IDEAL OPTICS WORKERS SUPPORT STYLRITE STRIKE

A RENEGADE UNION

Interracial Organizing and Labor Radicalism

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LISA PHILLIPS

THE WORKING CLASS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

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List of Acronyms

ACWA	Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America
AFSCME	American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees
AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
ALA	Alliance for Labor Action
BSCP	Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
CNA	California Nurses' Association
CP	Communist Party
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CIO-PAC	Congress of Industrial Organizations' Political Action Committee
CTW	"Change to Win"
DPO	Distributive, Processing and Office Workers of America
DSWOC	Department Store Workers Organizing Committee
DTC	Distributive Trades Council
DWU	Distributive Workers' Union
FDR	Franklin Delano Roosevelt
FEPC	Fair Employment Practices Committee
FTA	Food, Tobacco, and Allied Workers
HERE	Hotel and Restaurant Employees
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee
ICFTU	International Conference of Free Trade Unions
ILA	International Longshoremen's Association

ILGWU	International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union
ILWU	International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union
IUE	International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NALC	Negro American Labor Council
NCDWA	National Council, Distributive Workers of America
NIRA	National Industrial Recovery Act
NLRB	National Labor Relations Board
NNC	National Negro Congress
NNLC	National Negro Labor Council
NRA	National Recovery Administration
NUHW	National Union of Healthcare Workers
NWLB	National War Labor Board
NYMCO	New York Merchandise Company
OPA	Office of Price Administration
RCIA	Retail Clerks International Association
RCIPA	Retail Clerks International Protective Association
RWDSU	Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Workers Union
SCAD	State Committee Against Discrimination (New York)
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SEIU	Service Employees International Union
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
TUUL	Trade Union Unity League
TWIU	Tobacco Workers International Union
TWOC	Textile Workers Organizing Committee
TWU	Transport Workers' Union
TWU	Textile Workers Union of America
UAW	United Automobile Workers
UE	United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers
UHT	United Hebrew Trades
UHW	United Health Care Workers
UMW	United Mine Workers
UNITE	Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees
UOPWA	United Office and Professional Workers of America
UPWA	United Packinghouse Workers of America

URWDSEA	United Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Employees of America
URWEA	United Retail and Wholesale Employees of America
URW	United Rubber Workers
USWA	United Steel Workers of America
UTSE	United Transport Service Employees
UTW	United Textile Workers of America
WDGEU	Wholesale Dry Goods Employees' Union
WDGW	Wholesale Dry Goods Workers
WPA	Works Progress Administration

INTRODUCTION

Renegade Union

Organizing from the "Bottom" Up

This book tells the story of a group of men and women who kept a controversial labor union going through some of the more tumultuous events of the twentieth century. From the Great Depression through World War II, the beginnings of the Cold War, the civil rights era, and the Vietnam War, through the Reagan era and into the early 1990s, the men and women of Local 65 focused on improving the lives of the largely "invisible" people who worked in small, ten- to forty-person warehouses and wholesale shops throughout New York City, in small publishing houses in New York and Massachusetts, and in offices and research labs at Boston and Harvard Universities. Throughout the union's history, the first thirty years of which will be examined in this book, its members sustained a virulent critique of the ways in which the American dream consistently fell short. We can learn a great deal from Local 65's history as labor unions and worker centers continue to launch campaigns for better pay and working conditions for low-wage workers in warehouses, hotels, healthcare/home care settings, and restaurants, migrant farm workers, office workers, and workers in other non-factory-based settings throughout the United States.[1]

Five men, all Jewish immigrants, organized what would later become Local 65 in 1933. They worked as salesclerks at H. Eckstein and Sons Wholesale Merchant in the heart of New York City's Jewish Lower East Side. They sold, packed, and delivered underwear, pajamas, and other garments to retailers across the city, sometimes for twelve to sixteen hours a day, including Friday nights and Saturday mornings (the traditional Jewish period of rest). The Eckstein brothers wanted them to sell as much as they could, as quickly as they could, for as little money as possible so the business would make a profit.[2]

None of the five were happy. They had no control over their workday. They earned too little to support either themselves or their families, making an abysmal $10 to $13 per week, and it was next to impossible to find a better job.[3] Jacob Riis described comparable conditions some forty years earlier endured by men, cloak makers, who sewed by the piece in tenements on Hester Street, just around the corner from Eckstein's, for $7 to $12 per week, and women pieceworkers, who earned $3 to $6 per week.[4] The working conditions were similar if not identical to Eckstein's in all the wholesale shops on Orchard Street and around the corner on Broadway. A few of the men tried to get out of sales but, as Jewish immigrants, they faced the brick wall of anti-Semitism when they left the Lower East Side. Like so many people, the five faced a Depression-era context that rendered them relatively powerless over the conditions they found themselves in. The only thing they could do was to keep their feet planted, band together, and force the Eckstein brothers to make some changes.

With few, if any, routes to better employment, organizing a labor union became one of the only ways to try and secure better pay, consistent hours, and a stable work week. A union contract meant people were not continually at their boss's whim. The ways in which unions secured contracts varied dramatically from industry to industry, region to region, state to state, rural to urban setting, and warehouse to office, and depended, too, on the personalities and political leanings of the people who spearheaded the effort. The five men who decided to try to organize a labor union at Eckstein's did not stage a sit-in, they did not go on strike, they went to work each day and talked to the other Eckstein employees, and together they demanded a written contract from the Eckstein brothers that set the number of weekly working hours and established a stable wage rate. There were no brutal fist fights, no national guard, no arrests (yet). In the end, they negotiated a contract that improved their lives in the short run and led one of them, Arthur Osman, to a lifetime of innovative union organizing.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt encouraged men like Osman to organize labor unions as a way to get the struggling U.S. economy moving again. Roosevelt hoped the new labor unions would negotiate contracts that guaranteed higher hourly wages and stable work weeks. The idea, based on Cambridge economist John Maynard Keynes's analysis, was that people would spend their new earnings on goods and services, spur economic growth, and lead the country out of the Depression. While Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) did not lead the country out of the Depression as quickly as people had hoped, it did spur the growth of hundreds of new labor unions, known as the "NRA-babies" (after the National Recovery Administration, the office charged with enforcing the NIRA). The unions most people are familiar with, the United Auto Workers (UAW), the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), and the electrical workers' unions, along with hundreds of other less well known unions like Local 65, emerged within this pro-labor context.[5]

Over the next twenty years, labor unions grew to represent more than one-third of American workers, reaching a postwar peak of 35 percent. The standard of living rose dramatically. The forty-hour workweek, a living wage, health insurance, retirement benefits, paid holidays, and sick days became the standard. The contracts unions negotiated, especially in the mass production industries, enabled hundreds of thousands of workers and their families to move up to "middle-class" status at least until the 1970s, when the manufacturing giants began to take advantage of new legislation that permitted them to move their operations either south to Mexico or to parts of Asia to avoid these contracts.[6]

People who worked outside of mass production in service-oriented jobs or in agricultural settings struggled to attain those standards over that same twenty-year time period and beyond. As we continue to uncover their stories, a non-factory-based image of work, working conditions, equality, and inequality comes into view, one that, not surprisingly, resembles the struggles people are living through in the first part of the twenty-first century. Histories of African American women launching successful union drives among tobacco workers at R. J. Reynolds and among nut pickers in St. Louis, of African American men pressuring the municipal authorities in Memphis to improve the conditions sanitation workers endured, of Mexican men and women launching successful boycotts to force growers to sign contracts in California, of waitresses organizing unions in restaurants throughout the United States, and of clerical workers forcing university administrations to see their work as valuable and pay them accordingly, among so many others, have broadened our understanding of not only the history of union organizing but of the circumstances that encourage and discourage cross-racial, cross-ethnic, and cross-gender cooperation.[7]

Their stories, then as now, are also as much about failure as success. From the perspective of the early twenty-first century, it seems more remarkable that people ever succeed in changing the attitudes and assumptions that surround their jobs and determine their economic worth. The UAW, the USWA, and other mass production unions' collective success in the mid-twentieth century upended the societal values associated with factory-based, unskilled work. These jobs became respectable and were in high demand only after they commanded high wages, regular hours, and benefits. They were eventually dominated by white, now "middle-class" men and, at least until the 1970s, symbolized the ultimate labor union success story and the fulfillment of the American dream.[8]

And yet that success now seems like an aberration, bookended by the uneven achievements of unions like the Knights of Labor, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA), the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the similarly uneven success of their early twenty-first-century successors. The Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE), HERE, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and several other unions are still organizing in the service sector in an extremely hostile climate. They face the same challenges Local 65 did just remaining solvent. Beyond that, their ultimate challenge is to do for low-wage service-sector jobs what was done for assembly-line work in the mid-twentieth century and reorient Americans toward the idea that service jobs deserve a good wage.

The types of jobs Local 65 organized were and still are low wage, unstable, and dominated by people of color, some U.S. citizens, some recent immigrants, and some here illegally. Does that mean Local 65 failed? Well, yes. This book will help us understand better some of the reasons for the continued underemployment of women and men of color, about the persistence of low-wage service-sector jobs, and about the difficulties associated with organizing unions within the service sector. This book attributes much of that failure to the larger context within which Local 65 operated during its sixty-year history, one that continually rebuffed union members' attempts to bring low-wage workers into the American middle class. Much of the failure, too, lies with Local 65 itself, especially its presidents, Arthur Osman and David Livingston, who failed to allow the hundreds of talented organizers, men, women, black, white, Jewish, and Puerto Rican, from taking the lead in local campaigns and having a greater influence in how the union operated.

And yet, despite the union's overall failure, Local 65's story is compelling. Local 65 was one of the few unions that purposefully organized "the poor" in "dead-end" jobs and, while it did not fundamentally change the economic system that continued (and continues) to produce dead-end, low-wage jobs, it did win small wage increases and some job stability for its members. It created a union-sponsored health insurance plan and pension fund to provide low-wage workers with the stability their employers were unwilling or unable to provide. It also used its hiring hall to break down employers' assumptions (and corresponding differential pay scales) about which jobs should best be filled by "Negroes," Jews, women, and recent immigrants. Its approach was reminiscent of the Knights of Labor's "workingmen's" campaigns of the 1870s and 1880s or the IWW's campaigns of the early 1900s that sought to raise the overall status of the impoverished members of the working class by organizing on an area basis rather than by trade or skill level.[9]

In the early part of the twenty-first century, the SEIU, UNITE, and HERE are among the higher-profile unions that continue to try to organize low-wage workers. Eerily similar, the labor movement was torn apart in 2009 by the same issues that drove a wedge between "left-led" unions and the "mainstream" Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) sixty years earlier. The reinvigorated SEIU had been hailed as the hope of the new labor movement. Its organizers were savvy, better able to respond to people working in the "modern" workforce and to bring women and men of all backgrounds and skill levels together than had the "traditional" American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). It offered its members a combination of civil and economic rights-based change through effective union organizing. The SEIU brought "justice to janitors," while UNITE-HERE organized hotel service workers ("maids") in high-profile campaigns at the same time. In as dramatic a move as the CIO's break from the AFL in 1936–38, the SEIU joined UNITE-HERE, and together the "Change to Win" (CTW) coalition led 5 million workers out of the AFL-CIO in 2005 in a bold attempt to go it alone and "really" organize, the spark so many had anticipated would lead the country back to when 35 percent of the population (or more) belonged to labor unions. Many hoped the country's wealth would finally be "redistributed" out of the bank accounts of the corporate elite through the efforts of a strong, reinvigorated labor movement.

In a depressingly similar example of history repeating itself, the few people in the country who even care to think about the problems people trapped in low-wage jobs face turned on each other. Members of key labor unions like the California Nurses Association (CNA) and the United Health Care Workers (UHW) criticized CTW and the SEIU for engaging in "corporate unionism," arguing that the SEIU's phenomenal growth was attributable mostly to the deals the SEIU cut with corporate business leaders to bring in more palatable locals that would accept "less" of everything (wages, benefits, workplace protections). The SEIU, its critics argued, offered its members a weak voice in exchange for a cut of the dues each member was paying and the stability that rested in a multimillion-member union. Andy Stern, the SEIU's president, responded by *not* engaging in open discussion and, like the CIO of the Cold War era, squashed the criticism by putting the UHW into "trusteeship." Much of the UHW then broke away and formed the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW). After being poised to make a real difference in the political, social, and economic landscape, the labor movement was, just as it had been in 1948 and 1950, off on the sidelines embroiled in inter-union disputes while anti-labor voices took center stage and won important political victories during the 2010 midterm elections.[10]

Part of the controversy between the CNA and the SEIU involved, not surprisingly, whom and how to organize. The CNA, representing registered nurses, argued that a more craft-based organizing approach would benefit them. The larger SEIU, to which they belonged at the time, advocated, like Local 65, a more wall-to-wall approach. An increase in sheer numbers, in "density," the SEIU argued, was crucial to putting labor back in the political game. An increase in numbers would give labor some more clout in the "beltway," more of a voice with which to raise the standards associated with service-sector work, which, by the early twenty-first century, far eclipsed the manufacturing or factory jobs still associated with the "typical" labor union in most Americans' minds.

Versions of this debate have played out over and over again in U.S. history. Wall-to-wall SEIU-style organizing and Local 65's "catch-all" and "area" organizing strategies both have the effect of diminishing the differences among workers' skill levels, educational attainment, and individual "worth" relative to one another. This approach lumps people into a collective "working class." It usually works best for the lowest-wage workers and worst for the most "skilled" among the group. At any given time, some group of workers will be affected negatively by the strategies a union employs. And at any given time, the organizations claiming to represent the interests of the "low-wage" or "downtrodden" workers open themselves up to charges of corruption, sometimes legitimate, not only because some low-wage workers will inevitably remain unorganized but also because the "downtrodden" are viewed as easily exploitable.

Like the SEIU, Local 65 gained momentum by offering low-wage workers a voice, a vehicle with which to improve their circumstances. Like the CNA and the UHW, it continued to attract members by criticizing the larger "establishment" for its corruption and corporate collusion and was isolated from other labor, civil rights, and political organizations for doing so. But, as this book details, Local 65 existed long enough for it to, like the SEIU, garner criticism for becoming "the establishment," especially in its later years, when critics argued that it did a better job representing its own interests (its aging members' healthy pension funds) than those of the low-wage workers, black, Puerto Rican, and young white men and women it represented. For most of its history though, for better or for worse, it was one of the only voices out there that spoke directly for the interests of low-wage warehouse workers and later young clerical workers in small establishments in New York, the surrounding boroughs, and, eventually, scattered locations in the South, Midwest, and West.

It was in late 1937 that Local 65 adopted an "area" organizing strategy and, at the same time, decided to try to "catch all" of the lowest-paid workers in the city, regardless of job type or a worker's gender, ethnicity, religion, or race. Local 65 first targeted all the workers in the small wholesale shops (clerks, sweepers, errand boys) on Orchard Street and around the corner on Broadway, then eventually took on all of the Lower East Side. With a foothold in the wholesale shops, Local 65's organizers next targeted the poorly paid people who worked in the small warehouses where the wholesale merchandise was packaged (again, regardless of the type of job they did). As Arthur Osman, the union's first president, explained, Local 65 organized the people "nobody else wanted" or, to be more precise, no "other union" wanted.[11]

Local 65's strategies left it in direct opposition to the ILGWU and the ACWA, two of the largest unions organizing in the garment industry at the time, as well as the Teamsters and various smaller CIO locals, all of which adhered to a more occupationally driven or industry-oriented style of organizing. Osman argued that the labor movement as it emerged in the 1930s organized "jobs not people." None of organized labor's labels fit the messenger boy, the sweeper, the woman who sorted and packed the merchandise, the man who drove or carted it from the twenty-person warehouse to the small wholesale shop a few blocks away, or the clerk who stocked the shelves and sold the items. The difference for Osman, Livingston, and Local 65's organizers was that, at least in the union's early years, they targeted the people in "dead-end" jobs, rather than specific jobs themselves. Names like Local 65 of the "Lower East Side" or the "Everybody with a Dead-End Job" union would have better described it. Instead, Osman called Local 65 a "catch-all" union, arguing that only the number fit.[12]

There were simply few, if any, unions in New York in the 1930s that were dedicated solely to organizing the people Local 65 targeted. The American Federation of Labor's (AFL) Retail Clerks International Protective Association (RCIPA) focused on organizing retail rather than wholesale clerks. The drivers Local 65 organized drove for small warehouses, too small to warrant the attention of the Teamsters Union. The ILGWU and the ACWA came closest. They organized the men and women who sewed some of the garments Osman sold, some skilled "cutters," others who worked by the piece, and still others who worked in commercial laundries. But neither the ILGWU nor the ACWA focused on the small wholesale shops or warehouses where the garments were packed and sold. The International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) most closely resembled Local 65 in its politics and emphasis on warehouses, but it was headquartered on the West Coast.

Longshoremen in New York were organized by the AFL's International Longshoreman's Association (ILA). As its name indicates, the ILA made no direct attempt to organize warehouses and was "as conservative as its West Coast descendant, the ILWU, was radical."[13]

In Osman's and Livingston's estimation at least, the people who needed a union the most remained untouched by the organizational structures put in place by the AFL and CIO locals already organizing in New York. If they were brought into these unions, it was more or less by accident, as a byproduct of union-organizing drives designed to target the better-paid, more "skilled," and more stable workers in the hierarchy. ILGWU locals, Teamsters' locals, and several others would, at one point or another, argue that they did indeed intend to organize the poorest workers in their respective industries and that Local 65 violated established jurisdictional boundaries by organizing them first (Osman and Livingston complained that other locals would only raise objections after Local 65 had made some headway in previously ignored shops).[14] None of them organized "catch-all" and "area" style with the specific intent of organizing low-wage workers first.

Local 65's organizing strategies were derived directly from personal experience. All of the union's original organizers were subjected to anti-Semitism and/or classism at the hands of their bosses and underemployment. Osman in particular developed an interpretation of capitalism that provided the philosophical underpinnings of the union's hundreds of campaigns. In Osman's view, the "for-profit" motive put pressure on employers to not only cut costs but to also justify doing so by dehumanizing their employees to the point that, as nothing more than "animals," they existed for the sole purpose of producing wealth for their bosses, the "owners" of the business. The sting of that realization propelled Osman toward a radical, Marxist-inspired critique of capitalism. The Communist Party (CP), at least in the 1930s, offered him a way out of the Eckstein trap and a route toward self-respect through hard day-to-day union organizing.

Armed with a Marxist understanding of the labor conditions that surrounded them, Osman, Livingston, and the union's team of organizers engineered campaigns that directly confronted what they identified as the consequences of the "for-profit" economic system: the continual unemployment and underemployment of a significant proportion of the population, particularly racial and ethnic minorities. Not only did they target underemployed black and Puerto Rican workers, but they also used the union's hiring hall to "adjust" local employers' typical hiring policies to confront racial and economic discrimination, purposefully recruited in areas of the city where people were unemployed at high rates, and created a union culture that celebrated its members' racial, ethnic, and religious differences. Local 65's interpretation of the for-profit system and its attempts to organize the poorest workers in the city had the effect of exposing the work conditions experienced by people working in small ten- to thirty-person wholesale shops and warehouses throughout New York, the underbelly of the industrial and skilled jobs more typically targeted in this period by other unions.

Osman and the union's early organizers were certainly not the only people who thought of union organizing as a way to foment a social revolution.[15] People who, like Osman, had been attracted to Communism were organizing unions throughout the country. In New York, Michael Quill (who headed the Transport Workers Union of America [TWU]), Nicholas Carnes (who organized department store workers), and Leon Davis (who organized pharmacists and drug store workers), among many others, were attracted not just to Communism but, recalled Davis, to the idea that they could change the social, economic, and political order through union organizing.[16] Electrical workers in St. Louis and Schenectady, farm and factory workers in Alabama, tobacco stemmers in North Carolina, mine workers in New Mexico, cannery workers in California, meatpackers in Chicago, and dock and warehouse workers on the West Coast were all attracted to Communism because it helped explain their circumstances and offered them a route to attain some power relative to their employers.[17] Even A. Philip Randolph, the famous civil rights activist and anti-Communist, allied briefly with the Communists in the mid-1930s when he headed the National Negro Congress (NNC).[18] Some stayed in the party, others left, still others, like Randolph, would go on to denounce it vehemently.

Those who write about Communist-influenced unions throw themselves into a pit of controversy from the get go. Historians disagree about Communists' motives for participating in the various social movements of the mid-twentieth century and about the impact of their involvement. Most historians acknowledge the broader appeal of American Communism during the Great Depression as bankers, "big businessmen," President Herbert Hoover, and capitalism itself were all blamed for the dire situation Americans faced. Those who joined or were sympathetic to the party in the 1930s can be "forgiven," briefly, for finding the revolutionary rhetoric of Communism appealing. But those holdouts who played leading roles in the party and who supported the Soviet Union's agenda during World War II and beyond are considered a different breed by most historians. The problem is that they were often the same people who played leading roles in the labor movement and in numerous struggles for "Negro equality."

How to interpret Communists' involvement in the labor movement has been a decades-long source of contention among historians as has the related investigation of the degree to which unions acted as bastions of white, working-class privilege or broke down racial barriers. If you talk uncritically, or not at all, about Communist organizers' links to Moscow, you run the risk of being accused of distorting history and of seeing those organizers in too positive or romantic a light. If you trace them to the pro-Stalinist left, you are forced to conclude that they were, under orders from Moscow, working covertly through American organizations, labor unions in particular, to plot the overthrow of the U.S. government. While they may have worked hard engineering campaigns to help America's most oppressed, they did so only to convert the poor into revolutionaries without even telling them that that was their goal.[19]

These debates are maddening because they obscure the gray area that is usually the fodder for productive historical analysis. Even if the Communists were "boring from within" various labor unions to overthrow the U.S. government, we should look at their criticisms and use them to better understand, say, the persistence of low-wage work, and not completely dismiss the critique. Likewise, in describing Communists' commitment to racial equality, we would do well not to imply that Socialist, liberal, or anti-Communist organizers were all less committed to racial equality, just, perhaps, to a slightly different kind of equality, a different set of priorities, slightly different organizing strategies, and the like, an analysis of which is more instructive than simply saying the Communists were more committed and better at organizing around the "race" question.

Historians finally seem to be moving beyond an analysis of Communists' motives and of their level of commitment to racial equality (in comparison to that of anti-Communists) to answer more nuanced questions about how Americans interpreted Communism and the impact of an anti-capitalistic outlook on the organizations Communists were a part of. Historians are also rethinking the impact of the McCarthy era on New Deal liberalism and on the labor movement. While there is no doubt that the business offensive of the immediate post–World War II era helped shift the balance of power away from New Deal liberals and toward pro-business anti-Communists, did the radical critique of the American capitalist system die with the shift? Or did it live on as part of a broader postwar agenda that focused on civil as well as economic, job-oriented rights?[20]

Arthur Osman, David Livingston, and several of the union's paid organizers maintained close ties with the Communist Party until 1952.[21] They were about as "pro-Stalinist" as they could get, following the "party line" on everything, including *not* supporting their fellow retail, wholesale, and department store workers when they went on strike against Montgomery Ward during World War II (the only CIO-sanctioned and FDR-supported strike to occur during the war). Did they really "care" about the members of the union, or did they "use" them to advance their own agenda? Were they intent on overthrowing the U.S. government by establishing a foothold in the distributive industry? These types of questions can never be answered conclusively so I leave the evidence for the reader to interpret. What is much more interesting is the critique Local 65 provided of the economic system that rendered so many people "poor." The union's continual focus on economic, racial, and ethnic inequality and, later, gender-based inequality (although this book will not focus on the pink-collar organizing the union engaged in beginning in the late 1960s) enables us to learn a great deal about low-wage work, low-wage workers, and some of the reasons for their persistence.

Using its "catch-all" and "area" organizing strategies, the union went from a small wholesale dry goods workers' union with 1,000 members in 1937 to a 15,000-member union in 1941 that negotiated hundreds of contracts covering workers in small wholesale shops and warehouses. "65ers" sewed, "processed," and sold cardboard boxes, fountain pens, cosmetics, underwear, bathrobes, toys, and a whole slew of "miscellaneous" products in small ten- to fifty-person shops not only on the Lower East Side but, by 1941, in Midtown, Uptown in Harlem, in Brooklyn and the Bronx. While some "65ers" might work in a wholesale shop like H. Eckstein and Sons on Orchard Street on New York's Lower East Side selling long underwear, pajamas, and other types of clothing, stocking shelves, packaging orders, sweeping the store, typing orders, or delivering messages, other "65ers" worked in the small to medium-sized warehouses that supplied the wholesale shops, processing clothing, shoes, buttons, and other dry goods to get them ready for delivery. Still others worked in the corrugated "paper" processing warehouses that supplied boxes to the wholesalers and warehouses, while those in the union's "needle processing" division sewed garments, some of which eventually made their way to the shelves at H. Eckstein and Sons.

The union faced the enormous challenge of building camaraderie among its disparate members, most of whom did not work at the same place, see each other on a regular basis, or live near one another. They were socially divided by racial, gender, ethnic, and religious differences. Local 65 attempted to build a common identity—a seemingly impossible task—by creating a left-oriented political culture that went far beyond "simple bread and butter" wages and hours campaigns and engaged its members in political discussions (albeit usually one-sided) about racial inequality, the relationship between labor and capital, and war (Local 65 was a very vocal opponent of the Vietnam War). The union actively engaged in local political campaigns in New York and expected its members not only to vote themselves but to campaign for the union's preferred candidates. Local 65's union hall was each "65er's" second home. Members went to the headquarters on Astor Place near Greenwich Village to play cards, take in a show, sign up to play on one of the union's sports teams, get their eyes checked or see a doctor, take classes, and pay their union dues each week. As Moe Foner, who worked for the union from 1949 to 1950 recalled, "that building was rocking seven days and nights every week."[22]

Labor unions attempt to change the world their members live in, some more dramatically than others. Their success usually resides in organizers' ability to draw people to their vision, to win over people's "hearts and minds" enough to work day and night to realize that shared vision one person and one campaign at a time. Local 65 did this by creating a vibrant union culture that provided its overworked, discriminated-against members with a different way to view themselves. At the union hall, they were not "lowly," invisible, poor workers but members of a vibrant organization whose political stance rendered them not victims of their own inequities but of a powerful business class whose interests were best served by working them as long as possible for as little pay as possible and by creating competition among them by paying white workers more than black, Gentile more than Jew, men more than women, "skilled" more than "unskilled," U.S. citizens more than recent immigrants.

Local 65's alternative vision, or what one historian calls an "oppositional identity," was the glue that held "65ers" together. It represented a type of organizing that differed significantly from industrially based organizing drives that drew on workers' shared experiences on the job. Because "65ers" did not work together, their Local 65-centered identity was all they had. Local 65's organizers consciously set out to help its members create that identity by first setting up a union hall, then making it as central as possible to members' lives. Camaraderie was based on Local 65's members' shared understanding of the world around them, an understanding they developed as a result of being educated both formally and informally at the union hall. From that base, Local 65's members launched campaigns to raise wages, improve work conditions, desegregate local shops and warehouses, campaign for pro-labor politicians, organize civil rights rallies and marches, and protest the Vietnam War.[23]

What Local 65 engaged in was a combination of community organizing, civic unionism, and social unionism, all of which are meant to describe a type of agitation that goes beyond work-driven demands for better pay, shorter hours, and pensions. Community organizers in the early twenty-first century are neighborhood focused. They push local legislators to improve housing conditions and the quality of local schools, stop drug trafficking, and improve the neighborhood in general. "Community organizing" is almost always associated with poor neighborhoods. Labor unions engaged in "community organizing"

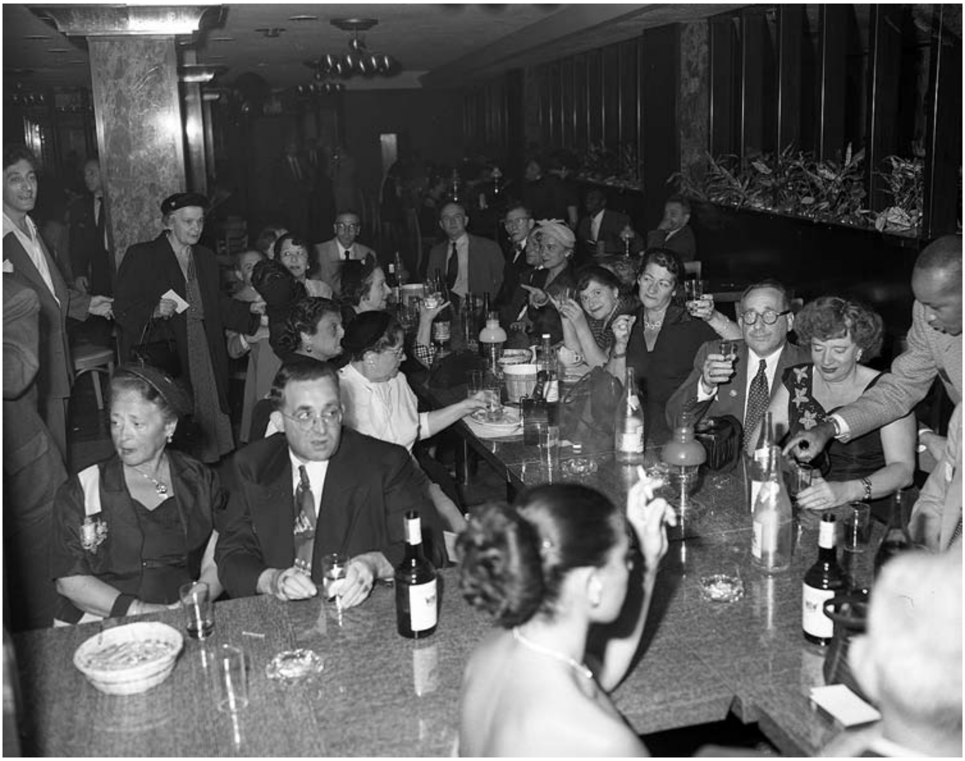

Figure 1. "65ers" enjoying a night out at the Union Hall, circa 1954, 13 Astor Place, New York, New York. District 65 Photographs, Part 1, Photos 023, Negative Number 11683, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

as well: they drew support from neighborhood-based groups (churches, parent-teacher organizations [PTOs], local branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP], veterans groups, etc.) to put pressure on local employers to improve working conditions and on local businesses (e.g., grocers) to drop their prices. This type of agitation was especially effective when people lived near where they worked and shopped but became less so after World War II when suburban development created separate housing, business, and shopping districts and left the inner cities depleted of resources.[24]

Local 65 certainly drew on neighborhood-based sources of support whenever it could, but the type of community organizing it engaged in emanated from the community it had created around the union itself. When it started its "Friends of 65" program in Harlem, it tried to draw Harlemites into its union-oriented community rather than work through groups already organized by people who lived in the neighborhood. Local 65's version of civic unionism, like that of other unions influenced by the Communist Party, held for-profit businesses, the bedrock of the capitalist system, responsible for the perpetually low-wage rates in the shops it organized. It argued that the only way to raise wages was to confront the power of the business class directly by using its hiring hall to aggressively resist employers' hiring policies, pushing for pro-labor and anti-discrimination legislation, and negotiating better contracts.[25]

Finally, Local 65, like the UAW and other unions, engaged in social unionism throughout its history. It was a very active civil rights proponent. It pushed for the passage of full employment and anti-discrimination legislation during and after World War II well before civil rights organization took up the fight in the 1960s. It organized a huge rally to protest Emmett Till's murder in 1955. It supported Martin Luther King Jr. from the days of the Montgomery Bus Boycott on by donating thousands of dollars to Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and by having Dr. King speak annually at the union's headquarters almost every year until his death. Cleveland Robinson, the union's highest-ranking black officer, helped plan the 1963 March on Washington (meetings were held at the union's headquarters). By the late 1960s, Local, by then District, 65 was one of a handful of progressive labor unions to be invited by Walter Reuther, president of the UAW, to join the newly created Alliance for Labor Action (ALA) which, like Dr. King's poor people's campaign, was designed to confront the structural causes of poverty directly.

This book looks at these developments in detail. Beginning with the union's origins in the 1930s and ending with its brief involvement in the ALA in the late 1960s, it follows the union and its organizers through thirty years of economic depression, wars both hot and cold, and the civil rights movement, paying close attention to how some of the country's most poorly paid service and distributive workers fared over those years. Whether they were organizing in New York City, in parts of the South, Midwest, or far West, or from a central or marginal position within the labor movement, Local 65's members and organizers were one of the few collective voices out there that continually pressured the "powers that be" to recognize and do something about the ways in which men and women of color and/or Jews facing anti-Semitism were negatively affected by "the system."

1

Community-Based, "Catch-All" Organizing on New York's Lower East Side

> They "called us a bunch of greenya chayas" whom they "took off the boat when we came from the other side and stuck . . . in a dark cellar to swallow dust and dirt."[1]
>
> —Arthur Osman, 1968

By 1933, during the darkest years of the Depression, Arthur Osman and his co-workers found themselves working sixteen or more hours a day stocking and selling merchandise, manipulating customers, and trying to turn a profit for their boss. While the job may have been better than sewing the garments by the piece or pushing a cart through the streets hawking merchandise, it no longer offered the upward mobility it had generations earlier, leaving Osman and the rest of the people who worked at Eckstein's trapped in low-wage jobs with no control over their own or their families' futures.

Many of the older men who owned the small wholesale and retail shops throughout the Lower East Side along Orchard Street were, like Osman, Jewish immigrants who, in their youth, either sold merchandise on a cart or as clerks in small shops. Unlike Osman and his co-workers, salesmen of preceding generations could realistically expect to eventually own shops. With a few hundred dollars in savings, two or three clerks typically pooled their resources, rented out a storefront, lived as cheaply as possible in the backrooms, and tried to sell the merchandise at enough of a profit to expand the business. The shop where Osman worked, for example, was owned by the Eckstein brothers and their father. In 1916, after having just ten years earlier emigrated from Zelva (in Lithuania, then part of the Russian Pale, the area to which Russian Jews were restricted until 1917), the four pooled their resources and opened a small wholesale undergarment shop on Orchard Street. During those ten years they peddled merchandise on the street, worked for other shop owners as clerks, and then finally tried their luck with their own shop.[2] By the time Osman and his co-workers began thinking about organizing a labor union at Eckstein's, the business had grown to one of the larger wholesale shops on the Lower East Side, employing more than sixty people.

