

CHAPTER IV

THE UNIONS—THEIR BEGINNINGS AND GROWTH

THE history of a labor union, if fully told, would be as complex as the history of a nation. There is, in the first place, the outward formal history of dates, names, numbers, and crises. There is also the history of political philosophy, structure, and laws. There is the cultural history, and the economic and social one. The present chapter, in order to make comprehensible any further discussion, must confine itself chiefly to the formal history of the clothing trades unions.

The unions now existing are the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, having jurisdiction over all branches of ready-made women's and children's garments, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, which embraces the majority of workers in the manufacture of men's and boys' clothing, the United Garment Workers of America, which officially has the same jurisdiction as the Amalgamated, but exercises actual control only in the overall industry, the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America, which in addition to those specified in its title includes a large number of

millinery workers, the International Fur Workers' Union of the United States and Canada, whose title is self-explanatory, and a number of locals of men's neckwear makers. All these unions are affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, with the exception of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, which was organized after a conflict within the United Garment Workers, and is regarded as an out-law body by the officials of the federation. To these might be added the Journeymen Tailors Union of America, because, although it consists mainly of employees of custom tailors, the line between the custom tailoring house and the clothing manufacturer is often dim. The Fancy Leather Goods Workers Union should perhaps also be included, since they are mainly needle workers in a trade similar in structure to the others, and they are racially and psychologically similar to the rest of the group. A few minor trades, such as suspender makers and garter makers, will complete the list of the unions.

These unions grew up and are strongest in the branches of the clothing industry where immigrant labor was chiefly employed, and large-scale production has shown the least development. They have thoroughly organized the makers of cloaks, suits, skirts, dresses of all kinds, waists, overcoats and the like. They are waging a heroic battle for the makers of shirts and collars. They are just beginning to be successful with the corset-makers. There are practically no unorganized makers of cloth hats and

caps, but still a good many non-union workers in the millinery trade.

Not one of these unions existed before 1890, and only one—the United Garment Workers—has been in continuous existence since before 1900. Strikes occurred long before the Civil War, and after 1880 small unions were repeatedly organized and disappeared again. For a union to have a dues-paying membership above a thousand or so was unknown. The leaders and the intellectuals never gave up the attempt, and perennial conditions offered them frequent opportunities to renew the agitation. But to make permanent gains for the workers seemed like trying to fill a bottomless pit. A strike at the beginning of a busy season would win concessions, for then every worker was needed. Gradually as the work decreased, the concessions would be withdrawn, and any toiler foolhardy enough to protest would be replaced by another, already out of a job and fearful of starvation. There was no machinery to apply the concessions universally, and the highly fluid competition acted to break down standards. Union members would drop off during the slack months, because they could not afford to pay their dues. And eventually the union itself would vanish, only to be replaced by another when a new rebellion against the employers broke out.

As Abraham Cahan, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, put it in an address to a recent convention, "In those days when our movement gave birth to a child, somehow or other the child did not live. No

sooner was it born than it died and then a new child would have to be born and the same thing would occur. But now the situation has entirely changed. The children are beginning to thrive."

The history of the individual unions before 1900 is therefore the history of scattered and mostly unsuccessful, though persistent efforts at organization. Like all small and ephemeral bodies, they never developed a consistent policy and were often at odds with each other. First one faction would obtain control, then another. But no faction exerted a considerable influence on the main body of workers. During the 'eighties the Socialists and the Anarchists waged a petty warfare over them. Then the American Federation of Labor, with its conservative influence, began to grow stronger, and the radicals fought to keep the unions out of its hands. The anarchists soon disappeared in the unions, but the Socialists carried on a campaign to affiliate the workers with the old Knights of Labor. This was not so much through a love for the Knights of Labor as through a desire for some unifying influence. After that organization became plainly obsolescent, a separate central body was formed, known as the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. During the second half of the 'nineties, after the split in the Socialist Labor Party, that parent body would not recognize unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, while the seceding Social Democrats made no distinctions. All this time the United Hebrew Trades was striving for unity of the

Jewish unions on a consciously socialist philosophy, and was fighting corruption wherever it appeared.

For corruption did appear. The great mass of the workers, never having been educated to union discipline or to consciousness of their democratic property in the union, did not feel that it was theirs, that they could make what they liked out of it. They regarded unions rather as outside agencies which could be paid to conduct strikes and negotiate settlements. Trading on this feeling, and on the recurring unrest, strike promoters arose, irresponsible persons whose names and achievements were obscure. Calling themselves union officials, they would circulate notices in the shops that a strike was on. Dues would be collected, the workers would walk out, and then a settlement would be announced. During the rest of the year the promoter would live on the proceeds. As a result of the unions' lack of victorious prestige, of their transient character and quarrels with each other, and finally because of the prevalent corruption, there came a time in the 'nineties when many self-respecting socialist workers, fully in sympathy with the labor movement, would not belong to a union. And yet all this time spontaneous strikes periodically arose in a futile attempt to better conditions.

