack federal job safety rights for all workers’. Women’s groups

81 John Alden quoted in Witt and Wilson, ‘The Teamsters’ UPS Strike of 1997’.
82 Rothstein, p.473.
highlighted the effect that a reduction of '... jobs with pension and health benefits' has on women.  

David Moberg, a leading US labour writer, claimed that

[b]y preparing well in advance, the Teamsters were able to mobilize critical support from the rest of the labor movement: UPS pilots and mechanics refused to cross Teamster picket lines, and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney pledged to raise whatever money was necessary to sustain the modest Teamster strike benefits. Just as the strike was settled, the European UPS unions were preparing for a major meeting and protest that would have included more job actions.

The Teamsters announced that it would hold a national Action Day of Good Jobs on August 22.

However, the union and UPS agreed to a five-year contract (the union had demanded a 3 year contract; UPS wanted a 6 year contract) before the rally took place. UPS pledged to create 2000 new full-time jobs for each year of the contract. It would only subcontract during peak seasons, and, unlike in 1993, it would consult with the Teamsters before it increased the package weight limit. UPS abandoned its opposition to the Teamsters' multi-employer pension plan and agreed to increase its contributions to the plan. It provided a wage increase of $4.10 an hour for part-time workers, with full-time workers receiving an extra $3.10 an hour over the life of the agreement. The strike was an overwhelming success for the Teamsters as UPS caved in to a majority of the union's demands. Carey stated that '[t]his strike marks a new era. American workers have shown ... we [can] stand up to corporate greed. This victory shows that American workers are on the move again'.

In July 1998, however, UPS argued that under the terms of the contract it did not have to create 2000 full-time jobs per year '... if a reduction in the amount of parcels shipped by UPS forces layoffs'. It claimed that because of the 1997 strike, it laid off 10,000 workers

84 Witt and Wilson, 'The Teamsters' UPS Strike of 1997'.
85 Moberg, p.15.
87 Ron Carey quoted in Rothstein, p.473.
due to a reduction in parcel traffic. The Teamsters argued that UPS had engaged in speedup. It claimed that UPS was ‘... forcing drivers to work through [their] lunches’ as it did not want to employ full-time workers. 88 This led the Teamsters to file a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). In March 2000, the Board ruled that UPS was in violation of the 1997 contract. It ordered UPS to create the full-time jobs as outlined in the 1997 contract within 90 days, and provide back pay and benefits to the new full-time workers. 89

That the Teamsters were overwhelmingly successful demonstrates the benefits of Moody’s social movement unionism tactics in collective bargaining. The 1990 and 1993 Teamster-UPS agreements demonstrated the difficulty of achieving a good contract with UPS. In comparison, the Teamsters were successful on all fronts in 1997, with it achieving the majority of its demands. Even after UPS tried to avoid creating the new full-time jobs it agreed to, the Teamsters was successful as the NLRB upheld the contract. Admittedly, the Teamsters benefited during the strike through the US public identifying with it over the issue of part-time jobs, but the public sided with UPS over the company wanting to withdraw from the Teamsters’ multi-employer pension plan. 90 The union did profit from President Clinton’s decision not to call a national emergency and order the strikers back to work, a decision that surprised UPS management. Likewise, improved economic conditions, such as the low US unemployment rate (4.9 per cent), and that UPS management did not bring in scabs during the strike further aided the Teamsters. Nevertheless, this does not take away from the Teamsters’ achievement.

90 Rothstein, pp.478-9.
A Change in Leadership

The 1997 UPS negotiations were Carey's last major triumph. Instead of relying on the rank-and-file during his successful 1996 re-election campaign, as he did in 1991, Carey hired political consultants. However, the consultants - the 'November group' - implemented '... an illegal fundraising scheme on Carey's behalf'. This led to union funds being channelled into his re-election campaign. While Carey was eventually cleared of all charges, during the investigation the Justice Department forced Carey to step-down as President and for the Teamsters to conduct a new Presidential election. In the election, James Hoffa Jr. - Jimmy Hoffa's son - defeated TDU backed candidate Tom Leedham to become President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

Initially, there was some surprise at Hoffa Jr's leadership. He seemed to maintain the Teamster's newfound progressive orientation. For example, the 'Teamsters have been lauded for participating in the November 1999 demonstrations in Seattle against the World Trade Organization (WTO) and for making overtures to Ralph Nader during the ... [2001 US] presidential campaign before finally backing Al Gore (rather than immediately casting support to the Democrats as did the rest of the AFL-CIO)'.

However, during the demonstrations in Seattle, unions had a separate protest from other anti-globalisation protesters. It was a Teamsters Local, whose President was a member of TDU, that was the most militant. Teamsters Local 174 in Seattle broke from the official union protest to join the protest by environmentalists, students, anarchists, and members of the general public. Other TDU members from different Locals joined it. After

the protest, the Teamsters ‘... joined other workers and residents in defending the
interracial and largely gay neighbourhood of Capital Hill from police attacks’.93

Nevertheless, the Teamsters under Hoffa Jr is very different from the union under
Carey’s leadership despite the above examples and TDU’s efforts. Hoffa has eliminated
many national organising campaigns that Carey initiated, with primary emphasis for
organising returned to Locals. However, ‘... many Locals have only one or two full-time
organizers; and others have little interest in organizing at all’.94 The Teamsters have once
again begun to support the Republican Party despite its flirtation with Ralph Nader, and
endorsement of Al Gore in the 2000 US Presidential election. For example, ‘Hoffa supports
[US President George W.] Bush’s controversial Terrorism Information and Prevention
System ... which would try to turn UPS workers into government informers’.95 Unlike the
majority of US unions, the Teamsters endorsed President Bush’s proposal for oil
companies to drill ‘... in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge’. Hoffa also claimed ‘... that
the IBT was working to “find common ground” with Bush and [US Vice-President Dick]
Cheney’. Likewise, the Teamsters endorsed the re-election bid of an anti-labour Republican
in Michigan because he supported the elimination of Federal Court Supervision of the
Teamsters.96 However, it is likely that the Teamsters will endorse John Kerry in the 2004
US Presidential election.