Other Lower East Side success stories included that of Louis Borgenicht, "the king of the children's dress trade," who arrived in the United States in 1888. He sold "whatever he could buy for a nickel for a dime" on a pushcart near his apartment on Eldridge Street (just two blocks west of where Eckstein's Wholesale Merchant would eventually be located). Four years later, he employed twenty girls in the back room of a larger store on Sheriff Street. He paid them as little as possible to sew children's dresses, which he then either sold wholesale out of the storefront or in bulk to Bloomingdale's and other department stores. By 1900, Borgenicht had moved the business out of the Lower East Side to a Midtown location on East Broadway, making a profit of $10,000, and employed several hundred people.[3]

While not all pushcart peddlers retired as millionaires, many, at least prior to the Depression, could realistically work toward owning their own shops and becoming the bosses of, if not 1,500 people, perhaps 5 to 10 people. The onset of the Depression wiped out the possibility of future shop ownership. While the Eckstein brothers managed to keep their business running, Osman and his co-workers faced a future working the same twelve to sixteen hours per day with no set days off and no way out. By 1933, Osman and his co-workers had grown increasingly frustrated not only with the positions they found themselves in but also with their bosses' condescending attitudes. They "called us a bunch of greenya chayas" (Yiddish for, literally, "inexperienced animals") whom they "took off the boat when we came from the other side and stuck . . . in a dark cellar to swallow dust and dirt,'" Osman recalled.[4]

Osman, like all Americans, was living through one of the worst economic crises in U.S. history. Regardless of how many times one contemplates the magnitude of the Depression, the statistics are still shocking. By 1932, 15 million people, or about one out of every four wage earners, were out of work. New York, hit harder than any other American city because of its size, mirrored national trends.[5] By 1932, one-third of the city's manufacturing establishments had closed, leaving one-quarter of the city's population out of work and 1.6 million people dependent on some form of relief. "Never," writes one historian, "had the city of New York faced such an overwhelming crisis. And never had there been a better opportunity to make profound, even revolutionary, changes in American life."[6]

How did salesclerks like Osman, lucky to be employed at all and working in small ten- to twenty-person wholesale shops, attempt to make revolutionary changes in American life? New York offered them a relatively unique context within which to try. Thousands of people worked within a square mile of H. Eckstein Wholesale Merchant. Some sewed the garments, others carted them to and from the warehouse, others "processed" and packed them, others stocked the clothing, still others sold them both to customers off the street and to larger retail establishments Uptown, and most of them, regardless of the job they did, worked in small shops employing forty people or less. In the 1930s, about 20 percent of the city's manufacturing workers (about 200,000 people) made garments, while several thousand more (about 10,000) made the buttons, thread, boxes, and other items that supported the apparel industry. Still others (more than 20,000), and this is where Osman and his co-workers fit into the picture, processed, packaged, transported, sold, and otherwise "distributed" the garments wholesale in one of the city's 2,400 wholesale dry goods establishments and in the warehouses in which the garments were processed and stored. The garments finally then made their way to retail outlets and into the hands of consumers. From the sewing machine operator's first stitch to the clerk handing a wrapped package to a customer, thousands of people worked day in and day out within just a few blocks of each other dealing with some aspect of garment manufacture, distribution, and various levels of sales.[7]

New York differed from other large cities in the United States in that, although it was a major manufacturing center, most of the manufacturing establishments located in the city were small, specialized in nondurable goods such as clothing, and produced for the local New York metropolitan area (which was enormous). New York was not engulfed by huge, smoke-spewing factories as were Detroit, Gary, and Pittsburgh. Because New York's local market was so big, producing for it enabled manufacturers to specialize in everything from pencils and long underwear to chewing gum and kosher wine. Smaller manufacturers were also able to adjust more quickly to consumers' whims, especially in the apparel industry. If a particular suit or blouse went out of fashion, a smaller apparel manufacturer could quickly retool and adjust to the market.[8] Small manufacturers throughout New York faced intense competition within their respective industries. They needed to keep costs, including labor costs, low and innovate constantly in order to outcompete their rivals as they all tried to respond to the local market.[9]

The thousands of manufacturers that together made up the garment industry constituted one of the four largest "manufacturers" in the city, the others being printing, publishing, and food. In all of these industries, not one company dominated. Rather, thousands of small establishments constituted the industry. In addition to manufacturing, New Yorkers worked in other nonmanufacturing sectors of the economy, which included "white-collar" professionals, "pink-collar" clerical workers, managerial positions, and sales, distribution, and service work. Whether the insurance district, the diamond district, various wholesale food districts, the financial district on Wall Street, booksellers row, or the entertainment industry, the people who worked in each tended to identify with their trade rather than with the small company for which they worked. If New Yorkers were unhappy with their jobs, they could quit and find a new job relatively easily, but because the competition was so fierce among shop owners, the new job would not be much better. Business owners pushed their employees hard in order to turn any bit of profit and edge out their competitors. Many shops, especially in apparel, Eckstein's included, cut costs further by operating on a seasonal basis.[10]

Ethnic, religious, racial, and gendered divisions further characterized New York's industries, including the garment industry. Over the period 1880–1920s, German and Irish immigrants, who had come to New York in the 1850s through the 1870s, saw their children and grandchildren climb the occupational ladder into skilled positions in the construction industry or on the waterfront; become shop owners; take management jobs; work for the city as firefighters, policemen, or transit workers; or find employment as teachers, nurses, or clerical workers. A definite shift had occurred by the first two decades of the twentieth century. The children of German and Irish immigrants left the less-skilled work their parents and grandparents had done to the Jewish and Italian immigrants who were just arriving. Jewish and Italian men and women found work in the garment industry (as would later waves of Puerto Rican, West Indian, and Chinese women and men).[11]

Not many African American men and women, less than 2 percent of New York's population in the years before World War I, worked in the garment industry before the 1930s. The few African American men who had found jobs in New York's various industries as skilled, semiskilled, or unskilled tradesmen or as waiters in the 1870s and 1880s were pushed out of these jobs by upwardly mobile German and Irish immigrants and their children and by newly arriving Jewish and Italian immigrants. Employers preferred to hire immigrants, and most labor unions made sure that any new, especially skilled and semiskilled, jobs were open only to their German and Irish sons. African American and West Indian men and women were forced to work primarily in service-oriented jobs as domestics, janitors, elevatormen, hallmen, chauffeurs, and porters and were barred, by various forms of racial prejudice, from finding jobs in significant numbers in industry or white-collar work in the years prior to World War I.[12]

World War I temporarily helped black New Yorkers move out of domestic jobs and into industrial jobs. Europeans all but stopped coming to the United States during the war, their numbers dwindling to only 110,000 in 1918 from a high of almost 2 million in 1914. As a result of this and of soldiers fighting overseas, American businesses experienced a wartime labor shortage and, for the first time in U.S. history, industrial jobs opened up for thousands of black men and women who were moving to New York and other northern cities, creating "the first black industrial class." As would happen again after World War II, however, African American men and women faced the "last hired and first fired" phenomenon as "white" soldiers, mostly European immigrants or their children, returned to New York. Although African American men and women were able to retain a significant number of unskilled jobs in New York's various industries, the even lower-paying and usually less stable service-oriented jobs remained the purview of African American men and women after World War I.[13]

Black New Yorkers began feeling the impact of the impending economic depression as early as 1926. By early 1929, before the stock market crashed, "one-fifth of all blacks employed in industry had already been thrown out of work." A bit of a reprieve emerged with President Roosevelt's New Deal programs. By 1936–37, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) had hired African American men and women into civil service positions, and at least one account indicates that they found new jobs in stores in Harlem. Overall, however, African Americans were three times as likely to appear on the relief rolls and their unemployment rates were double those of whites. The Depression pushed African American men and women to find work wherever they could; many women turned to the almost always-hiring garment industry for jobs.[14]

By the time the Depression hit, the garment industry had become less overwhelmingly Jewish, much more Italian, and increasingly more black than it had been in 1920. Like German and Irish immigrants, Jewish immigrants did not encourage their sons and daughters to follow in their footsteps. Instead, they steered their children into white-collar work in various businesses, as office workers, or in the professions. After 1933, young American-born Jews took advantage of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia's new merit-based hiring process and began taking positions as civil servants, ending the Irish monopoly under the Tammany Hall system. By the mid-1930s, the ILGWU reported only 40 percent Jewish membership, a significant drop from 80 percent a little more than a decade earlier. More recently arrived Jewish immigrants were joined by Italian immigrants and African Americans and some immigrants from the West Indies who together continued to work in the garment industry throughout the Depression and into World War II; they were joined by Puerto Ricans in increasing numbers after the war.[15]

Whether moving out of manufacturing into the sale and distribution of garments was "white collar" in the sense of higher pay and higher status is questionable and depends on the type of wholesale establishment a person worked for and in what capacity. Jews working as skilled cutters or tailors in the garment industry often made more than small shop owners so, in that case, the assumption that white-collar work paid more does not hold. In the late 1920s, the Workers' Cooperative Colony, a Jewish cooperative housing project, refused to admit anyone who did not "work by the sweat of their brow" into the cooperative. The cooperative reflected the thinking of most working-class Jews in New York at the time in that it considered Jewish entrepreneurs "workers" and allowed them to join. Small shop owners ceased being part of the working class when they were successful enough to start living "off the labor of others." Factory owners, larger shop owners, landlords, and people who, like the Eckstein brothers, had positioned themselves as "bosses" no longer belonged to the same class.[16]

More successful wholesale shop owners on the Lower East Side were almost always men and, especially in the apparel industry, Jewish. Most had emigrated a generation or more earlier than the men who worked as sales and shipping clerks, who were also Jewish but usually younger and more likely recent immigrants. In the 1920s, thousands of Jewish immigrants, like the Eckstein brothers, had opened up wholesale shops without needing much capital investment. Many of them were still in too precarious a position to survive the Depression (almost half of the wholesale furniture shops closed during the Depression). To make matters worse, wholesale shop owners complained that the new "chain" stores, like F. W. Woolworth's, made it even harder for them to offer their customers merchandise at "wholesale" prices, their prices now undercut by the "five and dime" chains (the first Woolworth store had opened in New York City in 1896).[17]

Jewish women were more likely to be young and hold clerical positions within the small wholesale establishments. More successful wholesalers also operated small warehouses where women and men, mostly Jewish and Italian recent immigrants and increasingly African Americans, "processed" the garments (sorted, packed, catalogued, and transported) and cleaned the warehouses. Local 65's first black member, Alexander Miles, came into the union in 1935 and worked as a sweeper.

Most of the garments would eventually make their way to the thousands of retail shops located throughout the city and in the boroughs and on to other cities throughout the United States. The most successful wholesalers held accounts with large department stores in Midtown. Retail clerks in the large department stores in New York were more often than not native-born, usually "white," roughly half Jewish and half Gentile, while the people stocking the shelves, sweeping, and doing the janitorial services were more often recent immigrants and, increasingly, especially after World Wars I and II, African American men and women. In addition to the department stores, there were hundreds of smaller retail and wholesale outlets, second-hand clothing stores, in each of New York's industrial districts and in the city's residential areas. New York was filled with small ten-person shops of all kinds, some of which were organized but many more of which fell outside the purview of the unions already organizing in the garment industry. Hundreds of thousands of people remained unorganized, including wholesalers.[18]

Working in wholesale was grueling both physically because of the long hours and psychologically because of the constant pressure to sell, sell, sell. Nineteenth-century accounts of the wholesale dry goods industry describe the competition not only among shop owners but within the shops as well. Salesclerks competed with one another to see who could make the most sales that day and/or who could sell the slowest-moving items in the shop. Success almost always depended on how good salesclerks were at manipulating unsuspecting customers, whether the customer was a buyer purchasing goods on account for a retail outlet or an individual attempting to bypass the retail markup by buying directly from the wholesaler (most wholesale dry goods shops sold directly to the public as well as to retail outlets). Louis Borgenicht, the peddler turned Fifth Avenue retailer mentioned earlier, recalled a valuable sales technique he had learned as a young clerk in a dry goods store: switching the item a customer thought she purchased for a more cheaply made substitute after the sale was made. "'A sleight of hand and it was the cheaper shawl which, wrapped, tied, was handed to the woman.'"[19]

Period novels, plays, Broadway musicals, and motion pictures popularized the experience, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* being probably the most famous account. Another critically acclaimed novel, Jerome Weidman's 1937 *I Can Get It for You Wholesale,* describes a young Jewish man's rise from shipping clerk to Seventh Avenue retail shop owner earning more than $20,000 a year. The key to his success was brutal dishonesty. Throughout the novel, the main character, Harry Bogen, cheats everyone he meets by lying and manipulating them, saying, "You couldn't reach for the big dough and listen to your mother's lessons in morals . . . you take one or the other." In his review of the novel, Josh Lambert writes that, although people at the time were offended by Weidman's portrayal of the young man's cutthroat behavior and by the negative portrayal of Jewish businessmen, the book was really "an attack on the moral depravity of the capitalist system, in which jerks like Bogen profit at the expense of the world's ethical *schlemiels*."[20]

How would one organize a union in this atmosphere and for what purpose, exactly? The challenge for Osman and other people organizing in New York City was whom and how to organize and how revolutionary a vision to pursue. What method would best benefit the thousands of people who worked, in Osman's case, within less than a square mile of Eckstein's Wholesale Merchant on New York's Lower East Side and for hundreds of different employers? What wholesale salesclerks really wanted was to own their own shops and be their own "bosses," but the Depression had rendered that opportunity all but impossible. Organizing a union was the only way Osman and his co-workers could hope to improve their situations as "employees" or "workers." But if not ownership, then what? A dollar more per week? A set number of hours per week? Paid holidays? Something more revolutionary? As difficult as it was to secure a dollar more an hour, set weekly hours, and paid holidays from employers who were by no means wealthy and whose business could go under at any time, doing so did not challenge "the capitalist system" that produced frustrated workers like Osman or Weidman's fictional Harry Bogen and, in the garment industry, was largely dependent on the sweatshop labor done by Jewish, Italian, and some African American women.

The two largest unions organizing workers in the garment industry were the ILGWU, founded in 1901, and the ACWA, founded in 1914. Both were affiliated with the AFL, although the ACWA formed as a response to the AFL's United Garment Workers' corruption, nativism, elitism, and anti-Semitism and maintained a tenuous relationship with the AFL until it finally broke with it and helped form the new CIO in the mid-1930s. The ILGWU and the ACWA had been organizing in the garment industry for decades by the time Osman and his co-workers began "talking union" at H. Eckstein's Wholesale Merchant in 1933.[21]

Both the ILGWU and the ACWA unionized by first focusing on the men in the industry who held the most skilled and highest-paid positions, usually the cutters and tailors, the idea being that shop owners would be forced to negotiate better wages for them because they were such an integral part of the business. Once the ILGWU and the ACWA won gains for the cutters and other skilled workers and union recognition in contract negotiations, their organizers then tried to negotiate increases for semiskilled and unskilled workers, including the subcontractors, or "sweaters" (the people who were paid a lump sum by the manufacturer for a specified number of garments), and the lowest-paid sweatshop workers, usually young, immigrant women, who produced garments by the piece for the subcontractors, earning only $3 to $4 per week.

The ILGWU and the ACWA were founded by men who were influenced by various forms of radicalism; both were determined to, or at least attempted to, ameliorate the abysmal conditions in the sweatshops. In the famous 1909 Uprising of the 20,000, "girls" who walked off their jobs in the sweatshops were supported by the ILGWU and their Local 25 became an influential local within the union. The ACWA, which got its start after a successful 1910 strike against Chicago-based Hart, Schaffner, and Marx (one of the largest clothing manufacturers in the country), was at the forefront of the "industrial union" movement, a precursor to the CIO of the 1930s that pushed the labor movement as a whole to reorient its focus toward bringing industrial workers, immigrants, and, to a certain extent African Americans into organized union locals. Nevertheless, both the ILGWU and the ACWA were criticized by their own members, Osman, and others for not doing enough for the lowest-paid workers in the industry, immigrant and black women, or for not promoting them to higher positions within the unions.[22]

The problem for the wholesale clerks at Eckstein's was that neither of these unions targeted workers in those economies "external" to the manufacturing of garments. While they did attempt to organize the subcontractors, other external economies, including wholesale and distribution, were virtually ignored, not intentionally, but rather because the garment unions faced the herculean task of organizing the garment workers themselves much less those workers peripheral to the making of the garments. Wholesalers, like Osman, who sold the garments made in the sweatshops, the men and women who packed them in small warehouses, and the people who transported them around the city found little support from the ILGWU or the ACWA.

Another union, the United Hebrew Trades (UHT), also organizing on the Lower East Side and in the garment industry since 1888, took a different approach. As its name suggests, the UHT organized within the "Hebrew" trades. More of an opening was created for less-skilled and sometimes even the *least* skilled Jewish workers to come into the union. Local unions that affiliated with the UHT demanded the same things the ILGWU's locals did—better wages, fewer weekly hours, and better working conditions—but they justified their demands not on the basis of their skill or their importance to the industry but argued instead that they deserved to be treated with dignity and their working conditions should reflect as much. The UHT organized a group of cleaners in 1894, most of whom had been tailors in Europe but, after arriving in New

York, were forced to take jobs as cleaners. They worked in cellars cleaning old clothes with benzene, dying them, and, presumably, giving them to back to their "bosses," the subcontractors, who sold them to wholesale or retail shops. The UHT was able to offer some stability (and visibility) to cleaners, knee-pants makers, and several other small locals composed of semiskilled and unskilled workers, mostly all Jewish, who were not organized by the ILGWU or the ACWA. In reality, Jewish cutters and tailors and other highly skilled men held dual memberships in the ILGWU, the ACWA, and the UHT. The UHT was criticized for its conservatism in much the same way the ILGWU and the ACWA (and the larger AFL) were.[23]

Ultimately, the problem union organizers faced, especially in New York City, was that organizing by industry, occupation, or ethnic, racial, or religious background left thousands of workers unorganized. New York City's manufacturing diversity and the corresponding existence of hundreds of thousands of workers in the distribution, processing, and service sectors that supported the manufacturers were not well served by relatively narrow industrially or occupationally oriented unions. Alternatively, organizing by race, gender, ethnic, or religious background meant that people who worked under similar conditions remained invisible to one another. How were the young organizers of the 1930s, inspired to bring about some kind of change, a social revolution as they called it, going to do so?

How revolutionary the effort depended on union organizers' abilities to bring the least skilled, lowest-paid workers in a given industry not only into the union but to raise their wages and status relative to that of other workers in their respective industries. For wholesalers, the biggest blow of the Depression was that they were precluded from becoming shop "owners" and better controlling, or at least having the chance to control, their destinies. They were now "employees" or "workers" subject to a lifetime of responding to the whims of their bosses, the "owners" of the shops, and all they could hope to do was pressure their bosses to pay them a bit more and improve their working conditions.

By the time the Great Depression hit, fewer Americans could hope to enter the ranks of land, business, or home owners. For wholesale clerks like Osman working in small shops on New York's Lower East Side, sharecroppers in the South, nutpickers in St. Louis, migrant workers in the West and the Southwest, factory workers, food and clothing "processors" working in small makeshift warehouses throughout the United States, and hundreds of thousands of other people, the possibility of the ownership of anything was virtually nonexistent. Even with the New Deal's groundbreaking support for the creation of labor unions through Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act, which Osman and millions of other men and women took advantage of to the fullest, the best they could hope for was to exert pressure through collective action to force their bosses and landlords to "share" more of the profit with them. "Workers" faced a constant struggle to ensure that they attained some semblance of a living wage and some, usually those considered the highly skilled in a given industry, succeeded. The majority of the workforce faced deteriorating conditions.

Communism and other left-leaning philosophies, those that were critical of private ownership, looked attractive to some people, including Arthur Osman, who were living within this worsening, Depression-era context. A significant minority of people at the left of the political and ideological spectrums believed that capitalism was a decaying system and, if workers' (i.e., "non-owners") lives were to improve, the system needed to be replaced altogether or significantly revamped. Something needed to be done to curtail the power of the "owning" class relative to the "working" class. This attitude was most clearly expressed by the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the members of the Jewish Bund, the NNC, and the more left-leaning members of the Democratic Party, all of whom believed that capitalism, the system that privileged private ownership, was responsible for the economic hardships people were experiencing. The benefit, if any, of the Depression, they argued, was that it laid bare the discriminatory foundation on which capitalism was built.[24]

The combination of economic depression, an intense questioning of the American capitalist system, the strong and relatively influential presence of the Communist Party, and FDR's New Deal initiatives provided the backdrop for the growth of Local 65 in the latter half of the 1930s. As Arthur Osman looked for ways to change the economic system, he needed only to step outside the shop and talk. Communists, Socialists, Progressives, Bundists, and New Deal Democrats all debated with one another about what caused the economic collapse and about what might be done to improve life. Leon Davis of Local 1199 (Davis worked closely with Osman, especially during the early years of their careers) said he and his generation of young union organizers were, regardless of the specific political philosophy they ascribed to, motivated to change the social, economic, and political order. Osman agreed. In the 1930s, people talked openly about whether a Communist, Socialist, liberal, Zionist, or other political philosophy would best serve underpaid workers on the Lower East Side.[25]

Born in 1907 in Russian Poland, near Warsaw, Osman immigrated to the United States from Manchuria in 1919 at the age of twelve. His father had been exiled to Siberia for "political reasons" in 1909 and was finally liberated during the Russian Revolution but the family (Arthur and his mother, father, and sister) could not get back into Russia (Russian Poland) so they went to Manchuria. While in Manchuria, Osman's father found out "by accident" that his brothers were living in the United States and they emigrated there as a result.[26]

Russian (Polish) Jews were exiled to Siberia in the years before and during World War I for participating in workers' movements designed to threaten the authority of the ruling elite (Czar Nicholas and the 1st and 2nd Russian Dumas, or parliaments). Even in exile, Jews continued to actively promote worker-centered movements, Zionist movements, or a combination of both. Osman's father was most likely exiled for holding views that supported one or the other of these movements.[27] Osman certainly supported both as a young adult and was likely attracted to Labor Zionism, a movement that grew in popularity worldwide in the 1930s, and that advocated the creation of a separate Jewish state through the united efforts of working-class Jews. Osman's father may also have been a part of the Jewish Bund, which encouraged the use of Yiddish as a way to promote a kind of transnational, Jewish, working-class culture and identity. Osman was at least fairly fluent in Yiddish. He was surrounded by Yiddish on the Lower East Side and recognized the Yiddish slurs his bosses hurled at him.

Although the degree to which his father's political leanings influenced him remains unclear, Osman clearly interpreted the situation he found himself in as a young twenty-six-year-old salesclerk at Eckstein's through the dual lenses of class-based discrimination and anti-Semitism. Trapped and in a quest for self-respect, Osman and five of his co-workers decided to try and organize everybody in the shop and force the Eckstein brothers to regulate their hours and raise their wages. Osman and his wife had just had their first baby. To celebrate, Osman invited Harry Karpe and a few other people from work to his house in Brooklyn. They of course talked about their problems at work but instead of simply commiserating, they decided to band together and do something. They quickly realized they were creating a labor union as they pledged to figure out how to force the Eckstein brothers to set their hours and give them a raise. Their efforts eventually resulted in the creation of the Wholesale Dry Goods Workers (WDGW) union in 1933. They met weekly thereafter, each time doubling their attendance. Osman recollected that within several weeks they managed to organize sixty or seventy people, leaving H. Eckstein's Wholesale Merchant "100% organized."[28] [29]

Although he never mentioned whether he had been approached by Communist Party organizers or whether he himself was a member of the party, Osman was almost certainly (without a copy of "the card") a party member. He said that he and the union's early organizers were attracted to political philosophies that did not make the for-profit system central, including of course, Communism. For Osman, the for-profit system necessarily encouraged the creation of a boss-worker hierarchy that then also promoted the exploitation of workers. Whether he, as a member of the CP, had organized Eckstein's Wholesale Merchant as a way to help the Communists "bore from within" the wholesale industry is also likely. In the 1930s, Communist labor organizers were dedicated, as was Osman, to putting an end to the owner-worker relationship. The only way out of that trap, the very trap Osman and his co-workers found themselves in, was to launch some kind of revolutionary union movement.[30]

Accounts of the origins of other left-leaning unions that began in the period 1932–33 describe the ways in which the Communist Party's Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) spearheaded organizing efforts in various industries that later became, like Local 65, a part of organized labor's left wing. For example, Joshua Freeman details the ways in which the TUUL (and its New York branch, the Trade Union Unity Council) made inroads in the New York City transit industry after the CP developed a strategy of "concentration" in 1933. It was the combination, Freeman explains, of general discontent among transit workers (particularly Irish workers), the passage of New Deal legislation favorable to union organizing, the election of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, and the direct organizing action taken on by the TUUL that resulted in the creation of the TWU.[31]

Leon Davis, the founder of Local 1199, a New York City-based union that first organized pharmacists and later hospital workers as well, allied closely with Local 65 during the Cold War years. The two locals remained closely affiliated throughout their histories. Davis describes the loose connections Local 1199 maintained with the TUUL in the early 1930s. "All of us," Davis recalled, "touched the TUUL for a while." But ultimately, he continued, the TUUL "was not a *practical* instrument for organizing workers [emphasis in original]." Despite Davis's lack of use for the TUUL, he nevertheless attended many TUUL meetings during the early 1930s.[32] One account holds that Arthur Osman worked with and "quickly became close friends with Ruby Schochet, a veteran of the TUUL-led drive to organize wholesale workers in the late twenties."[33]

Local 65's newspaper in the 1930s, *New Voices*, remained critical of the New Deal despite Osman's later praise for Section 7a. *New Voices* clearly opposed the candidacies of FDR and Alf Landon, the Democratic and Republican candidates, respectively, for president in 1936 in favor of the Communist Party and, to a lesser extent, Socialist Party candidates. With regard to FDR and the New Deal, *New Voices* argued that it could have been passed by either major party. Had the Democrats been in power in 1932, the paper maintained, the Republicans could easily have "assumed the role of New Dealers." What linked the two major parties was that they both supported "production for-profit." The paper criticized the Democrats, the Republicans, and the New Deal for assuming that prosperity could be achieved "without any basic change in the economic structure of the country." The Socialists and Communists opposed this principle, the paper reported, in favor of a "social set-up where there will be planned production for use rather than for-profit." The paper clearly hoped its readers would view the election as a choice between, on the one hand, the Democrats and Republicans and, on the other, the Communists and Socialists. Yet, it subtly tried to influence its readers further to support the Communist Party by criticizing the Socialists for naively "believing that they can obtain definite concessions by appeal to reason and justice while the Communists are depending more on the power of mass pressure."[34]

Articles in *New Voices* and the Communist Party's *Daily Worker* contain a significant amount of overlap the 1930s and throughout World War II. And, as left-oriented as Leon Davis and Local 1199 were throughout 1199's history, Davis describes Local 65 as "pretty much of a sectarian organization . . . not internally, but as far as the labor movement generally is concerned," meaning that Local 65 did not force its members to adhere to a Communist Party line but maintained a very left position relative to that of other labor unions throughout its history.[35]

After Osman and the initial group of frustrated dry goods salesmen were "100% organized" and named officially, Osman and his fellow WDGW members confronted their boss with the need for a contract. Their boss signed, and they began operating under contract with "H. Eckstein and Company" in 1933. The WDGW initially operated independently, that is, without a parent union. Osman recalled proudly that the WDGW "got that [H. Eckstein] contract before we were affiliated with anybody."

Osman was not alone. The combination of the economic crisis and prolabor legislation set the stage for many young men and women to find the self-respect they lacked in their jobs in union organizing. Being a Russian Jewish immigrant in New York City in 1933, Osman had little choice: he could continue to be treated like an animal with no control over his life or try to do something about it. He turned to union organizing out of a sense of desperation and because so many other routes out were closed.

In 1934, the WDGW reluctantly discussed the possibility of affiliating with the AFL and met with Bill Collins, the AFL's regional director. Even before the meeting, Osman's group suspected the AFL was full of "labor racketeers," and the meeting with Collins did not, according to Osman, improve their negative image. They then discussed affiliating with the UHT and met with Morris Feinstone. According to Osman, although Feinstone offered "some encouragement," they again chose not to affiliate because they "felt very suspicious that some kind of deal was to be made."[36] The UHT had positioned itself in favor of a Socialist-inspired path of Jewish assimilation. Osman surrounded himself with people in the top positions in the union who took strong nationalist positions and, as Labor Zionists, advocated the creation of a separate Jewish state. The UHT would not have provided a good fit for the union's politics.[37]

Nevertheless, the new WDGW did maintain some kind of relationship with the UHT. Harry Karpe, one of the original Eckstein workers who helped organize the union, remembered that, after their weekly meetings, the Eckstein workers held a larger, mass meeting at a hired hall (this must have been done with the help of either the UHT or the TUUL). At that meeting, Max Perlmutter, "Eckstein's top receiving clerk and a Labor Zionist, asked for and received permission . . . to explore affiliation with the United Hebrew Trades," Karpe recalled.[38] Apparently Harry Eckstein's brother, Teddy, attempted at least twice to stop union organizing by "cutting a deal," first with some Eckstein employees and later, as Osman said, with the organizer sent by the UHT. Those attempts failed because Osman "took over and won a meeting between his shop committee, which included the most skilled men in the shop, and Teddy Eckstein." Two more meetings and they signed that first contract with Eckstein. Consistent with Osman's account, Karpe remembered that the first contract was signed without the help of the UHT organizer. Nevertheless, and despite Osman's accounting of these early months, the WDGW seems to have maintained some relationship with the UHT. Not only did David Livingston (Local 65's second president) remember Osman's union coming from the UHT, the UHT assigned two organizers to work with Osman. The association gave the new union "some standing in the Jewish labor community."[39]

The contract with Eckstein established a starting weekly minimum wage of $14 per week, a forty-eight-hour week, and substantial wage increases and reduced hours for those already employed. It also established a seniority system for the rehiring process that occurred each year after the industry's seasonal layoffs. And the contract provided religious Jews with all of Saturday off (previously, Eckstein required people who left work early on Fridays for religious observances to return Saturday after sundown).[40] After signing that first contract, the WDGW set its sights on organizing "the rest of the street" and around the corner on Broadway. This was an important decision among the union's early leaders. The union could either have stayed on Orchard Street *or* it could have thrown itself more fully into organizing the unorganized. After some discussion, Osman and the Communist members of the union persuaded the rest of the members to go on to Broadway.[41] This was the beginning of the union's commitment to organizing across occupational and industrial lines, an approach the union would expand in interesting ways throughout its history. Within two years, the WDGW had organized, Osman recalled, "about a dozen places." Its membership hovered around only 150 because the shops it organized contained as few as 2 to 3 members each.[42]

While Osman left the UHT connection vague, he did provide details of how the WDGW finally affiliated with the AFL after the failed attempt in 1934. Typically, a small union like the WDGW would affiliate with the branch of the AFL that represented the same type of worker. For example, the AFL had a branch dedicated to organizing retail clerks in New York and throughout the country, the RCIPA, chartered with the AFL. It is not clear whether Osman and the WDGW discussed affiliating with that branch of the AFL at its initial meeting with Bill Collins in 1933. Nevertheless, Osman recalled that the WDGW did not affiliate with the RCIPA. Rather, in 1935 the WDGW affiliated directly with the AFL. To do this, it entered into what was called a federal charter and became Local 19932 of the AFL. As a condition of membership, Osman recalled that the AFL made the WDGW change its name to the Wholesale Dry Goods *Employees* Union (WDGEU), Local 19932 because "the word 'workers' rubbed them the wrong way." These small, directly affiliated federal locals had little influence within the larger AFL and were called "one-lungers" because they only had one vote at the AFL conventions.[43]

After the WDGW affiliated with the AFL, now the WDGEU, it stepped up its organizing efforts. By the 1936 AFL convention, Local 19932 had "several hundred" workers and started shopping around for a full-time organizer. A reporter for the *Jewish Daily Forward* (a Socialist newspaper that rented the WDGEU rooms for its membership meetings) recommended his father-in-law, Mr. Shalley, for the job. After a few months, Osman recalled that Shalley "suddenly without forewarning us gets up at our membership and says 'You people are looking for leadership all over the block and you've got the best leader in the room.'" Afterward, they voted Osman full-time organizer. He agreed, quit his job at H. Eckstein, and became president of Local 19932 in 1936.[44]

Local 19932's relationship with the AFL was brief. Once the union stepped up its organizing efforts after 1935, it ran into jurisdictional conflicts with the AFL. Local 19932 decided to expand and begin organizing other wholesale establishments in the immediate vicinity. There were two budding unions organizing wholesale shoe and hardware establishments. Osman approached Bill Collins, the regional director of the AFL, and proposed that Local 19932 merge with them to organize in the wholesale industry regardless of the product sold. Collins objected, arguing that the WDGEU should organize wholesale shops only in the dry goods industry.[45] Collins's and Osman's differences in philosophy were being played out in this period within the larger AFL in which a civil war was brewing over precisely the same debate: whom and how to organize. The AFL would split into two organizations in 1938, the AFL and the new CIO, with which Osman's union would remain affiliated until 1948.

David Livingston recalled that, by 1936, Osman was "obviously CIO."[46] What did it mean to be obviously CIO? After the passage of Section 7a of the NIRA, a growing number of people wanted the AFL to devote its energies to industrial unionism. The passage of Section 7a of the NIRA had unleashed a wave of union activity. Workers in auto, rubber, steel, textiles, and electrical goods began, as had the WDGW, to seek affiliation with the AFL. As a result, the AFL's membership increased by 30 percent between 1933 and 1935.[47] Despite many efforts at industrial unionism throughout its close to fifty-year existence, the AFL remained a craft-oriented union, its membership composed primarily of skilled workers. Most were Irish, German, and Anglo printers, plumbers, and railroad engineers and conductors. More than that, the AFL's old guard exhibited some distrust toward the "NRA-babies." They had witnessed similar swells in union activity in the mass production industries before. Not only were the newcomers of a different ethnic background, but the "AFL traditionalists believed that these new recruits were simply too inexperienced, undisciplined, and vulnerable to establish stable unions without detailed guidance." The fact that many of the new union recruits quickly disappeared from the scene seemed to bear out the old-timers' suspicions.[48]

The AFL traditionalists met with strong resistance, especially from those AFL members who had stronger industrial union traditions than most. The ILGWU and the ACWA, along with the United Mine Workers (UMW), had also experienced the effects of Section 7a. But, unlike the AFL traditionalists, John L. Lewis (UMW), David Dubinsky (ILGWU), and Sidney Hillman (ACWA) argued that if the AFL did not take advantage of the enthusiasm ushered in by Section 7a, it might miss the chance to "move to the center of American life" and that "these workers might well be lost forever to the labor movement" only to be recruited by other organizations, perhaps the Communist Party or a right-oriented fascist movement like those brewing in Germany.[49]

Although the AFL supported industrial unionism at its 1934 convention, by the following year it had devoted little money to that effort. By the end of the 1935 convention, the AFL leadership grew "ever more contemptuous" of those who favored industrial unionism. Like Osman, most industrial union advocates were "one-lungers," younger delegates who represented federal labor unions in mass production industries and, in Osman's case, the service sector. After a heated exchange between Lewis and William Hutcheson, forty to fifty industrial union supporters gathered at UMW headquarters and created the Committee for Industrial Organizations. The "Committee" went on to become the "Congress" of Industrial Organizations, a fully functioning rival to the AFL, in 1938.[50]

Within six months of its existence, the Committee established itself as an autonomous entity, separate from the AFL traditionalist leadership. Initially the Committee intended to act as a sort of support agent for industrial unionism, under the AFL umbrella. It encouraged and supported budding industrial unions that faced hostility from craft unions in their industries and it encouraged the presidents of federal unions, like Osman's 19932, to attend AFL meetings. All of these initial activities proved threatening to the AFL leadership. The traditionalists claimed that the AFL was the only voice for labor, industrial or craft, and it refused to recognize the Committee as an official part of the AFL. From the very first days of the Committee, it was clear that people had to choose between the Committee's industrial unionism and the AFL's craft-oriented, more traditional approach.[51]

In the year after the creation of the Committee on Industrial Organization at the 1935 convention, many federal locals identified the Committee, not the AFL, as their major source of support. Lewis, Brophy, Hillman, and Dubinsky used their unions' treasuries to support the efforts of smaller federal locals during this time, although it is unclear whether Local 65 or any of the federal locals representing unions outside of the mass production industries received any of this money. Federal locals in the rubber industry, for example, had affiliated with the AFL under the label the United Rubber Workers (URW). The AFL denied the URW, as it had Osman and Local 19932, a "full industrial charter." When in late 1935, rubber workers decided to strike, it was the Committee that encouraged and supported them, not the AFL, by sending veteran organizers and monetary support. The Committee demonstrated its importance as a vehicle to voice the discontent of those workers long ignored by the AFL.[52]

Osman was a part of the CIO movement. Not only did he clearly support the Committee, he brought with him the desire to upend the hierarchy that, at least in his view, had established itself within the organized labor movement by the 1930s, one that privileged the interests of craft-based and skilled workers over "unskilled" mass production workers, native-born sons of German and Irish immigrants over more recent Jewish and Italian immigrants, Gentile over Jew, and white over black.[53] Joining the ILGWU, the ACWA, and the UMW in the CIO movement of the mid-1930s were the relatively voiceless "one-lungers," representatives of the unions the AFL had chartered as "federal locals," like Local 19932, which were located in either mass production industries, or, as in Osman's case, in segments of the distribution, processing, and service sectors that the AFL had not organized.