In 1890 the cloakmakers won a lockout-strike for higher wages and the right to belong to a union, but by 1893 the union had only a formal existence. In 1894 another successful strike was followed by the disappearance of the union. In 1896 a victorious

strike so exhausted the union that it perished. In 1898 the Brotherhood of Tailors, which was affiliated with the United Garment Workers, suffered the same fate. Thus the conservative unions as well as the radical were ineffectual. Although at the beginning of the decade thirty-three organizations were affiliated with the Jewish labor movement, the number later dropped much lower. Extravagant hopes alternated with despair. The spirit of organized effort would lift its head for a moment out of the confusion in which the industry existed, only to sink back again into the morass. Life was battling for its birth in chaos. Little experiments, tiny nuclei, formed themselves out of the constantly renewed instinct for order, and were swept away again in the whirl of nebulous forces. Many of the very leaders who today are at the head of the strong and successful unions were then attempting the seemingly impossible, and they never gave up hope. Patiently the Yiddish press and the socialist intellectuals strove to educate the masses to their true interest, and built little by little the basis for the only kind of morale which could endure such disruptive forces.

Many of the early locals were composed of cutters, they being at the time the more highly skilled craft. At the beginning of the 'nineties, however, organization spread among operators, basters, and pressers. The decreasing differences in the amount of skill required in the various operations made the industrial form of organization, favored by the radicals, the natural one. This led in 1891 to the formation

of the first national union—The United Garment Workers—which held its initial convention on April 18th in New York. Thirty-six tailor delegates were present from New York, Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia. These delegates elected a group of American-born non-socialist officers, since it was thought on account of their superior knowledge of the language and customs they could better handle the affairs of the union. At the same time socialist resolutions were passed, the new officers acquiescing in them to gain the support of the radical tailor delegates. The union immediately affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. It was not long before the officers, relying on the support of the conservative element in the union—for the most part native skilled craftsmen—began a warfare on all socialist activities, and ever since then the United Garment Workers has been anti-socialist.

In the big clothing markets this union was no more successful during the 'nineties than any of the others. Its membership never grew large, and it remained in existence simply because there was always a group which clung to the A. F. of L. charter. Its policy was and has remained that of the old unionism. Basing its strength on the craft spirit of the skilled, it has striven to improve the condition of its members by limiting the supply of labor and by cultivating cooperation, wherever possible, with the employers. Peculiar conditions made this policy effective in one respect. Some of the cheaper ready-made suits, and a large proportion of the

overalls, are bought by union labor. By developing among these union men a demand for the union label, the United Garment Workers were enabled to bargain successfully with certain manufacturers. The union label gradually became not only an inducement for recognition by manufacturers, but a means of discipline within the union. No label is authentic except that endorsed by the American Federation of Labor, the label is protected by United States registry, and as long as the Federation supports the officials of the garment workers' union, these officials can, by granting or withholding the label to manufacturers as they please, maintain almost a personal monopoly of the labor supply. Wherever, as in the case of overalls, such a monopoly is effective, it may be used either to benefit or to restrict the workers, but in any case it obviates the necessity for more democratic methods of building up union strength, and tends to minimize the need for conscious solidarity on the part of the workers. So complete has become the reliance of the United Garment Workers upon the union label that the principal association of employers with which it now negotiates collective agreements is entitled the Union Made Garment Manufacturers' Association. This association consists chiefly of overall manufacturers employing largely native-born operatives in the smaller cities throughout the country, and includes almost none of the manufacturers of regular ready-made clothing in the great clothing markets.