In addition to the Teamsters’ partial realignment to the Republican Party, Hoffa Jr has
shown distaste for union democracy. During the 2001 Teamsters’ Presidential election
campaign, Hoffa Jr called Leedham’s campaign a joke and stated that he should withdrawal
from the race as the election costs the Teamsters millions. Likewise, a leading Hoffa Jr

96 Jim Larkin, ‘Which Way for the Teamsters?’ The Nation, October 8, 2001, p.21
supporter claimed that ‘Leedham’s running helps employers by showing we’re a divided union’. At a special convention in April 2002, the Teamsters’ leadership approved the largest dues increase in the union’s history. This is not necessarily something to criticise, as increased funds can be beneficial to unions in organising and during strikes. Indeed, Hoffa Jr argued that the dues increase would lead to a good UPS contract. He stated that

... when UPS finds out we have a war chest to back us up at the negotiating table they will think twice about offering us a weak contract... [A dues] increase will allow the International Union to secure a multimillion-dollar line of credit to bolster our Strike Fund war chest immediately.

However, the increase occurred without a rank-and-file vote. In 1994, Carey put a dues increase to a rank-and-file vote, but it was rejected. Hoffa Jr banned attendance at the special convention by rank-and-file Teamsters and the media and he refused to make public how Local union Presidents voted. Moreover, the dues increase will result in an extra $130 million for the Teamsters, but only $20 million, or approximately 13 per cent of the increase, will be earmarked for the Strike Fund (the 1994 dues increase would have resulted in the Strike Fund receiving an extra $63 million). The Teamsters claimed that the remaining money from the dues increase would go to organising ($13 million), with the Teamsters’ general fund receiving $97 million. Hence, TDU feared that the dues increase will not be used for the overall good of the union, but for ‘... large and multiple salaries, golf outings, and other official perks’ for the Teamsters’ hierarchy.

97 Ibid., p.22.
100 Dow Jones News Service, April 30, 2002; Eidlin, p.16.
101 Eidlin, p.16.
The shadow of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the US served as a backdrop to the 2002 UPS negotiations. The US economy was in recession, with workers being laid-off across the country. Unlike in 1997 when a Democrat was in the White House, an anti-labour Republican, George W. Bush, was US President. However, UPS was still a very profitable company. In 2001, UPS’s profit after taxes was $2.1 billion, which was its second best result ever. Likewise, while net income decreased 3.3 per cent during the March 2002 quarter, it was still $563 million. This amount exceeded UPS’s expectations. Moreover, since the signing of the 1997 contract, UPS had accumulated profits of almost $8 billion. UPS could not credibly cry poor during the negotiations.

UPS believed that it could reach a settlement with the Teamsters without a strike. UPS chairperson and chief executive, Michael Eskew, claimed that a strike was unlikely because ‘I think we’re dealing with reasonable, rational people this time. Ron Carey is no longer here’.

However, Hoffa Jr was promising UPS workers that the Teamsters would negotiate the best contract ever. He stated that the Teamsters would ‘... win the strongest contract ever at UPS. UPS is the goose that laid the golden egg, and we will grab that goose by the neck and get every one of those golden eggs’. Likewise, he claimed that the Teamsters were ‘... going to be asking for a lot of money... We think our people are behind for the

---

kind of work they do. Look at the profits ... [UPS] is making. The workers should share in that too'. TDU argued that to achieve the best contract ever, the Teamsters would have to gain 3000 new full-time jobs for each year of the contract. There would have to be an increase of full-time wages by 4 per cent ($1 per year) with a $2 increase in the starting rate for part-time workers. Management would have to ‘... create a top [part-time] rate equal to the ... [full-time] rate and a 2-year progression to reach this rate’. In addition, part-time workers should receive a guarantee of an extra hour per day, and there should be no concessions in the national contract and regional supplements. However, by comparing these demands to the 1997 contract, which was the Teamsters best ever UPS contract (which TDU did), TDU’s demands were somewhat extravagant. In the 1997 contract, the Teamsters achieved 2000 new full-time jobs for each year of the contract, full-time wages increased by 3 per cent, while the starting part-time rate increased by 50 cents. This was the first increase since 1982, and part-timers attained an extra $4.10 per hour increase over the life of the contract. Thus, there is ground between what TDU claimed what the best UPS contract ever would look like and the reality of the best contract ever. While the Teamsters did not release its economic proposals (see below), it did release its non-economic proposals. One of its demands being that UPS create ‘3,000 full-time jobs each contract year during the life of this Agreement’.

In addition to 3000 new full-time jobs for each year of the contract, the union’s other major issues during negotiations were wages, pensions and health care benefits. Hoffa Jr stated that the increases would be better than the 1997 contract.

---

107 TDU, ‘Best Contract Ever’.
108 Ibid.
Hoffa Jr did not actively involve the rank-and-file in the negotiations. The union did, however, distribute surveys to all UPS employers almost a year before the old contract expired to measure ‘... bargaining priorities, including wage and benefit improvements, time-off improvements, benefits, job security, the grievance procedure and paycheck accuracy, and gauge member positions on issues regarding part-time workers, safety and health and working conditions’.  

