An American Trade Unionist Abroad

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slums and company towns, to retell our struggles and achievements and to align our history with their current life.

The Australian and New Zealand workers want more direct and detailed comparisons. Their standards and ways of life are so much like our own that they want to evaluate the differences carefully. Is it true that the standards of the American worker have forged ahead at a more rapid rate since the end of the war? The vast range of wages, work conditions and benefits existing in the United States between the highly organized and profitable industries and the unorganized and low-wage ones is difficult to present to workers and trade-union leaders in countries where uniform regional and national rates and conditions prevail and the differences between the national minimum and the pay rate for the most skilled are very small. They look askance on our system of securing piecemeal improvements through individual plant or company negotiations, when they have been able to establish high standards, relatively uniformly for all, through a combination of government regulation and benefits and generous awards through national or state arbitration courts. They cannot comprehend the aggressive and effective opposition to unionism in some regions in the United States, in view of the American government's boasts abroad of our system of collective bargaining.

All of these challenges and questions must be met frankly with honest trade-union replies. The confusing differences in bargaining procedures have to be sorted out to highlight the similarity of goals.

Questions Asked About Labor's Aloofness to Political Parties

A common question put by workers and trade-union leaders throughout the world is why American unions are so relatively aloof from political parties. In some Asian countries, political activity has been accented, because they have recently gained independence, and workers' well-being is being determined by their influence in the new governments.

In other countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, political parties have been the instruments of the political ambitions of specific economic classes. A high degree of class consciousness exists, even in Australia and New Zealand with their narrow range of income levels and systems of uniform benefits. They ask most insistently why there is no Labor Party.

It requires a careful unfolding of our trade-union history to tell the story of the protection and support given trade-unions by the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. The peculiarities of local and national political traditions and operations are difficult for them to comprehend. They cannot easily understand that our national parties are peculiar coalitions of regional economic and political views. The force of traditional voting for Democrats and Republicans is rather novel to Laborites in Australia and New Zealand, weaned on supporting the Labor Party. To them, the Labor Party is an instrument for negotiations for improvements. They lament our lack of sophistication, and are not reassured by the story that our pattern has served us and that the future will have to dictate our new course.

Again the contrasts in trade-union organization and collective bargaining practices are most striking. We have been conditioned by our legal system to think of unions as representing workers in individual plants and to associate collective bargaining with individual employers. Therefore, it seems strange to industrial unionists to find the prevailing systems of bargaining in many countries built on a regional or national basis. In New Zealand and Australia, the negotiations are carried on with associations of employers. Agreements and arbitration decisions are binding upon all covered employees. Union membership is compulsory in New Zealand and in two of the Australian states, Queensland and New South Wales. Grievances and complaints are seldom handled in the plants; they are dealt with through the union secretary, who is a regional official. The plant grievance machinery is strange to them. When they see it in operation in this country, they label it cooperation rather than collective bargaining. The

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Leon Jouhaux Dies in Paris

Leon Jouhaux, 74, founder of France's Force Ouvrière and winner of the 1951 Nobel Peace Prize, died on April 28 at his home in Paris.

The revered Socialist elder statesman and labor leader was re-elected to the presidency of the Economic Council on the afternoon of his death. The Council gives economic advice to the French Parliament and Jouhaux served as its head since it was established in 1946.

Leon Jouhaux

Cables of condolence expressing his own sympathy and that of the CIO were sent by President Walter P. Reuther to Jouhaux's widow and to FO.

Well Known in U. S.

Jouhaux was widely known in the U. S. He addressed the 1946 CIO Convention in Atlantic City and made a fervent plea for world peace. He expressed a desire to see all agencies of the United Nations work to establish security, telling the convention: "This security will bring world disarmament, that will lighten the burden of armament on every worker and give them a chance to work for their well-being.

"We must be working for peace, all of us, and not for war. We are the builders of a new world. We have the faith and the confidence, we are tightly united, nothing can separate us."

Jouhaux also spoke at the 1952 Convention of the Canadian Congress of Labour in Toronto.

The son of a Paris match factory

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An American Trade Unionist Abroad

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drive for shop stewards, in the latter countries, has been associated with past communistic endeavors to establish a dual union movement.