Historians have convincingly argued that the AFL's craft and occupational focus meshed well with people who, like Osman, worked outside of the mass production industries that dominated the U.S. economy from the 1930s through the 1960s. So why did Osman go with the CIO? Industrial or CIO-type organizing, organizing by mobilizing *all* the workers at General Motors, RCA, or U.S. Steel, worked well when people, all working for one employer, were located in one enormous plant. Using this approach, CIO unions like the UAW were able to bring unskilled assembly-line workers, janitors, and skilled plumbers into the union.

This industrial-style approach did not work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and does not in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries for service workers who, while doing the same type of job, do not work under the same roof or for the same employer (although CIO-type industrial organizing might work for Wal-Mart and other large chain stores in the same ways it did for GM, RCA, and U.S. Steel). The AFL-style craft and occupational approach enabled waitresses working for hundreds of different restaurant owners in the 1890s and janitors working for several different employers in the 1990s to find common ground and pressure their respective employers to improve their working conditions. The AFL-approach, in these cases, rendered the "least skilled" and "unorganizable" much more powerful relative to their employers than was thought possible.[54]

Before the 1920s (and increasingly since the 1970s), smaller manufacturing establishments and service-oriented businesses employed millions of people in retail, wholesale, and entertainment and in the processing and distribution industry (people who process, pack, and move goods, now produced in China and other countries, throughout the United States). They continued to work in these jobs even as mass production came to dominate U.S. industry. Osman, then, was organizing the "invisible" workers in the service sector of the economy in the shadow of the CIO. Craft and occupational, or AFL-style, organizing was not appealing to Osman, despite the fact that it had worked well for service workers because wholesale clerks were deemed relatively unimportant within the AFL's hierarchy in New York (taking a back seat to retail clerks). Osman was also dissatisfied with CIO-style organizing even though he and the union's first group of full-time organizers were in effect organizing "CIO-style" when they brought all the workers in the shop, from "top to bottom," into the union. Both approaches left hundreds of workers out. Usually the lowest-paid, least stable workers, messengers, "processors," clerical workers, and drivers who worked in the warehouses around the block, the people who put toys together for a small toy manufacturer, the people who sold second-hand clothing in the shop across the street, all working within a few blocks of each other, remained unorganized by a "wholesale clerks" union or by a "wholesale workers" union.

Osman's eventual "catch-all" style of organizing was neither AFL nor CIO but more closely fit the IWW model that went on to influence "alternative" unions in the 1930s, most of which, like Osman's union, found homes in the CIO. These unions, tenant farmers, nut pickers, and community or city-wide unions organized without attention paid to occupation or industry, some miners, all emphasized an organizational approach designed to undercut the power of the "owner," "employer," or "ruling" class. They were critical, as was Osman, of both the AFL and the CIO for organizing in ways that left the various hierarchies among workers in place and that did not challenge the legitimacy of "ownership" as more class-based movements had under the IWW and the Knights of Labor in the late nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, many of the people who organized "alternative" unions were attracted to Communism in the same way they would have been attracted to the IWW had they been organizing twenty years earlier.[55] By the mid-1930s, however, the CIO "movement" seemed malleable and open to all sorts of new approaches to organizing, approaches that were not based on craft, occupation, or skill level.

By the 1936 AFL convention, representatives of the federal locals, including Arthur Osman, were ready to push the AFL in a different direction or break away if they had to. They were frustrated with the AFL's lack of support and encouraged by the Committee's success. At issue was their inferior status as federal locals. Many representatives complained not only about the lack of support they received in their respective struggles but also about the lack of influence the federal locals had within the larger AFL. Delegates representing federal locals complained about the fact that they had only one vote and that they were required to go through a lengthy procedure to introduce resolutions at the convention. The AFL conflict with the Committee in this period, Osman contended, boiled down to a conflict over how much control working people would indeed have over their destines. With just one vote and little access to introduce resolutions at the AFL national conventions, the federal locals felt they had little chance to influence what was going on around them.[56]

"One-lunger" members like Delegate Meyers, of the service or "white-collar" Technical Research Employees Union, No. 20049, argued that the AFL Executive Council designed these policies to purposefully weaken the federal locals and had blatantly ignored the opinions of a significant proportion of the AFL membership. "We have merely come and dropped our unions in the lap of the American Federation of Labor," Meyers protested at the 1936 convention. "We wanted to join the mainstream of labor, we wanted to be part and parcel of that movement, but we want to be treated fairly and on an equal basis."[57]

AFL vice president Daniel Tobin explained that it was the AFL's intent that the federal locals be treated the same as the International locals. International locals had to present resolutions to their International bodies after which the International would submit the agreed upon resolutions to the AFL Executive Council. Because the federal locals had no International, Tobin explained, they avoided part of the resolution process. The Executive Council intended to rectify that situation with the thirty-day approval process. Tobin did not address the federal locals' lack of voting power. He did point out that more than half of the dues collected from the 900 federal locals representing some 88,000 members went back into organizing in the industries they represented. At that point, Osman spoke. He countered Tobin's arguments by explaining that the locals that did belong to an International attended conventions at which they had the opportunity to present their resolutions. No such opportunity, he explained, existed for the federal locals under the proposed guidelines.[58]

After Osman finished speaking, Delegate Schoonover, a member of the Chicago Federation of Labor for thirty-three years, complained that he did not know "why those federal locals get up here and holler and squawk that they are not getting their money's worth . . . they are getting it plenty . . . all they have to do," he advised, "is go along." Delegate Handley, a representative from the Wisconsin Federation of Labor, argued that the behavior of the AFL Executive Council was driving the federal locals into the CIO and, although he did not belong to a federal local, he was "certainly desirous of retaining that great membership."[59] Many militant federal locals like Osman's and those in auto, steel, rubber, and other industries militantly supported the Committee and industrial unionism at the convention and in the intervening months. Doing so put them in direct opposition to the AFL.

In addition to speaking up for the CIO and the rights of federal locals, Osman's position on racism and fascism in the United States and his dedication to organizing black workers also distinguished him as "CIO" at the 1936 AFL convention. Certainly not all of the federal (soon to be CIO) locals demanded that the AFL force its locals to desegregate, to organize African American workers, or to take a stand against the Ku Klux Klan and the Black Legion as he did. The first non-Jewish member the WDGW organized was an African American "porter" (the kind of porter who sweeps and cleans stores) named Alexander Miles in 1935. Osman recalled being very proud of Miles's membership because he and the union's early members were "eager to prove that we had ideals of brotherhood and equality . . . we went out of our way to honor him and fight for him to make progress."[60] This dedication made the union "progressive" in 1935.

The union was at this point still very small, under one thousand members, most of them Jewish men working in wholesale shops and some warehouses. When it launched major organizing drives over the period 1937–41, the racial and ethnic composition of the union changed to reflect its commitment to organizing black workers who would constitute about one-third of the union's membership (see the following chapter). As A. Philip Randolph and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) found, advocating racial equality proved just as threatening to the AFL Executive Council as did supporting industrial unionism. Delegate Meyers argued that the AFL's policies were not only designed to weaken the federal locals but also to prevent "progressive" resolutions from being introduced.[61]

When Arthur Osman demanded at his first AFL convention in 1936 that the organization address the rampant racism that existed within the United States, he clearly stood with the BSCP and other federal locals in challenging the power structure that existed in the AFL. The AFL was already on the defensive about maintaining segregated locals. It hesitated to organize in the mass production industries because of a general mistrust of the workers and the organizers in those industries, not the least of that mistrust generated by the fact that those workers were not Anglo-Saxon, skilled craftsmen.

Osman's pronouncements on fascism and on racism also fit squarely within Communist Party rhetoric of this time period. As Osman urged the delegates at the convention to support efforts in Spain, many members of the Communist Party were preparing to go to Spain as part of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to fight alongside the Loyalists in an effort to prevent Francisco Franco from gaining power. One historian argues that nothing increased the Communist Party's prestige in the United States among liberals as much as the Communists' "willingness to fight against Franco." That willingness "was dramatic evidence of the Party's commitment in the war between democracy and fascism."[62] When Osman heard Green advise the AFL locals to guard against fascism and did not hear Green mention the situation in Spain he took the opportunity to clarify the issue and ally himself with the Communist Party.

At that same convention, Osman denounced the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the Black Legion. During the 1920s, the CP had developed its program for Negro equality around the idea that the United States, as an imperialist nation, had colonized Negroes in America. The theory of "internal" colonization enabled the Communists to see the experiences of Negroes in the U.S. South as no different from those of Negroes in Africa or the West Indies. With that theory established, the Communists built a campaign around the idea of Negro "self-determination." Always focused on a worldwide workers' revolution, Communists argued that self-determination meant that black

Americans had the "right to establish their own state [and] erect their own government" if they so chose.[63]

The Communists' program of self-determination had resulted in its adopting an aggressive agenda for black Americans. In the 1928 presidential election, the Workers Party (renamed the Communist Party in 1929) platform called for the abolition of all segregation; the enactment of federal lynching laws; the integration of the armed services; a guarantee of equal employment opportunities; better and integrated public accommodations; and the enforcement of voting rights. In a campaign tour through the South, William Z. Foster, the Workers Party's presidential candidate, called his party the "champion of the oppressed Negro race." Despite the fact that these demands became the centerpiece of the progressive labor movement and the civil rights movement in later years, in 1928 they received little widespread support especially since the platform was put forth by a group of white intellectuals (despite the label, the Workers Party agenda was driven in this period by Marxist theorists). After the onset of the Depression, however, the Communists' agenda gained some currency.[64] Osman's thinking on race-based inequality was clearly influenced by the Communist Party's analysis.

As the Depression forced liberal middle-class groups, both black and white, to pay attention to the working class, the CP hoped the climate would enable it to build alliances. To make itself more appealing, the Communist Party dropped its aggressive colonialist critique and its "Self-Determination in the Black Belt" slogans of the late 1920s. Instead, it discussed Negro equality strictly in terms of voting rights, employment discrimination, and the denial of civil rights. As the Communist Party softened its stance, left-oriented liberals began to aggressively criticize the "fascist" policies of the Roosevelt administration. Within the context of the Depression, the CP, labor unions, and liberal organizations found common ground. The creation of the NNC offers an example of the ways in which events came together to produce an unlikely alliance spearheaded by the Communist Party. At the founding convention of the NNC in 1935, A. Philip Randolph, elected president of the organization, offered a critique of American capitalism that mirrored Arthur Osman's and the WDGW's position.

By 1936, with the CIO firmly established, John Brophy and Allan Haywood, a member of the UMW and a close ally of John L. Lewis, encouraged Arthur Osman to "quit the AFL." Osman met with Haywood and Brophy when they were in New York in the spring of 1937.[65] Although the details of the process of "quitting" the AFL are not clear, Osman's Local 19932 probably stopped paying dues to the AFL at that point and simply remained, technically, unaffiliated.

After the meeting with Brophy and Haywood, Osman met two other militant organizers, David Livingston and Phil Manheim, who were organizing wholesale establishments in the textile and shoe industries. In 1937, the three got together and decided it would be better to organize wholesalers in all industries under one umbrella rather than have separate wholesale unions in each industry. Livingston brought with him fifty or sixty textile wholesalers who operated with the designation "Local 65." Of the three, Osman's union provided the bulk of the new union's membership. He brought 975 members operating under 123 contracts (151 of the union's members were unemployed). Most of the firms were located on the Lower East Side. But the union had also attracted members who worked in various wholesale establishments farther Uptown. Osman's 975 members joined with Livingston's 50 or so and the small number Manheim brought with him to create Local 65 of the Wholesale Employees of America with approximately 1,000 members in the summer of 1937. Livingston recalled that the three thought of themselves as organizers in the distribution industry, like "teamsters without the truckers," meaning that they tried to organize the people who had a hand in moving the goods through the city, in wholesale shops and warehouses, after they were made.[66]

David Livingston had, like Osman, been organizing wholesale shops, textile (fabric) though rather than apparel, in New York. Only twenty-two years old when he joined Osman in 1937, the Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, native had been working part-time as a shipping clerk in a wholesale textile "distributorship" and majoring in pre-law at Columbia when he decided to work full-time as a union organizer. At the same time, the Depression encouraged anti-Semitic hiring and admittance policies in other sectors of the economy, blunting young Jews' ability to move up the ladder. Medical and law schools tightened up their "quotas" so that the number of Jewish students admitted, especially to private schools in New York, dropped steadily throughout the Depression. Rather than submit to a "character examination," designed to limit the number of Jews admitted to law school, Livingston decided to pursue labor organizing. He had already been leading anti-Hitler demonstrations on Columbia's campus when he led the eight people who worked at the textile distributorship out on strike.[67]

Livingston quickly moved on. By 1936, as the head of Local 2269 of the United Textile Workers (UTW), he was organizing other textile wholesale shops and "converters" and "jobbers" in the silk and rayon industries as part of the drive initiated by the CIO's Textile Workers Organizing Committee. The UTW was a long-dormant arm of the AFL that was in the process of being revitalized by the Committee. Like AFL traditionalists at the national level, the older, native-born UTW leaders had been "at a loss" since the 1920s about what to do with the radical "wobbly inspired" immigrants who comprised the bulk of textile workers on the eastern seaboard.

Livingston was part of the CIO's Textile Workers Organizing Committee's effort to revitalize unionization attempts in this segment of the labor force. Converters were people (or very small two- to three-person "companies") who bought fabric directly from fabric mills, washed it, dyed it, and "converted" it into fabric that was then sold cheaply to jobbers. Jobbers, again either as individuals or as part of small two- to three-person establishments, sold the "converted" finished fabric to wholesale shops or bought excess fabric directly from the mills and sold that to the wholesale shops. Livingston's organizing style mirrored Osman's. His goal was to organize all the people working in the textile wholesale shops, the converters, and the jobbers, all located within a four-block area in Midtown and all working for small establishments. He had successfully organized about four hundred people by 1937, the wholesale segment of which became part of Local 65. Livingston believed he was a part of a social and economic movement in the 1930s and joked that he, as a union organizer, "got to tell lawyers what to do." In any case, union organizing became a viable option for young men like Osman and Livingston in the 1930s, and the CIO offered them a chance to be a part of a movement.[68]

Local 65 needed a parent-affiliate. The status, "federal local," was a process by which the AFL had minimized the new, industrial unions created by Section 7a. The CIO, however, intended that these "federal" locals provide the backbone of the industrial/mass production sector of the labor movement. As such, each local was integrated into a larger body that represented one of the mass production industries. Whereas the AFL organized plumbers, carpenters, and masons, the CIO organized in the rubber, steel, textile, and auto industries. Local 65, however, presented the CIO with a challenge. After the merger spearheaded by Manheim, Livingston, and Osman, Local 65 contained sales clerks, salesmen, warehouse workers, truck drivers, bookkeepers, and other people. The only thing that linked them was the fact that they performed these jobs for wholesale establishments. In CIO fashion, then, it made sense to organize the wholesale industry rather than the occupational categories "salesmen," "clerks," "warehousemen," or "truck drivers" (the AFL already had a Teamsters union). Indeed, Manheim, Livingston, and Osman had done just that. At this point, however, the CIO had not established a larger wholesale section. Allan Haywood, John Brophy, and Sidney Hillman exchanged some ideas. One option would have been for Local 65 to remain affiliated with the textile branch of the CIO. Hillman, head of the ACWA and of the CIO's Textile Workers Organizing Committee, was reluctant. Although he was organizing textile shops in the Northeast, he argued he would find it difficult to call 1,500 of his workers out on strike to support the efforts of a two-person wholesale establishment.[69]

Another approach suggested by Haywood and Brophy would have been for Local 65 to ride the coattails of New York City–based longshoremen who were considering creating an East Coast version of Harry Bridges' longshoremen and warehousemen's union on the West Coast. Bridges's West Coast union had just pledged its support for the CIO (it would become the ILWU in the summer of 1937), was left-oriented, organized warehousemen, and was committed to organizing black and immigrant workers. But John Ryan, leader of the East Coast's ILA, a longtime AFL affiliate, presided over one of the most corrupt, racketeer-ridden unions in the country. Ryan went so far as to call Bridges a "punk" when Bridges came to New York in 1936 and 1937 to encourage an ILWU-type organization on the East Coast. There was strong rank-and-file support for an East Coast ILWU from Italian dockworkers, but that movement was squashed in the summer of 1939, when Pete Panto, "their own Harry Bridges," vanished mysteriously. Both Livingston and Osman thought their new Local 65 would meet a similar fate, not being able to survive the power the ILA wielded on the East Coast. Local 65 drew inspiration from Bridges's union throughout its history, reporting on its successes and instituting a hiring hall that mirrored the ILWU's.[70]

Another option surfaced when Samuel Wolchok led a group of people out of the RCIPA-AFL and joined the CIO. Haywood suggested that Local 65 join the new Retail Clerks branch of the CIO. Osman and Livingston agreed. Local 65 affiliated with Wolchok and they renamed the new CIO union the United Retail and Wholesale Employees of America (URWEA) in 1937, beginning a long and tumultuous relationship with Wolchok. Even at the outset, Osman recalled that Wolchok "double crossed, he was a thief, he was a liar, he was a Red baiter, he was more interested in organizing from the top, sweetheart contracts, and we had a contest with him from the very first day."[71]

Despite trouble brewing with Wolchok, Osman found common ground with disparate groups of people interested in building a working-class movement. Osman's *New Voices* reprinted excerpts from A. Philip Randolph's address at the 1936 AFL convention; printed articles on the oppressive conditions black workers experienced in the South; informed its readers about the rise of fascism in Germany, Italy, Spain, and Ethiopia; and criticized both the New Deal and the AFL for not doing more. The CIO, in these same years, pushed the AFL Executive Council to support unionization in the mass production industries, those industries that employed semiskilled and unskilled workers from immigrant and African American backgrounds. The Communist Party sought alliances with left-leaning liberals, remained critical of the New Deal and the AFL for not doing more to address the economic exploitation experienced by the poorest segment of the population, and fought the capitalist/fascist regimes then emerging throughout the world at odds with its goals of creating a workers' state. Events looming in the near future, namely, the creation of the separate CIO, the Communist "takeover" of the NNC, and the Stalin-Hitler pact, made Osman and the wholesale workers, the CIO, Randolph, and the CP move in different directions, all of which affected the ways in which Osman's Local 65 organized black workers. But why did these men turn to union organizing? Like Livingston, many of these people had hoped to go on to college, attend medical school, or own their own businesses. When the Depression stifled those aspirations, they turned their attention to gaining respect within the work environment in which they found themselves.

2

Getting beyond Racial, Ethnic, Religious, and Skill-Based Divisions

> "'Arthur if you organize all the warehousemen, where is the boss going to take the money? If you organize just the platform men and the drivers we can get 'em a good raise but if you got to divide the pie with everybody, you're just going to get crumbs.'"[1]
>
> —Mike Cashell, Teamsters Union

At the time of its CIO-affiliation, Local 65 was predominantly Jewish and had organized people at all skill levels in small wholesale shops on the Lower East Side. In 1937 and 1938, the union began to target people who worked in "dead-end" jobs, first in the garment industry in Osman's old stomping grounds on the Lower East Side, then branching out to other industries in Midtown, in Uptown, and increasingly in Brooklyn and the Bronx, the goal being to bring low-wage male and female workers, including blacks, more Jews, and immigrants, into the union. The strategy put the union at odds with others in the city, particularly the ILGWU, the ACWA, and the Teamsters, which all laid claim to the low-wage workers Local 65 organized. It also forced the union to develop strategies designed to confront the ethnic, racial, geographic, religious, racial, and work-related divisions that made it difficult for its members to find common ground.

Local 65's organizers were pushing the envelope. Neither an AFL-style approach nor a CIO-style approach, Local 65's alternative unionism resembled more of the IWW's style of class-based organizing. Targeting people in "dead-end" jobs seemed foolish to other organizers, as Mike Cashell's comment above indicates. The problem was that both the AFL's and the CIO's strategies, even when combined, still left thousands of "unskilled" workers unorganized, fighting for the "crumbs" that were left over. Local 65 began to target the least skilled workers, whether clerks or sweepers in the garment industry or box assemblers in the printing industry, shop by shop, warehouse by warehouse, area by area, regardless of the industry in which they worked.[2]

The union's new tack put it at odds with the CIO's "industrial unionism." Osman argued with John Brophy about exactly how to define it. Using people who worked in warehouses as an example, Osman argued that it made little sense to award jurisdiction over the warehouse workers who distributed rubber products to the union that represented the workers who produced the rubber products in the factories. The rubber warehouse was likely to be located in a completely different city or state. Using this logic, Osman argued that unions should organize the rubber plant and every worker in and around that plant, "irrespective of the crafts or of the nature of the work." Likewise, the rubber warehouse, he argued, was likely to be located near other warehouses holding other commodities. Why not, Osman argued, organize all warehouses into the warehousemen's union or, even better, into a distributive workers' union along with the delivery drivers who transported the material to and from the warehouse and the office workers who coordinated their efforts? Osman took more of a geographical, or what the union called an "area," approach. This strategy offered the small shops and warehouses Local 65 organized in New York more strength.[3] Osman thought the CIO carried its industrial approach to extremes like the craft approach used by the AFL; its strategy divided warehouse workers from each other and weakened their collective strength.[4]

The CIO had decided in the period 1937–38 to organize by industry rather than by area. After the CIO had established itself as a functioning rival to the AFL, its offices were flooded with applications from small unions like Osman's from across the country. At that point, the CIO had to institute some kind of structure. As Osman's disagreement with Brophy showed, the CIO chose to organize along industrial lines. Thus the CIO chartered organizations like the USWA, the UAW, and the URW, a decision Osman argued was not much different than the "trade union practices followed by the AFL."[5]

As he argued with Brophy, Osman realized Local 65 had made a similar mistake. "In spite of our apparent recognition of the importance of unity among all wholesale and warehouse workers in and around the Port of New York," Osman argued, "many of us, by separating the plants in accordance with the commodities they handled, continued to obstruct unity among all wholesale and warehouse workers within the various sub-divisions of the city of New York."[6] For example, in 1938, before the change to an area structure, organizers were in charge of warehouses and wholesalers in the "dry goods, white goods, textile, shoes, jewelry, woolens, warehouse, ribbon, general, and miscellaneous" industries.[7] The new policy of "Organizing the Shop Next Door" resulted in 2,600 new members in 1939 and 3,000 new members in 1940. Prior to adopting that approach, the union had experienced a surge in growth of 2,500 immediately after its affiliation with the CIO in 1937 and then slowed to organize only 1,200 members in 1938.[8]

While the union's organizers still targeted the wholesale shops and their associated warehouses, by 1939 the union organized all the small manufacturers, retail shops, and their associated warehouses sandwiched in between, one dense New York City block to the next. The union encouraged its shop stewards to think of the area around the shop he or she worked in as a neighborhood. "Every block where there are members must become a union fortress," *New Voices* explained.[9] The union divided Manhattan into four territories: Uptown (north of 34th Street and west of Sixth Avenue), Midtown (everything between Fourteenth and Thirty-fourth Streets, and the section above Thirty-fourth Street east of Sixth Avenue), Downtown (the area below Fourteenth Street and west of Lafayette Street), and the East Side (the area below Fourteenth Street and east of Lafayette Street). The union's three hundred shop stewards, not the union's paid organizers, were expected to "actively carry through the U.W.W.E.'s 1939 organizational drive" and make sure current contracts were enforced.[10] Once the union adopted this organizing strategy, it became a "catch-all" union. Osman explained: "We were known as a number, a catch-all union . . . whoever was not wanted by anyone else was welcomed by us—we wanted to organize everybody and we were organizing them on a physical basis; our whole concept was that the capacity to win depends on the capacity to concentrate numbers in one spot."[11]

Asked specifically where his desire to organize people in dead-end jobs came from, Osman responded by criticizing the organizational strategies of the ILGWU and the ACWA. He accused the ILGWU, one of the most powerful unions in the country, of committing what he called a type of "unconscious racism." For Osman, unconscious racism was akin to what we refer to now as "institutionalized racism." It's a kind of racism, Osman said, that was embedded in the way in which the ILGWU was set up. "It's so much a part of their makeup that they are not even aware of it and they would deny it." He explained that the ILGWU's goals were focused not on the people but on the industry. The union was concerned with "their industrial image, with their statesmanship," and not, Osman argued, "with people."[12]

Osman went on to speculate that the differences between Local 65 and the ILGWU's approaches were attributable to the fact that he and Local 65's early organizers were all Jewish immigrants; were acquainted with Socialist, Communist, and Marxist philosophies; and were basically dedicated "to the elevation of people."[13] The ILGWU had failed to develop, as Local 65 had, at least according to Osman, around the "revolutionary concern for the dignity of the human being."[14] By the late 1960s, when Osman offered his critique, the ILGWU had been criticized for becoming a bureaucratic institution whose leaders were out of touch with the rank-and-file. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, however, the ILGWU's revolutionary beginnings and its Jewish immigrant leadership (along with that of the ACWA) made it more similar to Local 65 than any other union organizing in New York at the time. The ILGWU did not, however, focus on organizing people in dead-end jobs on an area basis, and the ACWA's Sidney Hillman had rejected the idea of a Local 65 merger.

New York's warehouses were more likely to employ unskilled than skilled workers, increasingly black men and women in the 1920s and 1930s and Puerto Rican men and women after World War II. Most of the wholesale establishments in New York were small; the larger among them were able to run their own warehouses in an attempt to better control sales. Warehouse employees constituted 19.5 percent of all full-time employees in the "wholesale" industry nationally (over one-quarter of the nation's wholesale business occurred in New York state; New York City had the largest wholesale "industry" in the country). Warehouse workers were the lowest-paid full-time workers in the wholesale industry, below office and clerical workers.[15] These jobs then were filled more often by black men and women seeking some way out of domestic and custodial work. Osman said his own experiences with discrimination enabled him to identify with black workers and that he and the union's early organizers were attracted to the Negro community and Negro struggles because "we saw in them a reflection of our own struggles, especially in the early days." When he spoke at rallies in Harlem, he said he "felt at home there and I didn't speak to them as a white person to a black person."[16]

Osman also provided two, more practical, reasons why the union persisted in its commitments to organizing low-wage workers. First, Local 65's organizers felt that people in "dead-end jobs" needed the union most. As such, these people really appreciated the union and retained a great deal of loyalty to it. Furthermore, exploited workers were "better union people" because they had no illusions about becoming bosses or shop owners someday. Osman explained, "There were no illusions among the black workers, they were the best union people, basically, because of our revolutionary approach that most exploited people needed the organization."[17]

Local 65's members needed a reason to stay with the union once they were there. Building common ground among its members, who worked in hundreds of small shops and warehouses throughout the city, was crucial to the union's ability to retain a strong base. In order to do this, Osman argued that the union's headquarters had to become its members' "second home," a place people came to after a hard day's work. Within the union's first few years, Sol

Molofsky was appointed Local 65's recreation director. It was Molofsky's job to create that second home. His efforts brought several of the union's black organizers into the union.

Morris Doswell, the union's first black organizer, was initially attracted to the union because of the social gatherings and nightclub it sponsored. Not only did Doswell head down to the "Bible House" (the nickname of the union's second headquarters) to enjoy himself, he remembered appreciating the way he was treated when he was there. The union involved "black people in a normal way, there was nothing phony about it." It was at the union's headquarters that Doswell first met "some white people that appeared genuine." Indeed, Doswell became a regular, he explained, because of the way he was treated.[18]

Doswell recalled that he came in contact with Local 65 three times between 1937 and 1941 and finally became active first as an employee at a small wholesale shoe company called Midland Shoe and then through the Harlem chapter of the "Friends of 65." He had, as was discussed in chapter 1, become acquainted with the union during the period 1936–37. Sol Molofsky, the union's recreational director, worked as an electrician at the Felsworth shoe shop where Doswell also worked in the display department. Molofsky told Doswell about the union and Doswell went down to the union headquarters, where he was "encouraged" by the way in which black people were involved in the union "in a normal way." Doswell then became "interested in organizing Negroes" and frequented the union headquarters to socialize with people there despite the fact that he was not yet a member. At that point, however, he took a job in Jersey City. When he came back to New York three years later, taking a job at the Midland Shoe Company, he reestablished contact with Sol Molofsky and Local 65. Doswell organized the few workers at Midland, the bookkeeper, and clerks, all of whom were Jewish and "did everything" in shipping and receiving, resulting in a contract between Midland and Local 65 at the end of 1940.[19]

Doswell was an integral part of the union's "Friends of 65" program. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, David Livingston recalled, the leadership decided to "speed up the struggle for equal rights and bring minority groups into the union."[20] Doswell remembers, too, that the "Friends of 65" was an outgrowth of a "conscious effort based upon a stated goal that the leadership of the union made at the time to really recruit Blacks and Hispanics, mostly Blacks, at that time into the union." Organizers from Local 65 began renting a hall every weekend in Harlem. Local 65 provided food, drink, and conversation and, during the course of the evening, talked with Harlemites about the union and particularly about its hiring hall. Molofsky and Doswell encouraged people to come down to the union's headquarters the following Monday. Those people who were interested would come down to the headquarters, pay a nominal fee, and enter the union's hiring hall.[21]

The union's hiring hall, established in early 1938, was modeled after the ILWU's hiring hall on the West Coast.[22] The ILWU had developed its "low man out" policy that was designed to ensure that everyone, regardless of race or ethnicity, had access to the good-paying jobs the union's contracts provided. It was certainly not a failsafe mechanism and depended on each local's aggressive use of the hiring hall to combat racial discrimination, but it was a model that Local 65 manipulated to fit the conditions it faced in New York's shops and warehouses.[23] Other unions, of course, used their hiring halls to ensure that black workers, immigrants, or, later, women were denied access to union jobs. This was especially true in New York City's construction industry and on the docks.

Local 65 used its hiring hall to challenge employment discrimination by attempting to integrate both predominantly "black" jobs as well as predominantly "white" jobs. An example of the former occurred early in the union's history. Local 65 had organized most of the firms on Orchard Street, one of which was L&B Hosiery. L&B, Osman recalled in a 1968 interview, had "tried to put on airs of being a very dignified and fancy place and they wanted to hire a porter" (in this case, a kind of custodian). Osman explained that, through the hiring hall, Local 65 sent L&B numerous white men to fill the position. In each case, the company refused to hire the white porter. Local 65 responded to L&B by arguing that "if a job is open for all you don't have to discriminate against blacks by hiring them specifically for that purpose."[24] The hiring hall was usually used to integrate traditionally "white" jobs. A company under contract with Local 65 was required to hire through the union's hiring hall (a system called the "closed shop"). As with the L&B case, the union would send a black worker, the company would refuse to hire him, and the union would send another black worker and tell the company to "hire a Negro." If the employer persisted, Local 65 would ask the employer to supply specific reasons why it refused to hire the people the union had already sent. At that point, if there was no merit to the non-hire, the employer would often back down. Or, if for some reason there was merit, Local 65 would send another black worker and the company would finally give up and hire the black worker.[25] Local 65 would use these early "test runs" more aggressively as it organized more black workers through the early 1940s.

Because of the way Local 65 organized, the union's leaders were especially dependent on the full support of the union. Osman hoped the union's members would enthusiastically support his vision. If they did not, he and the Executive

Council would talk them into believing in that vision—they had to. If a small shop of twenty black workers, for instance, decided to quit the union, Local 65 would lose the whole shop. According to Osman, the union needed to respond to the needs of its members (or convince them of their needs) perhaps more than other unions because of the union's sheer dependence on them. In the case of a strike, according to Osman, if the union did not have "100% participation . . . we were licked."[26] Local 65 was also extremely decentralized. With hundreds of small shops and warehouses and few members working with one another, Osman and Livingston were able to exert tight control over the messages union members, in disparate locations, received.

The union consistently displayed this odd mixture of "interconnected rights and obligations; of opportunities and sanctions; of voluntarism and compulsion," all based on Osman's vision.[27] While "65ers" recalled their admiration for both Arthur Osman and his arrogant tendencies, they agreed that he was an inspirational leader and a "brilliant" organizer. Sam Neuberger, Local 65's lawyer from 1943 until 1952, estimated that Osman was one of the most "ingenious and efficient organizers in all of the trade union movement." "Nothing," Neuberger claimed, "of any consequence took place unless Arthur did it."[28] Nicholas Carnes, one of the founding organizers of Local 1250 of the Department Store Workers Union and a close affiliate of Osman and Local 65, purposefully modeled Local 1250 after Local 65 because he admired the "65s'" structure. Carnes recalled that Osman was, at the same time, nice and warm as well as insecure and tough. Osman expected all of the union's members, organizers, stewards, and the rank-and-file to devote a great deal to the union and he was able to get that sort of devotion from most. As Jack Paley recalled, if Osman asked you to do it, you did it.[29] Sam Kovenetsky, president of Local 1-S of the Department Store Workers Union, kept Osman at arm's length because of his overbearing tendencies. Unlike Carnes, he chose not to ally closely with Osman when the opportunities arose because he was concerned about the amount of autonomy he would be able to retain in the relationship.[30] Moe Foner (who started his union career with Local 1250, moved to Local 65 to head its social and recreational activities department, and then moved to Local 1199 in 1952) explained that even though union leaders might "meet together on a problem," nevertheless a certain amount of competitiveness developed among them. "Arthur Osman has a certain amount of arrogance to his leadership," Foner explained, "and when you become successful, you become arrogant, too."[31]

Osman's mixture of genius, arrogance, and toughness became institutionalized in many of the union's policies and in its very structure. For example, once Local 65 grew large enough, Osman developed a governing structure for the union that was designed to maximize rank-and-file participation while, at the same time, allow the leadership to exert a great deal of control and discipline over the membership. Local 65 (and Local 1250 in its attempt to model itself after Local 65) was run by an Executive Council. The Executive Council, a very small group of four to five people, consisted of the president, vice president(s), secretary-treasurer, and (later) regional (or area) directors. Despite the changes in posts over the period 1937–54, the flow of information remained consistent. Rank-and-file members, or the "crew" as they were called, at all union shops elected a co-worker to be their union representative, or "steward." Originally Osman intended that there be a steward for every three members although that ratio increased over the years.

The union's General Council was made up of all of the elected stewards and was presided over by the Executive Council. The relationship between the steward and his co-workers, or crew, was supposed to constitute the union's foundation but in reality it was always run more from the top down. Each month the Executive Council and General Council met and exchanged information. Executive Council members and stewards discussed items on an agenda prepared in advance by the Executive Council. Next, stewards, particularly those in shops experiencing difficulties, discussed the shop's status and related any concerns of the crew. More discussion followed. The following week, the stewards met with the crew and summarized what had been discussed at the General Council meetings.[32] Stewards also attended mandatory Saturday morning meetings at which Osman, Livingston, Jack Paley, or Esther Letz would deliver lectures on trade union democracy, the history of the labor movement, or the relationship between capital and labor, among other topics. Many organizers recalled that they got their education in the union.[33]

Theoretically, rank-and-filers had easy access to their union representative, were kept well informed about what was going on in the union, and had the ability to influence union policies. At times the system did indeed work in the way it was intended, but it also lent itself to a type of paternalistic, educational approach that, one sociologist argued, bordered on indoctrination. Nevertheless, meetings were held very frequently and, combined with the union's other rank-and-file-oriented policies, including the direct dues-payment policy and majority vote discussed in chapter 1, meant that rank-and-file participation was institutionalized to a significant degree.[34]

Local 65 grew dramatically in the period 1937–41. After the union initiated its organizer-training program and an area-based organizing structure in the period 1939–40 that helped the union organize, at its peak during its "7 in 7" (seven thousand members in seven months) drive, more than one thousand members joined the union each month. The 1937–41 drives brought in workers from the warehouses in New York City and dramatically altered the racial and ethnic composition of the union. It then launched its "10,000 by June of 1941" and "7 in 7" drives. Jack Paley recalled that the drives of 1941 "came about because of quotas from below." Shop stewards, in conjunction with the organizers, calculated how many people in neighboring shops they could organize in their respective areas. Once the numbers were added up, the union determined that goal of ten thousand could be met by June 1941 and coordinated its efforts toward that number.[35] While Local 65 had decided to organize warehouses as early as 1937, by 1939 the drives were not limited to any particular type of shop. Thus, although it targeted warehouses, it also attempted to organize establishments located near the warehouses (and the wholesale shops) it organized. The union had developed from organizing wholesalers to organizing wholesalers and warehouses, and finally to organizing anybody and anywhere it could with the intent of picking up the people other unions ignored.