In addition to the survey, other campaign tactics included touring two UPS contract caravans across the US to increase support for the negotiations. The first caravan began from Louisville, the second from Seattle, and they travelled to Las Vegas for the IBT Unity Conference and Special Convention (which passed the increase in dues without the rank-and-file voting on the issue). The only other rank-and-file intensive tactic the Teamsters employed in the lead-up to the 2002 contract was in June when it held rallies across the US. At a rally in New York, Hoffa Jr claimed that ‘... we will protect Teamster pensions. We will maintain good health benefits. We will win more full-time jobs. And, we will preserve and expand good Teamster jobs’.  

The caravans and the survey, however, were not used to mobilise members; union officials conducted the campaign with little rank-and-file involvement. For example, the union did not make its opening economic proposal public, nor did it release any information on the progress of the negotiations to members. Nevertheless, reports indicated that the Teamsters demanded a $1.25 wage increase for each year of the contract, while UPS offered a 35-cent increase. The Teamsters wanted a three-year contract, while UPS

wanted a five-year contract.\textsuperscript{113} Although there is some uncertainty about UPS’s opening economic proposal, it is clear that Teamster officials were not impressed by it. Ken Hall who was the key architect, along with Carey, of the 1997 negotiations/strike was also Co-Chair of the National Negotiating Committee for the 2002 negotiations. Hall claimed that the two sides ‘… are very far apart on economic terms of the contract. I have urged the company to submit proposals that reflect the contributions of our members to UPS’ success’.\textsuperscript{114}

Two weeks later, however, the Teamsters reached an agreement with UPS. This was very surprising, as the old contract was not set to expire for another sixteen days. Hoffa Jr claimed that the agreement ‘… surpasses any contract ever negotiated at UPS … [and] it is the richest contract in UPS history and will set the tone for all collective bargaining for years to come’.\textsuperscript{115} The agreement revealed otherwise. The six-year agreement (the longest UPS agreement ever) contained a 3.2 per cent wage increase for full-time workers ($5 per hour), and part-time workers received $6 per hour over the life of the agreement. As US labour academic Rick Hurd argued, ‘… it gives … [UPS workers] a decent pay rise… It’s not an extraordinary pay rise, but it’s solid’.\textsuperscript{116} However, there is only a 50-cent increase in starting pay for part-time workers. Thus, by 2008 the starting rate for part-time UPS employees will only be $8.50 per hour compared to $22.50 for full-time employees. As TDU noted, ‘… there seems little doubt that by 2008 McDonalds, Burger King and other low wage employees will be paying more than $9 per hour’, as does the non-unionised Federal Express. Moreover, there is ‘… no increase in the daily (3.5 hour) guarantee’ for part-time workers. UPS agreed to create 10,000 new full-time jobs over the life of the

\textsuperscript{114} ‘UPS’ Latest Offer Fails to Address Issues Important to Teamster Members’, \textit{PR Newswire}, June 27 2002.
\textsuperscript{115} ‘Teamsters, UPS Reach 6-Year Deal’, \textit{AP Online}, July 16 2002.
contract (as in the 1997 agreement, but in that agreement UPS agreed to create 10,000 full-time jobs over five years. The Teamsters wanted 3000 new full-time jobs per year of the contract), with ‘... annual increases of $0.63 per hour in health and pension contributions, compared to $0.36 in the 1997 agreement’. However, UPS workers in the Central States Pension Fund, which is the largest pension fund, received no pension increase.\(^{117}\) Likewise, the new full-time jobs are not necessarily real full-time jobs. The contract stated that UPS ‘... wherever possible, [would] reschedule part-time employees to make additional full-time jobs or combination full-time jobs’.\(^{118}\) In other words, UPS has the option of classifying workers in these new jobs as full-time for only part of the day, while for the rest of the day, workers would be classified as part-time. There is a substantial difference between full-time and part-time wages. A part-time worker with four years experience and seniority would receive $11.25 per hour, while a full-time worker would receive $22.50 per hour. Thus, the company would save money by only classifying a worker as full-time for part of the day. Overall, the agreement was good for full-time UPS employees, and average for part-time employees.

It is likely, however, that the Teamsters could have achieved a better contract. Following the 1997 strike, UPS was very fearful that another strike would occur. Indeed, UPS volume was decreasing before the contract expired, as customers anticipated another


\(^{118}\) National Master United Parcel Service Agreement For the Period: August 1, 2002 through July 21, 2008, 2002, p.31. [Emphasis Added]
strike. Volume declined by 4 per cent in June, and 5 per cent in the first two weeks of July.\textsuperscript{119} This gave the Teamsters bargaining strength. This was in addition to the increased strike fund, which Hoffa Jr claimed was to allow the Teamsters to ‘... grab that goose [UPS] by the neck and get every one of those golden eggs’. However, failure to mobilise the rank-and-file in advance of the negotiations made threat of a strike less plausible. While the contract was good for some UPS workers, it was only average for others, particularly part-time workers who make up the majority of UPS’s workforce.

TDU campaigned against the contract. It argued that UPS workers should reject the contract because of, amongst other things, the Central States Pension Fund freeze, the widening of the gap between full-time and part-time wage rates, and the six-year contract. However, a clear majority of UPS workers ratified the contract (72.1 per cent), although voter turnout was only 38 per cent. This was the lowest voter turnout in UPS history and the first time it had fallen below 50 per cent.\textsuperscript{120} Moreover, Hoffa Jr imposed the UPS Detroit Area Contract Rider (a Local contract in addition to the national UPS agreement) despite a majority voting against the contract. Hoffa Jr implemented the two-thirds rule as less than 50 per cent of UPS members voted.\textsuperscript{121} This further demonstrated Hoffa Jr’s distaste for union democracy.