The membership of the United Garment Workers

remained small in the large centers until the New York strike of 1913. Up to this time the union had not retained a membership of over 4,000 in New York, although the International Ladies' Garment Workers had become powerful and negotiated the famous "Protocol" as early as 1910. It was soon after the strike of 1913 that the split in the men's tailoring union gave birth to the independent Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

Next to the United Garment Workers, the oldest international union in the needle trades is the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers. One of its locals, Cap Cutters, Local 2, has been in continuous existence since 1880. An attempt to form an international was made in 1886 by representatives of New York and Boston unions, and at that time the name was adopted. The present organization, however, was not effected until 1901, when delegates from nine locals, three in New York and one each in Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit, Baltimore, and San Francisco, met and established it. The first convention enunciated a radical policy, and voted to remain independent, taking no part in the conflict which was still being waged between the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance and the American Federation of Labor. Yet the young international soon was forced into a controversy with the American Federation of Labor, which had taken under its protection a few outside locals of cap makers. As a result the General Executive Board, in conjunction with delegates from some of these outside locals,

decided in 1902 to amalgamate and affiliate with the American Federation of Labor. The charter was granted on June 17th, and for a long time the Cap Makers held it without difficulty, although they have always remained faithful to the socialist movement. They have consistently represented the radical attitude within the Federation, and have frequently been in opposition to its larger policies.

The international immediately opened a fight against long hours, home work, and sweatshop conditions. In 1902 and 1903 general lockouts took place in New York and Philadelphia. In December, 1903, the largest manufacturer in New York attempted to safeguard the open shop by a lockout which precipitated a ten-weeks' struggle, ending in victory for the union. This was the signal for general organization on the part of the manufacturers, which led to a national onslaught on the union during the winter of 1904-5. The New York strike lasted thirteen weeks, and there were general strikes or lockouts in Chicago, San Francisco, New Haven, Cleveland, Detroit, Cincinnati, and almost every other town which the union had penetrated. The battle was decisive, resulting in the establishment of the union shop and a greatly enlarged membership. This was the first lasting success won in the needle trades.

In the meantime the union had begun to turn its attention to the millinery trade, which employed many young women and was so closely associated with the manufacture of caps that it was impossible fully to control the one without organizing the other.

Application was made for jurisdiction over the millinery workers, and in 1903 this was granted, first by a unanimous vote of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, and later by the Boston Convention. The victory of 1905 cleared the way for aggressive organization of the millinery workers as well as for constructive improvements in the condition of the cap makers.

Just at this time, however, the Industrial Workers of the World came into active being and began a campaign for the allegiance of A. F. of L. unions. The Cap Makers, because of their radicalism, were naturally one of the first points of attack. The I. W. W. had not at that time adopted the weapon of sabotage, and stood for constructive revolutionary industrial unionism, therefore it enlisted some support among the membership. The union, however, decided not to abandon their regular affiliation, and an ugly quarrel resulted, which was not terminated until 1907. The dual unions which arose during this internal struggle naturally made the conflict with the manufacturers more difficult, but in the end the Cap Makers reestablished their complete jurisdiction. With this difficulty out of the way, the union began its progressive effort for the betterment of conditions.

Near the end of 1909 separate locals were established for millinery workers and in 1910 an intensive organization campaign was begun among them. In 1915 this campaign had become so strong that the manufacturers did not force the issue, and after one-

tenth of the millinery employees had been out a short time a collective agreement was negotiated with the Ladies' Hat Manufacturers' Protective Association.

Up to this time the United Hatters, having jurisdiction over makers of felt hats, derbys, etc. had maintained friendly relation with the Cap Makers, and had never made any attempt to organize the girl millinery workers, who were excluded by their constitution. In 1915, however, after the successful milliners' strike, the United Hatters altered their constitution to admit the women's straw hat makers and applied to the American Federation of Labor for jurisdiction over them. The Executive Council of the Federation, reversing their decision of 1903, granted the application. The 1917 and 1918 conventions of the Cap Makers both decided that it would be against the best interests of their members to comply with this decision, and the conventions were supported by a referendum vote of the membership, 7011 against 19. As a result the union remained for a number of years suspended by the Federation. Nevertheless, wishing to avoid another division in the labor movement, the Cap Makers proposed a compromise in the form of an industrial amalgamation between themselves and the Hatters. This suggestion was rejected by the Hatters, and not considered by the A. F. of L. officials or convention in 1918. In 1919, however, the Executive Council of the Federation took it under advisement.

The United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers now con-

sists of 46 locals in 25 towns, with a membership of about 15,000. They have attained a 100 per cent organization in the cloth hat and cap trade, being the only union in the clothing industry which has succeeded in establishing a universal closed union shop. In the millinery trade their organization is strong except in the custom retail shops. The strike of the Cap Makers in 1919 won every demand made upon the employers, including the forty-four hour week, and the substitution of week work for piece work. A millinery strike, however, was not so successful, in part on account of the jurisdictional dispute with the Hatters.