By the end of 1939, the union boasted a membership of close to 4,000 members, an increase of 3,000 over the previous two years. In every month of 1940, Local 65 increased its membership by an average of 300 people per month. Motivated to continue, the union pushed the 10,000-member goal to the period 1940–41. Harry Wilson and Sol Molofsky, both shop stewards, developed a theme song for the drive. *New Voices* printed pictures of union members singing at the union's headquarters:

> Now all you guys get on the move,
> And all you gals get in the groove,
> There's so much work to be done,
> 10,000 MEMBERS BY '41.
>
> Let's organize shops one and all,
> They may be big and they may be small,
> Let's help others to be one of
> 10,000 MEMBERS BY '41.
>
> Now all get in step, and let's get hep,
> Like the gaters do in jive.
> No jitterbug can cut his rug,
> 'Till his quota's filled for 65.
>
> Better conditions and better pay,
> We want all to share, so whatta ya say,
> Don't dare stop until we've won
> 10,000 MEMBERS BY '41.[36]

The target was still warehouses in various industries, but if the five people who worked in a small shop down the street next to the warehouse were interested in joining, they were encouraged to do so.

Instead of General Motors, Ford, or Hormel, Local 65 negotiated with "ten firms in the wholesale and warehouse industry engaged in the distribution of corrugated paper products located in Bush Terminal, Red Hook, Long Island City and Glendale." The union referred to the members affected by these negotiations as "800 corrugated paper warehousemen" and only secondarily named the actual companies for which the warehousemen worked and with which the union was negotiating. For example, when the eight hundred warehousemen elected a rank-and-file committee to represent them in the negotiation process, *New Voices* listed the committee members' names and the companies they worked for, including D. L. and D., Arch-Bilt, Manufacturers, Colonial, Brite, Empire, Hercules, and Romeo of Interstate.[37] Occasionally Local 65 attempted to organize a larger company's warehouses like Lerner, Sears, or Revlon (it succeeded in organizing Lerner and Revlon during World War II and in 1946, respectively) but the bulk of the union's membership worked at and contracts were negotiated with a variety of small establishments. The businesses on the whole were much smaller and less stable, paid lower wages, and were more likely to employ men and women of color.

Jack Paley recalled that, although the union started out Jewish and white, it consciously sought out neglected shops, those "not sufficiently large or important enough to be sought by the rest of the unions." For example, Paley explained that it organized the second-hand clothing shops and that it specifically sought them out because black workers staffed them. Likewise, the button shops in the textile industry had not been organized by either the ILGWU or the Textile Workers Union of America (TWU) so Local 65 targeted those shops, many of which employed black men and women. Corrugated was another industry that employed a significant number of black workers, Paley explained.[38] David Livingston, who was the union's organization director during the 1939–41 drives, remembered that the racial and ethnic composition of the union changed dramatically after it acquired the processing shops.[39]

People who joined the union and organized their shops in this period benefited from union representation. Paper warehousemen at Brite and Liberty corrugated had organized and signed their first contract by October 1940, adding forty-five new members to the union's rolls. The terms of the contract signed with Brite and Liberty were similar to those in the other eight shops previously signed: the minimum wage was raised from $12 to $18 per week, $2 general increases were negotiated, and the contract provided for vacations with pay, sick leave, and seniority rights.[40]

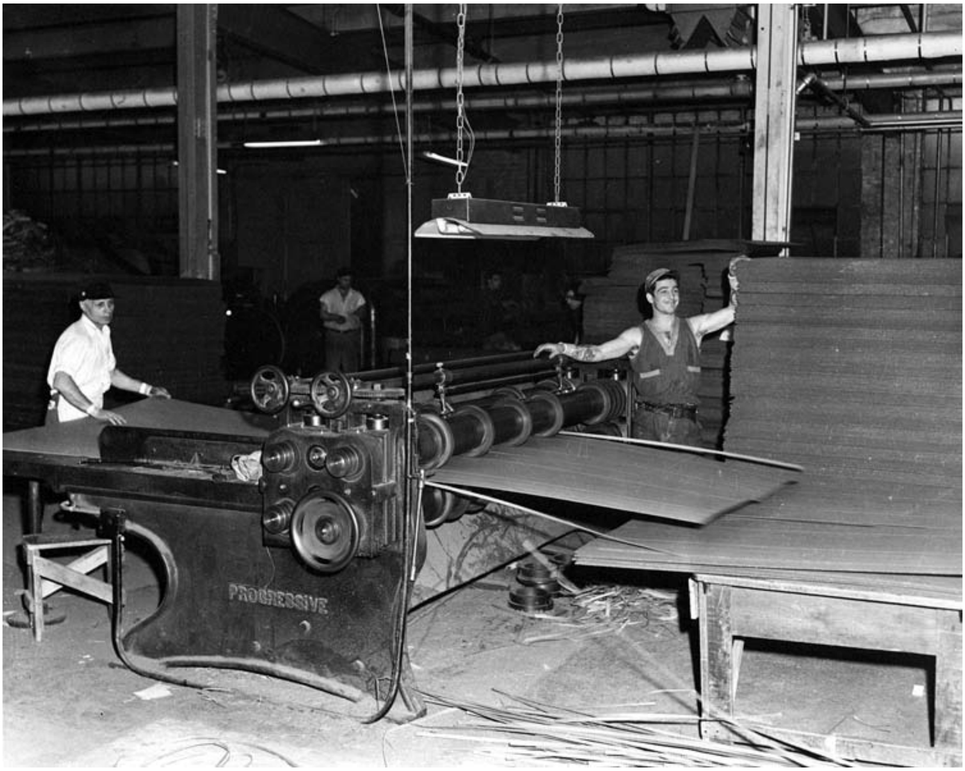

Figure 2. Two men manufacturing corrugated boxes in one of the small processing warehouses organized by Local 65. District 65 Photographs, Part 2, Photos 023, Folder 30, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

As the union began targeting industries that employed more ethnically and racially diverse workers, both men and women, it attempted to educate its still predominantly white, Jewish, and male base about the particular problems Negro workers faced. Although the union had published articles in its newspaper about the struggles confronting Negro workers in the South and publicized A. Philip Randolph's address to the 1936 AFL convention, until 1940, it had little to nothing to report on the activities of the union itself with regard to the organization of black workers. As the organizing drives of the period 1939–41 picked up, the union began discussing with the membership the benefits of organizing black workers. It developed programs designed to attract black workers to the union and it started using its hiring hall to desegregate some shops.

In 1940, Local 65 sent two delegates to the third NNC convention held in Washington, D.C., in April. The union's newspaper reprinted parts of the call issued by the NNC and explained to its members that the organization "clearly points out the dangers facing the oppressed sections of the American population in view of the war situation and the steady decline in employment opportunities." The NNC, the paper explained, in light of "the painful silence of the national administration and both leading parties toward the blight of Jim-Crowism, lynching and revived Ku Klux Klan terror . . . will give serious independent attention to the crisis which today threatens workers and farmers."[41]

George Davis, one of Local 65's two delegates to the convention, wrote an article about his experiences in Washington for the May 15 issue of *New Voices*. Davis detailed the history of the NNC and its agenda for the immediate future. The organization, he reported, was formed in 1935 to "deal with the special problems facing the Negro population as the most oppressed people in America":

> Deprived of the American right to vote, held in virtual slavery, employed at the most menial and lowest paid jobs, subject to false race prejudice, subject to lynch torture, the Negroes down South know what fascism is. They have been living under its yoke these many years.

Davis went on to inform his readers about the NNC's strategies for attacking these problems. First, he said, the NNC intended to publicize the "true" contributions of the Negro people to the American wars rather than those falsely depicted in movies like *Gone With the Wind* (which had recently won the 1939 Academy Award for Best Picture). It intended, Davis continued, to fight for the elimination of the poll tax and other violations of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, to "put an end to mob violence and every other fascist tendency which exists to undermine the social, political and economic security of the Negro people," and to promote the cooperation of Negro and white people to achieve these goals.[42]

After he reported the details of the convention, Davis asked rhetorically, "Why are we in Local 65 especially interested in the National Negro Congress?" He answered the question by explaining that Local 65, along with other CIO unions, has "always guaranteed equal rights to all members, regardless of race, creed or political beliefs." "If," Davis continued, "so few Negroes are members of our organization, it is because of discrimination on the part of employers." Davis argued that the only way to combat employer discrimination was to involve Negro members in every aspect of the union's activities. He concluded the report by inspiring the union's members to "in the spirit of the National Negro Congress and our Union constitution . . . cooperate together for our common welfare—Negro and white, Christian and Jew, native-born and foreign born . . . Let no false issues keep us apart."[43]

To bring more black workers into the union, Local 65 continued to target shops that employed black workers, it developed its "Friends of 65" program, and it utilized its hiring hall to force employers to hire black workers. The "Friends of 65" program "burst into being like spontaneous combustion or something" in February 1941, right in the middle of the union's big organizing drives. The program was designed as a Local 65 social club in which members of the union took it upon themselves to spread the word about, not only the union, but also the social, recreational, and welfare activities Local 65 sponsored. For $1 per year, members of the "Friends of 65" could use the facilities at the union's headquarters, attend community-based social events organized by the union, and receive a subscription to *New Voices*. Once fifty applicants from a community signed up, Local 65 issued them an official charter. Chapters of the "Friends of 65" had been organized in Brooklyn, Borough Park, and the Bronx almost immediately after the program was initiated. *New Voices* reported that after it publicized the formation of the first chapters at Borough Park and Brooklyn, "droves of Bronxites, Harlemites and Brownsvillites [came down] to the Recreation Department offices, clamoring 'Hey, What about us?'" Local 65, in typical fashion, required the "Friends" chapters to "operate consistently with weekly social activity." If the chapters succeeded in doing so, Local 65 intended to look into the possibility of setting up a kind of mini-headquarters, or a union-sponsored community center, at which gatherings and social activities could be held. "Just picture," *New Voices* proclaimed, "Local 65 social centers in every community throughout the city."[44]

The "Friends of 65" program was fairly successful in the years it operated (1941–48; it was not fully functioning in 1947–48). Sol Molofsky encouraged Morris Doswell to become deeply involved in the "Friends of 65" in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant. Doswell recalled that Molofsky also recruited Lillian White and Amy White (both African American, Lillian wrote a weekly column in *New Voices* beginning in the mid-1940s, and Amy White eventually became a dispatcher in the union's hiring hall), both from Harlem, and Doris Shaw (also African American; David Livingston called Ms. Shaw "one of our best organizers"[45]), from Brooklyn, to work on the "Friends of 65" programs in those areas. Arthur Osman, David Livingston, Jack Paley, and Ester Letz (the first woman on the union's Executive Council as secretary) made a "conscious effort" and a "stated goal," Doswell recalled, "to recruit Blacks into the union." Later the union would recruit Hispanics but, in the early 1940s, it concentrated on black workers, Doswell added.[46]

The "Friends of 65," Doswell argued, "played a major role in changing the ethnic and racial composition of the union." Every Friday night Doswell, White, and White would organize social gatherings at 310 Lenox Avenue (and between 125th and 126th Streets). The union provided food and entertainment and signed people up for both the "Friends of 65" and an orientation the following Monday evening. At the orientation, Molofsky and Doswell told people about the union and encouraged them to organize the shops where they worked. Those who were unemployed could build up "credits" by working for the union, either on picket lines or as volunteers in the union's various departments. Once a person accumulated twelve credits (about thirty-five to forty hours of work), he or she was eligible to register with the union's hiring hall. Doswell remembered signing up "75–100 people, sometimes less," every week at the Friday night gathering. The "Friends" programs in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant brought in 5,700 people in one year (1942–43). Not only, Doswell recalled, did people come for the social gatherings, they came because they were getting jobs through the hiring hall. Most of these jobs paid $20 or more per week, and some of the original "Friends of 65" recruits retained those same jobs for more than thirty years. As unbelievable as the numbers sound, Doswell explained that in those days, "you didn't have the selling job you have today—blacks were eager for union representation then . . . they hadn't had bad experiences with racket unions and sweetheart contracts" yet.[47]

At about the same time, the union began to use its hiring hall even more aggressively not only to employ recruits from the "Friends" programs but to step up its efforts to combat employment discrimination for its growing black membership. In February 1941, Murray Levine, who was active on the hiring hall's dispatching committee, wrote a letter to the Editor of *New Voices* about the situations in the Lane Bryant and Arthur Beir shops. In both cases, the employers refused to hire the Negro workers sent out by the hiring hall. At Arthur Beir, the foreman, "a Southerner," refused to hire the black applicants the union sent and "chose only from the white workers sent." Levine reported that, in both cases, due to the militancy of the workers at the shops, the employers were "compelled" to hire the Negro applicants. The solidarity expressed by Local 65 members at these shops, Levine argued, "will do a lot to strengthen our union by shattering the employers' efforts to weaken us by dividing our ranks."[48]

The following month, the union's hiring hall pressed three other employers to hire black workers. At Globe Sales, two positions for "floor girls" opened up. Globe contacted the union's hiring hall and the dispatcher sent a black woman and a white woman to fill the two spots. While the white woman was hired, the black woman was rejected because, said the employer on being questioned by the union, "workers themselves objected to working with Negroes." On hearing this, the workers, members of Local 65, objected to the statement and the dispatcher sent the "same girl." This time she was hired. A similar situation arose at Fuldheim and was successfully resolved after workers in the shop took "the proper action . . . [and] secured the job for the applicant."[49]

Challenging employment discrimination required the union's "white" (really Jewish, an important distinction in this time period) workers to make sacrifices. Occasionally, and especially after 1940, the union's hiring hall dispatchers asked its mostly Jewish members to give up their spots on the longest-unemployed list to black members in an effort to desegregate particular shops. In 1941, for example, Local 65 suspected that Synthetic Plastics (461 Eighth Avenue) was discriminating against Negro workers. Whenever an employer rejected an applicant sent by the hiring hall, the union asked the employer to provide reasons for the rejection. If employers provided sufficient reasons, the union would send a better-qualified applicant. In the case of Synthetic Plastics, however, even though the company supplied a reason for not hiring the black applicant, Local 65 suspected discrimination. The hiring hall dispatcher tested this theory by sending one black worker after another to fill the job. This action required white workers to give up their spots on the next-to-hire list. After the situation was explained to them (and having little choice in the matter), they relinquished their spots. Synthetic Plastics eventually hired one of the black applicants.[50]

Hiring halls were used by New York unions to control the labor supply in ways each union saw fit. "Closed shop" agreements, ones that required employers to hire only through the union's hiring hall and not from the open market, were common in New York, especially in the printing and construction industries and continued to spread until the Taft-Hartley Act, passed in 1947, made the "closed shop," but not technically the hiring hall (employers could choose after 1947 to hire through the union or from the open market), illegal.[51]

Until the Taft-Hartley provisions began to slowly erode their influence, the union's hiring hall dispatchers wielded a considerable amount of power and used it in ways that were consistent with the culture the union promoted. At the opposite ends of the spectrum from Local 65 was the ILA, which kept black workers off the docks and out of good-paying jobs for generations. A. Philip Randolph's 1959 attack on organized labor cited the maintenance of segregated locals, which were often kept in place by the strategic use of unions' hiring halls, as direct evidence of the ways in which the labor movement itself constituted yet another barrier to black Americans' economic progress.[52] Local 65 ran into some trouble with employers who resented the union's ability to dictate whom they could hire, especially after the war as Taft-Hartley's passage approached. During the Depression and into World War II, however, the hiring hall was a common method by which small New York establishments hired workers. For small five- to twenty-person businesses, hiring halls operated a bit like "temp" agencies in that they took the burden off employers to fill vacated positions.

Did white "65ers" object to the union's aggressive anti-discrimination policies? Surprisingly, Morris Doswell remembered that there was little conflict, probably because the majority of the union's "white" membership was Jewish and more sympathetic than "whites" in this period. Doswell said there was "absolutely no conflict, we were welcome . . . it was like a family, it was just fantastic." Doswell explained that, in those days, most of the shops to which the hiring hall sent a black worker when it was trying to make a point were 98 percent white and Jewish. When an employer sent the person back with a "cock-eyed reason or no reason," the union made it clear, Doswell recalled, that it thought that he (or she, usually he) was discriminating and he might as well hire the black person because that was all the union would send. When there was conflict, Doswell said the union would bring the shop together, explain what the union was trying to do, and usually the members would support the black worker and the union's efforts. In his estimation, it was the "white, Jewish, Italian, Irish, although I would say mainly Jewish, that had to come to the forefront in the shop fight to get blacks in on the job and this happened hundreds and hundreds of times."[53]

Most of the union's black workers and women came into the union during the 1941 drives and during World War II. How did Local 65 make black workers feel at home? Jack Paley said the integration of black and Hispanic workers did not present the union with much of a problem. Given the nature of race relations in the 1930s and 1940s, there would have been some potential for conflict. After all, this was a period during which the building trades locals across town maintained segregated locals. Paley explained that the new black union members elected stewards from their own shops to represent them, the implication being that black workers' link to the union was through another black worker employed in the same shop. That connection made black workers feel more welcome in the union. Paley explained, too, that the union had a mixed office staff. When black workers came to the union's headquarters and interacted with an interracial office staff, the union became a more welcoming place. It was also during this period that the union set up its various racial and ethnic committees: the Negro Affairs Committee, the Jewish Affairs Committee, the Irish Affairs Committee, and the Spanish Affairs Committee.[54]

David Livingston attributed the lack of conflict to differences in the contexts in which unions organized in New York versus the Midwest. Autoworkers, he said, dealt with a different racial legacy in the Midwest than did New Yorkers. He also explained that management in the basic industries (rubber, auto, steel) purposefully divided workers along racial and ethnic lines. In the small shops Local 65 organized, by contrast, management was not powerful enough to wield that degree of influence. In fact, Livingston claimed, "the union was always a more powerful influence in shaping policy and attitude than any individual management." Furthermore, Livingston explained, "Wherever leaders of unions consciously seek to create good racial relations we don't have Detroit . . . it becomes the thing to do . . . to be for unity, for justice."[55]

The union's members remembered only the slightest hints of overt racial antagonism within the union; they had to be prodded to think about instances when it surfaced. Jack Paley remembered that a certain amount of resentment developed under the surface among the old-timers, the dry goods workers. Some of them, he said, slowly stopped coming to the union's headquarters after black and Hispanic workers frequented the headquarters in greater numbers. Paley guessed that this was due to a combination of resentment and natural attrition. By the time black and Hispanic workers constituted a significant proportion of the union's membership (20 percent by the end of World War II), they would have been ten years older and less active.[56] Nicholas Carnes (head of Local 1250 representing department store workers) also recalled that a certain degree of resentment built up within the dry goods section of the union. He explained it not in terms of natural attrition but argued instead that the union gradually lost its identification with its Jewish immigrant dry goods worker-base. This occurred after David Livingston took over as the union's president in 1954 (he became acting president in 1950). Before then, Osman continually projected the union's Jewish immigrant heritage. Carnes described Osman as "fairly nationalistic in those days." When Livingston took over, he did not continue to project that heritage and Carnes recalled that resentment built up among the dry goods workers as a result.[57]

Morris Doswell remembered that the union attempted to establish community centers both in Harlem and on the Lower East Side in the early 1940s. The union had had a great deal of success holding meetings both at the union's headquarters and at various locations in "the communities." Depending on where they lived, members attended every third monthly meeting in the Bronx, Harlem, Long Island, Brooklyn, and other areas. At one point, the union sponsored "eighteen to twenty-one" different community meetings, two in Harlem. As a result, the union planned to set up one of its first community centers in either Harlem or Bedford-Stuyvesant but rethought the decision when Osman feared white members might "misinterpret" it. Instead, Local 65 opened the first community center on the Lower East Side, close to the union's headquarters. According to Doswell, that one "turned out to be a flop" and "the whole thing went by the wayside."[58]

The union encountered additional challenges as it expanded in the early 1940s. Because of Local 65's unique "area" approach to organizing, a number of jurisdictional conflicts arose between Local 65 and other unions that argued that Local 65 was organizing outside its jurisdiction. Affiliation with the AFL or the CIO provided somewhat of a guarantee that other locals would not compete for, or "raid," the areas or industries in which a particular union was attempting to organize. If a union held a CIO charter, it was assumed no other CIO unions would organize within its defined jurisdiction and that, if another union attempted to do so, the appropriate CIO body would handle the dispute. But, because of Local 65's "catch-all" and "area" approaches, disputes emerged.

Jurisdictional conflict arose, for example, when Local 65 began organizing Negro and Puerto Rican pushboys in the garment industry in the period 1938–39. Pushboys literally pushed hand trucks filled with garments through the streets of Manhattan from the warehouse to the retailer once wholesale sales were made. Local 102 of the ILGWU had not organized the pushboys but claimed jurisdiction over them once the workers showed an interest in Local 65.[59] Local 65 had actually been organizing the wholesalers in the interlining industries—which sold linings from wholesalers to retailers in the textile and garment industry—when the pushboys came to Local 65 asking to be organized. Local 65 agreed. Once Ross Berger of Local 102 heard, he and some members of Local 102 raided Local 65 and went to "65's" headquarters and literally roughed up Local 65's organizers. Osman explained that for the next few months, any union member who wore a green Local 65 button was "slugged" by a member of Local 102.[60] Eventually, Local 65 admitted that it had overstepped its bounds and agreed to let Local 102 organize the pushboys in a separate "pushboys" local.[61]

By March 1941, the "Friends of 65" programs were underway, the union's hiring hall was active, and the Security Drive ("10,000 by June of 1941") was into its eighth month. Local 65 was organizing between five hundred and six hundred new members each month. Having a great deal of momentum behind it, the Organization Department, headed by David Livingston, announced yet another drive, the "7 in 7" (seven thousand members in seven months) drive that he proposed would begin in June, after the Security Drive concluded. The immediate impetus for the "7 in 7" drive was the union's shrinking budget. In order for Local 65 to finance its organizing efforts, to fund the growing "Friends" programs and other social and recreational activities, to implement some of the welfare programs it was considering, and to maintain a large enough strike fund, the union needed to generate more money. Local 65 could raise money in a variety of ways: increase the dues scale by 5 cents, institute a union-wide tax, secure loans, or cut expenses. Or, Osman suggested, it could cut the union's expenses by 25 percent and put the remainder of the available money into a big organizing drive. If the union picked up its organizing efforts and increased its dues-paying members significantly in the first half of the fiscal year, the money generated from the dues would pay for the next six months of activities and for projected expenses. More members would also provide the added benefit of strengthening the union in general.[62]

The union's Executive Council's proposal, presented to the union's stewards at the March General Council meeting, was initially greeted by a "noticeable hush." Livingston outlined the program: 500 to 600 members per month currently; 750 per month in June, July, and August; and 1,000 to 1,250 per month from September through December. In order for it to work, the union needed its members, stewards, and organizers to continue at an even more intense pace. "Slowly," Irving Baldinger reported in the *Union Voice*, "the program began to sink in and slowly take hold of the stewards." Many of them, according to Baldinger, stood up and spoke about the ways in which they thought they could manage it and, as they did so, their enthusiasm grew. The general membership approved the program nine days later at the union's general membership meeting, held in two ballrooms of the Manhattan Center to accommodate the union's seven thousand members. The final approval was granted when the membership approved the union's budget for the year beginning May 1, 1941. The budget established a program that called for a 5 cent increase in dues, the setup of a $200,000 Defense Fund "through voluntary loans by the members," and the final approval of official bylaws for the "Friends of 65" program.[63]

While the details of the "7 in 7" drive were hammered out, June 1941 rolled around. The Security Drive had come upon its deadline, set a year earlier. Membership totals were in, and in June 1941, *New Voices* reported that the union had indeed met its goal. The union had organized more than 5,000 new members the previous year and now boasted a total membership of 10,042. In an article in *New Voices*, Livingston recalled the goals set by the stewards and Executive Council the year before: to add 5,000 new members, to "entrench our union in every section of the city," to organize at least 16 corrugated warehouses into the union, and to complete the organization of S. Blechman (the last "open shop" of the wholesale dry goods establishments in New York). It posted tremendous increases in its Uptown (1,280 new members), Downtown (1,012 new members), and East Side (1,436 new members) "areas." Local 65 had also gained members in areas it had not targeted the year before: Long Island and Brooklyn, contributing a combined total of 1,000 new members. Efforts were also underway to organize shops in the Bronx and New Jersey after people there expressed an interest in Local 65. The union organized 19 corrugated warehouses, surpassing its original goal of 16, and S. Blechman signed with the union after a long struggle.[64]

As Local 65 grew, its reputation as a strong, militant union preceded it. Employers in the shops Local 65 organized grew more combative. The union's newspaper during these months is full of blurbs about protracted struggles in various shops as the drive to organize more and more people into the union gained momentum. At any given moment, a number of strikes, lockouts, and heated negotiations were underway simultaneously. Most of the new shops that came into the union during the 1939–41 drives were small. Strikes, lockouts, and negotiations occurred on behalf of 10, 40, and 80 people. A few shops, like National Container, employed as many as 350 people and, in 1941, Lerner, with 550 workers, was the union's biggest single shop; the majority of Local 65's shops, however, employed 100 people or less.

At the end of each year, the union published a month-by-month progress report of the previous year's activities. The following is a sample of union activity in March 1940. In that month, an eight-week strike was settled at Marvlo, resulting in a 100 percent victory at the Bell Textile Co., a white goods firm. The contract stipulated a $22 per week minimum and general raises of $2 and $8. A number of contracts were settled with textile firms in the Uptown and Downtown areas, resulting in $4,000 in raises. "Closed shop agreements" were reached with 20 woolen jobbers. The union continued to organize in the beauty supply field and negotiated $3 raises for Hill Lalin workers. The Labor Board ordered the S. Blechman Co. to reinstate Tobias Gartner and Sidney Rosenthal to their former jobs with back pay to August 1937. Local 65 sent a formal complaint to Samuel Wolchok, president of the URWEA, about the raiding activities of Local 338 among wholesale food workers. An agreement at A. S. Beck was ratified, resulting in a raise in the average wage in the shoe warehouse to $31 per week. Alpine Fabrics and Garber-Eagle Oil signed "closed shop pacts." Display Equipment agreed to Local 65's terms after workers there orchestrated a three-day work stoppage. A strike against Simon, Healy, and Goldstein was its fourth week and any possibility of a settlement there seemed remote. In the one month of March 1940, Local 65 negotiated 18 new contracts and 21 renewals affecting 648 workers. The total number of working hours required of the people affected by contracts signed in March dropped by 75,568 annually (or an average of two hours per worker per week) and $62,781 in wages were won in increases.[65] One year later, the union reported a similarly frenzied pace of activity. Between March and April 1941, a walkout, following two earlier strikes, was taking place at the National Container Corporation. The Schiffenhaus Company in Newark (one of the union's first New Jersey locals, an attempt to stop the runaway shop phenomenon) refused to negotiate with the union even though the shop was 100 percent organized. The Breakstone Cheese Company locked its employees out after they joined the union. And Local 65 reported getting "the run-around" in contract negotiations with the New York Merchandise Company (NYMCO).[66]

In order to put pressure on the owners of these small shops, Local 65's members (those who worked in the shop, those from neighboring shops, and unemployed members waiting to be called by the hiring hall) engaged in mass picketing, wrote and distributed leaflets, and, when possible, boycotted the products handled by the offending company. For example, a strike was called in June 1940 at the Van Brode Milling Co. at 291 E. 133rd Street in the Bronx. Fourteen workers at the Van Brode warehouse went on strike after the owner attempted to fire a few of the workers because of union activity. Phil Manheim, one of Local 65's original founders and a Local 65 business agent in 1940, had attempted to intercede with little success so the fourteen workers at Van Brode voted to strike. In addition to picketing, the union put the products distributed by Van Brode on its "Unfair to Labor" list, encouraging all Local 65 members to boycott "Fluffies, Luckies, and Johnson's Cereal products." Local 65 hoped to sign Van Brode in order to generate organizing momentum among other warehouses in the Bronx.[67]

As the Van Brode strike dragged into its third week, Local 65 conducted negotiations with a number of paper warehouses in an effort to "organize all paper warehousemen." Local 65 was happy to report that negotiations were finally underway at Archbilt Corrugated Products, "one of the giant paper warehouses located in Bush Terminal." After Archbilt's ninety-three employees voted to demand union representation, their employer refused. Local 65 appealed to the State Labor Relations Board, which ruled in favor of the Archbilt employees, saying that the employees not only had the right to demand union representation but they also had the right to choose the union they wanted to represent them. They chose Local 65 and the negotiation process began. Struggles ensued in two other paper warehouses—Hercules and Empire—at the same time. At Hercules, as employees discussed union representation, the firm began to lay off a number of workers. Hercules workers orchestrated a work stoppage in response, which "compelled the firm to reinstate all those laid off and promise not to interfere with organization." When workers at Empire began talking about joining Local 65, the company quickly offered them representation through a company-organized union. This effort "was smashed," *New Voices* reported, "when the workers exposed this as a plan to prevent genuine organization into Local 65."[68]

After Local 65 began organizing extensively throughout the city, employers began offering competing unions "sweetheart contracts" in order to prevent Local 65 from organizing their shops. Once Local 65 made inroads with workers at a particular shop, an employer would contact one of Local 65's competitors and offer that union a deal if the union would claim jurisdiction over the shop Local 65 was organizing. Arthur Osman recalled that this phenomenon occurred frequently throughout the union's history and that, in fact, it was a "common practice" among ILGWU locals. He first became aware of the extent of it during the rapid organizing drives of 1939–41. He provided the example of the Coro Jewelry warehouse. The shop contained about three hundred workers, and by the time fifty or sixty of them had shown an interest in Local 65, Osman got a call from the head of Local 132 of the ILGWU claiming that Local 65 was encroaching on Local 132's territory. Osman did some research and found no evidence, he said, of Local 132 ever organizing Coro. Local 132 claimed it had and offered a contract to prove it, a contract that Osman implied was drawn up quickly between Local 132 and Coro. The contract, Osman explained, barred any election the competing unions might hold to enable the workers to choose whom they wanted to represent them. Despite the difficulties, Local 65 persisted and persuaded the workers to organize themselves into an "independent" union—giving the company the impression that it was neither an ILGWU local nor Local 65. To the employer, an independent union (an unaffiliated group of its employees) would be more easily manipulated. In addition, recognizing the independent union meant that Coro would not have to "pay off" the ILGWU local or deal with Local 65's stringent demands. Once Coro recognized the "independent" union and negotiated a contract with it, the independent union quickly affiliated with Local 65. "That's the way we do things," Osman recalled.[69]

Osman also recalled that the ILA-AFL, the ILGWU, and parts of the ACWA commonly participated in the practice of offering employers less rigorous contracts just to prevent Local 65 from representing a particular shop. Osman criticized Sidney Hillman (the president of the ACWA, the CIO's first vice president, and later labor's representative in FDR's war mobilization team), saying, although he did many "wonderful things" and made "tremendous contributions" to the labor movement, he nevertheless organized by trying to sell management on the fact that its workers should belong to a union. Osman argued that

> this basic philosophy of collaborating with management trying to convince them as a matter of right and of statesmanship that in the long run business will be better off—it just must lead to all sorts of corrupt practices and the natural

> consequence of this is that when another union comes into an industry, they are called in for help. The employer calls them and says, “can you save me from this impossible union that is going to double my wages?”[70]

The ILA, the ILGWU, the ACWA, and the Teamsters all participated in these types of activities. In the late 1930s and 1940s, Teamsters locals began following Local 65 around the city “selling protection against us.” “It was like,” Osman said, “they were getting paid off to keep us out . . . wherever we failed in organizing, they took credit for it and they got paid off.” For example, Local 65’s activity at the NYMCO (workers went out on strike twice and were locked out before the company signed with Local 65) during the Security Drive of 1940–41 had apparently scared a neighboring employer. The employer offered an associate of Osman’s in the Teamsters union $10,000 if he would prevent Local 65 from organizing his shop. Osman’s associate asked Osman to simply issue a leaflet to workers at this particular shop. Once the employer found out about the leaflet, his worst fears would be confirmed and he would pay the Teamster representative $10,000 to prevent further activity by Local 65, after which the Teamster representative would give Osman a cut for Local 65’s strike fund. Everyone would benefit. Osman refused. He offered this as additional evidence of the ways in which rival labor unions made money off Local 65’s organizing efforts. “It was obvious,” Osman recalled, “that a lot of people were making a wonderful living by merely trailing us and selling insurance against 65.”[71]

The sweetheart contract phenomenon, Osman recalled, was particularly prevalent in shops that employed Negro and Puerto Rican workers. Having less experience with labor unions and, in some cases suffering a language barrier, Negro and Puerto Rican shops were particularly susceptible to labor-management collusion. “The unions,” Osman explained, “are able to get away with it and the combination of the union and the employer are very difficult combinations to break.” Osman explained that the ILGWU’s and the ACWA’s top-down approach, their desire to become “statesmen” within the industries they represented and maintain good relationships with management, and their willingness to compromise workers’ gains for the benefit of this privileged position worked against the workers they represented, particularly Negro and Puerto Rican workers.[72]

After eighteen months of intensive organizing activity like that detailed above, Local 65 reached a membership of more than 16,000 by January 1942. Its “Friends of 65” programs were attracting more and more members into the union from nonwhite and non-Jewish backgrounds. The union’s hiring hall dispatchers placed Negro workers in firms that were overwhelmingly white and Jewish. Headlines between June and December 1941 read "D-2 Leads in 7 in 7 Drive: Campaign Clicking at Zell," "Neighborhood Groups Spur Wide Program on the Homefront," "65ers Plan to Dot The Community Map With Neighborhood Centers," "Where Good Neighbors Meet," "'7 in 7' Ahead of Schedule; 1309 Enrolled in Six Weeks," "2068 Members Gained in Fast-Paced 7 in 7 Drive," "Increased Crew Activity Speeding 7-in-7 Drive to Completion," "Harlemites Go To Town; Plan Early Fall Dance," "7 in 7 Drive Tops 2,500; Five New Sections Set Up," "7 in 7 Drive Tops 3,500 Mark," "7 in 7 Passes 5,000 Mark," "Harlem Social In Spotlight Nov. 1; Boro Park Next," "7 in 7 in Home Stretch; Drive Tops 6100 Mark," "Call Issued for Big Push to Put 7-in-7 Drive Over the Final Yard Stripe," "Gala Program of Events Arranged By Neighborhood Groups for Dec.," "Union Mobilizes to Defend U.S. Against Axis Attacks," "7-in-7 Drive in Final Lap; 490 Members Needed," and "It's a Natural! 7-in-7 Drive Doubles Membership in '41."[73]

The union had again reached its goal. Overall, union members gained $1,512,370 in wage increases; it negotiated 137,783 fewer working hours, 24,017 additional days of vacation, and 14,365 additional sick days.[74] Local 65 was able to implement a new budget to cover the months of January to May 1942. And it was no longer a predominantly white, Jewish, and small labor union organizing wholesale establishments on the Lower East Side. Instead, Local 65 represented workers who lived and worked all over Manhattan. including Harlem, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Long Island, and in New Jersey. It had become a "catch-all" union. It negotiated contracts with small second-hand clothing shops, numerous warehouses throughout the city, button shops, army supply shops, textile shops, and dry good establishments, among many others. Its racial and ethnic composition had changed dramatically. As the country entered World War II, black workers made up close to 20 percent of Local 65's membership and women made up 30 percent of its membership. The union also boasted increases in its Italian, Irish, and Polish members.[75]

3

"Like a Scab over an Infected Sore"

Full and Fair Employment during and after World War II

> What the Negro people want is equality, and not special privilege. At best, the quota system can only be a temporary stop-gap, like a scab over an infected sore—and we all know what that means: on the surface, all looks well, but underneath there is plenty of trouble brewing.[1]
>
> —Ethel Braun, member of Local 65's dry goods division, 1945

Local 65 struggled during World War II to keep a hold on its 16,000 members and, even more important, to sustain among them a commitment to "catch-all" organizing. The union experienced high turnover rates within its shops and warehouses and a disruption in leadership as Arthur Osman and David Livingston went off to war. In 1945, more than four thousand members down and with Osman and Livingston back at the helm, "65" attempted to pick up where it had left off in 1941. It joined other unions and organizations in New York City to push for full and fair employment practices legislation and continued to use its hiring hall to change the racial composition of the workforce within the shops it organized. The political climate for such efforts, however, had changed dramatically since 1941. As anti-Communism gripped the country as a whole, a movement was underway within the CIO to expel left-led unions like "65" from its ranks.