\textsuperscript{119} Financial Times, August 1, 2002.
Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the claim that TDU is an embryonic social movement union under Moody's account, its efforts to democratise the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and to transform the Teamsters into a progressive union. TDU, despite its small size, managed to play a crucial role in moving the Teamsters to the left. This was through its attempts to make Teamster officials agree to majority rule in contract and strike votes, and helping to persuade the US government not to put the Teamsters into trusteeship, but to allow the rank-and-file to vote for top Teamster officials. Moreover, it helped Ron Carey's successful election campaign, which subsequently led to the Teamsters increasing its organising efforts. In the political arena, the Teamsters moved away from the Republican Party and towards the Democratic Party. The Teamsters attempted to stop NAFTA, and to increase rank-and-file involvement in the union. However, the US Justice Department, by forcing Carey to step down as President, which assisted the election of Hoffa Jr, negated much of TDU's efforts. Hoffa Jr slashed the organising budget, partly realigned the Teamsters with the Republican Party, and limited the rank-and-file's involvement in the union. After the failure of the Teamsters to achieve good collective bargaining agreements with UPS in 1990 and 1993, the union implemented a contract campaign in the 1997 negotiations that had a definite social movement unionism flavour (militancy, rank-and-file solidarity, internationalism and community involvement). This led to a stunning victory for both full-time and part-time UPS workers. Under Hoffa Jr's leadership, with little rank-and-file and community involvement, the 2002 UPS agreement was a disappointment. While the contract was good for full-time workers, it was inadequate for part-time workers.
Following member dissatisfaction with the 2002 UPS collective bargaining agreement— in particular, that there was no pension increase in the Central States— there has been a dramatic increase in TDU membership. While Hoffa Jr may move the Teamsters further to the right, this may lead to an increase in TDU membership and thus more members committed to social movement unionism.

122 Private email sent to author from TDU, May 2, 2003.
Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analysed different theories of social movement unionism and the potential of social movement unionism as a strategy to revive North American unionism. Recognising that there are different theories which use the same terminology, I wanted to find which one is most appropriate to help me understand what is happening in North America. I did this in two ways; first, by comparing the social movement unionism theories of Kim Moody, Peter Waterman, Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster, and Kim Scipes. Second, by examining North American unions that Moody claims are social movement unions.

In this chapter, I focus on 4 issues that I think are most important in regards to my overall project to analyse social movement unionism, and the potential of it to revive North American unionism. These issues are the relationship of social movement unionism to existing theories of trade unionism; social movement unionism and challenging the existing order; the success of social movement unionism in North America; and factors affecting the likelihood of social movement unionism succeeding in North America.
Relationship of Social Movement Unionism to Existing Theories of Trade Unionism

As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, Scipes’ theory of social movement unionism corresponds to the psychological tradition as he argues that a union’s goals depend on the group psychology of the workers. In contrast, Waterman’s theory, because of its eclectic nature, with elements from socialist trade union theory, new social movement theory, and radical communications theory, cannot be classified within any existing theory of trade unionism.

However, there are considerable similarities between Moody’s account of social movement unionism, and the trade union theories of Marx and Engels, and Trotsky. These include: a distrust of union bureaucracy; unions should organise the unorganised; unions should be democratic and undertake independent political action and; unions need alliances with political parties. Moreover, they can be summarised as theories of militancy and anti-collaboration. Likewise, both Moody, and Marx and Engels argue that the industrial working class are very important to class struggle, and regard resistance at the national level as a precondition for successful labour internationalism.

Like Moody’s account, Lambert and Webster’s theory of social movement unionism belongs in the Marxist tradition of trade unionism. This is not surprisingly since, as I argued in Chapter 3, there are great similarities between the social movement unionism theories of Moody, and Lambert and Webster.

As Moody has incorporated Marx and Engels’, and Trotsky’s analysis of trade unionism into his own work, this demonstrates that while social movement unionism may be the new buzzword, many of the key characteristics of Moody’s account (which is the

---

1 See Chapter 2.
most influential account of social movement unionism, at least in North America) were first suggested in some cases over 100 years ago. Thus, how “new” and original social movement unionism really is, at least Moody’s account of it, is open to serious doubt.

Social Movement Unionism and Challenging the Existing Order

While all the theories I analysed have divergent aspects, there is a major difference between Moody’s account of social movement unionism and the other three theories; namely, unlike Waterman, Lambert and Webster, and Scipes, Moody does not make explicit the link between social movement unionism and challenging a country’s economic and political order. Likewise, there is a distinction between social movement unions in the South, such as COSATU and the KMU, and the North American social movement unions. Southern social movement unions actively struggle(d) to change their country’s economic and political system. For example, Lambert and Webster argued:

Under ... [specific] conditions [in South Africa] the trade unions, in alliance with students, the youth, the unemployed and community groups, have begun to play a leading role in the struggle for democracy and political rights in society at large... By combining links at community level with an engagement in national liberation, these unions [i.e. affiliated with COSATU] have begun to take on the characteristics of social movement unionism.2

The North American social movement unions, while often criticising the system, do not actively attempt to change it. Even the UE never attempted to challenge the system. As Filippelli argued:

In the UE the question of Marxism as an alternative to capitalism was never raised with the rank and file. This does not mean that the

Marxism of the leaders did not inform their trade union behavior. They led by example and their egalitarian principles were represented in progressive policies such as the constitutional limitation on officer’s salaries, much greater local autonomy than most unions, and the retention of the right to strike over grievances. Nevertheless, these policies as well as pronouncements on foreign policy existed in a vacuum, never related to a broader ideology aimed at radicalizing the workers.³

This is in contrast to the KMU leadership. As Leopoldo Dejillas noted, the ‘KMU leadership is characterized by the following features: the dominance of individuals directly linked with revolutionary and national-democratic forces; ... adherence to revolutionary and socialist beliefs; aggressiveness in initiating and advancing organizational positions; and aggressiveness in using organizational structures to mold its members’ consciousness’. He goes on to state: ‘The KMU leadership’s socialist and revolutionary beliefs and links with national-democratic and revolutionary forces show that the KMU views the trade-union struggle as part of the broader struggle for national democracy and, eventually, socialism’.⁴ In other words, there is a major distinction between social movement unions in the South and in the North.