Local unions of women's cloakmakers were among the transitory organizations which were born and died so frequently in the early years of the labor movement in the needle trades. A lockout-strike for recognition in 1890 is on record. In 1894 some of the cloakmakers joined the United Garment Workers, but withdrew in 1895 and continued an agitation which they had been conducting for a national union of workers on women's garments. The other unions concerned did not respond enthusiastically, however, until the end of the 'nineties, when the cloak manufacturers began to use the injunction to prevent strikes.

On June 3rd, 1900, the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union was organized at a convention at which there were present delegates from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Newark, and Brownsville. Soon afterwards the Chicago and San Fran-

cisco workers joined. The International, adopting a socialist constitution, immediately affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and has retained this affiliation ever since, although, like the Cap Makers, it has often disapproved of the policies of the Federation officials.

The original plan of the union was to duplicate the success of the United Garment Workers with the union label—this, if nothing else, made affiliation with the A. F. of L. necessary. Between 1900 and 1907 it struggled along in a vain attempt to establish its label, relying for direct gains only on the old method of sporadic strikes against individual manufacturers at the beginning of the busy season. No organizers besides regular officials were kept in the field and financially the union lived from hand to mouth.

In 1907 an event occurred which changed the whole outlook of the membership. The reefermakers, led by refugees from the Russian Revolution of 1905, went out in mass and stayed on strike for nine weeks, showing such common determination and spirit that they won most of their demands and put courage into the rest of the workers in the needle trades. For the first time in years it seemed possible to win direct results through strong organization and fighting tactics. Although the financial panic of 1907 severely affected industry and threatened the union with extinction, the stimulation of this success endowed it with new resolution; the members held together and soon undertook a great organizing

campaign. With the recovery of business in 1908 and the rapid expansion of the women's ready-made clothing industry, the union grew quickly. It was also during this period that a definite negative decision was reached regarding a proposal to amalgamate with the United Garment Workers. The latter organization not only rejected the proposal, but advised the International to surrender its charter. The current of events was bearing the two organizations farther apart rather than closer together.

In 1909 another surprising mass movement gave proof of the workers' heightened morale. The small local of waist and dressmakers in New York called a strike, expecting about 3,000 to respond. Instead 30,000 went out, including workers of all races, except a few native-born women. No such strike of women had before been known or thought possible. It aroused the public as never before to the sufferings of the needle workers. The more liberal churches and newspapers gave it much attention, and many of the purchasers of fine garments that were made under such frightful conditions felt a twinge of conscience. Substantial gains were made, and the local succeeded in retaining for some time afterwards a membership of 12,000.

This strike stimulated the cloakmakers to renewed activity; they rushed to join the union and repeat the success of the waistmakers. Enthusiasm ran high, and on July 8th, 1910, the great strike¹ was called

¹ For a description of this strike, see Chapter V.

which aroused the whole city, lasted for ten weeks, and resulted in the establishment of the first collective agreement in the ready-made clothing industry—the so-called "Protocol" which is discussed in detail in Chapter VI. After this the union maintained nearly a one-hundred per cent organization of the cloakmakers. In 1913 another general strike of the waistmakers brought about a collective agreement in that trade as well, and the permanent membership grew correspondingly.

The Protocol remained in force for five years, the workers achieving under it progressive concession in material conditions. Nevertheless friction was constant and increasing, there being an element among the manufacturers who desired complete independence and hoped to destroy the union, and an element in the union which was too radical to be anything but restive under a compromise with the employers. There were many points of conflict also which the divergent interests of both parties made inevitable. On May 20, 1915, the manufacturers abrogated the Protocol, charging that the union had not lived up to its provisions. Soon thereafter eight leaders of the cloakmakers were indicted on various charges including murder, all these charges dating back to the strike of 1910. The accusers were, for the most part, characters of the underworld. The eight men were brilliantly defended by Morris Hillquit; the charges against some of them were dismissed by the court, and the rest were acquitted. These events aroused intense feeling among the

workers, and convinced them that the manufacturers had embarked upon an attempt to destroy the union by fair means or foul. A strike was temporarily averted by a Council of Conciliation appointed by Mayor Mitchel under the stress of public opinion, but the award was abrogated by the manufacturers in the spring of 1916. On April 30th the 400 members of the employers' association ordered a lockout. The result was a bitter general strike lasting fifteen weeks, during the entire slack season. It ended by a victory for the union, and the establishment of a new agreement modified in their favor. This agreement was for the period of three years, and its conclusion was marked by another successful strike.