This chapter examines the challenges the union faced during World War II and in the immediate postwar months. The union lost Arthur Osman and David Livingston, both of whom served in the armed forces, thousands of members, and its catch-all focus during the war. Jack Paley, Esther Letz, and the "65ers" who led the union in their absence gained valuable experience working with the National War Labor Board (NWLB) and campaigning for pro-labor legislation but freely admitted that they failed to continue to organize as effectively. By 1945, with Osman and Livingston back home, Local 65 tried to pick up its catch-all organizing and pressure Congress and the New York state legislature to pass full and fair employment legislation. By then, however, the union had begun to lose credibility with other New York City locals and the national CIO because of the "pro-Soviet" positions it had taken during the war. Although the loss of credibility was worn like a badge of honor by union members who disagreed with the CIO's increasingly anti-Communist stance, its new marginal status rendered it less effective.

The differences in Local 65's and the CIO's organizing philosophies and their respective relationships to the Communist Party were magnified in the new contexts of World War II and the postwar period and eventually forced Local 65 to disaffiliate from the CIO (detailed in the following chapter). The CIO's leaders made a series of choices during the war that shaped the organization into "a coherent, fully functioning, and self-financing union entity" that was "enmesh[ed] in the wartime ideological and governmental consensus." Its development into such an organization, historians argue, "raised questions about the CIO's ability to fulfill the agenda of 1935." Fulfilling those goals would be difficult without the continued support of John L. Lewis's UMW (Lewis continued to challenge the CIO leadership and gradually pulled out of the CIO between 1941 and 1942) and its left-led unions (eleven of which Philip Murray, the CIO's president, purged from the CIO in 1949 and 1950), including Local 65.[2]

The strategies Local 65 developed during the drives of the 1939–41 were difficult to carry out during the war. Like most unions, Local 65 relied heavily on strikes, picketing, and a sympathetic labor relations board to win representation in the various shops it organized. During the war, one of Local 65's most potent weapons, its ability to strike, was taken away when it agreed, as did most labor unions, to abide by a no-strike pledge for the duration of the war. President Roosevelt set up the NWLB to set wartime wage increases and hour limits and to settle disputes between unions and employers. In June 1942, the NWLB announced a standard "maintenance-of-membership formula . . . that automatically applied to any union whose leaders agreed to enforce the no-strike pledge and otherwise cooperate with the production effort." New workers coming into a defense plant under contract with a cooperating union, for example, were automatically enrolled into that union, dues were automatically deducted from their pay, and they were required to abide by all union regulations. An accountant for the USWA called the plan's automatic check-off policy "'manna from heaven.'"[3]

Local 65 did not benefit from the maintenance-of-membership agreements to the same extent as did unions representing people who worked in manufacturing plants. New York's manufacturers did not profit from defense contracts, as did Detroit's, because the city's thousands of small manufacturers continued to produce for the local civilian market. Unlike the auto industry, which expanded dramatically during the war, the shops Local 65 organized did expand, but only from under one hundred to a few hundred. Because Local 65 chose not to negotiate the automatic check-off in its contracts, no manna fell from heaven during the war for the union.

Ultimately, the war caused Local 65 more harm than good. The union experienced a great deal of disruption, the wartime no-strike pledge limited its ability to pressure employers with its effective use of strikes and picketing, and the CIO's turn toward labor bureaucracy and away from labor militancy, although benefiting millions of workers nationwide, did not trickle down to the people who worked in the small wholesale shops and warehouses that Local 65 continued to represent. The union also lost a whole cadre of young, talented organizers trained in the 1937–41 organizing drives, a group, Jack Paley, the union's secretary-treasurer, said was "decimated" by the war.[4] Union members did gain one thing during the war: the ability to engage in what the union's wartime vice president called "legal rather than street fights." "65ers" studied wage standards and government reports in an effort to influence the NWLB from an informed standpoint. Milton Reverby argued that that training became especially valuable after the war.[5]

One of the biggest policy changes the union made during the war was to go from an area structure back to an industry structure. Partly because of the no-strike pledge, and partly because of potential negotiations with the NWLB, the union decided that focusing on the problems within each industry made more sense in the wartime context.[6] Evidence indicates that this policy change did not result in a drop in the recruitment of black workers; that is, the union's return to an industry approach did not result in a similar return to a primarily Jewish base. The numbers of black and women workers increased slightly during the war and, as Morris Doswell's experience demonstrated, even though the union reverted to an industry approach, it nevertheless continued its commitment to organizing black workers through its "Friends of 65" programs and the hiring hall. Nevertheless, the change meant that the union devoted less of its resources to community-based projects. The significance of the change was not lost on the union's Harlemites. In an article in the union's newspaper, the Harlem group pledged to carry on Local 65's program "under a rank and file leadership," and to continue to work with the Negro Labor Victory Committee (which Morris Doswell had helped to create), the People's Committee, the NNC, and other organizations in the absence of a strong Local 65 area-based presence.[7]

As the union began to redefine the character of its struggles in light of the new NWLB and the no-strike pledge, it sent many of its members off to war, including its key policy makers, Arthur Osman and David Livingston. In the interim, Jack Paley, Milton Reverby, Esther Letz, Molly Genser, Alice Gechter, and Anne Kravitz took on leadership roles. Their job was to do their best to continue the union's policies.

There is an interesting silence in the record about Esther Letz, Molly Genser, and many of the women who came to the fore in this period. While the union's male leadership recalled that they were very capable leaders and organizers, nevertheless, very little mention is made of the exact nature of their involvement. Women did not assume leadership roles after the war, despite years of experience gained in the absence of Osman and Livingston. Most men came back and resumed their posts after the war. Genser maintained an active role immediately after the war but quit in 1947 to have her first child (with fellow Local 65 officer Sol Molofsky). With more than one-third of its members women, Local 65's Executive Council committed less time and fewer resources to building a strong female presence in the union's hierarchy. Several key women did exert a significant amount of influence: Esther Letz, who served as the union's secretary-treasurer during the war, continued to play an active role afterward and Lillian White and Amy White continued on the union's editorial staff. David Livingston explained, however, that he did not think they saw the question of women in the same way as they did racial minorities.

While Local 65 made a conscious commitment to organize in "Negro-intensive" industries and to train and promote black organizers, it did not do the same for women. It organized the office staffs of shops whenever possible, but it did not proudly call itself an "office workers union" as it did a "warehouse workers" or "catch-all" union. Local 65 negotiated separate female and male wage rates in some shops and, as extensive as *New Voices*' coverage on inequality was, it did not devote much space to equal pay for equal work campaigns underway in other unions.[8] Some of this changed in the late 1960s when, in the thick of the feminist movement, District 65 began organizing small publishing houses and then clerical workers.[9]

In October 1940, Arthur Osman, in his biweekly column "Our Problems," wrote: "Nearly one third of our members are women. No one would surmise that from a glance at a stewards or executive board meetings. On none of the numerous union committees, in very few of our various activities are the girls participating in proportion to their numerical strength within the union."[10] Osman went on to chastise women for not involving themselves more in union activity. He provided statistics on the wage discrepancies in average wages for men and women (67 percent of men in Local 65 earned $21 per week compared with 50 percent of women; 20 percent of the men in the union earned $31 per week or more while only 2 percent of the women earned that wage) in the union and argued that women themselves could rectify the situation if they became more involved. Osman argued that women should train to take on leadership positions in every section of the union. The union depended, he argued, on that leadership, especially now that a number of the union's male members were signing draft cards. "Under no condition," Osman argued, "should we tolerate the tendency to relegate women members to purely 'clerical' work."[11]

As adamant as Osman was about women taking an active role, he nevertheless offered a relatively ambiguous leadership model for them to follow. Unlike African American men like Morris Doswell and later Cleveland Robinson, who were groomed for leadership positions, women were expected to lead alongside men. As Osman did for many of the union's programs, he offered a concrete goal for women. In every shop, he argued, "one or more of the assistant stewards must be a woman" and, "wherever possible, the steward must be a woman." But Osman undercut his directive when he argued, simultaneously, that women, in assuming leadership responsibilities, should not replace men. Osman wrote, "Care must be taken that women don't replace men, but that they assume their responsibility SIDE BY SIDE with them [emphasis in original]." Women, Osman continued, "should supplement and augment the work of those who are already active." The union did initiate a women's leadership class, which was led by Esther Letz and Molly Genser. The nature and extent of their active leadership remained ambiguous. If they were not to replace men as leaders, whom were they expected to lead?[12]

Communist-oriented unions, especially their leaders and paid organizers, were well armed to fight racial, gender-based, ethnic, and religious discrimination in the workplace. They carried with them a broad understanding of the links between "for-profit" systems and discrimination. They knew that they needed to create a social environment that encouraged racial "mixing" as a way to break down social barriers and help union members find common ground. And they understood that women bore the brunt of the "exploitation" meted out by capitalist employers because they earned a much lower "woman's wage."

"The Woman Question" presented Communist-leaning organizers and the larger Communist Party with a dilemma. It was much easier for Osman and Livingston to find common ground with black men, including Morris Doswell and, later, Cleveland Robinson, both of whom held top spots in the union's hierarchy. Osman said his experiences with anti-Semitism helped him identify with the struggles black people faced. He never differentiated, however, between black men and women or articulated the ways in which their experiences differed. Osman was not alone. The Communist Party, and the Marxist-Leninist theory on which it relied, was unable to articulate a kind of class-based analysis that adequately accounted for the differences specific people experienced as a result of gender-based or race-based discrimination or both. The organizing campaigns Local 65 engineered, especially during its first twenty-five years, were straightforward: identify the lowest-paid workers in the wholesale shops and warehouses in a given area and bring them into the union. Once these workers were in, the union tried repeatedly to "desegregate" by sending black members into "white" (specifically Jewish) shops. It did not, however, "de-gender" the local jobs it had control over through the hiring hall. It never sent black men to fill vacant clerical jobs or white women to fill vacant driver, messenger, porter, or pushboy jobs.

If unions like Local 65 were truly committed to ending the exploitation of the most degraded workers, they should have focused solely on black women. Like the Communist Party itself, Osman, Livingston, and Local 65's top organizers, while perhaps understanding the conditions black women faced better than most (thinking about black women at all was "progressive" in the pre–civil rights era), still did not engineer organizing campaigns to benefit them directly. Not until the late 1960s would Local 65 organize campaigns that focused solely on women, and then they were "white" clerical workers. Braun and Schrank lumped "Negro" workers into one category, failing to distinguish the ways in which black women faced what black Communist Claudia Jones would first call "triple jeopardy" in 1949. Neither, however, did they distinguish Jewish, Italian, or Puerto Rican men from women and yet they clearly brought them all into the union, allowed them to write articles for the union's newspaper, and encouraged them to organize. Class-based struggles (as opposed to race- or gender-based ones) formed the crux of Local 65's vision, and the union, like civil rights organizations in the 1950s and 1960s, struggled to articulate an agenda that encompassed *all* the forms of discrimination that they knew affected their members. Nevertheless, in the years before the civil rights and feminist movements, Local 65 encouraged women, black and white, to express their opinions, promoted black women (Amy and Lilian White) into important positions, created an atmosphere at the union hall where a person's race did not negatively affect him or her, and gave women ample opportunity both at the union hall and in the newspaper to express their opinions before, during, and after World War II.[13]

When Arthur Osman, David Livingston, and other rank-and-file members of Local 65 returned from the war, they found that Local 65 had lost close to 5,000 members (bringing its membership to just under 11,000). By 1945, Local 65's goals seemed in line with those of the CIO. The no-strike pledge and the NWLB no longer demanded labor's cooperation for the sake of the war effort. It was time to regain what the union had lost. Reverby recalled that Local 65 was as "good, militant, if not more, than 1941." Almost "everybody in the union, he recalled, was on strike" as were millions of workers around the country.[14]

During the great strike wave of 1945–46, in the course of three short months, 180,000 auto workers, 500,000 steel workers, 200,000 electrical workers, and 150,000 packinghouse workers went out on strike nationwide.[15] Over the course of the year, 3.5 million workers would go on strike, followed by 4.8 million in 1946. New York was brought to a standstill in September 1945 when 1.5 million workers refused to go to work to support the "fifteen thousand elevator operators, doormen, porters, firemen, and maintenance workers employed in commercial buildings." In May 1946, the city's commuter railway system ground to a halt as railway workers participated in a nationwide strike. Four months later, New York harbor all but shut down for the second time in a year when a nationwide shipping strike took hold. During the following year, the city's painters, communications workers, truck drivers, motion picture projectionists, stevedores, and tugboat operators went on strike.[16]

The postwar strike wave was quite a bit different than the strikes and sitdowns of the 1930s. Not only were the postwar strikes less violent, the central issue was no longer union recognition. By the end of the war, collective bargaining between labor and business had become a generally accepted fact of life. The public and the U.S. government endorsed it and labor law had evolved to support it. The postwar strike waves in the steel and auto industries particularly were less about workers demanding a union and more about how the "permanent structures of collective bargaining in basic industry" would develop.[17] There were exceptions: strikes launched by the UE and the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA) were more militant in nature and more reminiscent of the 1930s. Similarly, Local 65's campaigns emphasized, as they had in the late 1930s, union recognition.

Local 65's organizers started their 1945–46 campaigns just as they had the successful drives of the period 1939–41. They targeted warehouses and wholesale shops in the dry goods, shoe, textile, and other industries and the smaller shops "next door." Organizing took priority again after the NWLB stopped issuing orders and the Office of Price Administration (OPA) stopped regulating the amount of money grocers charged for foodstuffs and landlords for rent. Local 65's members lost their safety net and the union reverted back to the strategies it had developed in the 1930s and 1940s because, for its members, the postwar situation mirrored the prewar situation. A return to Depression-era conditions seemed imminent.

Of the shops the union represented that engaged in war production, 40 percent fell into the union's general processing, needle processing, and paper products divisions. Once the union expanded, "65ers" worked in literally hundreds of different jobs for thousands of different small manufacturers (the union's prewar drives and "shop next door" approach had brought in very small, more make-shift than anything, manufacturers primarily in the garment industry—"businesses" that were just a step above the subcontractors or sweaters who employed home workers or piece workers in the garment industry), wholesalers, and warehouses. Categorizing them all after the union returned to an "industry" setup proved difficult. In order to encompass as many members as possible, the union began lumping all the people who handled (packed, sorted, carted, pushed, or drove) various goods into the "processing" category. "Needle processors" were people who worked in warehouses in the garment industry rather than in wholesale shops; general "processors" were mostly people who worked with scrap metal in small metal warehouses; the union's paper "products" division encompassed people who worked for companies like National Container, in its warehouse division, "processing" bulk paper products (boxes, etc.).

Local 65's metal "processors" were laid off in especially large numbers because metal was more difficult to convert to civilian processing.[18] Because three thousand of Local 65's black members worked in general processing (the largest proportion in any of Local 65's divisions), the union's black stewards and high-ranking black officers met in June 1945 with the union's Executive Board to formulate strategies for dealing with the reconversion problems. Morris Doswell, Henry Hamilton (secretary, then director, of the union's needle processing division), Amy White (a dispatcher in the hiring hall), and Lillian White (columnist for the *Union Voice*) met and decided to use the union's hiring hall to send laid-off workers from processing into the "basic wholesaling shops." During the previous year alone, 20 percent of the placements made in dry goods, shoe, and textile shops were Negro workers; the idea was to continue to use the hiring hall to place workers from processing into wholesale dry goods, shoes, and textiles. The group also decided that they might be able to adjust the hiring hall's seniority policy to help place laid-off Negro workers in jobs.[19] They agreed that the union needed to continue to push Congress to pass a permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), to continue to educate workers, and to prepare for returning veterans. They set up a working body to meet at least once per month to continue to address these problems and planned a mass meeting in Harlem for early fall to let people there know how the union was addressing reconversion problems, particularly as they applied to black workers.[20]

In a remarkable exchange in the pages of Local 65's *Union Voice* in 1945, Pearl Schrank and Ethel Braun argued about the Executive Board's decisions and ultimately about what one historian has called the central debate of the twentieth century: "whether economic empowerment and racial equality were possible under democratic liberalism or whether economic egalitarianism was the logical prerequisite for liberal democracy and racial equality."[21] Just as longtime civil rights activist W. E. B. DuBois was in his office in Harlem grappling with the centrality of either race or class in the fight for equality, Downtown Pearl Schrank and Ethel Braun argued about essentially the same thing. They debated whether their union, Local 65 of the URWEA, should use its hiring hall to prevent its black and Puerto Rican members from shouldering the burden of impending unemployment. What could or should the union do to help its members avoid the last-hired, first-fired trap?

Schrank suggested that the union should continue to use its hiring hall to desegregate the local labor market by forcing employers to hire black workers even if it meant upsetting seniority in the unemployment line. "It should be remembered," Schrank argued, "that one way we in local 65 established our policy of no discrimination was when we in the hiring hall relaxed our rotating policy in cases where a Negro worker was discriminated against and after discussion with the members in the hiring hall, white workers gave up their chance to go out on a job in order to let Negro workers apply to the employer who thought he could choose a white worker instead of a Negro." To Schrank, the solution was to try to force a kind of liberal, social Keynesian, vision into the parts of the local New York City labor market Local 65 could control. Schrank advocated using the union's hiring hall to redistribute wealth (what little there was of it among wholesale and warehouse workers) in a more equitable way among the "groups" of people who were differentially affected by employers' hiring policies and wage structures. In that way, Schrank's vision was a kind of democratic liberalism embodied in the wartime fair employment policies and later institutionalized in various affirmative action policies in the mid- to late 1960s.[22]

Foreshadowing later criticisms of affirmative action and arguing for economic egalitarianism, Braun responded in the subsequent issue of the *Union Voice* that Schrank's plan "would not achieve economic-race freedom." Rather, it would result in the institution of a quota system that, Braun argued, would only provide temporary relief. Until the government guaranteed full employment, Braun argued, any solution designed to privilege one group over another would only cause tension between the groups involved. Braun wrote: "What the Negro people want is equality, and not special privilege. At best, the quota system can only be a temporary stop-gap, like a scab over an infected sore—and we all know what that means: on the surface, all looks well, but underneath there is plenty of trouble brewing." Seniority had to be maintained, Braun argued, for without it, the boss "can fire anyone." "The Negro," she argued, "might have to sacrifice now for greater rewards later" but not if the United States could operate at full production—then there might be full employment for all. For Braun, racial equality was dependent on full employment. She would rather the union work to secure the passage of full employment legislation than tamper with the hiring hall's seniority provisions. For Braun, full employment, or economic egalitarianism, was the prerequisite for racial equality. Without it, various groups of people would continually be at odds with each other, fighting for whatever limited resources were available.[23]

Despite their disagreement over how to use the hiring hall, Schrank and Braun echoed the sentiments of politicians, civil rights activists, and labor union activists who had come together during the war (called the "Black-Liberal-Left" by one historian) to push for a permanent version of the wartime FEPC and full employment legislation. Economic security was paramount in people's minds as the war drew to a close. President Roosevelt had clearly drawn the connection between economic security and "individual freedom" a year and a half earlier in his January 1944 State of the Union address. "True individual freedom cannot exist," FDR had said, "without economic security and independence. We have accepted," he went on, "a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all—regardless of station, race, or creed."[24] Chester Bowles, head of the wartime OPA, was in the process of writing *Tomorrow Without Fear*, published in 1946, in which he argued that if the government guaranteed "full production and full employment, consumerism would increase, tax revenues would finance social improvements for the 'disinherited,' and all Americans would learn to live constantly better."[25] Braun and Schrank may have argued about how best to achieve economic security, but both agreed with FDR and New Dealers like Bowles that economic security "for all" would only come about through the government's aggressive regulation of business toward that specific end. Free enterprise or "unregulated" business would lead to the opposite: unemployment and discriminatory employment policies.

This linkage was perhaps the closest New Dealers in particular and "non-Communist" critics of American capitalism in general came to voicing Communist-types of critiques. Communists and non-Communist critics of "free enterprise" exposed one of the fundamental mechanisms by which racial, gendered, and class-based hierarchies were maintained: employment. "Full" employment, abolishing race- and gender-based wage scales, and regulating the amount of money CEOs could earn, all of which were NWLB policies, simply "equalized" everyone too much for many people's tastes. Anti-New

Dealers, segregationists, anti-Semites, and even anti-feminists found common ground in criticizing policies designed to bring about some semblance of equality by calling the policies "Communist."

Communists went much further than New Dealers. Not only did they support full employment as a method by which to equalize the masses, but they also believed that capitalism itself was the problem. The only way to combat the capitalist system was to launch some kind of revolution to abolish private ownership altogether. Collectively "owned" businesses heavily regulated by "the state" seemed the most logical way to eliminate inequalities driven by the need individual business owners had, in a capitalist system, to make a profit by keeping wages low by discriminating among their employees.

The Communist solution could not have been more at odds with most Americans' growing faith in the "free" enterprise system and American democracy as the war came to an end. Hitler's Germany, Hirohito's Japan, and Mussolini's Italy, and, of course, despite the wartime alliance, Stalin's Soviet Union, were heavily regulated, state-centered economies, led by dictators or emperors who had not been elected. Each country allowed varying degrees of private business ownership, from none in the Soviet Union to its heavy encouragement, through government subsidies, in Japan. Four-term President FDR's endorsement of "full employment" through government regulation would have been disagreeable to business interests at any point in U.S. history but, in the wake of the war and with the quick deterioration of the U.S. alliance with the Soviet Union, increasing numbers of Americans, including non-business-owning workers, found the push for full employment and an FEPC either unnecessary now that the war was over or too Communist and un-American.

Braun and Schrank's debate reflected the ways in which Local 65's members, especially the old-timers, continued to apply a Communist-inspired understanding of business, profit, and discrimination to the work conditions they faced. The problem was, they were increasingly in the minority in their views and, compared with the Depression at least, fewer people experienced the super-exploitive conditions they faced as low-wage workers in small, peripheral, service- and distribution-oriented shops in New York. And the "condition" of working in such settings was no longer as permanent as it would have been during the Depression. The phenomenal growth of American industry in the postwar period and in New York in particular made it easier for even the most recent immigrants to find better work. The jobs, however, continued to exist and Local 65 was determined to unionize them.

As soldiers returned home and businesses shifted from wartime to peacetime production, full employment was quickly giving way to unemployment, at least in small processing warehouses in New York City. Phil Manheim warned that the people who worked for companies like Ideal Metal Products, Corrugated Paper Products, Victory Suspender, Cambridge Straps, and Globe Sales would face layoffs. Globe Sales, one of the bigger shops organized by Local 65, had won several government contracts during the war. Globe workers sewed and "processed," (i.e., sorted, packed, loaded) work suits, cotton mattress covers, and slings for the "boys" in the army. No longer buoyed by government contracts, Globe Sales was in the process in late 1945 of laying off 325 out of 350 people (the shop would dwindle to 25 workers by February 1946).[26] If Globe Sales was any indication of what was to come, the union's hiring hall would be flooded in the coming months with newly unemployed "65ers," the vast majority black women. To ameliorate these conditions, the union needed the support of local, state, and federal versions of both full and fair employment legislation not only to promote union organization but also to help restructure the economic system that created sweatshops, homework, and piece rates in the first place.[27]

In its effort to deal with reconversion, Local 65 counted on the CIO's Political Action Committee (CIO-PAC) to influence the ways in which the country structured its economy in the postwar period. By lobbying Congress to pass not only a full employment bill, but also legislation creating a permanent FEPC and providing an extension to the OPA, Local 65 hoped the CIO-PAC could pressure Congress to smooth the transition to peacetime, particularly for black workers. In 1945–46, there was reason to believe that the CIO-PAC might indeed accomplish these goals. It had influenced the congressional and presidential elections favorably in 1944, just a year after it was created, helping FDR win his fourth presidential election.

During the 1944 election, PAC had, however, along with its director Sidney Hillman, become the focal point of "anti-Communist" fears that would emerge full blown at the end of the war. Martin Dies (chair of the House Un-American Activities Committee [HUAC] whose investigations of Communist infiltration in 1939 served as a precursor to similar investigations in the period 1948–53) "attacked PAC as a Communist front, declaring on the floor of Congress that 'Sidney Hillman [the CIO-PAC's director at the time] will soon succeed Earl Browder as head of the Communists in the United States.'"[28] As a Russian-born Jew, leader of the ACWA, and close associate of FDR, Hillman provided the image around which anti-New Dealers, anti-Semites, business interests, and rival labor leaders rallied. Hillman, the CIO, and its CIO-PAC had clearly become too powerful, a "foreign" presence infecting America with Communism. The chairman of the Republican Party's campaign committee "suggested that 'Hillman and Browder want to rule America and enslave the American people.'" Republicans and southern Democrats feared a "bestiary of greedy financiers, conniving Jews, hypereroticized Negroes, supercilious intellectuals, violently deranged radicals, and misspoken, unclean immigrants."[29] Despite the attacks from this coalescing "anti-Communist" coalition, the CIO-PAC proved influential enough in 1944 to generate talk among Communists and the CIO's left-leaning unions that it might spur the creation of a progressive labor-left third party.[30] Local 65's leadership and its membership did indeed agree with Ethel Braun on one thing: the importance of a full employment bill, and hoped its support of the CIO-PAC would result in the bill's passage.

Local 65 also thought of the CIO-PAC as one of labor's best defenses against the rise of racial violence in the United States in the months after the war. In her July 1946 "Report on PAC," Esther Letz detailed increases in lynching reported in the South and related an experience Councilman Benjamin Davis Jr. (Communist Party) had had with New York City police in which he and the two white men he was traveling with were questioned relentlessly. "These incidents," she argued, "which were merely typical examples of many others too numerous to mention, are the beginning of fascism in America." They were, Letz continued, "a duplication in America of the terrorist actions which Hitler carried out against the Jewish people, similar to what is happening now in Palestine and in Poland." In 1946, Letz (who was a member of the Communist Party) envisioned a strong CIO-PAC, one that could effectively lobby lawmakers to pass legislation designed to curtail these "fascist" activities nationwide. In her report, she called on President Harry S. Truman to deputize Negroes in the South to help stop the activities of the KKK, to outlaw the KKK, and to pass the fair employment practices bill, the anti-poll tax bill, and the anti-lynching bill.[31]

At the same meeting at which Letz presented her report on the CIO-PAC, Valerie Robinson, a shop steward in the needle processing division, and Lillian White, a columnist for the *Union Voice,* initiated a long discussion about three recent incidents of racial violence. After Letz introduced a resolution pledging Local 65's support to the Southern Negro Congress, a group working to stop the spread of lynching in the South, White called on the union to "organize the people in the South" and to put together rallies in Harlem, in the garment center, and "throughout the whole union set-up . . . to take a definite stand."[32] Robinson then informed the union's members about two incidents in Harlem: an elderly black man and a black woman were beaten during the same week as each attempted to hail cabs after midnight.[33] Arthur Osman, having since returned from the war, responded to Robinson's plea for Negro-white cooperation by arguing that the labor movement should support the CIO-PAC as a method by which it could educate people about the way prejudice worked. He urged Local 65 members to support the CIO-PAC.[34]

The political culture in New York City in the postwar period provided Local 65's members with a great number of allies in its drive to secure a permanent FEPC, full employment, and an end to racial discrimination. New York City in the years after the war was a "laboratory for a social urbanism committed to an expansive welfare state, racial equality, and popular access to culture and education."[35] From this laboratory emerged a powerful coalition of politicians, trade unionists, and ministers, who, along with activists in the NAACP and the Urban League of Greater New York, spurred the creation of a civil rights movement in New York City that "exploded" in 1945. Local 65 was certainly a part of this movement. The Negro Labor Victory Committee, which Morris Doswell helped organize in 1942, was instrumental in pressuring the state legislature to pass the Quinn-Ives Bill (New York State's FEPC) in March 1945, which its supporters hoped would prove to be a "local victory that 'paved the way for a permanent FEPC in Washington.'"[36]

Hope soon faded for a permanent national FEPC, however. Like the full employment bill, the bills calling for a permanent FEPC never made it to the floor of either the House or the Senate for debate.[37] Southern Democrats were largely responsible for suppressing the various FEPC bills that were introduced in the 79th Congress (1944–46). However, even the bills' supporters were divided. Early in the war, A. Philip Randolph had engineered the enactment of the wartime FEPC through his well-known threat to stage a March on Washington in 1941 if FDR did not sign an executive order mandating the FEPC. In 1943, Vito Marcantonio, without A. Philip Randolph's support, introduced legislation for a permanent FEPC. First elected to Congress in 1934 to represent East Harlem and re-elected every term until 1950, Marcantonio remained in office largely because of the support he received from the black-liberal left, the American Labor Party, and the Communist Party. Although Marcantonio was not a Communist, many people, like Randolph (who had broken his ties with the NNC in 1940 because of its increasingly Communist orientation), either assumed he was or disliked the support he received from the party. Despite the fact that Marcantonio "helped sustain a national voice for the labor movement, the Popular Front, civil rights, and Puerto Rican independence without equivalence in mid-century America," his Communist taint prevented him from gaining the support of Socialist and liberal groups that had similar goals for black workers.[38] Thus, while Randolph strongly supported a permanent FEPC, he did not endorse Marcantonio's bill. Rather, he and rival Socialist groups and the NAACP turned their attention to devising their own legislative initiatives. Alfred Baker Lewis, of the Workers Defense League and the NAACP, encouraged Randolph to introduce his own version of the bill, and quick.[39] Thirteen separate FEPC bills were introduced in Congress in 1945.[40]

The federal FEPC died in Congress, but a small glimmer of hope still existed for New Yorkers. New York state passed its own FEPC in the form of the Quinn-Ives Bill. The State Committee Against Discrimination (SCAD) was created, like the FEPC, to enforce the Quinn-Ives Bill by reviewing cases of employment discrimination and making recommendations (a kind of precursor to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission created by Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act). Not nearly aggressive enough, SCAD immediately began touting the benefits of "education and gradualism in combating employment discrimination." Without the federal or the state government's backing, black workers turned to progressive labor unions to enforce fair employment practices and to try to retain some the gains they had made during the war.[41]

As the FEPC stalled in Congress and as SCAD evolved (or devolved) into a weak enforcement agency, Local 65's members hoped that the 1945 municipal elections might put FEPC, CIO-PAC, and CIO supporters in office. For mayor, District 65 endorsed William O'Dwyer's candidacy, referring to him as a candidate of the CIO-PAC, the American Labor Party, and the CIO who had a "progressive record" and was a spokesman for the "Roosevelt program,"[42] and Benjamin J. Davis Jr. for re-election to the City Council. Local 65 supported Davis, a member of the Communist Party, because he led the fight against discrimination in housing, in private and city employment, and in schools and hospitals, and because he "represents a symbol of the unity between the Negro people and the people of all races of our city." Local 65 criticized the URWEA and ILGWU for supporting Jonah Goldstein for mayor and other candidates who were taking strong anti-Communist and "anti-CIO" stances.[43]

In the immediate postwar period, Local 65 was a strong force within New York City's black-liberal left. It supported Vito Marcantonio and the American Labor Party and progressive candidates in New York City. Its own Kenneth Sherbell was elected to the state senate in 1946. Local 65's leaders and members hoped the national CIO would follow New York's lead and push for a permanent FEPC and a full employment bill and strong civil rights measures in Congress in 1946. Evidence indicates that the national CIO had discussed using the CIO-PAC to push for the continuation of New Deal/Roosevelt policies. Although CIO leaders disagreed on how to implement the CIO-PAC's agenda, Jack Kroll, the CIO-PAC's director, said, "there are no 'off-years' in the battle against fascism, against reaction at home and war-mongering abroad" and that he fully intended to use the CIO-PAC to continue the "Roosevelt program."[44] Just weeks after Kroll's statements, however, a *New York Times* headline criticized the CIO-PAC and the candidates it endorsed in the 1946 elections. They all, the *Times* argued, took stands that were uncomfortably similar to those criticisms leveled at the United States by the Soviet Union.[45]

At the same time, dissension grew within Local 65's ranks over the CIO-PAC. By September 1946, Jack Paley asked delegates at that month's General Council meeting why shop members were "not more enthusiastic about Sherbell's campaign and about PAC in general?" A delegate reported that he knew some stewards who failed to bring information from the General Council meetings back to the shops and "played cards" instead. A delegate from Woolworth said that he and the members of his shop supported Sherbell but not some of the other CIO-PAC candidates. Bob Burke, an organizer in the general warehouse division, offered an explanation. Burke said that the reason the delegate from Woolworth (Woolworth workers eventually disaffiliated from Local 65 in August 1948) did not support all of the CIO-PAC's candidates was because he and his fellow shop members thought the CIO-PAC "endorsed reds." Burke had encouraged the delegate to "express his opinion" to the General Council but the delegate told Burke, "'I don't want to say that, not to this meeting.'" Burke went on to criticize himself for not being able to convince the members in the shops that the red-baiting campaigns that were going on were geared toward "immobilizing us." Burke said that he just could "not convince the union's rank-and-file leaders, the stewards." In fact, Burke had done such a poor job, many of the stewards went back to the shops, he reported, and "attack[ed] PAC—Everyone of them—-with a few exceptions." The few who did support the CIO-PAC, Burke said, "are afraid to open their mouths because the red-baiters are going to say, 'You are red! You are for Russia!'"[46]

With dissent brewing in the ranks over the CIO-PAC, and the union's left stance, the push to organize continued. The needle processing division of Local 65 offers a mini case study of the trends that took place in the union immediately after the war, particularly with regard to organization. During the war, Local 65 had eliminated its territorial, or "area," sections. It had struggled to maintain some degree of the intensity of the organizational drives of the period 1937–41, but high turnover and the loss of leadership, including "practically all of our stewards and other rank-and-file spark plugs," made it difficult for the union to do so. By early 1945, the needle processing division oversaw the negotiation and enforcement of 25 contracts affecting approximately 1,800 workers. Local 65's needle processing division oversaw contracts with shops like Victory Suspender, Wittenberg Leiward, Wellmade Suspender, B. Goldberg Trimming, Cambridge Straps, and Globe Sales, the shop that was forced to hire a black woman due to the efforts of Local 65's hiring hall four years earlier. The needle processing division reported that, with contract renewals looming, 70 percent of them had been renewed or were waiting approval by the NWLB.[47]

Needle processing was one of Local 65's newer divisions, not only because of the change from an area to an industry structure, but also because the union had not been organizing as long in needle processing as it had in wholesale, shoe, and dry goods shops and in warehouses. By organizing "the shop next door," Local 65 had accumulated enough small needle processing shops to warrant the creation of a needle processing division by 1945. Creating unity among workers in needle processing was difficult. The new division was headed first by Patsy Rotavero (a man), who was replaced in 1946 by Henry Hamilton, who, along with Morris Doswell, was one of the union's highest-ranking black organizers (Doswell headed the food and drug division in this period).[48] Of all of the union's divisions, needle processing contained the largest proportion of women (more than half), black, and Hispanic workers and represented "the lowest paid workers" in the union.[49] People worked by the piece sewing garters, suspenders, and other articles of clothing in back room–type warehouses. Local 65's biggest challenge in needle processing was employers' reliance on the use of homework. Many of the employers in this division began "reducing their crews in the shops and [were] having their work done by child-labor at slave wages" in late 1945–46, the union reported. "Unless," the union warned, "we eliminate homework our shops will be manned by skeleton crews and our work done by sweatshops at depression wages."[50]

Because of the constant turnover and occasional language barrier (workers suggested a Spanish-speaking organizer be appointed to needle processing), Rotavero and Hamilton were constantly repeating the same information about Local 65's history, about the role of the steward, about the intricacies of the hiring hall, about the problems with homework, and about the importance of paying dues and attending meetings regularly. One member complained that he had already heard the same information multiple times. One shop was confused about which union it belonged to after a heated contest with a competing local.[51] And, to make matters worse, once Local 65's relationship with Samuel Wolchok and the URWEA began to deteriorate in 1945–46, Rotavero and Hamilton spent a great deal of time explaining to members who Wolchok was, reciting his history with Local 65, and defending Arthur Osman from criticisms Wolchok leveled against him, now openly calling him a "Communist" who was more loyal to the Soviet Union than the United States. The needle processing division faced a number of challenges. Rotavero and Hamilton, along with Local 65's other organizers, were not dealing with a group of stewards who had gone through Osman's rigorous organizer-training program in 1940. They started from scratch each month with new employees in small shops who had little experience with unions or with Local 65.[52]

Rotavero and Hamilton had an especially difficult time convincing new members in needle processing that Samuel Wolchok was wrong and that Arthur Osman was not a traitor to the labor movement. Osman, Livingston, and the Communist-leaning Local 65 (which has to be labeled as such at this point because the rifts in the labor movement between "Communists" and pro-Soviet locals on the one hand and liberal and "Democratic" locals on the other had widened during the war) had maintained a tenuous, at best, relationship with the URWEA since they affiliated in 1937. Samuel Wolchok, very much pro-CIO in 1936, had led department store workers out of the AFL as part of the soon-to-be CIO's "Department Store Workers Organizing Committee." Like Osman and Livingston, he was anti-AFL in the late 1930s and welcomed the creation of the CIO, hoping the new labor federation would aid him in his efforts to organize the industry.