Furthermore, as I argued in the Introduction to Part II, while it is clear there are differences between Moody’s account of social movement unionism and Scipes’, it should be noted that Moody’s social movement unionism and Scipes’ social justice unionism are very similar. Although Moody’s account of social movement unionism is vaguely defined, he clearly places union democracy and rank-and-file involvement, and labour internationalism as being key characteristics of his account. Here there is an important distinction from Scipes, who advocates these things as being important, but does not make them essential requirements of his account of social justice unionism. I believe Moody’s account is more desirable of the two because apart from democratic practices being

³ Filippelli, p.223.
⁴ Dejillas, pp.96-7.
generally (if not always) better than undemocratic practices, as I demonstrated in Chapter 4, democracy and rank-and-file involvement can potentially lead to unions becoming militant and embrace social movement unionism. Moreover, in this globalised world, on purely “bread-and-butter” issues, labour internationalism can help unions in collective bargaining (of course, labour internationalism can help unions and workers worldwide, which most of labour’s supporters will argue is a good in itself; see Chapters 1-6). Thus, I specifically include these two requirements in my understanding of social movement unionism as it relates to unions in North America.

The Success of “Social Movement Unionism” in North America

It is from this understanding that I examined Moody’s examples of social movement unions in North America. I did this by analysing two unions – the Canadian Auto Workers and the United Electrical Workers – and what I termed an “embryonic” social movement union: Teamsters for a Democratic Union. I argued that Moody is correct to claim that the CAW and UE are social movement unions. This is because the attributes of both unions correspond to many, if not all, of the characteristics of Moody’s account.

However, while neither union is a social movement union under the other theories because of them not challenging the existing economic and political order (and in the case of Waterman’s theory a range of other factors, such as not having the organisational structure of social movements), both unions can be considered as social justice unions under Scipes’ definition.

The TDU cannot be considered a social movement union because it is only a reform movement in the Teamsters. However, its goals of democratising the Teamsters and
making it more militant correspond to Moody’s account; as such, it is an embryonic social movement union.

**A New Name**

While the CAW and UE are social movement unions under Moody’s account, and in the case of TDU, an embryonic social movement union, there is a difference between them and social movement unions in the South like COSATU and the KMU; namely, the North American social movement unions are not actively challenging the existing order. This is also the crucial difference between Moody’s account of social movement unionism and those of Peter Waterman, Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster, and Kim Scipes. Despite Moody’s use of the term social movement unionism, there is a major difference between Moody’s account and the other three theorists. To continue to use the term social movement unionism in relation to Moody’s account continues to hide the difference between it and other theories of social movement unionism, and social movement unionism in North America and in several “developing” countries. Accordingly, I suggest that there needs to be a totally different term used to refer to Moody’s account of social movement unionism and unions that correspond to it.

While Moody’s account of trade unionism is more desirable from my perspective than Scipes’, I believe Scipes has suggested a better name for this trade unionism: social justice unionism. This in no way reduces the importance of either Moody’s account of social movement unionism or the benefits of unions adopting it as a strategy. With that understanding, I argue that we should refer to Moody’s account of social movement unionism, and unions such as the UE and CAW, from here on out as social justice unionism.
(unions), despite recognising that there are some differences between Moody and Scipes. I leave it to future writings to address the differences between these two accounts.

**Collective Bargaining and Organising**

There was a common theme running throughout the empirical chapters. With respect to wages, working conditions and organising new members, the CAW and UE generally achieved better wages and working conditions, and organised more new members per capita than their rival business unions. Likewise, the Teamsters achieved their greatest success in recent years when they implemented a contract campaign that had a definite social justice unionism flavour.

From 1979 onwards, the CUAW/CAW consistently achieved better collective bargaining agreements with the Big Three automakers (Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors) than its US counterpart the United Auto Workers (UAW). This was irrespective of the state of the Canadian and US economies. I argued that the differences between the contracts were because of the CUAW/CAW’s militancy and its refusal to accept concessions. Conversely, the UAW leadership refused to fight for its members, which led it to accept concessions very quickly. The CAW’s militancy resulted in it fighting for workers at Canadian-American Manufacturing Inc (CAMI) after initially agreeing to lower wages, as well as Japanese production methods, in return for the company allowing the CAW to represent the employees. The CAW’s militancy led to CAMI workers’ wages eventually corresponding to CAW Big Three employees’ wages. Furthermore, there was a “roll back” of Japanese production methods. Finally, since it split from the UAW in 1985, the CAW has increased its membership by 130,000, with it organising more than 6000
workers per year. The majority of new members came from mergers between the CAW and smaller unions, but the CAW’s social justice unionism influenced many unions to merge with the CAW.\(^5\) In contrast, between 1985 and 1995 the UAW’s membership decreased by 33 per cent, and between 1979 and 1995 by a massive 50 per cent.\(^6\)

The UE, like the CAW, consistently achieved superior collective bargaining agreements compared to its rivals. As I noted in Chapter 6, Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, in their analysis of CIO unions’ contracts from 1938 to 1955, concluded that the UE contracts were more pro-labour than other unions.\(^7\) Moreover, the UE had better collective bargaining agreements than the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) at Westinghouse in the 1950s. This is despite the IUE having almost three times as many members at Westinghouse compared to the UE. In recent years, the UE continued its trend of attaining good contracts; for example, in the period 1996-98, the UE achieved higher wage rises for its members than the average of all US unions.