These repeated victories stimulated the organization not only in New York but throughout the country, and resulted in the acquisition, since 1907, of more than 75,000 members outside the New York cloak trade. The union is one of the few in the country until very recently which has been able to organize women in large numbers. The Waist and Dressmakers Union of New York, Local 25, is the largest single local of women in the country, and is strong and progressive in every respect. Dozens of conflicts with the employers have added to the ranks of the International not only cloakmakers and waistmakers throughout the country, but workers on house dresses and kimonos, white goods, raincoats, embroidery, corsets, etc. In the spring of 1920 the International officially reported a paid-up

membership of 102,000. In 1919 it was the sixth largest union in the American Federation of Labor, being surpassed only by the United Mine Workers, the Carpenters and Joiners, the Machinists, the Electrical Workers and the Railway Carmen; all these organizations were greatly aided by the war, although the war created a depression in the women's garment industry. If the Ladies' Garment Workers had included those not in good standing because in arrears through unemployment at the time of computation, the total would probably have reached 150,000.

Seeing the success of the makers of women's garments, the workers in the men's clothing industry became more and more restless during the years between 1907 and 1913. They had not made parallel gains, and the United Garment Workers, which held official jurisdiction over them, seemed to them inactive and impervious to the spirit of the times. A general strike in Chicago in the fall of 1910 resulted in a satisfactory agreement with the large and progressive house of Hart, Schaffner, and Marx, which already had about 6,500 employees, but in New York no appreciable gains were made. Agitation was continuous, however, and in December, 1912, a strike referendum was finally submitted to the union members in New York and overwhelmingly carried. The referendum showed the membership to be not over 5,000. Yet about 50,000 walked out within a few days of the strike call. Repeated efforts at a settlement were rejected by votes of the determined

strikers, who were resolved to achieve their full demands. A final proposal to submit the controversy to arbitration was accepted without a referendum, by the President of the United Garment Workers, who on his own responsibility declared the strike at an end. Some of the workers refused to go back to the shops until the decision of the arbitrators should be announced, but the action of the President effectually broke the strike. On this account ill feeling against his administration was intensified. The award, when finally published, contained substantial concessions, but made no provision for peaceable settlement of future difficulties.

Dissatisfaction with the existing régime in the union was prevalent also in the other great clothing markets, and a movement was launched in the Yiddish press and among the clothing workers in the large cities to capture the offices at the coming convention. In the ensuing controversy many heated charges were made on both sides which, if related at length, would demand far more space than a book like this could possibly devote to the matter. No full and impartial investigation of these charges has ever been made, but it is important to note that the specific charges were but the occasion of a split which was really the result of a fundamental difference of philosophy and spirit between the radical workers and the conservative officers.

The radicals charged that the officers misused the union label and employed their power to make money for themselves, that they had private understandings

with the manufacturers and deceived the membership, that, in order to maintain themselves in power, they designated far-away Nashville as the convention city and fabricated unwarranted bills against the opposition locals in order to disfranchise them. The officers charged that the radical movement was promoted by outsiders and intellectuals for their own benefit, that it was founded merely on race prejudice and aimed to secure an exclusive control by the Jews, that it was from the beginning a conspiracy to found a competing union, and that with this end in view the opposition locals withheld per-capita taxes which were rightfully due.

The ill-fated convention met on October 12th, 1914, at Nashville, Tennessee. As had been expected, most of the delegates from the large cities were not seated by the credentials committee. A hearing by that committee after the first day of the convention failed to smooth over the difficulty. On the second day the convention attempted to go ahead with business, but those few radicals who had been granted seats insisted that a complete report of the credentials committee was first on the order of business. When they were overruled, they left the hall amid a turmoil, and with the unseated delegates proceeded to hold a convention of their own in another hall, which they claimed was the only rightful convention of the union, and to which they invited all the delegates.

A comparison of the official reports of both conventions, and of the subsequent first convention of

the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, reveals the following figures:

	<i>Delegates</i> representing	<i>Locals</i>
Seated by United Garment Workers . . .	184	147
Of these, left for insurgent convention . .	19	11
Remaining with United Garment Workers	165	136
Present at insurgent convention	110	54
Absent from both conventions		91
Of these, represented at first convention of Amalgamated		16
Present at first convention of Amalgamated	130	68

It thus appears that the radical element did not have a majority of the delegates, even if all had been seated. There was a decided inequality, however, due to the fact that the larger locals in the big cities did not have anything like a proportional number of delegates. The claim of the insurgents to represent a majority of the membership was probably just, since they included almost all the delegates from these large locals in New York and Brooklyn, Chicago, Boston, Rochester, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, besides a few from Syracuse and Cincinnati, whereas the loyal delegates were from small locals in scattered towns, and in great part represented the workers in overall factories controlled by the union label.