Wolchok, was, however, not a Communist but part of the old guard of Jewish Socialists in New York and more of a John L. Lewis Social Democrat (a left-leaning Democrat influenced more by Socialism and very much anti-Communist). Jewish Socialists were more likely to be older, Jewish Communists more recent immigrants and younger, reflecting a generational split among labor organizers in New York City. Like other Jewish Socialists (and black Socialists, including A. Philip Randolph), Wolchok supported the Communist-led organizing drives of the 1930s, but held the Communists at arm's length. Like most CIO leaders of the late 1930s, Wolchok was willing to allow Communists into the URWEA but constantly monitored the amount of control they had, fearing a Communist "takeover" of the organization. Wolchok supported the URWEA department store locals that had come into the CIO as a result of the Communist Party's TUUL organizing campaigns of the early 1930s. These locals (Locals 1, 2, 3, 5, 1250), along with Local 65, however, came into Wolchok's URWEA in 1937 already "marked" as part of a left-wing faction.

Local 1250, an outgrowth of the TUUL led by Clarina Michelson (a Communist whose husband, Bill Michelson, was a top organizer for Local 65), organized a successful prewar sit-down strike against the F. W. Woolworth five-and-dime dynasty. The "girl" sit-downers were a part of the 1936–37 "sit-down wave" that had started in the auto industry and spread first to a Woolworth's store in Detroit, on to the New York stores, then to Philadelphia and other cities. The strike helped spur the creation of the CIO's DSWOC with Wolchok *and* Sidney Hillman (of the ACWA) at the helm. CIO leaders, however, immediately pressured Wolchok to step down. Apparently, store management had actually requested Hillman because he was considered the "more responsible" of the two. Wolchok was, at this early point in the URWEA's history, much more willing to work with the left-led locals in the URWEA.[53]

The DWSOC then, under Hillman, began to take more of a "top-down" approach, an approach Wolchok continued once he was appointed head of the new URWEA. Top-down in this context meant that Wolchok engineered and/

or approved organizing campaigns and the URWEA locals implemented them. Local 65 resented the "interference," and tensions brewed under the surface between Wolchok and the left-leaning locals, which continued their Communist-inspired militant organizing strategies and which had taken "pro-Soviet" stances (not dropping their affiliation with the CP, for example, after the Soviets signed the 1939 pact with Adolf Hitler) during the war. The gap between right (anti-Communist) and left (pro-Soviet) factions within the URWEA widened after another major department store strike in Chicago in 1944.[54]

The 1944 Chicago strike against Montgomery Ward was called by Local 20 of the "Union of Mail Order, Retail, and Warehouse Employees" in Chicago, which was affiliated with Wolchok's URWEA.[55] At issue was Ward's management's refusal to recognize and negotiate with the union, despite the NWLB's directive requiring that they do so. More than 5,500 Ward's workers, employed at the department store on Chicago Avenue, the mail order house across the street, and three associated warehouses, went out on strike. More than one thousand people could be seen picketing at any given time over the course of the two-week strike. The strike was supported by the larger CIO and most of its locals, none of which crossed the picket line.

The strike was an amazing showdown between business and labor. President Roosevelt had consistently encouraged the growth of labor unions throughout his, by then, three terms in office. Business leaders clearly felt as if they were in a desperate fight for their rights as business owners. Sewell Avery, Ward's chairman, refused to recognize Local 20 as his employees' bargaining agent because, he said, not all employees had "freely" chosen the union. Worse, to Avery, was Local 20's (with the support of the NWLB) insistence on a maintenance of membership clause in its contract.

The maintenance of membership clause benefited labor unions tremendously. The clause did not create a "closed shop" exactly. Workers could choose *not* to join the union; they had fifteen days after being hired to decide. Those who signed up for union membership were required to stay in for the duration of the contract signed between the union (as the employees' representative) and the company. Maintenance of membership and the automatic dues check-off were "manna from heaven" for labor union organizers, who had fought tooth and nail during previous decades to convince people that joining a union was in their best interests. Maintenance of membership also staved off competition from company-backed "unions" whose "organizers" were often paid off by employers to sully the reputations of the non-company-backed unions, "win" elections, then negotiate wage rates and hours per week that were more acceptable to company, that is, lower than what the "real" union would have negotiated. Labor unions were simply more stable as a result of the NWLB provisions.

In return for the maintenance of membership clause and the dues check-off, labor unions agreed to a no-strike pledge for the duration of the war. President Roosevelt hoped that this compromise would work to stabilize industry as a whole. Wartime disputes between business and labor interests were handled not by lockouts or strikes but through mediation by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).[56] Not everyone agreed with the no-strike pledge. Workers across the country balked when union officials "informed" them of the compromise. Going out on strike, many argued, was the working class's only weapon. Some UAW members predicted that a no-strike clause would be written into their next contract.[57]

Pro-Soviet, Communist locals, including Local 65, agreed wholeheartedly with the no-strike pledge. As many times as Local 65's members went on strike, it is shocking that the union so easily gave up its "right" to do so. Pro-Soviet locals saw little alternative to the no-strike pledge. Allied, that is, Soviet, troops "needed every tank, plane, and gun that American factories could provide." The Communist Party even went so far as to support business owners' call for a return to a "piece work" incentive system as opposed to across the board wage scales as a way to increase industrial output.[58] While Local 65 never went that far, it clearly chose to support the interests of the Soviet Union over those of striking workers in the United States. That decision became more and more difficult to defend as the United States' Soviet ally became its archenemy after the war.

Business owners, CEOs, and managers, whose best interests were served by maintaining as profitable a business as possible, while appreciating labor's "supreme" sacrifice, nevertheless continued to resent union and NWLB interference. They wanted to hire and fire at will and adjust wage scales and hours to best suit the company's health. Sewell Avery, Ward's CEO, refused to comply with the NWLB's requirement that Ward first recognize then negotiate with Local 20. Striking workers repeatedly accused Avery of defying a government-NWLB order by not signing a contract with Local 20. Samuel Wolchok went so far as to say that Avery was "striking against the government" during a war. President Roosevelt took the opportunity to show Avery who was really "boss" and seized control of Montgomery Ward, giving over the daily operations and all assets associated with the mail order house, the retail store, and associated warehouses to Secretary of Commerce Jesse Jones. FDR clearly blamed Avery for the "labor dispute" at Ward which, he said, had disturbed the distribution of goods and services and threatened the war effort. Making the front pages of the *New York Times* and newspapers across the country, Avery was forcibly removed from his offices by two soldiers. Striking workers went back to work, ending the two-week strike.

Ward remained under the government's control for two weeks. In that time, the NLRB oversaw an election in which the majority of Ward's workers voted for Local 20. As Avery returned to work, he said the NLRB election "was of no consequence" and that he would, again, refuse to negotiate a contract that included a maintenance of membership agreement, saying it in effect gave the union the ability to hire and fire his employees. Anyone who did *not* support the union, he said, could be discharged under the clause. He was right to a certain extent. New employees who refused to pay dues after an initial fifteen-day grace period could be discharged for not complying with the contract. They could also, however, choose *not* to join the union during that period and not pay dues for the remainder of the contract, yet still be covered. Employers were not supposed to lower the wages of any employee below NWLB-generated wage scales. Avery refused to give up that amount of control to either Local 20 or the NWLB.

Local 20's president, Henry B. Anderson, was especially angry with FDR's decision to hand the operations back to Avery before the contract was negotiated. Anderson said that the seizure of the plant "had been a farce" because, now, when the union needed the government's support to finalize the contract, the government deserted and brought Avery back in. Local 20 threatened another strike if Avery did not sign a contract that included a maintenance-of-membership agreement.[59]

The back-and-forth continued for seven months. Local 20 went on strike again in December 1944. By the end of the month, the army again seized control of the same Chicago-based Montgomery Ward's facilities, again escorted Avery out of his offices, and this time took over Ward's stores, plants, and warehouses in six other cities. In the months before the second strike and subsequent takeover, riots had occurred outside Ward's facilities in Detroit, Ward's workers in Kansas City quit, and the CIO was growing increasingly combative. Government officials feared the "tinderbox" theory had become reality. War workers, frustrated over the government's slowness to force companies to abide by the NWLB's requirements, seemed on the verge of "exploding" in the face of slow to no government action. Government officials were particularly concerned about the situation in Detroit, the heart of the defense industry, where any walkout could cripple the war effort. Pat Quinn, head of the Greater Detroit Industrial Union Council and a member of the UAW, had threatened as much, saying the CIO and organized labor would consider it their right to rescind their wartime no-strike pledge if the government refused to force Avery to comply. Under pressure, Roosevelt issued the order for the second seizure. The army ran the day-to-day operations of the Chicago Ward's facilities for the next eight months, until just after V-J Day, when the company was turned back over to its "private owners."[60]

With Chicago Ward's workers (including warehouse workers) on strike, CIO locals across the country ready to walk out in support, and pressure mounting on the government to act, Arthur Osman and Local 65 issued a statement saying that the union's five hundred stewards would not support the strike. Little did Osman know that this decision would lead to the "disintegration" (or at least weakening) of the URWEA and the marginalization of his own union. At the time, he, in line with other now "pro-Soviet" unions, including Bridge's ILWU, steadfastly refused to violate the CIO's no-strike pledge, the thinking being that any disruption in the defense industry threatened the war effort and the U.S. alliance with the Soviet Union. Osman argued that the Ward's strike and threatened sympathy strikes amounted to wasted energy. By supporting a strike by Local 20, Wolchok and the URWEA had in effect, Osman said, "helped" Avery engage in "treasonous" activities. Instead, he argued, the URWEA and the larger CIO should call off the strike and "send a delegation" to Washington to demand that Roosevelt seize control of Ward's and enforce the NWLB's directives.[61]

By 1944, Local 65 was by far the largest URWEA local in New York, where the URWEA maintained its headquarters and the left, now pro-Soviet locals outnumbered the "right" locals. The Chicago strike gave the left-leaning contingent another means by which to carve out an independent, anti-Wolchok position from which to take control of the URWEA and finally get rid of Wolchok and the "right wing." Wolchok was "dumfounded" by Osman's "effrontery" in characterizing the URWEA's support of the striking Ward's workers as treasonous.[62] While Osman and Local 65 never went that far, the union clearly lost credibility in *not* supporting the URWEA, the CIO, and striking warehouse workers in one of the biggest showdowns between "capital" and "labor" during the war. While Local 65 certainly did not side with "capital," neither did it side with "labor." It sided with the government which, although pro-labor under Roosevelt, could not be counted on to aggressively enforce its own NWLB standards.

In 1944, Local 65 and other left-led unions seemed to have the upper hand in New York City as the divide between "right" and "left" widened. A bitter fight in 1943 over control of the American Labor Party in New York had proven as much to the left, which had successfully mobilized against the anti-Communist David Dubinsky (ILGWU) and put Sidney Hillman (ACWA) in charge. Not a Communist, Hillman was still willing to work with the Communist-left and acknowledge its influence. Hillman, not Dubinsky, gained FDR's support in the fight for the American Labor Party (primarily because FDR needed Hillman's and the CIO's support in the upcoming election). To the left, at least in New York City, not supporting the "right-wing" Wolchok during the 1944 Chicago strike was just another method by which to isolate him. As now the largest local within the URWEA, Local 65 could comfortably take the anti-Wolchok position sitting eight hundred miles away from the action.

Further damaging its credibility, especially as the war came to a close and the anti-Communist crusade gripped the nation, Local 65 had also supported two Communists (Peter Cacchione and Benjamin Davis Jr.) and Adam Clayton Powell and Vito Marcantonio, both heavily supported by Communists in their respective races for political office between 1937 and 1946. It sent delegates to what were considered "Communist-front" organizations' conventions, including those of the NNC and later the National Negro Labor Council (NNLC). Morris Doswell helped organize the Negro Labor Victory Committee. Local 65 strongly identified with other Communist-led unions like the ILWU. It supported the creation of a second front in Europe during the war and pushed for "Big Three Unity" after the war.[63]

By early 1945, the tide was turning in New York back toward Wolchok and the anti-Communist "right"-led factions in New York. As the war came to a close, Patsy Rotavero and Henry Hamilton explained, defensively, to Local 65's newest members in needle processing that the "Ward situation came about because the labor leaders failed to call attention of the Government to the conditions in Ward's." Local 65, they maintained, was never against Ward's workers: their problems could have been solved without a strike. "Our policy is, and still stands," said Rotavero, "that as patriotic citizens we pledged to our President, that we will not strike for the duration of the war."[64] Nevertheless, to people who had not helped Osman build the union, and who had not been instructed in the "correct" policy, the "smears" increasingly directed at Osman and Local 65 proved difficult (but not impossible) to counteract. The strike "created an issue which split the [URWEA] along left-right lines," a split that continued to widen after the war.[65]

Samuel Wolchok took advantage of the left stance that Local 65 took during the World War II years and began to encourage other URWEA locals to raid Local 65–organized shops by playing up Local 65's Communist ties and emphasizing its disloyalty to the URWEA and the CIO. After Local 65 organizers made progress organizing a shop, a now "rival" URWEA local would come in and try to persuade workers not to join Local 65 because it was Communist. Local 65 eventually disaffiliated from the URWEA because of Wolchok's growing hostility and red baiting.

Accusing Local 65 of being "Communist" became an increasingly effective strategy for rival unions as the Cold War intensified. And because Local 65 had experienced a great deal of turnover during the war, the technique worked much better than it would have in 1941. The differences between 1941 and 1945 are telling. In 1939–41, Local 65 devoted its resources to organizing and grew tremendously. By 1945, it was unable to organize as effectively. Although the union quickly regained 3,000 of the 5,000 members it had lost during the war (bringing the union's membership to 15,000 by July 1946), the evidence suggests that the growth was attributable not solely to organizing but to the influx of returning veterans in Local 65–organized shops.[66] Organizers spent a great deal of time telling new union members about the union's policies and defending it from the criticisms of rival unions instead of launching drives for new members. Competing unions like the ILGWU, ACWA locals, and even the URWEA (its own International), all of which took increasingly anti-Communist positions after the war, found it easier to persuade the workers Local 65 was trying to organize to stay away from "that Red union" and join them instead. Local 65's General Council minutes are filled in the postwar period with discussions about the importance of "harmony" and "solidarity."[67]

In spite of tensions brewing between the URWEA and Local 65, Local 65 continued to try to recapture some of the momentum of 1941. Organization continued to take place in the needle processing division despite the difficulties. By May 1946, needle processing had organized AJ Siris, Powder Puff, Star Suspender, and Livelastic Suspender and Garter. Although it had lost the Leo Safir shop in an election to an ILGWU local by a vote of 15 to 7, the needle processing division nevertheless boasted a membership of 1,600 (900 Negro, 300 Jewish, 200 Italian, 100 Spanish, 25 French, 50 others of all nationalities). Although that figure represented a loss of 200 members over the previous year, and a loss of 600 from its highpoint of 2,200 members during the war, much of the loss (more than 700 workers) occurred because of layoffs. The Globe Sales shop alone had dropped from more than 350 employees to 25 in February 1946.[68] So, despite the layoffs and the difficulties, needle processing continued to organize and became the union's "Melting Pot."[69] In an editorial to the union's newspaper, Morris Gettis, an organizer assigned to needle processing, wrote, "I would like just to add that Henry Hamilton is a shining example of the heights that can be reached when you combine two important factors: 1. The will of the individual to fight, and 2. The backing of an organization such as Local 65 which does practice what it preaches—that is, No Discrimination—Fair Play For All."[70]

New organization had also taken place at Revlon. Morris Doswell, Jack Paley, and Pete Stein led the drive at the suggestion of Doswell, who had proposed it in June 1945. After handing out leaflets and talking to the workers for close to a year, Doswell recalled that they finally "cracked" the shop. Made up mostly of older Jewish, Italian, and black women, Doswell recalled that he received a telephone call one morning from someone at the shop who complained that a few of the older women they worked with had just been fired without warning. By lunch, Doswell was outside the building (on Fifty-fourth Street between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues) passing out leaflets that said, "You Could Be Next." Local 65 called a meeting at the union's headquarters that night. More than two hundred people came. Local 65 signed a contract with Revlon in April 1946 covering more than five hundred workers. The contract called for union recognition and a "22% pay lift."[71] More trouble, however, was brewing. Fearing their threat to national security, the HUAC was drawing up lists of suspected Communist subversives to subpoena. First among them were members of labor unions in the "distributive trades." Arthur Osman, David Livingston, and Ester Letz were on the list.

4

Attacked from the Right and the Left

Community-Organizing, Civic Unionism during the Early Years of the Cold War

> It is the conclusion of this subcommittee that, at the time it began its inquiry, the Communist Party, U.S.A., had penetrated so deeply into union organization as to be the dominant power in the distributive trades in New York City, and that it was on the verge of achieving such a position nationally in this key branch of American business.[1]
>
> —Charles Kersten, House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor, 1948

This chapter examines the challenges Local 65 faced during the early years of the Cold War. Its position within the labor movement changed quickly once the Republican-dominated 80th Congress (1946–48) took office. By the close of 1948, the union had undergone an investigation by a subcommittee within the House of Representatives appointed by Fred Hartley and chaired by Charles Kersten designed to root out Communist activity within the New York City distributive trades. Local 65 had broken away from the URWEA (renamed the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Workers Union, RWDSU-CIO) and maintained an independent status with other "seceding" locals in New York City to form first the Distributive Trades Council (DTC), then the Distributive Workers Union (DWU). This chapter examines Local 65's initial attempts to deal with the changing context that had brought it from occupying what it thought was a central place in the CIO to a marginal place outside of the increasingly anti-Communist labor movement.

In 1946, Local 65 brought workers from Dadourian Export into the union. Dadourian is an important case. First, Local 65 organized the shop during the 1946 strike wave. Second, it offers an example of Local 65's return to aggressive "catch-all" and "area" organizing reminiscent of its prewar drives.

Third, Cleveland Robinson, who would become the union's highest-ranking black officer, came into the union as a result of the Dadourian drive. Finally, Dadourian, as "the first casualty of Taft-Hartley," helps us understand how the changing political climate affected the union and the low-wage workers it was trying to organize.

Cleveland Robinson had not heard of Local 65 until 1946. Born in Jamaica in 1914, Robinson came to New York in 1944 to join his mother and to pursue better opportunities in the United States. In 1946, he took a job at Dadourian Export in one of its warehouses. Dadourian exported army surplus materials and used clothing to the Middle East. Robinson loaded and unloaded trucks for 85 cents per hour (the minimum wage was 75 cents at the time). About 250 people worked at Dadourian packing, loading, and unloading in one of its four warehouses, typing and filling orders in its main office, or sewing and doing other repair work at yet another location, all on the Lower East Side. Dadourian Export was non-union when Robinson started working there (one of the Dadourian warehouses was located on 41 Elizabeth Street, another below Lafayette Street, and another in Bush Terminal; its main office was on Canal Street, and women sewed and did repair work at another location). While organizing a Local 65 dry goods shop on Elizabeth Street, near one of the Dadourian warehouses, Local 65's organizers scouted the area for new shops. "A group of Jewish workers and two blacks came to talk to us," Robinson recalled, about what union members made an hour, the conditions they worked under, and other benefits of union membership. When the workers at Balikoff, a warehouse in the area, concluded a successful strike, winning union recognition, higher wages, sick days, and hour limits, Robinson began to talk to his co-workers at Dadourian, and they "started stirring [them] selves." Once "Mr. Aslanyan," Dadourian's Armenian-born owner, realized what was going on, he offered Robinson and his co-workers a 20 percent increase in wages. They took the increase, Robinson remembered, and kept organizing. Robinson was transferred to another of Dadourian's warehouses in Bush Terminal.[2]

In the weeks that Robinson spent organizing Dadourian, he remembered talking with Local 65 organizers a number of times and going down to the union's headquarters. Robinson recalled that there was very little hierarchy at the headquarters, "no differences between the staff and the rank-and-file." He also remembered seeing black, white, and Hispanic members at the headquarters. Members showed him the headquarters' facilities, informed him of Local 65's credit union, and encouraged him to write an article for the union's newspaper. Robinson recalled that writing an article for a newspaper was something he had never considered doing. About the activities at the union, Robinson said that people "just could not find that kind of experience in this country or in Jamaica."[3] He frequented the union headquarters in those weeks and listened to discussions about the union's contracts, the union's history, and the union's security plan (a health insurance plan Local 65 administered itself; premiums were deducted from employees' paychecks). He recalled that the same kind of information was presented "over and over for new members."[4]

Once Robinson began working at Dadourian's Bush Terminal warehouse, he learned that the hog carriers union was entrenched there. He speculated that his boss had transferred him in an effort to prevent him from bringing Local 65 into the shop. Robinson recalled that he immediately began talking to his co-workers about Local 65, and within a short time twenty-five people had signed, formally expressing an interest. "Only two blacks and two Italians did not sign." Eventually the black workers signed but, Robinson recalled, "ratted on me later on." Meanwhile, at the Elizabeth Street warehouse, the hog carriers had called a strike. According to Robinson, the hog carriers had cooperated with the boss to call a mock strike to make it seem as if Dadourian was negotiating a tough contract, the implication being that, in reality, the two were negotiating a "sweetheart" contract. When Robinson went to the Elizabeth Street warehouse and walked across the picket line amid boos from his former co-workers (most of whom, he recalled, were Armenian and supported Aslanyan), he found another fifty workers inside sorting merchandise. They told Robinson they had wanted to contact "65" but were not permitted to make a phone call. Robinson did. Organizers from Local 65 headed to Elizabeth Street the same day and threatened to negotiate a contract only after Aslanyan "got rid of the union he brought in." Otherwise, Local 65 would call a strike. As Robinson and Local 65 organizers exited the building, the workers in the shop followed them. The following morning, Robinson recalled, a picket line of more than two hundred people was operating outside Dadourian.[5]

In one of Local 65's successful attempts at organizing "wall to wall," Robinson recalled that the first day of the strike the office workers asked if they too could join the union. Robinson remembered that he had not even thought about organizing among office workers but, once they expressed an interest, Robinson and Local 65 organizers talked with them and they had a majority committed to the union by the end of the day. Even the boss's personal secretary, "Estelle," Robinson recalled, signed up with Local 65. At that point the union agreed to negotiate a contract with Aslanyan at his lawyer's office. Robinson recalled that when Aslanyan saw his secretary at the lawyer's office, he told her she could go home, that he did not need her services that day. Apparently Estelle did not say anything. The next day, she was there again and Aslanyan again told her she was not needed. At that point someone told him that she was there because she was with the union and represented the office workers. According to Robinson, Aslanyan "jumped his whole height" and exclaimed that he was there "negotiating a contract for 'these,' [but] for officer workers, never!" The union responded that it was "all or nothing" and Aslanyan signed a basic contract covering the warehouse and the office, and including the establishment of grievance procedures, the hiring hall, and the union's security plan, ending an eight-day strike.[6]

After the strike, Aslanyan offered Robinson a supervisory position. He agreed to take the job as long as he could continue in his capacity as shop steward. The supervisory job never materialized. Robinson continued as shop steward until February 1947, when Local 65 asked him to join the union's staff as a paid organizer. Robinson asked Aslanyan for a three-month leave of absence, which he extended to six months, then nine months. After a year, Aslanyan told Robinson he would not offer him another extension. At that point, Robinson cut all of his ties to Dadourian Export.

Robinson continued to work closely with his former co-workers, trying his best to educate them about labor-management relations. Robinson was pleased that Dadourian workers' attitudes changed after they signed a union contract. They finally realized that they did not have to kowtow to the boss. Robinson also said that Dadourian workers continued to undercut their position with Aslanyan by borrowing money from him or their foremen, by coming to work late, and by pilfering merchandise. It was difficult, he recalled, "to educate them about keeping their distance." Aslanyan never did, Robinson recalled, get used to the idea that he had to hire his office staff through the union's hiring hall.[7] He wanted to control as much of daily business operations as possible and it worked to his advantage to keep his employees dependent on him (rather than on the union). The soon-to-be-passed Taft-Hartley law would give Aslanyan the tools he needed to try and get rid of pesky Local 65.

Local 65's contract with Dadourian covered October 1946 through October 1947. Over the course of the year the Dadourian contract was in effect, and in the immediate months after it expired, a number of developments occurred that put Local 65 and the labor movement in general on the defensive. Robinson recalled that Dadourian was the "first casualty of Taft-Hartley."[8]

Just as Local 65 attempted to pick up its organizing efforts in 1946, boasting some success in small shops like Dadourian, those in the needle processing division, and in larger shops like Revlon, the political mood shifted considerably, resulting, eventually, in the passage of Taft-Hartley.[9] Ironically, Esther Letz, Lillian White, Valerie Robinson, Arthur Osman, and many members of the union hoped the CIO-PAC would stop the various forms of "fascism" (racial discrimination, anti-Semitism, economic exploitation) they thought existed in America, yet their statements in support of the CIO-PAC helped link Local 65 to what the new Congress thought was one of the most repressive and threatening governments in the world at the time—that of the Soviet Union. In a sign of the changing climate, the CIO-PAC-supported candidates fared miserably in New York primaries and then in the 1946 elections. Local 65 had some indication that the CIO-PAC candidates were in trouble when, in the August primaries, only 10 percent of New York City's 200,000 voters went to the polls. "The total results of the primaries on August 20th," Local 65 argued, "should serve as a warning to labor that its winning strength cannot be felt at the ballot box if labor stays away from the polls on election day as it stayed away on Primary Day." Labor's failure to vote in the primaries, Local 65 argued, "resulted in a show of gain for the Republican reactionaries headed by Gov. Thomas E. Dewey . . . not one progressive candidate is left on the Republican slate." Indeed, the August primaries in New York proved to be a sign of what was to come in the national elections. One historian finds that "PAC-backed candidates won only eight of twenty House races in districts containing high proportions of CIO members." Jack Kroll, the CIO-PAC's director, tried to remain optimistic but it was clear that "ebullient CIO hopes for a renewal of the New Deal had given way to a grim determination to ride out the impending right-wing counterattack." Republicans controlled both houses, and Congress immediately set to work on Taft-Hartley.[10]

The Taft-Hartley law, passed on June 23, 1947, over President Truman's veto, was devastating to the labor movement. Passed by a Republican-controlled Congress, the law represented a culmination of attempts by business interests to dismantle the "pro-labor" National Labor Relations Act of 1935 that had ushered in the CIO and its affiliates. Between the final session of the 79th Congress and the first four months of the 80th Congress, "seventy three labor policy bills were introduced, most designed to chasten the unions and amend the [National Labor Relations] Act." Taft-Hartley also represented Republicans' and business interests' response to the strike wave of 1945–46. The law's provisions effectively undercut most if not all of the strategies Local 65 (and other unions) had developed to organize workers, to pressure employers to abide by contracts, and to desegregate the shops where its members worked. The law clearly "aimed to curb the political and economic activities of unions, to strengthen employers' ability to resist unionization, and to place the internal workings of labor organizations under greater direct federal scrutiny."[11]

The specific provisions of Taft-Hartley read as if the law's authors designed it to undercut specific techniques used by effective labor unions. Although Taft-Hartley did not eliminate collective bargaining, it completely restructured the NLRB to favor business interests. For example, it established a separate, independently controlled legal arm for the NLRB. One of the legal department's duties was to enforce a list of "unfair union practices" the law itself had outlined. Taft-Hartley made it possible for employers to use the NLRB to initiate "decertification" proceedings against unions. And it gave employers and the NLRB greater ability to seek injunctions against unions. Among the law's remaining provisions, it "explicitly gave employers the right to attempt to dissuade workers from supporting a union" and it greatly expanded the president's power to make unions delay strike action in situations deemed "national emergencies." One Taft-Hartley provision was particularly harmful to Local 65 given its "catch-all" approach to organizing: Taft-Hartley "banned strikes stemming from jurisdictional disputes among unions and banned secondary boycotts." Finally, the law established its famous "non-Communist affidavit" provision, requiring that "all union officers seeking access to NLRB facilities and services sign an affidavit stipulating that they were not Communists" (while not requiring some kind of certification such as submitting wage rates, hours, or profit margins of employers), which was particularly vexing to Local 65 and the CIO's left-led unions.[12]

Once Taft-Hartley was passed, Osman and Livingston initiated another type of drive in late 1947 that was designed to get around the law's provisions, at least for a matter of months. Normally the contracts Local 65 held with employers like Dadourian were in force for one year. Dadourian's contract expired, for example, in October 1947. Organizers and business agents devoted a great deal of time in the weeks before each of their contracts ended to negotiating a better contract for the following year. If the employer did not agree to the new terms, Local 65 members often voted to strike to pressure the employer to sign. After Taft-Hartley passed, Osman and Livingston thought that if they tried to have each of their employers agree to merely extend their current contracts for another year, Local 65's Executive and General Councils would have time to figure out how to deal with Taft-Hartley's provisions before their employers could determine how to use the law against them. Basically, they thought, extending the contracts quickly would buy them some time. Amazingly, the union was quite successful. Most of the employers it contracted with agreed to the extensions. Employers benefited because they did not have to consider new wage rates or other increases in benefits. Dadourian, however, was among the few shops that chose not to extend its contract. After failed attempts to negotiate, Local 65 members voted to go on strike. The strike went on for nine months until, finally, the much more conservative postwar NLRB, which Local 65 referred to as the "Taft-Hartley Labor Board," ruled that the replacements Aslanyan had hired in the interim, rather than the regular (now striking) workers, were allowed to vote for union representation. While the regular workers had voted 60-30 for Local 65, the replacement workers voted in favor of the "scab herding sellout artists" of the TWU.[13]

The TWU, like various ILGWU, ACWA, and URWEA locals, was attempting to capitalize on Local 65's weak position and raid the shops Local 65 had organized. As a now independent, non-complying union, Local 65's future looked bleak. Other locals in New York hoped to shore up their resources by adding Local 65's shops to their ranks. Their futures were perhaps not as bleak but nevertheless the labor movement was on the defensive; it faced a pro-business Congress and waning support for the New Deal's regulatory state from a majority of Americans. To Local 65, the "scab herding" sellouts represented the worst of the changes that had occurred in the immediate postwar period. The proverbial "divide and conquer" strategy was now being used not only by business interests but by the labor movement itself. Local 65 was particularly bitter because it was losing the fight; all sides had turned against it.

It is worth noting that the TWU, like the URWEA, had long earlier taken more of a conciliatory, what Local 65 called a pro-business, approach to organizing. Like the Department Store Workers Organizing Committee (DSWOC), the TWU traced its origins to pre-CIO days. As the CIO was breaking away from the AFL, it formed the Textile Workers Organizing Committee (TWOC) as way to counter the AFL's largely ineffective UTW. The TWOC was making some headway in the hostile South, where absolutely miserable conditions existed in the textile mills when the 1937–38 recession hit. The textile industry nearly collapsed. Mills closed throughout the South and the effects were felt in the Northeast. Already underpaid mill workers in New England were forced to accept wage cuts of up to 12.5 percent. Under these circumstances, the AFL's UTW and the upstart TWOC, in attempts to simply stay afloat, found themselves working with mill owners to determine the size of the wage cuts. The problem was that the TWU continued this strategy after the economy rebounded. The TWU's goal was no longer, at it had been briefly under the TWOC, to force mill owners to pay more and provide better working conditions but, rather, to prove "itself as a competent and cooperative collaborator with management efficiency experts."[14] Just as the DSWOC turned URWEA had taken a more top-down approach in 1937–38, so too had the TWU. Local 65's organizers saw URWEA and TWU drives of the previous ten years through this lens. While it was being called Communist, Local 65 shot back that the URWEA and the TWU were "collaborators" with business interests.

By the time the Dadourian strike approached its failed resolution (the strike officially ended in December 1948), Local 65 had been brought up on charges of Communist domination; it officially broke its ties with Samuel Wolchok and the URWDSEA-CIO (the URWEA had added "DS" to represent department store workers and was about to change its name again to the RWDSU); the CIO's president Phil Murray was considering purging eleven of the organization's more powerful "Communist-led" affiliates; Henry Wallace, left-progressive-labor's last hope to build a strong third party, had lost his bid for the presidency to Harry Truman; and the Communist Party had turned even more to the left, dropping its attempt to build alliances with progressive-liberal non-Communist organizations in the United States. It had been an eventful eighteen months. Local 65 now operated in a completely different context than it had during the first years of its existence.

The first in this series of cataclysmic changes was the break between Local 65 and Samuel Wolchok, president of the URWDSEA. Local 65's decision to affiliate with the then URWEA was more an arrangement of convenience for both Wolchok and Osman than anything else. As long as Local 65 was free to organize whom and where it wanted, without much interference, it preferred to remain affiliated to the URWEA because that affiliation gave Local 65 access to the CIO. Whenever the International began interfering with Local 65's organizing efforts, however, Local 65's immediate response was to disaffiliate and find another home.