The UE had similar success in organising. In 1939, the UE membership was less than 50,000; by VJ day, UE membership was 750,000. Only the UAW and the United Steelworkers of America could match the UE’s growth during World War II. However, following the split in the union, anti-communist attacks on it by government, business and rival unions, and the betrayal by the Communist Party the UE’s membership declined dramatically from which the UE has never recovered. Nevertheless, the union had the second highest National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) certification election win rate for the period 1972-1984, well ahead of the IUE and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Since the early 1990s, the UE only organises approximately a


\(^6\) Ibid.

It is impossible to compare TDU's record in collective bargaining systematically with unions because it is only a reform caucus within the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. However, the TDU successfully campaigned against concessions that Teamster President Jackie Presser agreed to in the 1983 National Master Freight Agreement. Moreover, by analysing Teamster-United Parcel Service (UPS) contracts (the highest profile US collective bargaining agreement), I demonstrated that the Teamsters achieved their best contract ever with UPS in 1997, with both full-time and part-time workers attaining significant gains. It was during this campaign that the TDU's influence was greatest and the Teamsters' leadership implemented a contract campaign, which was initially suggested by TDU. The campaign had a social justice unionism flavour (militancy, rank-and-file intensive tactics that built solidarity between full-time and part-time UPS employees, international solidarity, and community alliances). In contrast, the 1990, 1993 and 2002 UPS campaigns either only utilised these tactics to a limited extent or ignored them for a top-down approach. This was clearly illustrated in the 2002 campaign headed by Jimmy Hoffa Jr. It was therefore not surprising that these contracts were disappointing to many UPS workers, especially part-timers.

Thus, Moody's North American examples of social movement unions – which I now refer to as social justice unions – have consistently gained better wages and working conditions for their members than their rival business unions have. In addition, they generally organised more new workers. My findings correspond with both Scipes', and Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin's research. In an analysis of the United Packinghouse Workers of America (social justice union) and the United Steelworkers of America (business union), Scipes demonstrated that the Packinghouse workers achieved greater economic gains than thousand new workers each year, but this is a relatively good achievement considering the small size of the union.
the Steelworkers did. Likewise, as I previously noted, Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin established that left-led unions achieved greater pro-labour contracts than right-wing unions. This demonstrates the benefits of social justice unionism compared to business unionism for workers, purely in regards to “bread-and-butter” issues.

Factors Affecting the Likelihood of Social Movement Unionism or Social Justice Unionism Succeeding in North America

Impact of Government Policies

In addition to social justice unions achieving better collective bargaining agreements and organising more new workers, another theme running throughout the chapters was that government policies either helped or hindered, in some cases dramatically, the CAW, UE and TDU. The then Canadian UAW benefited from government involvement in its 1979 collective bargaining negotiations with Chrysler. The Canadian government was an active participant in the negotiations and helped the union achieve job guarantees, increased investment in Canada, and no additional concessions. Likewise, TDU greatly profited from the US government’s decision not to place the Teamsters in trusteeship, but instead to allow the rank-and-file to vote for the top union officials. This is not to argue that the TDU had no role in the government’s decision or that the TDU would not have been able to reform the Teamsters without government help. As Nelson Lichtenstein stated, ‘... when the [US] government finally moved to root out Teamster criminality, TDU influence helped

---

8 Scipes, Activists, Collective Identities, Conceptualizations and Trade Union Behaviors, Chapter 6.
shape the settlement, especially those provisions that opened up the Teamster election process to make possible a genuinely democratic contest.\textsuperscript{9} However, the government’s involvement greatly helped TDU and it is likely that change occurred much faster than would have been achieved otherwise. Moreover, the US government’s decision not to intervene in the 1997 UPS strike also benefited the Teamsters. This decision surprised UPS’s leadership and was a great boost to striking UPS employees.

While government decisions helped both the Canadian UAW and TDU, the opposite occurred for the UE. Government interference almost destroyed the union and greatly contributed to the UE’s dramatic decline. Some of the decisions that had an adverse affect on the UE included a provision in the Taft-Hartley Act where union members had to sign affidavits stating they were not communists, and the Atomic Energy Commission’s decree to companies not to recognise unions that were labelled as security risks. These decisions resulted in the UE losing representation at many plants. Furthermore, the government scheduled House of Un-American Activities sessions to correspond with NLRB representation elections, which further hampered the union’s organising efforts. Government repression was complemented by the actions of rival unions which raided the UE’s membership. The IUE, IBEW, UAW, Teamsters, the AFL Jewellery Workers, the Glass, Ceramic and Silica Union and the AFL Carpenters conducted over 500 raids on UE Locals. Both the US government and rival unions, including non-business unions (at that time) such as the UAW, attacked the UE.

As Ian Robinson argued,

\begin{quote}
... the radical agenda of SMUs [social movement unions] means that government and employers often target them with higher levels of repression than rival union types. We have seen this dynamic recur in U.S. labor history, and the result was clear: SMUs were marginalized except during the great economic crises
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{9} Lichtenstein, p.260.
of the 1930s. The lesson, it seems, is that even with superior mobilization capacity, SMUs will be crushed by the superior power resources of the state, employers, and more conservative unions – if they are willing and able to cooperate. Less inclusive and radical forms of unionism will thus come to dominate unless such a coordinated repressive response proves impossible.\(^\text{10}\)

However, as I noted, the Canadian UAW and the TDU benefited from government involvement (or in the case of the UPS strike, non-involvement). Thus, it is not necessarily the case that social movement unions or social justice unions face greater repression than other types of unions (which Robinson does note). Nevertheless, in the majority of situations, especially in this era of neoliberal globalisation, governments and conservative unions will likely try to prevent any radical unions' agenda from succeeding, especially anti-capitalist activities. As J.M. Barbalet argued:

> Every time that radical unionism has flourished in the USA, it has been destroyed or severely damaged by political repression. In addition, the “mainstream” labour movement ‘came under special attack when it showed signs of becoming radical’. In particular, state repression had the effect of totally removing the radical element form the labour movement, and of providing a strong incentive away from the radical end of the political and industrial organisational spectrum.\(^\text{11}\)

**Impact of Structural Conditions and Demographic Change**

While more successful than business unions, at this stage, social justice unionism is unlikely to result in a dramatic revival of North American unionism. There are two main reasons for this. First, as noted above, unions are relatively powerless compared to governments, and government policy has greatly contributed in social justice unions’

---

\(^{10}\) Robinson, ‘Does Neoliberal Restructuring Promote Social Movement Unionism?’, p.199.

successes and failures. In this era of neoliberalism, governments are increasingly likely to attempt to undermine social justice unions. While one could argue that social justice unions should have a link with like-minded political parties, as I demonstrated in Chapter 4, such alliances have undermined social movement unions in South Africa, the Philippines, and the UE in the US. Second, the conditions that led to the rise of social movement unionism in countries such as the Philippines and South Africa are not applicable to North America (see below).

It is very doubtful that the current conditions in Canada and the US are contusive to social justice unionism, let alone social movement unionism becoming the dominant union ideology throughout North America. CAW, UE and TDU have been very successful in achieving significant gains in wages and working conditions, as well as organising the unorganised in regard to the CAW and UE. However, apart from a brief period where the UE was a major union in the 1940s with over 500,000 members and there were other militant left-wing unions (predominately within the CIO), and the current success of the CAW, social justice unionism has not been the dominant in North America. Despite the downturn in unionism and increased talk of change, it is difficult to envisage that there will be a major shift in union ideology in the near future. Nevertheless, one could have argued in the years preceding the fall of communism in Eastern Europe that this system would be in place for the foreseeable future. In other words, it is very difficult to determine when a major change will occur. Halliday claimed that ‘... while revolutionaries and their opponents have long advocated a voluntaristic view, stressing the role of human will and organisation, few deny that such action cannot succeed except where objective factors enable them to do so’. As Marx argued, ‘[m]en make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves,

12 Halliday, p.172.
but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past'. For a major change to occur there is a need for both structural facilitators, such as an economic collapse, and for people and/or organisations, such as unions, to be in a position to respond effectively.

Structural conditions contributed to the success (even if the success was brief) of social movement unionism in other countries. As Robinson claimed, '... conditions in the 1970s contributed greatly to the emergence of SMU [social movement unionism] as the dominant form within the labor movements of Brazil, South Korea, and South Africa in the 1980s'. This corresponds with my findings in Chapter 3 that structural transformations partially led to social movement unionism in South Africa.

However, at the same time, social actors have contributed to the rise of social movement unionism in other countries. For example, the KMU gained strength because of its nationalism and efforts to democratise the Philippines. As Lois A. West noted: 'KMU members have rooted their critique of foreign and labor intervention in their conception of Philippine nationalism which they saw as culturally based'. A KMU leader claimed that

\[\text{nationalism provides one with the cultural level. It's necessary to be able to integrate ourselves into a people, that is, you've got to integrate people with different histories... Everybody else has his own history, and it's not simply the history of the Tagalogs that is the history of the Philippines. You've got to bring this into a national culture and a nation state. The only thing that I'm clear in my mind is that you've got to create strong unions, strong people's organizations, build good bureaucrats, a strong civil service system, and rein in the military.}\]

West stated that the KMU viewed the ‘... nationalist agenda ... as a primary organizing tool ... as the national democratic movement continued to link the Philippines government

---

14 Robinson, ‘Does Neoliberal Restructuring Promote Social Movement Unionism?’, p.221.
16 Unnamed KMU leader quoted in ibid.
to the Americans in what they called U.S.-Marcos, U.S.-Aquino, and ... U.S.-Ramos regimes'. The nationalist movement in the Philippines greatly benefited the KMU.

The conditions in South Africa and the Philippines that led to the rise of social movement unionism are not applicable to North America. Nor are there any other similar conditions, in the short term, which will dramatically increase the chances that social justice unionism, let alone social movement unionism will become the dominant union form.

Moody admitted that social movement unions in the North (i.e. social justice unions) and South are not the same because of the conditions that have led to their formation; he claimed that ‘... revolutionary conditions in the South led to social movement unionism’. However, he further stated that ‘... social movement unionism in the North has more currency now because union demographics have changed’. For example, 40 per cent of union members are women, while people of colour make up 25 per cent (this overlaps with women unionists). White males are not the majority of union members in the US. Moreover, the decline in workers' economic and living conditions combined with resistance to them is making social movement unionism (social justice unionism) a realistic alternative. Nevertheless, as I argued in Chapter 2, a decline in workers' economic conditions, by themselves, will not necessarily lead to an increase in class consciousness.

There is evidence, however, that so-called minorities, such as women and people of colour, can contribute to the revitalisation of unions and lead them to adopt progressive agendas. For example, as noted in Chapter 2, Moody argued that immigrant workers often have a significant role in the reintroduction of rank-and-file unionism and militancy in many unions. In addition, the growth of Latino members was intertwined with the growth

18 Interview with Kim Moody, September 23, 2002.
19 Moody, 'The Dynamics of Change', p.113.
of TDU, and in other reform movements such as New Directions within the UAW and the New York Transit Authority workers within the Transport Workers Union. Likewise, Lichtenstein claimed that women workers, combined with a sense of community led to an increase in solidarity in the US in the 1930s:

> Women workers were a key part in the labor upsurge when an organic element of that movement included rent strikes, soup kitchens, and neighborhood political mobilizations... [W]omen made the union impulse present throughout the neighborhoods and communities. Labor-based tenant organizations, soup kitchens, food cooperatives, recreation halls, singing societies, and education programs drew women workers as well as the wives and daughters of male unionists into a dense, supportive social network that thickened the ties of solidarity inside and outside the factory.