The insurgent convention elected its own officers and adjourned after transacting whatever business it could. A series of legal skirmishes followed, which resulted in the establishment of the right on the part of the original organization to retention of its title and the union label, and the right on the part of the insurgent locals to retention of the funds in

their treasuries. Toward the end of December, 1914, the insurgents held a second convention in New York, adopted a democratic constitution and the title of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and united with the Tailors' Industrial Union, formerly known as the Journeyman Tailors' Union. Later, however, this organization withdrew and renewed its original title and its affiliation with the American Federation of Labor:

The insurgent convention in Nashville had elected delegates to the coming convention of the American Federation of Labor. The Credentials Committee of the Federation, after hearing in private the claims of the rival groups, forthwith decided not to recognize the insurgents. Their decision was sustained by the convention. Repeated attempts to bring about a reconciliation have been rebuffed by Mr. Gompers and the other officials of the Federation, solely on the ground that secession cannot be tolerated in the labor movement. The attitude of Mr. Gompers in this matter, as fully expressed before the United Hebrew Trades, is an interesting one. There is no room in one country, he said, for competing labor movements; unity is the first requirement of strength. Yet the labor movement has no police power, no army and navy, to prevent the setting up of secessionist bodies. The only way it can do this is by using discipline. It must insist, first of all, that all differences of opinion and policy be settled within the existing organizations. The general administration cannot look back of the

official and regularly registered decisions of these organizations. Therefore, no matter how many just grievances may underlie the disaffection of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, these grievances can not be investigated or relieved unless the insurgents shall first submit themselves again to the jurisdiction of the parent organization.

It is easy to see the force of this principle of legitimacy, and yet it has not sufficed to make the men's tailors surrender or to prevent the growth and success of the Amalgamated. To Mr. Gompers they reply that they see perhaps even more strongly than he the need of unity, and that they will eagerly be accepted by the Federation as soon as their basic principle, the principle of democracy, is recognized and practiced. They inquire how a majority faction, wishing to change the policy of a union and the personnel of its officers, can do so if by the rules of that organization and the tactics of the officers the majority is not allowed to express its will. They assert that, if while frowning upon secession the Federation does not exert its disciplinary powers to make sure that honesty and democracy exist in its component unions, secession is made necessary rather than discouraged. They point to their own existence as the pragmatic proof of their position.

Mr. Gompers might reply that the insurgents who founded the Amalgamated Clothing Workers did not represent a majority of the United Garment Workers, and that their charges of dishonest administration are untrue. But to do so would be to raise

at once a question of fact, and to admit that an impartial investigation of facts is necessary before a fair decision in the matter can be reached. That is just what he refuses to do.

In any case it is too late now to heal the breach by an appeal to ancient history. The officials of the Federation, in conjunction with those of the United Garment Workers, were evidently animated by the belief that if the new union were effectually outlawed and fought with every available weapon it would be weakened and discredited, and its members would individually return to the fold. Such a policy, at least, they have attempted to execute. In Baltimore, for instance, the local representative of the Federation, even made an alliance with the I.W.W. against the Amalgamated. He engineered a small strike of sub-contractors against a manufacturer who had just abolished sub-contracting in compliance with the demand of an overwhelming majority of the workers. During this conflict actual violence arose, a pitched battle occurring in the shop and in the street outside. Again and again, when members of the Amalgamated have been on strike, officers of the old union have negotiated an agreement with the employers, declared the strike at an end, called the workers back into the shop under their own jurisdiction, and if the strikers refused to return, attempted to fill their places with strikebreakers from the "official" union. The American Federation engaged in a long controversy with the United Hebrew Trades, endeavoring to force the Jewish

central body to expel delegates from the Amalgamated, on pain of being itself outlawed by the general labor movement. For a time the United Hebrew Trades resisted this pressure, but eventually the Amalgamated withdrew of its own accord in order to save its fellow unions embarrassment. Still, however, the United Hebrew Trades refused to accept delegates from the United Garment Workers as long as the rival union was not represented. James P. Holland, President of the New York State Federation of Labor, attempted to direct again the Amalgamated the popular hostility to "Bolsheviki," and gave testimony before the State Legislative Committee investigating Bolshevism which might easily have caused trouble for the union. Apparently some officials of the Federation and their close followers, relying on the anti-secessionist principle, have believed that all means of battle were fair against the outlaw. At any rate they have fought it with a persistence and bitterness seldom shown against employers.