Local 65's disaffiliation from the International in September 1948 represented the second time Local 65 had attempted to break from the International. In July 1945, Local 65 sued the International for not abiding by its original 1937 affiliation agreement. The original 1937 agreement between the two granted Local 65 "sole jurisdiction over all wholesale and warehouse establishments located in and around the Port of New York"; and it provided for the creation of a wholesale department to be headed "by the leader of local 65" that "would have the objective and opportunity to organize wholesale and warehouse workers all over the country as well as assist in organizing the unorganized workers in and around New York," among other stipulations.[15] Local 65 complained that the URWDSEA, while collecting per capita dues from Local 65, never devoted any of those resources to building a strong wholesale department within the International. Local 65 tolerated the International nevertheless. In 1945, Wolchok awarded jurisdiction over Adam Hat workers to Local 721 after Local 65 had done all of the organizing. With its list of complaints against the International piling up, and after the International's "most brazen attack" yet in Adam Hat, Local 65 sued the International in August 1945 on the grounds that it failed to abide by the original agreement. By awarding Adam Hat to another local, the International failed to recognize that Local 65 had sole jurisdiction over warehouses and wholesale establishments. Furthermore, Local 65 argued, the International had never established a wholesale division.[16]

In addition to suing to force the International to abide by its original agreement, the 1945 lawsuit also demanded that the court require the International to turn over "at least half the monies" that it had collected in per capita dues from wholesale locals to the new wholesale department (retroactive to 1937) and that Local 721 "be enjoined from putting into effect the backdoor agreement entered into by it with Adam Hat Stores covering the wholesale and warehouse employees of that establishment." In a move that Jack Paley, the union's secretary-treasurer, called unprecedented, the 1945 lawsuit further stipulated that Local 65 retain the right to disaffiliate from the International in the future if it breached the terms of their agreement.[17] Once the lawsuit was filed, Wolchok and the International were able to postpone a court hearing set for September 20. In the interim, Local 65 and the International began negotiating some version of the stipulations of the lawsuit that would satisfy both parties. They continued negotiating until the URWDSEA convention in Akron, Ohio, in June 1946. At that point, the International and Local 65 agreed that Local 65 would "give full support to any constructive program for organizing that the International might adopt in the future" in return for the "right to withdraw during the next year" if Local 65 was not satisfied that the International was carrying out the terms of their original affiliation agreement, including establishing a "warehouse" department (50 percent of the union's per capita dues were to be earmarked for warehouses) and giving Local 65 sole jurisdiction over wholesale and warehouse establishments in New York.[18]

While contemplating the possibility of disaffiliating from the URWDSEA in 1945–46, Local 65 members and leaders held long discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of doing so. In 1946, at least, Local 65 distinguished between the CIO and the URWDSEA. Affiliation with the URWDSEA was merely a route to affiliation to the CIO. Molly Genser, in a March 1946 General Council meeting, reiterated the importance of the CIO. Genser recalled that, when the Executive Council originally considered the lawsuit the year before, someone said, "Why can't we just get out of the International? Why do we have to go through all this fuss?" At that point, Genser recalled, they discussed disaffiliating and came to a "certain agreement, the most outstanding of which was that we wanted to remain in the CIO." CIO status meant a great deal to Local 65's leaders. To them, the CIO, unlike the URWEA, represented a group of like-minded people. Genser explained their thought-process by arguing that "The CIO is ours. The CIO was built by progressive-thinking people like ourselves. It was not built by the Wolchoks."[19]

Kenneth Sherbell, Local 65 organizer and soon-to-be state legislator, attended the March General Council meeting and added that, even if Local 65 were to disaffiliate, where would it go? He recalled that they had considered affiliating with Harry Bridges and the ILWU in the past. That option, he argued, was still not practical. It might have been a possibility, Sherbell continued, if the ILWU on the West Coast had "made some progress organizing nationally." Without the ILWU as an option, Sherbell argued that Local 65 had to continue with Wolchok. He said, "We are here. We have no other place to go. We have to fight."[20]

Jack Paley, Bernard Talkow (an organizer in the footwear division), Milton Reverby, Phil Manheim, David Livingston, and Bob Burke echoed Genser's and Sherbell's feelings about the CIO and the International. Paley and Burke thought that once Local 65 exposed the corruption rampant in the International, its allies in the International and in the national CIO would step in on Local 65's behalf and force the International to abide by the original agreement. According to Burke, there were many people in the country, including the International, who were interested in "attacking our Great C.I.O. movement from any angle." Burke argued that Local 65 had an obligation to let the CIO know what was going on. "We can no longer keep our mouths shut in the C.I.O.," Burke argued, "about the disgraceful situation that exists within our International" and said that Local 65 should stop contributing money to the International.[21] Jack Paley argued that there were other locals within the International that felt Wolchok was corrupt. Those locals, he was sure, would join Local 65 and the national CIO in forcing Wolchok to stop raiding Local 65 and violating the terms of their agreement. "We are not alone," Paley said, "not only within this international. But I am sure that when the labor movement, the C.I.O., becomes acquainted with this action, that we will be able to enlist their support."[22]

By the last months of 1948, however, Local 65's leaders found that the CIO no longer "belonged" to "progressive-thinking people like ourselves." It was no longer worth the CIO-affiliation to put up with Wolchok and the URWDSEA and CIO-affiliation itself no longer provided Local 65 with the support, financial or ideological, that it had come to depend on. And the larger CIO was not going to support it in any fight with Wolchok and the RWDSU. The labor movement divided quickly when President Truman stepped up his attack on the Soviet Union and initiated the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, effectively ending the alliance the United States had maintained with the Soviet Union during the war. Truman's anti-Soviet/anti-Communist stance forced the pro-Soviet and anti-Communist factions within the labor movement, which had managed to co-exist while FDR was president and while the Communist Party took a conciliatory approach, to take sides. In the polarized atmosphere generated by Truman's stance toward Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union and by the Communist Party's corresponding move to the left, factions within the labor movement found it impossible to co-exist. The Marshall Plan, which pledged U.S. financial support to European countries ravaged by war, and the Truman Doctrine, which called for U.S. military and economic aid to Turkey and Greece, effectively stated that U.S. foreign policy was now geared toward maintaining U.S. influence in Europe, at the expense of Soviet influence. The Communist Party moved to the left as a result and declared that the Marshall Plan "was part of a general plan of world expansion being carried out by the U.S.A." and called for "proletarian activism" in response.[23] Phil Murray, the CIO's president, moved the organization toward an increasingly anti-Communist, pro-Truman, and pro-Democratic stance that, to Local 65 and other pro-Soviet locals, made the CIO a shadow of its former, 1930s, self.

As Murray and Walter Reuther, whose ascendance to the UAW presidency and corresponding move into the inner circle of the CIO marked "an escalation of Communist/anti-Communist tensions" in the CIO, moved the CIO toward a strong anti-Communist stance, anti-Communist locals took advantage of the favorable political climate to solidify their power blocs and minimize the influence pro-Soviet locals wielded within their respective unions.[24] Walter Reuther and David Dubinsky supported anti-Communists in their attempts to gain control over pro-Soviet elements within various CIO unions as early as 1946.[25] Samuel Wolchok and Jack Altman, vice president of the URWDSEA, stepped up the red-baiting campaigns they had begun against Local 65 in 1945. Altman emerged as a leader in the URWDSEA-CIO's anti-Communist bloc and vehemently criticized the Communist-dominated locals within the URWDSEA. They had repeatedly, Altman charged, "'disregarded CIO policy and adopted their own foreign policy, thus embarrassing the entire CIO.'"[26] It seemed to Local 65 that the CIO, in particular the URWDSEA since it represented Local 65's only route to CIO-affiliation, now "belonged" to Wolchok, Altman, and the anti-Communists.

Altman's statements appeared in the May–June 1948 issue of *Labor and Nation*, a left social democrat, anti-Communist publication edited by J. B. S. Hardman.[27] Hardman, a former member of the ACWA, was, like Wolchok, Altman, Reuther, Murray, and other labor leaders, distancing himself from the Communists and trying to create a distinct voice for Socialist or, in this period, "social democrat," labor leaders who disagreed with the pro-Soviet positions the Communists had taken, positions that were simply unforgiveable by 1947–48. Altman's comments were clearly directed at Local 65 and signaled the end of any semblance of a relationship between the URWDSEA and Local 65. By September, Local 65 would disaffiliate from the URWDSEA (which had been renamed the RWDSU) and join eight other New York City locals to form the DTC. Wolchok and Altman seemed to have taken the more popular stance. Just months after Altman's article appeared, Congressman Fred Hartley launched an investigation into Communism in the New York City distributive trades in July and August, and, then, after Local 65 seceded from the International, again in October 1948.

After Taft-Hartley had passed, labor leaders were forced to identify themselves as Communist or not. Top union leaders signing as "non-Communists" and thereby certifying that they were not members of the Communist Party enabled unions to continue to take advantage of the federal government's NLRB and, perhaps more important, to signal to potential members and to the larger public that they were "safe." Local 65 along with other powerful New York City-based locals within the URWDSEA (and other left-led unions nationwide) did not sign the affidavit "as a matter of principle," although they clearly would have perjured themselves if they had.[28] This decision, along with Local 65's support of Henry Wallace, marked the union as "Communist-led" to all who were not familiar with it.

David Livingston criticized Walter Reuther and Philip Murray for signing the affidavit. Livingston had a difficult time accepting the powerful position organized labor now occupied in the immediate postwar period. Tying labor's interests so closely to those of FDR's Democratic Party and institutionalizing labor's presence in governmental bodies like the NLRB and the NWLB, made Livingston (who was more vocal about this than Osman) uneasy. While Sidney Hillman, Walter Reuther, Philip Murray, and William Green (head of the AFL) had become powerful voices in the upper echelons of government, in doing so they sacrificed too much independence. The controversy over the affidavit already indicated, to Livingston and John L. Lewis (UMW) who refused to sign, that labor had lost its ability to pressure political parties to take pro-labor positions; instead, organized labor was "complying" with what politicians demanded. Even worse, Livingston argued that labor's now "dependence" on its ties to the Democrats forced it to take increasingly pro-business positions. The NWLB tripartite type of system FDR had initiated during the war provided the labor movement with a seemingly permanent and relatively equal voice with both government and business interests as they worked together to decide what was good for the country. For Livingston, that system made labor's interests entirely too susceptible to political maneuverings. Livingston had hoped organized labor's leaders would carry on the spirit of the 1945–46 strike wave and reassert an independent voice for labor from the left. Complying with Taft-Hartley signaled labor's relative weakness in the face of a Republican-dominated, pro-business Congress. The decision left unions like Local 65 with fewer and fewer allies in its fight for low-wage workers. To Livingston then, Walter Reuther and Philip Murray and other "compliant leaders" were, in reality, not simply stating that they were not Communists, they were, by signing the affidavit, eliminating the only voice (labor's) that could have legitimately criticized business interests from a workers' perspective. Reuther and Murray, in signing, became to Livingston, "firm supporters of what they call the free enterprise system." In not complying, Livingston saw Local 65 and other non-complying unions, particularly the UE and the UPWA, which were waging strikes, as the only fighting unions left.[29]

Osman, Livingston, and Jack Paley had also hoped, albeit briefly, that in not signing the affidavits, they would encourage Samuel Wolchok to resist as well. Wolchok could easily have taken the position Sam Kovenetsky, the president of Local 1-S of the URWDSEA's department store division, had. Representing Macy's workers, Kovenetsky, an anti-Communist, refused to sign on principle. Wolchok went in the other direction. Rather than resist the affidavits, Wolchok used a local's non-complying status as a license to take over that local. One of the reasons Local 65 finally decided to break from the International was the attempt by the International to take control of Local 1-S from Kovenetsky after he refused to sign the affidavit. Local 65's leaders assumed their union was next.[30]

As Local 65 and the International were making their respective positions on the affidavits clear, Local 65 began preparing for a general strike. Many of its contracts, most of which the union had signed with employers hastily the year before as extensions of the 1946 contracts immediately after Taft-Hartley was passed, were set to expire in August 1948. Local 65 anticipated that many of its employers, emboldened by Taft-Hartley and in the growing anti-Communist atmosphere, would refuse to sign new contracts. To prepare for that possibility, the union planned to hold a general strike in August in an attempt to force its employers to sign new contracts. The year before, Local 65's members agreed to donate a week's pay to the union to help it in its efforts to resist Taft-Hartley. Local 65 counted on this "strike fund" to finance the general strike in August.[31]

As the relationship between the International and Local 65 took on a decidedly anti-Communist/Communist character, and as Local 65 prepared for its August contract renewals, Local 65 became the central target of a series of congressional hearings before a Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives of the 80th Congress, the same body that had passed Taft-Hartley the year before. The hearings, held over thirteen days in June, July, August, and October 1948, generated more than eight hundred pages of testimony on the "Investigation of Communism in the New York City Distributive Trades" and was front-page news in *The New York Times*.[32] Osman, Livingston, Paley, and other members of Local 65 were called to testify as to their own and the union's "Communist" activities.

While the hearings were being conducted, the union continued to prepare for the general strike, to negotiate contracts, to campaign for Henry Wallace, and generally to conduct business as usual. The hearings, however, certainly helped anti-Communist unions in New York City bolster their attacks against Local 65. They contributed to Local 65's decision to formally break with Wolchok, Altman, the URWDSEA (which was in the process of changing its name yet again to the RWDSU), and the CIO, and they ushered in close to five years of Local 65's independence from what its leaders and organizers viewed as the anti-Communist, mainstream labor movement.

Examining the subcommittee's investigation into Communism in the distributive trades provides the opportunity to analyze exactly what these congressmen considered "un-American." The hearings Local 65's leaders participated in were part of a larger red scare that was just beginning to take root. Senator Joseph McCarthy would not produce his famous list for another two years, yet some of the McCarthy paranoia is evident in the transcripts of the hearings, although the earlier hearings seem a bit more calculated. The investigation of Communism in labor unions was the first of a series of investigations that the HUAC would conduct throughout the 1950s, the most notorious of which occurred between 1950 and 1953, and which resulted in the blacklisting of lawyers, teachers, actors, screenwriters, and anyone who was deemed a threat to national security. These investigations eventually created an atmosphere of timidity that made Americans reluctant to criticize the United States. "The fear of unemployment," one historian argues, "sufficed to squelch dissent for almost a decade," particularly dissent from the left. The impact of the McCarthy period was clear: "the political chill that settled over the United States during the late 1940s and 1950s made many Americans hesitate to criticize the government or join any organization to the left of the Democratic Party."[33]

When Congressmen Charles Kersten, Fred Hartley, and John F. Kennedy convened to investigate the organizations involved in the New York City distributive trades, they assigned themselves the responsibility of rooting out "un-American" activities. Any practice that was deemed to interfere with the "American system of free enterprise" was suspect. The congressmen in charge of the investigation, whether from the Democratic or Republican Party, found common ground in their virulent anti-Communism, their support for U.S. foreign policy, and their relatively pro-business stance.

The 1948 investigations of the distributive trades can be read as an extension of Taft-Hartley. First, the hearings, the congressmen argued, were held to ensure that no one or no organization was interfering with the American free enterprise system. David Livingston had argued that the privileging of free enterprise, as witnessed in legislation like the Taft-Hartley Bill, undercut effective union organizing. The manner in which the congressmen conducted the hearings supports one historian's contention that American business leaders believed that selling Americans on the importance of the private enterprise system was their prime task in the postwar period.[34] Second, the hearings privileged business interests' assessments of the degree to which Communism had infiltrated the distributive trades. Finally, in the course of the investigations, the congressmen implied that the American free enterprise system could not function properly without a cooperative workforce and a pool of cheap labor.[35]

On June 25, 1948, Congressman Fred Hartley Jr. (R. N.J.), chairman of the House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor, appointed a special subcommittee

> to conduct a thorough study and investigation to determine to what extent Communists have infiltrated into labor organizations which serve the industries of the United States. You are further erected to ascertain whether or not the objectives, methods, and means used and proposed by Communist leaders and labor organizations are in violation of any Federal statute and endanger peaceful industrial relations between employers and employees, jeopardize our free enterprise system and threaten the security of our government.[36]

Hartley appointed Charles J. Kersten (R. Wis.) chair of the subcommittee and the following representatives, including himself, to serve on the subcommittee (which I will refer to as the Kersten Committee): Carroll D. Kearns (R. Pa.), O. C. Fisher (D. Tex.), John F. Kennedy (D. Mass.), John Lesinski (D. Mich.), and John S. Wood (D. Ga.). The section of the investigation of Communism in the New York City distributive trades was part of the Committee on Education and Labor's larger investigation of Communism in the labor movement that targeted not only the URWDSEA-CIO, "that portion," the report states, "operating in the New York City distributive trades," but also the UE-CIO; the International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America-CIO; the ILWU-CIO; and the National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards, all non-complying Communist-led/Communist-sympathizing/pro-Soviet unions. The House Committee on Education and Labor argued that, while most labor unions and their members were anti-Communist, there were a few Communist-dominated locals that represented enough workers in "interdependent" areas of the economy to warrant investigation.[37]

The Kersten Committee hoped businessman Louis Broido's testimony, that Local 65 and the other non-complying unions constituted a threat to the country as a whole, would sway public opinion away from New Deal values. Broido was the president of Gimbel's department store; his employees belonged to Nicholas Carnes's Local 1250, a sister union to Local 65. It was much easier to take an anti-free enterprise position during the Great Depression. People were much more willing to question the capitalist system. Local 65 and other labor unions, particularly CIO-affiliates, thrived in the 1930s. Workers adopted a vision in the 1930s, one historian argues, "characterized by equal rights, industrial democracy, economic equality, and social justice." During the immediate postwar period, business interests used their resources to "shape the ideas and images that constituted America's political culture" away from equal rights, economic equality, and social justice and toward "individualism, competition, and free enterprise." Business used television, radio, magazine, and newspaper ads, and, in this case, government machinery, to "reeducate the public in the principles and benefits of the American economic system."[38] The Kersten Committee found Local 65 and its leaders' associations with Communist-front organizations and Communist publications clear proof of their desire to incite class warfare and threaten the stability of the American economy. While those transgressions/associations were rather obvious, less so was the Kersten Committee's underlying accusation that what was really wrong with Local 65 and other non-complying unions was that they were effective. Their ability to lobby for equal rights, economic equality, and social justice (FEPC, full employment, CIO-PAC-initiatives), Local 65's "catch-all" organizing approach, its strong political stance, and its ability to manipulate the social and economic systems through its hiring hall were incompatible with the business-led campaign in the late 1940s and 1950s to privilege individualism, free enterprise, and competition.

Louis Broido saw the struggle in the department store industry as one of class warfare and argued that the department stores, the U.S. Congress, and the American people in general were struggling against Communists for "political power and ideological power." Broido considered any strike or confrontation with a union, particularly a non-complying union, class warfare. For Broido, Local 65 and the other non-complying unions were a serious threat to U.S. economic security. He argued that the "country at large has never realized . . . that there are 13 or 14 New York unions, thousands of people, dominated and controlled by left-wing groups, which, in case of trouble between this country and Russia, could cause us, in my judgment—and I say this with all due recognition of the solemnity of what I am saying—could cause this country very great trouble."[39]

Whereas Arthur Osman viewed his and his co-workers' efforts to organize a union at the H. Eckstein wholesale dry goods firm in 1933 as a struggle to gain self-respect through union representation, the Kersten Committee viewed that early history quite differently. It relied on Louis Broido's and Theodore C. Kirkpatrick's version of events. Kirkpatrick, who was secretary-treasurer of

American Business Consultants, Inc., managing editor of its newsletter *Counterattack*, and special agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 1942 to 1945, did not discuss the heroic efforts of Osman, Livingston, Manheim, and Paley to build a union.[40] He did not discuss the ideological differences that prevented Osman from affiliating with the AFL. He did not discuss the ways in which New Deal legislation and the growth of the CIO greatly aided Osman's, Livingston's, and Manheim's early organizing efforts in the wholesale and warehouse industries in New York City. According to Kirkpatrick, Osman, Livingston, and Nicholas Carnes of Local 1250 of the URWDSEA's (just changed to RWDSU but referred to as URWDSEA in the hearings) department store division intended to use the distributive industry to gain control of a key component of the U.S. economy for the Communist Party. According to Kirkpatrick, "Early in 1935, the labor-Communists decided to enter the American Federation of Labor . . . they remained hidden there until the CIO was organized in 1937 . . . it was not until they had the advantage of the CIO as a vehicle that they were able to make much headway."[41] By 1948, according to Broido, their efforts had resulted in a "hard core of 12 or 13 unions which were, in the labor field, considered as left-wing unions." They all associated with the American Labor Party and their "intellectual guidance and leadership came from local No. 65, of which Arthur Osman is the head."[42] According to Kirkpatrick, under the leadership of Osman, these twelve unions had accomplished a great deal recently:

> In recent years a great deal of headway has been made in not only increasing the membership of the various locals but also tightening the Communist grip on the locals by increasing the membership in the party within the locals and broadening the base so that more people could hold key positions in the locals. Also, they have been able to do an excellent job of propagandizing, particularly through the meetings and the union's publications, and also have been able to rally many members of these various locals to participate in other mass demonstrations, not necessarily confined to their particular union, demonstrations of front organizations and other political demonstrations.[43]

After detailing the "Communist" stance of the non-complying unions, the Kersten Committee relied on Kirkpatrick's investigations to securely link Local 65's leaders (as well as the leaders of the other non-complying unions in the distributive industry) to the Communist Party. Paley, Osman, and Livingston all attended the 1945 May Day parade, they subscribed to the *Daily Worker*, and they supported Henry Wallace's presidential campaign. The committee referred to Wallace, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's former vice president, as "the adopted son of the Communist Party." Osman had called capitalists members of a "decaying class" in *New Voices* in 1935, attended the 1945 National Convention of the Communist Political Association, and sat in the honored-guest section at the May 11, 1948, Wallace rally at Madison Square Garden. Livingston had been pictured in the 1938 yearbook of the Young Communist League, had requested that war veterans be allowed to march in the May Day parade in uniform, and had led GI protests in the South Pacific. The union modeled itself, Representative Kennedy argued, after Lenin and Stalin's use of a "staff to implement their cadre of the masses." A staff of 500 stewards, who made up its "general council," for example, ran Local 65. Each steward, the report described, "'cares for' 25 people and for an average of 2 employers each." The Kersten Committee also implied that the membership was subject to manipulation by its Communist leaders. It was unable, for example, "to establish if, how, when, and where the membership of any union had had an opportunity to vote on whether their officers should file the non-Communist affidavit" and implied that the rank-and file-membership of Local 65 may have been manipulated by the stewards to do what the "'general council' have determined . . . is 'best' to be done." The Kersten Committee argued that business interests ultimately competed with Communists over "the essence of ideological will."[44]

In 1948, if a person was a member of a labor union and criticized the United States for any reason, for its foreign policy, its racial problems, its social problems, or its economic setup, she or he was labeled Communist. The Kersten Committee used the fact that Local 65's publications were critical of the United States to accuse it of being Communist. "President Truman and Governor Dewey, Secretary Marshall and John Foster Dulles are denounced," the Kersten Committee contended, "with equal vigor . . . everything is wrong in the economic, labor, social, and racial relationships and foreign policy of the United States; nothing is wrong with Stalin and his Soviet foreign policy." The committee argued that Communists maintained control by keeping the membership "stirred up as to 'issues' with the employer, and satisfied that the dominating clique is responsible for benefits obtained in wages, hours, or conditions." The *Union Voice*, it argued, "whoops things up for the worker and substantiates its intemperate appeals by factual proof of new victories and concessions bludgeoned out of the employers." The Kersten Committee was particularly concerned that the *Union Voice* be prevented from promoting Communistic ideology, "not only among the members of the unions concerned, but among many others the paper might reach, notably Negroes and Puerto Ricans."[45]

The Kersten Committee encouraged Philip Murray and Samuel Wolchok in their recent efforts to "clean house" and get rid of the "eight Communist dominated locals," what Murray called in a telegram to Wolchok, "enemies" of the URWDSEA.[46] The Kersten Committee even went so far as to take credit for

Wolchok's and Murray's efforts. "All of the basic union moves are undoubtedly designed to prevent the recent attempt of eight Communist-dominated locals located in the New York City area to destroy Wolchok's union and capture the department-store field in America. As such, they are commendable. But the difficulty caused by the Communist clique has been brewing for nearly ten years and was brought forcibly to public attention when this Kersten committee commenced its public hearings with regard to the URWDSEA-CIO." The department store industry, the Kersten Committee argued, was in a state of chaos because of the Communists. "The subcommittee," the report states, "is gratified to have held the Communist clique up to general public gaze and to have its hearings be followed by what appears to be a house cleaning in this field." The only way such chaos and disruption could be prevented in the future, it continued, was to strengthen and enforce labor legislation, presumably Taft-Hartley, and compel anti-Communist labor unions to continue to rid their ranks of Communists. David Livingston, Jack Paley, and Esther Letz were cited for contempt of Congress.[47]

Once the June–August hearings were over, Local 65 made its final preparations to leave Wolchok and the URWDSEA. It had made arrangements with what the Kersten Committee referred to as the "eight other communist-dominated locals" in New York City to form a loose affiliation as all of them had decided to break from the URWDSEA and referred to themselves as the "seceding locals." (Osman, Livingston, and Paley all recalled proudly that Local 65 had not been thrown out of the CIO; it left on its own accord.) On September 14, Local 65's General Council and later its membership formally resolved that the "Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Union, Local 65 withdraw its affiliation with Retail, Wholesale & Dept. Store Union, CIO," leaving it to fight business interests and now rival unions.[48] Nicholas Carnes, president of Local 1250 that was now also part of the independent DTC, recalled that Samuel Wolchok had begun organizing "dissident groups" within the URWDSEA immediately after Taft-Hartley was enacted to counter the organizational drives in the left-led unions. Once they had formally seceded, Carnes explained, "all the jackals came out." The International sent letters to employers under contract with the seceding locals advising the employers not to deal with them.[49]

The RWDSU's seceding locals (Locals 1250, 1-S, 2, 3, 5, 65, 830, and 1199) together represented approximately 40,000 workers in New York City, making it the third largest union in the city after the ILGWU-AFL, headed by David Dubinsky, and the ACWA-CIO, headed by Jacob Potofsky. The unions agreed that Arthur Osman would serve as the DTC's president, Leon Davis of Local 1199 would be vice president, and Sam Kovenetsky of Local 1-S would serve as secretary-treasurer.

By September 1948, the seceding locals came together informally as the DTC of New York and began to seek affiliation with an AFL or CIO union. While it may not have been looking for a "cloak of respectability," as the Kersten Committee phrased it, Local 65 realized that breaking with the CIO altogether would leave it unprotected from increased raiding by rival unions. In its 1946 discussions about whether to break from the International, Local 65's General Council had argued that it would not break from the URWD-SEA unless it found some other CIO union with which to affiliate. When it became clear that Wolchok was going to use the anti-Communist context to severely undercut Local 65's efforts, it began negotiating, for itself and the other members of the soon-to-be named DTC, with the Building Services International Union, an AFL affiliate and predecessor to the SEIU, in Chicago. How could Local 65 justify seeking an affiliation with an AFL union? Jack Paley argued in September 1948 that, "while there undoubtedly was a vast difference between the CIO and AFL a year ago . . . in the last year there is no difference." Cleveland Robinson offered Dadourian as an example: "it is a CIO union who is aiding the boss to beat local 65 . . . it makes no difference what the label is."[50] The negotiations with the Building Services International did not go well. By November 1948, Local 65, DTC, was an "independent union" with no CIO- or AFL-affiliation. The seceding locals reminded themselves that they numbered 40,000 in the New York City area and would have to rely on each other as a source of strength. The new union's treasury was fairly sizeable partially because Local 65 had succeeded in negotiating most of its contracts to February 1950 without resorting to the general strike it had planned for August 1948 and because each of the member unions had agreed to a 60 cent per capita dues payment.[51]

Not only did the hearings send the non-complying New York City locals looking for a home, they also forced Local 65's leaders to clarify what it was that they wanted from any larger labor organization with which they would affiliate. In 1948, Local 65's leaders argued that it would affiliate with any International as long as that International agreed to a "three-point program" that included the right to secede, the right of autonomy (to strike), and the right to political freedom (to comply or not to comply with the non-Communist affidavit, depending on what each local's membership decided).[52]

In the wake of the hearings and while solidifying its ties with other New York City locals, Local 65's leaders were quick to criticize Philip Murray and, of course, Sam Wolchok. Now completely out in the cold, marginalized from the larger labor movement, Bob Burke, Sol Molofsky, Esther Letz, Livingston, Osman, and other members of Local 65 argued that, by moving toward an anti-Communist position, the RWDSU and the larger CIO were, in effect, aligning themselves with the anti-Communist and pro-business 80th Congress. As Wolchok encouraged the remaining, non-Communist RWDSU locals to raid the Communist-led locals, Local 65's organizers argued further that the raiding unions were nothing more than "company" unions, more palatable to business owners than Local 65, more willing to compromise, and more willing, in essence, to accept business owners' interests as legitimate. Bob Burke argued that the TWU-CIO, which eventually won the right to represent Dadourian workers in an NLRB election, was "the type of rotten company union 'organizational drive' Mr. Philip Murray of the C.I.O. is sponsoring in his frantic attempt to fasten company union chains around the American workers."[53]

As 1948 came to a close, Local 65 and the other affiliates of the DTC remained hopeful that they could withstand the red baiting and raiding that was already on the increase from both AFL and CIO unions. In 1946, Local 65 had pictured itself part of a larger black-labor-left contingent in New York City and a progressive-left coalition of CIO-affiliates nationwide who, together, would work in tandem with the CIO-PAC to lead the drive for an FEPC and full employment. Just two years later, it found itself much more isolated. Nevertheless, it attempted to carry out its version of community-based, civic, and social unionism with or without the CIO. Local 65 maintained a sizeable treasury. It retained support from most of its membership. It hoped, through the DTC, to expand nationally in an effort to offer alternatives to Wolchok's anti-Communist locals and it pledged to resist Wolchok, Murray, and Congressman Hartley and not sign the non-Communist affidavit. "Compliance was kowtowing," argued one of the union's top organizers.[54]

Arthur Osman went a lot further. In his assessment, the unions that signed the Taft-Hartley affidavits and who "bragg[ed] about their union's non-Communism" were also lily white, did not allow Negroes to become full-fledged members, and did not allow their members to oppose the union's leadership.[55] To a certain extent, he was right. The CIO-affiliated unions that signed and that were avowedly anti-Communist (the USWA, the TWU, and the URW, among others) were overwhelmingly white and male in both leadership and membership. The Communist-led, "-influenced," or "-sympathetic" unions in the CIO (the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, and the United Electrical Workers, the ILWU, the United Office and Professional Workers of America [UOPWA], among others) made a point to organize and promote black men and, to a lesser degree depending on the industry, black and white women. Between these extremes, several hundred locals existed both in the CIO *and* the AFL that either vehemently resisted organizing any other than white men or made organizing "nonwhite men" a priority. The UPWA and the UAW were both unions that fell somewhere in the middle of these extremes. Both provided homes for locals that were led by black organizers, both adopted inclusive rhetoric and organizing strategies, both were models of civic and social unionism, and both contained professed Communists and vehement anti-Communists.

Local 65 was a much smaller version of those CIO unions on the extreme left of the spectrum; all of them were left of the UAW on one crucial issue: their willingness to "blame" the capitalist system for continued unemployment and underemployment, particularly of racial and ethnic minorities and, in Local 65's case, religious minorities. CIO-affiliated unions had moved, as a whole, to the right on this issue as they solidified their position in the business-labor-government "tripartite" committees that regulated wartime production. For Osman, capitalism's private ownership and the drive for profit were the problems. The "system" would continue to produce pockets of low-wage jobs that would be disproportionately filled by women and minorities in a country that discriminated by race, ethnicity, gender, and religious affiliation. Local 65's members' overall well-being was not dependent on the health of a big company like General Motors, Ford, or Chrysler. Its members, working for small, "makeshift" shops, were better served, Osman thought, by a highly regulated system that mandated full production, a guaranteed job for all, as a way to counter the continued threat of unemployment as small shop owners struggled to outcompete one another, keep bankruptcy at bay, and cut costs, including wages, as deeply as possible.[56]

Neither the CIO nor the AFL provided the type of structure that fully supported the direct targeting of low wage workers, "catch-all"-style, that Osman and Local 65's organizers engaged in. The more left-leaning 1930s CIO offered former Communist organizers an opening to at least try but, by 1948 as it purged the Communist-led locals, that opening vanished. Local 65 was forced to chart another path as were the now left-led unions that continued to criticize the emerging "free enterprise system," or capitalism. In 1947, the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers continued to argue for a socialist system, one that would end exploitation and return "wealth" to the "producer" as did the other purged unions. The anti-Communist (or non-Communist) unions were not as bold. They argued for continued and increased government regulation but nothing that smacked of the "overthrow" of capitalism itself.[57]

For a few years at least, while Local 65 remained independent of the CIO and AFL, it continued to organize black workers and began, through its affiliation with the Food, Tobacco, and Allied Workers (FTA), to organize in the South. It tried to maintain the image it created for itself, that of a militant, fighting union. That image would be severely tested, however, not only by the difficulties associated with launching organizing drives as an independent "Communist-dominated" union, but also by internal struggles over Osman and Livingston's decision in 1952–53 to break from the Communist Party and rejoin the RWDSU. Before that took place, however, the union remained independent for close to five years. Local 65 continued to organize in New York City and throughout the country, it picked up some of the decimated FTA and UOPWA locals, and emerged from the Cold War changed but intact.

5

A Third Labor Federation?

The Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers of America (DPO)

> Among the most inspiring moments of the convention was the role especially played by delegates from the South, primarily our Negro brothers and sisters who described how they were building the union in spite of the organized terror of the KKK and Southern employers, who by the way are Northern employers as well.
>
> —Arthur Osman[1]

This chapter provides a fascinating look at how the union's leadership attempted to continue its social revolution within the completely changed context of the emerging Cold War with the Soviet Union. By 1948, "65" was for all intents and purposes expelled from the CIO. It refused to give up on what it called "catch-all" organizing, its version of community-based civic unionism and joined with other refugees of the CIO to continue to organize poor workers in areas as varied as New York City, Chicago, Texas, and the RJ Reynolds plant in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, under the auspices of the Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers of America (DPO). From 1950 to 1954, the DPO, a merger of the DWU with the FTA and the UOPWA, constituted a third labor federation, an alternative to the Cold War versions of the AFL and CIO.

Through its connections with the DPO, District 65's organizers tried out their New York City–born strategies in old FTA and UOPWA locals in the Midwest, the West, and the South. This chapter spends a considerable amount of time detailing the DPO's successes and failures organizing workers in the South. While its efforts to unionize the Planters Nut and Chocolate Factory and the smaller Suffolk and Lummis Peanut Plants, all in Virginia, were fairly successful, the DPO's similar attempt to revive Local 22 at the R. J. Reynolds plant in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, was an utter failure. Disagreements among the DPO's national Executive Board members over how to organize across the color line at R. J. Reynolds were particularly heated. The DPO's failure with Local 22 drew criticism from the Communist Party and contributed to the eventual break between District 65 and the CP and Osman's ouster of Vicki Garvin and other UOPWA members—the "white" leadership's ouster of the union's highest-ranking black activists.