Moreover, the rise of social movement unionism in Brazil was in part because of an increasing number of women joining unions and social movements. This gives credence to Moody’s claim that an increase in the number of “minorities”, such as women, becoming members of unions may result in the rise of social movement unionism.

There has been a rise in the number of so-called “minorities” joining US unions, but the majority of unions are still firmly under the grip of business unionism. Thus, it is doubtful that this by itself will lead to social justice unionism or social movement unionism becoming more popular in the North. It is also unlikely that the conditions that resulted in the rise of social movement unionism in South Africa and the Philippines will manifest in North America. Nevertheless, it is possible that a number of factors combined could lead to the growth of social justice unionism or social movement unionism.

I agree with Lambert and Webster, and Robinson that neoliberal restructuring does offer a potential structural transformation that could lead to more North American unions embracing radical forms of unionism. Likewise, union education programmes run by the

---

20 Moody, *An Injury to All*, p.257.
21 Lichtenstein, p.90.
22 See Chapter 4.
KMU, CUT and the CAW have led to a change in workers' ideology and increased participation in union affairs. Finally, as Moody, Scipes, and Waterman claim, union democracy and rank-and-file involvement lead to unions becoming more militant. The CAW, UE and TDU chapters further demonstrate that democratic unions with extensive rank-and-file involvement are more militant than business unions. These factors, in addition to the changing workforce demography, the rise of new social movements (which accompanied the ascent of social movement unionism in Brazil and South Africa, and an increase in public sector unionism in the US) and a decline in workers' economic conditions (possibly as a result of neoliberal restructuring), potentially offer the best hope for the spread of social justice unionism or social movement unionism in North America. However, the rise of either is far from certain.

A Beginning

While social movement unionism or even social justice unionism is not currently widely practiced throughout Canada and the US, it has been successful in a number of situations throughout the world. In North America, by fighting for workplace (such as higher wages) and non-workplace issues (such as the fight for adequate childcare or against racism), social justice unions have improved society for all. On purely “bread-and-butter” issues, social justice unions have achieved better collective bargaining agreements than their rival business unions, as well as organising more new workers per capita. Therefore, if unions embrace social justice unionism this will result in the North American union movement...

---

23 See Chapters 3 and 4 for an analysis of these points.
24 See Chapter 4.
regaining some of the strength that has been lost through decades of business unionism. How much strength it will regain is uncertain, but it is a beginning.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Bernstein, Aaron and Vogel, Todd. ‘A Game of Chicken between the Teamsters and UPS – A leadership race and thin profits have both sides driving a hard bargain’, *Business Week*, August 6, 1990, p.32.


Davidson, Nick ‘Fresh From Victory – TDU Faces Major Challenges Ahead’, *Against the Current*, vol.viii, no.1 (New Series), March-April 1993, pp.7-10.


Fennell, Tom. ‘Upbeat on the line’, *MacLean’s*, October 28 1996, p.36.


Gibb, Robert. ‘Leadership, political opportunities and organisational identity in the French anti-racist movement’ in Colin Barker, Alan Johnson and Michael Lavalette (eds.)
Leadership and social movements, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2001, pp.60-76.


Hanisch, Carol. ‘Struggles over leadership in the women’s liberation movement’ in Colin Barker, Alan Johnson and Michael Lavalette (eds.) Leadership and social movements, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2001, pp.77-95.


Joffe, Avril, Maller, Judy and Webster, Eddie. ‘South Africa’s Industrialization: The Challenge Facing Labor’ in Stephen Frenkel and Jeffery Harrod (eds.) *Industrialization &


Larson, Simeon and Nissen, Bruce (ed.). *Theories of the Labor Movement*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, Michigan, 1987


Nissen, Bruce and Rosen, Seth. ‘Community-Based Organizing: Transforming Union Organizing Programs From The Bottom Up’ in Bruce Nissen (ed.) Which Direction for Organized Labor?, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1999, pp.59-73.


Parker, Mike and Gruelle, Martha. Democracy is Power: Rebuilding Unions from the Bottom UP, Labor Notes, Detroit, 1999.


Schulz, John D. ‘Funding a Strike?’ Traffic World, April 1, 2002, p.29.


Scipes, Kim. ‘Social Movement Unionism: Can We Apply the Theoretical Conceptualization to the New Unions in South Africa – And Beyond?’, 2001.


Waterman, Peter. Social Movement Unionism: A New Union Model for a New World Order?’, Review, vol.XVI, no.3, Summer 1993, pp.245-78.


**Archives**


*United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America Archive [UEA]*, University of Pittsburgh.

**Interviews**


**Newspapers/Wire Services**

*AP Online*
*Associated Press Newswires*
*Atlanta Constitution*
Social Movement Unionism in North America

Automotive News
Business Wire
Canada News-Wire
Chicago Sun-Times
Chicago Tribune
Convoy Dispatch
Dow Jones Business News
Dow Jones News Service
Financial Times
Houston Chronicle
Knight-Rider News Service
Knight-Rider Tribune Business News
Labor Notes
Los Angeles Daily News
Los Angeles Times
National Post
People’s Press
People’s Press (Schenectady Edition)
PR Newswire
St. Petersburg Times
The Boston Globe
The Canadian Press
The Commercial Appeal
The Dallas Morning News
The Financial Post
The Globe and Mail
The International Teamster
The Manila Chronicle
The Milwaukee Journal
The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
The Toronto Star
The Wall Street Journal
The Wall Street Journal Europe
The Washington Post
UE News