In Asian countries, similar forces are at work. Agreements are with employers as a group. Even in Japan, where the American influence has been strong as a result of the period of occupation, the unit of bargaining is the large company or enterprise or groups of employers. Unions are constituted around these specific units.

In each of these countries, they rely upon legislation to enforce benefits which we would try to obtain through collective bargaining. There is, therefore, a great deal of uniformity in terms of employment. However, it must be said that in the Asian countries where unions are weak, the laws remain dead letters because they are not enforced and are widely avoided.

Many attitudes found among American workers are absent among workers in these other countries. Our confidence in the future and expectation of rising standards and continuous improvements are difficult to duplicate. The Asian worker is often at the brink of starvation. He has never really witnessed an era of constant economic improvement. He has no faith—he is pessimistic or resigned. Economic progress through trade-union action does not yet seem to offer a rewarding course of action. Political power offers more immediate rewards.

In countries like New Zealand and Australia, the strong trade-union movements, aided by their political parties, have assured workers of the maintenance of their living standards in face of rising living costs. The tremendous profits earned by the farmers from the world sale of meat and wool have hitherto provided resources both for taxes and wage negotiations for raising standards. It is only now, with the advent of modern technology and management, that they begun to seek more regular advances through claims on the rising national productivity. The tapping of tremendous new natural wealth in Australia will help to assure even greater opportunities for improvements in living standards from this source. The prevailing American optimism may well find its closest approximation in this country.

Trade Unions Abroad Seek to Benefit From Experience of American Labor

The trade-union movement of each country seeks to benefit from our experience and advances. In my own short contacts in Japan, I found trade-union leaders looking for counsel on the type of economic program they might espouse to inspire greater confidence in the constructive opportunities for rising living standards through trade-unionism. In New Zealand, trade-union leaders were eager to acquaint themselves with the detailed methods of operation of our unions and methods of administering them within the plants. Australian trade-unionists wanted to know how we dealt with modern management techniques and for them I prepared analyses of wage incentive plans and time study. The Indian textile unions asked me to participate in the preparation of their case in arbitration on a technical problem to illustrate our procedures and point of view. *Each eagerly looks for our practical aid.*

Foreign Groups Seek Direct Contact With U. S. Workers

I might add that the employers, faculties of universities and government officials handling labor problems in each country are most desirous of meeting an American trade-unionist. They have heard much about our system. They want to learn from the trade-unionist what actually happens in this country.

A visit of an American trade-unionist to a foreign country is a full assignment, as so many have questions to ask and want to learn about us from people they have come to trust as bona fide trade-unionists.

Leon Jouhaux

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worker, Jouhaux left school when he was 12 and went to work in a match factory. He became national secretary of the match workers union and in 1909 was elected secretary general of the French Confederation of Labor. He was a delegate to the first Intl. Labor Conference in Washington in 1919.

Helped Draft Labor Charter

Before World War I, Jouhaux tried to organize an anti-militarist movement with German labor leaders but when this failed he supported the French war effort. At the peace conference in 1919 he helped draft the Intl. Labor Charter and was a delegate to the League of Nations from 1925 to 1928.

Although his career began at the extreme left of the French labor movement, Jouhaux moved closer to the center to oppose growing Communist influence. He refused to enter Leon Blum's coalition cabinet and broke with the government completely in 1936 to start a general strike.

Fearful of a new war, he came to the U. S. not long after to ask for President Roosevelt's intervention to maintain peace. When war came and the Germans overran France, Jouhaux was interned by the Petain regime which dissolved the labor confederation. Later he was turned over to the Nazis and sent to a German concentration camp from which he was liberated by American troops in 1945.

He resumed his leadership of the Labor Confederation but split with its Communist majority in 1947 and established the non-communist Force Ouvriere (Workers Force). FO is a member of the Intl. Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

Received Nobel Prize in 1951

When he received the Nobel peace award in 1951 Jouhaux said he regarded it as a recognition of the working class' efforts for world peace. Any peace that did not have the working class support, he said, would no more be a true one than "a peace not based on social justice."