The other needle-trade unions, however, have taken no part in this campaign. The fact that in philosophy and method they are sympathetic with the Amalgamated, and that this union in a closely related industry, in spite of all persecution, has grown powerful, make it necessary for them not to oppose it, but to strive sincerely for an end to the quarrel. The fight in the United Hebrew Trades against exclusion of the Amalgamated was led by the delegate of the International Ladies' Garment

Workers. When, during the war, a depression in the women's clothing industry was accompanied by a great demand for military uniforms, the two unions negotiated an agreement to share equitably between their respective memberships the jobs available. The International introduced into the 1918 convention of the American Federation of Labor a resolution calling for the establishment of a clothing trades department, similar to the metal trades and mining departments, to coordinate the various unions concerned, with the idea that such a department might facilitate the return of the Amalgamated. This resolution was supported by all the needle-trades unions except the United Garment Workers, but was defeated on account of the hostile attitude of the Federation officials. The culmination of this movement towards unity, fostered as it was by the philosophy of the unions concerned, was the proposal in the spring of 1920 for a Needle Trades Federation, to be consummated if need be without regard to the American Federation of Labor. This proposal seems about to bring together all the radical clothing unions for joint action. The prevailing sentiment among the clothing unions seems to be that it is not worth while to persecute thousands of fellow-workers and widen a breach in the labor movement solely for the sake of the anti-secessionist principle. This feeling is strengthened by the consciousness that the historical basis of the division has never been candidly examined, and by a strong suspicion that the supporters of regularity are animated not

so much by a desire to preserve labor discipline in general as by a desire not to weaken the prestige and power of the existing conservative administration of the American Federation of Labor.

The jurisdictional warfare with the United Garment Workers has, however, been little more than a distressing incident in the life of the Amalgamated. The large associations of manufacturers were forced to deal with it. A collective agreement in New York was signed in July, 1915, providing machinery for the adjustment of disputes. The formal agreement was later destroyed, but informal arrangements were substituted for it. A spirited general strike in December, 1916, gained the 48 hour week for all members of the union in New York; this struggle, involving nearly 60,000 workers, was the first in the history of the clothing trades to be financed entirely with funds raised from the locals concerned. Successful strikes in Baltimore, Toronto, Montreal, Chicago, Boston and other centers kept the morale high and increased the membership. The union took a prominent part in the agitation against sweatshop conditions which began to crop out in the manufacture of army clothing, and assisted the government to put an end to them. Without any missionary work on its part, shirtmakers' locals of New York and Boston came over to it from the United Garment Workers, the occasion being orders from the higher officials of the United Garment Workers to assist in breaking strikes called by the Amalgamated. Early in 1919 the Amalgamated established

a precedent in the American labor movement by gaining the 44 hour week, being one of the first unions in the country to win this concession.

The Amalgamated now has a membership in good standing of over 150,000, and if it should include those members who are in arrears through unemployment the total would probably be close to 200,000. The United Garment Workers pay to the American Federation of Labor a per-capita tax on 46,000 members. Their total membership can hardly be larger than this, since there are, on a generous estimate, not 46,000 overall workers in the country, and the remainder of their locals, scattered among shirt makers, raincoat manufacturers, and custom tailors, cannot include a numerous membership.

The International Fur Workers Union of the United States and Canada, though the youngest of the group, has been highly successful. A club of German fur workers, most of them cutters, existed in 1882 and continued until 1913, but it exhibited few of the qualities of a trade union, being chiefly a social organization with fraternal benefits. Attempts to form unions failed in 1882, 1893, and 1902. An international union was founded in Washington, D. C., and affiliated with the American Federation of Labor in 1904, but it did not grow large, and in 1911 the charter was surrendered. In 1907 a new organization was formed in New York, but a lockout destroyed it. The union was revived in 1910, and limited itself to propaganda for two years. By June, 1912, it had a membership of about 600, and on that

date it called a general strike which lasted for nearly twelve weeks and ended in complete victory. An agreement was arrived at, although the manufacturers would not enter the same room as the union representatives, and carried on negotiations through a third party. The agreement was renewed, with progressive improvements in conditions, in some cases after strikes, in 1914, 1917, and 1919. The union is now recognized, has a 44 hour week, and a remarkably high scale of wages. It embraces about 80 per cent of the workers in both fur goods and dressed furs, having a paid-up membership of 10,800, and about 1,200 more in arrears. Of the members, 3,500 are women.

The Journeymen Tailors' Union as at present constituted was formed in 1883. Tailors' strikes had occurred spasmodically ever since the beginning of the century, and previous attempts had been made to found a national union. The organization had many ups and downs, but has never experienced any such dramatic leap to power as the unions in the ready-made clothing industry have known. Indeed, since it consists of custom tailors, and the ready-made industry has been steadily sapping the strength of the custom-tailoring houses, it has been forced to work against strong handicaps. It has been affiliated with the American Federation of Labor since 1887, and has, with a few interludes, adhered to conservative policies. One of the chief difficulties of the Journeymen Tailors' Union has been the constantly recurring jurisdictional disputes with the unions in the ready-

made industry. This has led recently to an agitation to amalgamate once more with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

The men's neckwear industry has for a long time remained without a national organization. Although there are between eight and nine thousand workers in the trade throughout the country, the unions are still locals affiliated as federal locals directly with the American Federation of Labor. There is a local of cutters in New York, and another union for the rest of the workers in the city known as the United Neckwear Makers. About 70 per cent of its members are women. Other locals exist in Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and St. Louis. Cleveland and Philadelphia are entirely unorganized. The total membership in these unions is about 3,200. They feel strongly the need of national unity, but an application for a national charter was refused by the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, at the 1917 convention. The locals have retained their membership in the Federation solely because they wanted the privilege of using a union label, but even in this respect the Federation has failed them, because the paper label supplied cannot be conveniently used on neckwear. As a result of these unfavorable conditions, the neckwear makers are not abreast of their fellows in the needle trades. If they do not soon achieve a national union within the Federation, they will undoubtedly do so outside it.

The first attempt to organize the suspender

makers was made in March, 1890. After a four weeks' strike, the union was destroyed. Repeated attempts to reorganize were made in 1892, 1894, 1896, and 1897. During these years many long strikes were conducted, of which the last continued for 16 weeks. Eventually the union won recognition and several closed shops. It also introduced a label. In 1901 the Suspender Makers Union affiliated with the American Federaton of Labor as Federal Local 9,560. In 1903 and 1905 two long and bitter strikes ended in total failure. The crisis of 1907 still further hampered the progress of the organization. But since 1909 it has entered upon a more successful period, and has won many concessions. In 1910 the union had a jurisdictional controversy with the United Garment Workers, who argued that suspenders must be considered an integral part of trousers. The Executive Council, however, did not sustain this bit of logic. Since then the progress of the organization has been slow and steady.

In spite of their comparative youth, the clothing trades unions are now, from any point of view, among the strongest in the country. Wages, hours, control in shop, and morale of the membership, will be discussed in succeeding chapters; we are here concerned with size alone. In the men's clothing industry, the 1914 census figures place 174,000 wage-earners, or if we include shirts, collars, and cuffs, 236,000. The combined membership of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the United Garment Workers is at the moment 196,000. Of the trades

in which they are well organized they therefore include nearly 100 per cent; of the whole industry over which their jurisdiction extends, 83 per cent. There were in 1914, 169,000 wage-earners in the women's clothing industry, and although this figure decreased during the war, we may now take it as the basis of a rough computation. The 150,000 members claimed by the International Ladies' Garment Workers would compose 88 per cent, or if we add the 20,000 corset workers over whom they have jurisdiction, 79 per cent of the total. The Fur Workers have 80 per cent of their possible members. The Cloth Hat and Cap Makers control 100 per cent of the workers indicated by their title; it is difficult to estimate their percentage of the millinery workers, since in the census these are grouped with the lace makers; but a very conservative estimate would be 25 per cent. The census indicates 22,459 in the men's furnishing trades; these include the 8,000 neckwear makers of which the various locals have 3,200, or 40 per cent. There are 9,646 makers of suspenders and garters, of which perhaps a quarter are organized.

Let us take the figures which will give the most unfavorable result. Let us take the total of 518,000 wage-earners in all branches of the ready-made clothing industry, and place against it the total of paid-up membership in good standing shown by the unions, or 305,800—excluding the Journeyman Tailors and the suspender makers. These figures show 60 per cent of the industry organized, whereas the

whole American labor movement has not much over 15 per cent of the nation's wage-earners. According to the American Labor Year Book of 1917-18 only one industry—the breweries—had a higher percentage, 88.8. This figure has since become nearly meaningless.

On the other hand, let us take the more favorable figures. Let us take the total of wage-earners in those branches of the industry where the organizations grew up and were first effective—men's ready-made clothing, women's ready-made clothing, furs, cloth hats, and caps. This omits those trades where the unions are now doing their missionary work. It gives us 360,530 wage-earners. Setting against that the full membership claimed by the unions, it is evident that these trades are virtually 100 per cent organized. Considering the fact that this membership is not held together so much by control of large establishments or other direct means as by the democratic allegiance of the workers themselves under extraordinary difficulties, it is a remarkable achievement.