The DPO was a conglomeration of those unions deemed Communist and too left even for the labor movement in the postwar period. Eight months prior to the official creation of the DPO, Arthur Osman, David Livingston, Nicholas Carnes, and several other left-led locals in New York City seceded from the RWDSU and formed the DWU. At the time, it appeared as if the seceding locals hoped to launch a third labor movement in New York, an alternative to both the AFL and the anti-Communist CIO. Although Osman denied that that was the intent of the DWU, he did hope that the new union would be able to accomplish what Sam Wolchok's RWDSU had not, namely, to organize a strong nationwide distributive workers union. It had already succeeded in New York, "the world's greatest distribution center," to "constitute a great organized force." According to Osman, "there [were] thousands more in many cities beyond New York, waiting to join with us once we are prepared to guide them on to the path to security." A reporter for the *New York Post* argued that "if the pro-Communists ever set up a third labor federation, its operating engineer could well be a left-wing labor leader as obscure as he is efficient," Arthur Osman. While the reporter argued that a third federation was unlikely, he nevertheless identified Osman as "the most important figure in the divided, depressed councils of the left-wing unions" who might launch such a movement by first linking his DWU with strong New York City bases, including the office workers, the furriers, the communications workers, and the teachers.[2]

Just eight months after the DWU's founding convention, it joined two other left-led unions, the FTA and the UOPWA, to form the Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers Union (DPO).[3] Philip Murray had officially purged the UOPWA and the FTA from the CIO. Between January and May 1950, just as the DWU was being organized, the CIO held its own trials which, like the Kersten Committee's investigations, sought to "show a systematic pattern of pro-Soviet behavior" among the left-led unions and use that pattern as grounds for expulsion from the CIO. For the CIO, similarities in the shifts in the offending union's political positions with those of the Communist Party, along with support for Henry Wallace, constituted pro-Soviet behavior.[4] In the aftermath of the purges, the CIO had lost approximately 750,000 members nationwide, or between 17 and 20 percent of its membership.[5]

The DPO, now an independent International, brought together 85,000 of those workers, about half of whom were located in New York City. Local 65, like it had been in the DWU, continued as the driving force behind this newest organization. The DPO maintained its headquarters at 13 Astor Place in New York City in the building owned by Local 65. Arthur Osman became president of the organization, Donald Henderson, president of the FTA, became vice president, and Jim Durkin of the UOPWA assumed the office of secretary-treasurer. Local 65's attorneys provided legal counsel for the new DPO, the *Union Voice* became its official newspaper, and Local 65's constitution provided the basis for the new DPO constitution.[6] It was at this point that Local 65 changed its name to District 65; it now boasted 40,000 members as a result of the various mergers with the beleaguered Communist-affiliated unions.[7]

The DPO held its first convention on October 6–7, 1950. In a section of his report to the convention entitled, "Who We Are," Arthur Osman, DPO president, described the new organization. The DPO's nearly 80,000 members were located in at least 50 cities in half the states of the United States and were organized into approximately 150 separate locals. The DWU contributed 35,000 members, the UOPWA 25,000 members, and the FTA 20,000 members. The DPO's members varied from heavy manual laborers to highly skilled craftsmen to salespeople, office workers, technicians, cigar makers, tobacco workers, engineers, draftsmen, bank tellers, social service workers, warehousemen, freight handlers, metal workers, paper box makers, and packers. The DPO now held contracts with American Tobacco, Campbell Soup, Quaker Oats, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and the John Hancock Insurance Company. It represented workers from Gimbel's, Bloomingdale's, and Saks department stores and chain stores including Lerner, Whelans, Liggets, Davega, and A. S. Beck. More than half of the DPO's members lived in or near New York City, 6,000 members lived in the Chicago area, 10,000 were located in Southern California, and 8,000 in the deep South. The financial state of the DPO seemed sound, District 65 anchoring it with an approximated $4,000,000 in assets. The FTA had no surplus, however, and the UOPWA projected $70,000 in cash assets pending some liquidations. Among the DPO's leadership, Osman reported, there were "Jews and Negroes, Irish and Italians, Spaniards and Swedes and every other type of American working in our industry."[8]

Although Osman explained in his report to the delegates attending the first DPO convention that District 65 was the force that "unites them all," he also advised that, if the DPO was to grow, it would do so only if and when the members in each of the DPO's locals took it upon themselves to organize. In a veiled criticism of the CIO's 1946 Operation Dixie, Osman advised that DPO locals could count on financial support from the DPO's treasury, on the exchange of experiences and advice, but there would be "no Messiah sent either from New York or elsewhere."[9]

The new DPO launched organizing drives in many of the former FTA locals, including those in Memphis, Chicago, Louisville, Newport News, Dade City, Florida, Camden, New Jersey, Suffolk, Virginia, and other cities, in which the union's locals pressured businesses to hire more black workers, upgrade jobs held by black workers (this in the era before the passage of the Civil Rights Act), and provide benefits packages, including health insurance. This chapter focuses on the DPO's efforts in Suffolk and Newport News, Virginia, to resurrect the just about defunct Local 26 of the former FTA.[10] Between 1951 and 1953, Local 26 gained higher wages, better working conditions, and a health and benefits package for more than 1,200 mostly black workers at the Planters Nut and Chocolate Factory. It is remarkable that the "Communist-dominated" DPO, whose president had been called the "intellectual guide" of the Communists in New York City, organized successfully at all, much less in the South during the McCarthy era. Not only was the DPO able to commit organizers and money to Local 26, it watched Local 26 leaders Leroy Harris, Flossie Jones, and Robbie Mae Riddick build a union headquarters and negotiate fairly successful contracts with Planters, the nearby Suffolk Peanut Company, Lummis Peanut Company, and the Hiden Storage Company.

The DPO's efforts in Virginia represent its attempt to challenge the CIO's new, more conservative turn. The anti-labor context of the Cold War certainly limited the CIO's ability to promote any kind of social-economic change of the type more typical of its 1930s organizing drives. Focusing on black workers at all much less attempting to raise their wages, improve their working conditions, and funnel them out of "bottom" rung of jobs was an enormous undertaking because of the social implications of doing so in the South (and in the North). Having made some progress in the 1930s and during World War II, the anti-labor context of the Cold War put the CIO on the defensive and limited its ability to support these efforts, particularly after 1948 when, concurrently, its Southern Organizing Drive, Operation Dixie, had failed and it began purging its "Communist-dominated" affiliates.[11]

Members of the mostly black Local 19 of the FTA in Memphis described the immediate postwar period as the "highpoint of the CIO in the South" until it "pulled the plug on everything and started the Cold War."[12] Likewise, the DPO's leaders believed that the CIO that was emerging in the postwar period was a shadow of its former self, the CIO in name only. Now attempting to organize in the South, the DPO added abolishing poll taxes, passing anti-lynching laws, and securing fair employment legislation to its list of goals years before the famous *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case, Emmett Till's murder, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott launched a civil rights movement with the same goals.

Three strategies, in particular, seemed to have worked in Suffolk.[13] First, the organizers, if they relocated to a southern location at all, stayed temporarily. Leadership came directly from the rank-and-file in each location. Second, Local 26 established a union headquarters, very similar to headquarters set up by its sister Local 22 in Winston-Salem, by District 65 in New York, and by other unions. Like schools, churches, and other community centers, these locals institutionalized a worker-centered, class-oriented set of values that emanated from the union headquarters. As part of their vision of civic and community unionism, District 65's organizers, under the auspices of the DPO, fought to make "unionism" a permanent institution in the landscape of the town, every member's second home. Third, and strikingly different from the CIO's strategy during its massive 1946 Operative Dixie campaign, the DPO (as did former FTA locals) did not apply what Osman called "perfectionist ideals" in the South, meaning it focused less on forcing white workers to accept black workers in the local and more on negotiating contracts for black workers that were so appealing that white workers would want to join the union out of economic interest. The DPO thought its health and security plan would push white workers into joining the union and overcoming some of their reluctance; negotiating that plan in its contracts became one of the union's "primary" objectives.[14]

When longtime District 65 organizer Kenneth Sherbell traveled south to check the status of the former FTA locals, he found most almost defunct. The CIO purge, the FTA leadership's refusal (until 1949) to sign the non-Communist affidavits, the effects of raiding anti-Communist locals, and emboldened business interests had all but destroyed the locals. Local 26 operated out of two rooms without much financial help, its members attended meetings sporadically, and the last wage increase it won came through the recently mandated federal minimum wage. If the distribution of the workers at Planters, the largest of Suffolk's peanut companies, is representative, approximately 80 percent of the workers at the Suffolk peanut plants, in which Local 26 concentrated its efforts, were black and about 66 percent were women.[15]

Gertrude Franklin's experience was typical. She began working at Planters in 1916 and made 50 cents per day. Planters was organized, she recounted, during Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, and conditions and wages improved. By 1951, soon after the formation of the DPO, Franklin was making 90 cents per hour and working a 40-hour week.[16] Moreover, Planters exploited racial divides by discriminating against the few white workers who belonged to Local 26. Of the 250 white workers at Planters, Local 26 had organized only 15.

Planters forced the white union members, Lock J. Parker reported to the *Union Voice*, to take their breaks while the machines were running and while they were on the clock. Black workers, union members or not, and white workers who did not belong to the union did not have to pay for their breaks.[17] The FTA succeeded in gaining higher wages for its members in Local 26 yet the local was weak, especially in the context of the Cold War, and companies like Planters exploited racial divisions to keep it so.

Sherbell and Osman found that FTA (now DPO) members appreciated the union, believed in the benefits of union organization, and were ready to fight their employers at Planters Nut and Chocolate Factory for higher wages and better working conditions. Leroy Harris and Flossie Jones went to work. After Harris and Jones brought Sherbell up to speed on the situation in Suffolk, they concentrated their efforts on the next contract with Planters, set to expire in April 1951. Local 26 drew up demands that included higher wages, more vacation days, upgrades for certain classifications of workers, and a union-administered health and security plan. Harris and Jones spread the word and signed up as many people as possible in preparation for the contract talks. In late January, three months before the contract was to expire, Planters responded to Local 26's increased activity by offering workers an across-the-board 5 cent per hour increase, no additional holidays, and no health and security plan. Local 26 responded by saying a nickel meant nothing. Members voted to wait until April to negotiate the contract and continue to build in the meantime. Dora Davis proclaimed, "Planters has money and we have time to get it."[18]

Local 26 was on the move. As the talks at Planters neared, the union lost no time organizing the nearby Suffolk Peanut Company (which had not been organized by Local 26 when it was part of the FTA). In January, inspired by the recent visit of DPO executive officers Arthur Osman and Don Henderson (president of the former FTA and vice president of the DPO),[19] Local 26 workers from Planters helped the workers at Suffolk Peanut to organize. The two hundred or so workers at the Suffolk Peanut Co., mostly black women, complained of bad treatment at the hands of their supervisors. Local 26 petitioned for an NLRB election and set to work organizing as many workers as possible.[20] Just before the talks were to begin at Planters, neighboring Suffolk Peanut Plant workers voted by a majority to begin paying union dues regularly beginning in March, even before the NLRB election was held. "The workers," Lock J. Parker reported, "are determined to build a strong union while waiting for a labor board election."[21] By December 1951, Local 26 leaders believed the union would win the election easily. More than 150 Suffolk workers were active in the union and attendance at meetings was at 75 percent. For the first time, “male workers have become active in the union.”[22] To no one’s surprise but everyone’s relief (except the peanut companies of course), on December 13, 1951, Suffolk Peanut voted 159–4 for Local 26 of the DPO. The success at the Suffolk Peanut Co. was credited to Local 26 having “completely reorganized the plant.”[23]

Meanwhile, in the nearby city of Newport News, workers at the Hiden Storage and Forwarding Co., a leaf tobacco plant, circulated petitions that called for wage increases to meet the high cost of living, although their contract did not expire until November, almost eleven months later.[24] Hiden workers were coming around to Local 26, especially after the union pushed the company to pay workers time and a half for Memorial Day.[25] Hiden Storage, although a much smaller operation than Planters Nut and Chocolate Factory, represents another example of the way in which the DPO tried to breathe new life into some of the old FTA locals. The FTA originally organized Hiden Storage. In November 1950, the DPO found the local in a sad state of affairs after the CIO purge. Fewer than ten members were paying dues and going to meetings. Just one year later the 140 members of Local 26 who worked at Hiden Storage reported that they had won a 15 cent raise, three more holidays, and an additional week of vacation for those workers with one or more years on the job. Almost 100 percent of the 140 union workers were paying dues, and Hiden workers had successfully fought off an AFL raid by the Teamsters.[26]

Finally, the contract negotiations at Planters, the first under the auspices of the DPO, began in April 1951. Osman characterized the negotiations as of central importance to the entire DPO. Local 26 formally presented its demands; Planters refused to discuss them. To offset the rising cost of living, Local 26 demanded a minimum wage of $1 per hour (the current minimum was 80 to 82 cents per hour) and a 15 cent per hour increase for workers making more than the minimum. The union demanded that Planters reclassify semiskilled and skilled jobs and authorize three additional paid holidays (bringing the total number to six) and improvements to vacation accrued by senior workers with five or more years on the job. Finally, Local 26 demanded that the company sponsor a health and security plan, to be paid by the company with 3 percent of the payroll “to give hospitalization, sick, and life insurance benefits to all union members.”[27] Local 26 declared that it was ready to go on strike to win its demands. Osman reported that, if it came to that, Local 26 would have a “fighting chance” if the rest of the international DPO membership supported the action.[28]

The DPO’s success at Planters and in Suffolk in general was particularly important. The Suffolk local (including workers at Planters, Suffolk Peanut Company, and Hiden and Lumis Storage) was large, the second largest of the

DPO's locals in the South next to Memphis. It was "practically 100% Negro and, therefore, the biggest concentration of Negro members in the South." Given the local's contracts were to expire soon, negotiating them successfully through the new DPO would offer the union the chance to establish itself in the peanut industry. Finally, if the DPO did well in Suffolk, the example might "inspire" other black workers in the area to organize and join the DPO.[29]

When Planters offered an 8.6 cent per hour across the board increase, three additional paid holidays, an adjustment to semiskilled and skilled classifications that resulted in 9 to 24 cent per hour increases for some 200 workers, Local 26 members voted to accept the offer but were less than happy. According to a report from Don Henderson, Local 26's members complained that the increase, which amounted to 6 cents per hour across the board, did not cover the cost of living increases and that workers were "particularly resentful at the refusal of the company to agree to a 3% health and security fund." In fact, the company had proposed a Blue Cross Blue Shield package to be paid for out of the 8.6 cent increase just negotiated but Local 26 refused, despite the fact that the Blue Cross Blue Shield package would represent a significant improvement in the health care of Planters workers. Instead, Local 26 voted to work for a "union administered 3% plan" at the following year's (1952) contract negotiations.[30] The Wage Stabilization Board approved the holiday portion of the contract in October 1951 yet continued to study the wage increases.[31] Finally in December, with Planters workers ready to strike, the Wage Stabilization Board and Planters were persuaded "to come across" and approve the raises.[32]

As the Planters contract was being signed, negotiations opened in the Suffolk Peanut plant. In the short month since the NLRB election, Leroy Harris, president of Local 26, reported that more and more people were signing up for the union and even had hopes that 100 percent would be signed up in the coming weeks. He also reported that attendance at meetings was upwards of 95 percent, "the best attendance record of any plant in Local 26." Suffolk Peanut workers were ready to demand raises, holidays, and vacations in the next contract. Workers joked about the last raise approved for them by the Wage Stabilization Board of 1 cent per hour to affect twenty-four workers. Most of the workers at Suffolk Peanut Co. made much less than their counterparts at Planters. Women at Suffolk made 75 cents per hour, an increase from 58 cents mandated by the recent passage of minimum wage legislation. Men made 87.5 cents per hour. Neither men nor women were paid for holidays or vacation days.[33]

By March 1952, Suffolk workers reported that their talks were just about completed. The company and Local 26 had agreed to a 4 cent per hour increase for pickers, mostly women who represented two-thirds of the workers at Suffolk; a 2.5 cent per hour increase for picking room helpers, truck drivers, and machine operators. The latter group had already received a 6.5 cent per hour increase the previous May and an additional 1 cent an hour just recently. Year-round workers at Suffolk who had one or more years on the job now earned four days of vacation per year. The sticking point for the union was the quota system in place for women pickers. They were required by the Suffolk Peanut Co. to produce nine cases of rejects for eight hours of work. The union demanded a lower quota.[34]

Meanwhile, with contract negotiations going on, Local 26 went house hunting. The local's leaders and members were dissatisfied with the building they were operating out of and, at Osman's suggestion, decided to establish a more permanent union headquarters. Members of Local 26 devoted 10 cents per month to the building fund and had been contributing to the fund since the spring of 1950. Apparently, Local 26 members had discussed the benefits of owning and operating out of a bigger, more substantial union headquarters. Owning a new and more permanent building would strengthen the union and allow it to "practice democracy." A new building offered the possibility of holding large meetings in their own headquarters and of overcoming the Jim Crow restrictions operating in Suffolk that "had made it virtually impossible for Negro and white members to meet together under one roof." One union member likened her 10 cent contributions to the union building fund to the other contributions she made each month to her church and community centers, proclaiming, "It's about time we built our own union headquarters."[35] With the help of the DPO's treasury, Local 26 secured enough money by June 1951, just after the conclusion of the contract negotiations with Planters, to purchase and renovate a two-story brick building it hoped would "stand out as a symbol of the struggle for justice and equality."[36]

Purchasing the building was consistent with District 65's philosophy. Arthur Osman went to Suffolk and discussed with Harris and Local 26 members the advantages of having a big functional union headquarters that allowed members to meet, socialize, and strategize together. Osman described District 65's headquarters in New York City, how it had been purchased by rank-and-file contributions, how it served as a central meeting place for workers throughout the city, and the various social events held there. Having a well-equipped union hall had enabled District 65 to build a union-centered community. Local 26 was convinced and started a building fund.

By the spring of 1951, the national DPO had helped Local 26 purchase a $40,000 building that was in the process of being remodeled to better suit the union's needs. Before long, Suffolk residents were scheduling proms, glee club and choral concerts, weddings, and other social events at the two-story brick building with the new neon sign indicating "Local 26-DPO." Harris recounted that Suffolk's white firemen's group wanted to schedule their annual dance at the headquarters but the union hall was booked.[37] One Local 26 member described the building and the union's presence as a new institution in town, as important and central to the community as the churches and schools. Another commented that the popularity of the facility itself within Suffolk had created more public support for the union and helped Local 26 win the election at the Suffolk Peanut Co.[38] Leroy Harris and Local 26 members reported feeling a sense of pride that the union and its headquarters were beginning to occupy a central place in the community. To them, the union was now stable and stronger, and it offered its members a source of "personal dignity."[39]

Practically, the union's new headquarters enabled Local 26 to concentrate on bringing new workers into the union. In addition to Planters, Local 26 organized the other smaller peanut processing plants in Suffolk, including the Lummis and Suffolk Peanut companies, and brought the Hiden Storage Company's warehouse workers in from nearby Newport News, Virginia. This strategy, too, seems to have been a direct influence of District 65. The "area" principle, organizing the "shop next door," was implemented in Suffolk and, as a result, Local 26 was not strictly a peanut workers union. Warehouse workers from surrounding Newport News were members of Local 26, and the union made plans to organize various establishments in the immediate area.

Ultimately, the hope was that Local 26 would become a permanent fixture in the greater Suffolk area. By the next round of contract negotiations at Planters, the union had gained some strength. This time, as talks were reopened in March 1952, Local 26 was prepared to hold out for the union-sponsored health and security plan. Local 26 also demanded a 9 cent per hour increase, more holidays, better working conditions, and improvements in the job classification system.[40] The contract, covering approximately 1,200 workers, expired April 30. When the union formally presented its demands, it was backed by a large turnout of workers gathered outside the factory.[41] When the company returned with a 4 cent per hour increase and a company-sponsored health care plan that would cost each employee 4 cents per hour, thereby negating the hourly wage, Planters workers prepared to strike.[42]

Negotiations were deadlocked. Local 26 refused to accept the hourly increase and the company-sponsored health plan. It argued that the company health plan provided fewer benefits than the union's plan and cost more. The union plan would only cost 3 cents per hour. "The company admitted," *Union Voice* reported, "that it is opposed to the Union Security Plan because it is afraid Local 26 will get stronger if the union plan goes into effect."[43] Planters then offered the union a 5.3 cent per hour increase with the same privately purchased insurance plan, which workers promptly rejected. Rather than strike, however, the union and Planters agreed to extend the April 30 contract for two weeks. Local 26 expected that workers would be locked out after the two-week period was up and prepared to strike if the company had not agreed to a larger increase and a union-sponsored health plan. At this point, Arthur Osman stepped in and negotiated for Local 26 in person and a mediator was brought in from the U.S. Conciliation Service. Osman reported that there was "no sign that the company could be budged from its position except by a strike or other form of economic action."[44]

The union's health and security plan became the sticking point for Planters. The union and the company were in agreement that initiating a union-sponsored program would further strengthen the union. The company was unwilling to support such an initiative and even offered its employees a health plan that would cost them more than the union's plan. At one point, workers agreed that any health plan, whether sponsored by the union or the company, would suffice so long as the benefits matched those the union offered at a comparable price. In addition to health insurance, the union's plan also included maternity care and death benefits. Finally, "at the eleventh hour," the company offered a 6.3 cent per hour increase, a weekly dues check-off, more vacation days, and a better job classification for some workers. Local 26 members decided to accept the offer because the dues check-off enabled them to devote 3 cents of their raises to the DPO security plan, which included sick benefits, hospitalization, surgical, maternity, and death benefits. Local 26 had won the union health and security plan and claimed that the contract represented the "finest achieved in their 14 year history" and that the security plan granted benefits to "a large group in the South for the first time."[45] Planters refused to recognize the contract right away, preferring instead to wait for the Wage Stabilization Board's approval. Local 26 members started paying into the security fund anyway.[46]

Local 26 attributed its success to three factors. First, after studying the history of negotiations with Planters, Local 26 decided *not* to settle when the contract expired, as had been standard practice. Local 26 had a history of going through negotiations with Planters for two weeks prior to the contract expiration. Eventually the negotiation process became a bit of a sham. Each year the company discussed the union's demands and would then make a "final offer" to the union the day before the contract expired. Local 26 members would accept the offer, thinking the only alternative was to strike.[47] This time, Local 26 surprised Planters by not accepting the company's "final offer." Rather than go out on strike, union members simply went to work as usual without a contract and insisted on continuing the negotiations.[48]

Second, Planters's "final offer" had been a 5.3 cent increase without the dues check-off option. Instead of agreeing to the dues check-off as a method by which Local 26 members purchased their own health insurance through the union, Planters offered to purchase health benefits from a private source and to pay for them out of the 5.3 cent increase. Local 26 decided that if it was going to accept the offer, it might as well do it on its own time rather than quickly conceding immediately after the company pronounced its "final" offer. So, Local 26 for the first time in its recent history had rejected Planters's "final offer" and continued to negotiate.[49] Once everyone returned to work and negotiations continued without incident, Local 26 gained a sense of strength and pushed the company to increase its offer. Meanwhile, Local 26 perceived Planters as surprised and anxious, which seemed accurate given that the company quickly offered a full cent more and agreed to a dues check-off.[50]

Third, during the post-contract negotiation period, the union had hoped to push the company to accept the union security plan. Local 26 believed that in addition to the obvious and immediate benefits of the DPO's plan, the security plan represented the permanence and stability of the union itself, as Osman had argued at the DPO's founding convention. Gaining the DPO plan would, Local 26 thought, "cement the unity of the workers and make their union unbreakable" and bring new workers to the union.[51] Planters refused to agree to the union's security plan. Even though Planters offered a health insurance package, Local 26 rejected the company's offer and was determined to get the union's security plan through other means. So, Local 26 pushed for a weekly dues check-off with which it could determine how much money of the union's dues would go directly to the union and how much would go to the health plan. The dues check-off then became a big issue between Local 26 and Planters. Planters eventually agreed and Local 26 workers accepted the offer. The union preferred that the company pay directly into the union security plan because it would cost less, ultimately. The 3 cents each worker now contributed to the plan was subject to taxes and Planters would benefit in that it would not have to pay Social Security on that same 3 cents.[52]

What accounts for Local 26's success, its ability to grow and win substantial contracts as an affiliate of a "Communist-dominated" union in the early years of the McCarthy era? Leroy Harris gave quite a bit of credit to the DPO's "hands-off" approach and to Arthur Osman in particular.[53] Harris explained to Catherine Parker, a District 65 visitor to the Suffolk local, that with the FTA "organizers were sent in to 'take over' and run the Union." The effect of that strategy, Harris explained, was to alienate the rank-and-file; no one knew what was going on. As a result, attendance at meetings was low; the union lost members and plants.[54] Kenneth Sherbell was there for ten weeks, Harris reported, not organizing and taking things over but "helping us to help ourselves."[55]

Immediately after the merger of District 65, the DWU with the FTA and the UOPWA, the new DPO held an executive board meeting at which the leaders of the three organizations discussed union policy. Union officials discussed the method by which organizing new locals would take place. Osman, apparently, suggested that the DPO merely help its locals develop their own leaders, a strategy that would cause a great deal of controversy in the new union. According to District 65's newspaper, the *Union Voice*, Osman had to overcome the idea that the DPO would send in organizers to run the new locals. Rather, the new international DPO, Osman argued, "should be responsible for aiding the locals to become self-sufficient, self-supporting organizations."[56] DPO organizers threatened to pull the DPO out of a locality if it did not run things on its own. The DPO also resisted some locals' tendencies to expect the organizers to run things. When this attitude surfaced, the organizers consciously fought it by reminding the locals that they were only there for a finite time period and that when the organizers left, they'd be on their own.[57]

If Harris was right and that "hands-off" approach taken by Osman and the DPO was at the heart of Local 26's success, that approach begs a comparison to the CIO's Operation Dixie. At the very least, the evidence from Local 26 in Suffolk suggests that the criticisms leveled at the CIO's Operation Dixie are somewhat accurate. Operation Dixie was the much-hailed southern campaign the CIO put into effect in 1946. Although the campaign continued officially until 1953, it was all but officially over within the first six months after it was launched and it assumed a very top-down approach. The CIO intended to replicate its earlier successes organizing in the auto industry by trying the same strategies in the South. Thus, the CIO decided to organize the South's main industry, textiles, the idea being that if textiles were organized, other, smaller industries would fall in line. The CIO sent 250 organizers to southern cotton mill towns to get the workers in line and pressure big companies like Cannon to concede to the CIO's demands. The campaign was an utter failure. The CIO's organizers did not have a clue about the particular situations in the localities to which they were dispersed. Their presence as outsiders created a lot of hostility among obvious antagonists like company officials and, to the great surprise of the CIO, among workers as well. To textile workers like those at Cannon the organizer represented a "threat to their jobs."[58]

Leroy Harris was consistently complimentary of the DPO because it encouraged Local 26 to run things on its own and was particularly critical of a District 65 member from New York who wrote an editorial to the union's newspaper suggesting that more white organizers be sent south, Operation Dixie-style.

The editorial, written by Joan Nicklin, argued that Negro workers should not have to bear the brunt of organizing white workers. Harris was irked enough by this seemingly supportive editorial to write that Sister Nicklin was simply "wrong." Sister Nicklin, Harris said, "says that 'not enough is being done to back up our struggles.'" If Nicklin's solution was to send "more and more organizers," then he strongly disagreed. Doing so, he argued, "prevented us from taking on our responsibility" and stunted the growth of "a broad, effective leadership and an active rank and file." The DPO "did not come to us like 'Messiah' who was going to save us from all evil" and armed with a bunch of promises. If New Yorkers like Nicklin wanted to offer their support, Harris suggested they continue to build their own rank-and-file because Local 26 depended on District 65's strength.[59]

There is no doubt that the DPO (and District 65) believed that overcoming racial and ethnic prejudice was key to winning better wages and conditions from employers who, in the face of a united union membership, would be less likely to use race to divide workers and weaken the union.[60] But, at least in Suffolk, DPO organizer Kenneth Sherbell did not force the issue. And, unlike the CIO's textile mills, the former FTA local was almost all black. The success of the union did not depend on integrating the workforce. The DPO hoped white workers would want to integrate in order to enjoy the benefits of a good contract that included health insurance.[61] Not surprisingly, despite substantial victories in the Suffolk area, Local 26's goal of organizing white workers proved elusive. Leroy Harris was adamant that "the answer can only be found by the Negro and white workers of the South . . . it is a difficult job." Harris continued to chastise white northerners, "but you can no more relieve us of the humiliation and oppression of segregation by offering to take it on your back for us."[62]

The DPO implemented these same types of strategies in other former FTA and UOPWA locals. Al Evanoff (a longtime organizer for District 65) recalled that, immediately after the merger, he was sent to Chicago, where he worked for more than ten years (1950–60) organizing former FTA and UOPWA locals representing workers at the Campbell's Soup Company, the Libby plant in Blue Island, Del Monte in DeKalb, and a number of social workers and office workers. He recalls having limited success overall but, as happened in Suffolk with Local 26, Evanoff applied the "same kind of framework" in these areas; the assumption was that "working people could operate everything." District 65 helped workers finance a headquarters near the Campbell's Soup plant on Thirty-fifth Street that opened in 1952.[63]

Osman felt pressured to prove that his methods worked and exploited the Suffolk example to make his case in the DPO's paper, the *Union Voice*. Not only was the DPO still being raided by rival unions, but the DWU in New York and Osman, Livingston, and Paley in particular were also engineering a break with the Communist Party. It was within this context that Osman, Livingston, and Evanoff argued with DPO vice president Vicki Garvin of the former UOPWA and Executive Board member Morris Doswell, a longtime organizer for Local 65, about the best way to organize black workers in the South. Read together with the coverage of the organizing activities in Suffolk, Lock J. Parker's accounts seem to provide examples of the points Osman, Livingston, and Evanoff were trying to make in their arguments with Garvin and Doswell, whose perspectives were not a part of *Union Voice* coverage and who, as part of a vocal Communist-sounding contingent now, unbelievably, constituted a liability, Osman and Livingston thought, to the DPO and, more important, to the future of District 65.

In clearly one of the ugliest episodes in Local/District 65's history, Osman and Livingston "sold out" the very members it should have celebrated: people who had, like they had, built unions from the bottom up, were committed to organizing black workers, and were bold and willing to criticize the CIO for its "lack" of action on black workers' behalves. The DPO's Executive Board members' heated exchange occurred in April 1951 while they discussed Local 22, the former FTA local that represented workers at R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in Winston Salem, North Carolina. By the time the DPO arrived in Winston-Salem, Local 22 had been involved in a long fight against what historian Robert Korstad calls "racial capitalism" and had succeeded in 1943 in doing the impossible: organizing a union at R. J. Reynolds. Karl Korstad, organizer and regional director for the FTA from 1945 to 1951, recalled that organizing at R. J. Reynolds was tough going. The company "used every weapon in its arsenal: its control of city and county political power, its strong influence over state and national politics, its ownership of the newspapers and radio stations, its cultivation of the black and white middle class, its appeal to anti-Communist hysteria, and its portrayal of the union as a threat to white supremacy."[64]

Local 22 had prevailed in 1943 and the first few years after the war by using strategies similar to those of Local 65: it drew on talented black organizers and sympathetic community members to rally support for first the recognition of Local 22 as the workers' bargaining agent, then for improved contracts as they were negotiated. The FTA's strength was rooted in its mostly black composition, although it continually encouraged the organization of whites. Unity started to falter when R. J. Reynolds made a conscious effort in 1950 to bring more whites in but, had Local 22 not been dealing with the effects of the red scare, particularly its impending ouster from the CIO, it may have been able to deal more effectively with the company's tactics and better integrated incoming white workers into the union (although as company “plants,” doing so would have been difficult).

Both Korstads hold that the political repression of the postwar red scare was responsible for the “breakup of the workers’ movement in Winston-Salem” that “silenced dissident voices” and “contained political debate.” Karl Korstad recalled that, of all the difficulties the union faced, the lack of support by the CIO was the most damaging. Once the national CIO stepped up its anti-Communist stance, Local 22 began to lose the ground it had gained. He remembers conservative elements within the CIO stepping up their efforts to “curtail any political activity not approved by the national CIO office, particularly actions in the South that might challenge the status quo on race relations” and encouraged raiding by the anti-Communist United Transport and Service Employees (UTSE). By the time Local 22 “merged with strong District 65” in October 1950, it had been seriously weakened by the company’s and the CIO’s efforts.[65]

At the April 1951 Executive Board meeting of the DPO, six months after the DPO’s founding convention and thus six months after Local 22 merged with the DPO, the Executive Board discussed how to proceed in Winston Salem. After Osman suggested that the DPO commit $135,000 to the effort, Carl Andren, Executive Board member, raised the question of organizing white workers in the South. James Durkin, secretary-treasurer of the DPO and former president of the UOPWA, said, “it is hoped that the application of DPO methods will result in the solution of this problem, but it is definite that Negro workers will bring whites into the union.” Durkin was not exactly sure how that would happen, to which Norma Aronson, DPO Executive Board member, suggested that local people be brought to District 65 for training. David Livingston supported Durkin’s and Aronson’s suggestions by criticizing the former FTA locals for not having faith in the “capacity of the Negro people to lead and execute a program of organization, including organization of white workers.” This was a clear distortion as Local 22 had been led by Viola Brown, Velma Hopkins, Robert Lathan, and Moranda Smith (all black). Livingston argued that the DPO’s program would fail unless “we believe that the Negro people can organize, and organize whites as well.”[66]

After John Tisa, one of the DPO’s vice presidents and a former leading organizer for Local 22, recommended that a Negro organizer be released for the job, Morris Doswell responded at length, arguing that Negroes should organize Negroes and whites, whites. Doswell argued further that when white organizers went into the South to organize black workers, they, in essence, were “drawing salaries and living off the backs of the Negro people.” He reacted “violently” to the idea that Negro workers should have the major responsibility for the organizing drive and criticized David Livingston, saying he was unable to "appreciate the problems of the Negro workers" and that, if they were asked to take the lead in organizing white workers, the drive would not succeed.[67]

Vicki Garvin, the former director of research for UOPWA, now one of the DPO's vice presidents, and black, agreed. She argued that the problems of Negro workers in the South were "infinitely more complex" than those of Negro workers in New York City and that, as a result, "it was impossible for the Negro workers in the South to organize white workers." Garvin reminded the other Executive Board members that Jim Crow practices in the South were much more rigid; if white and Negro workers were prohibited from eating in the same restaurants and riding on the same busses, they could not possibly organize across racial boundaries and when they attempted to do so, black workers should certainly not be expected to do the work alone. Garvin argued further that "if these difficulties were appreciated by white trade unionists and greater efforts made by white organizers [to organize] Negro workers, progress could be made."[68]

Garvin had been born in Virginia in 1915 and moved to New York City with her family during the Depression. She remembered her mother, a domestic worker, standing in what her mother and the other black women with her called "the slave line" in New York during the Depression, waiting to be "picked" by white women who needed help. Her father had apprenticed in the building trades but was denied entrance into the all-white union locals that controlled access to positions in New York. He then held two jobs, one as a janitor in the Harlem apartment house where Garvin and her family lived, the other as a "delivery boy" for a millinery shop on Madison Avenue. While earning a degree in political science at Hunter College, Garvin worked in the sweatshops in the garment industry during the summers. She first picketed during a march Adam Clayton Powell Jr., pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem and U.S. representative representing Harlem from 1944 to 1971, had organized to demand job upgrades for black men and women. Garvin went on to earn a master's degree in economics at Smith College. During World War II, Garvin worked for the NWLB and organized an independent union of office workers. After the war she was hired by the UOPWA as its national research director and co-chair of its Fair Employment Practices Committee. It was while she held this position that Garvin vehemently criticized the CIO at the 1949 convention that initiated the purges. The "unknown black woman from the floor" spoke at length, openly criticizing George Baldazzi, the head of the CIO's Southern Organizing Drive, for its failures. The CIO's response was swift; Willard Townsend, head of the anti-Communist UTSE, which was raiding FTA locals in the South even before the purge, told her that she "obviously did not know what she was talking about" and that "maybe she could organize in the South from Harlem." After the CIO let the UOPWA loose, Garvin joined the DPO as one of its vice presidents, a UOPWA representative.[69] One would think she would have been a great match for the DPO but, unfortunately, she joined the organization just as District 65 began distancing itself from the CP. Nothing she said was taken into consideration.

Jim Durkin pointed out that "it is a distortion to interpret Brother Livingston's remarks as any argument that the Negro workers should have to fight alone." Livingston stated that he resented Doswell's and Garvin's remarks, particularly Doswell's implication that Livingston expected "the Negro people to carry the load alone, to face the KKK and expose themselves to disaster." Livingston, according to the minutes, "resented Brother Doswell's reaction to him and his proposals were the kind that were appropriate toward an enemy of the Negro people."[70]

Osman and Livingston responded at length. Osman criticized Doswell and Garvin for "obviously" distorting Livingston's comments and argued that there was no excuse for Doswell to have done so since he had been with District 65 for "many years." Not only, Osman argued, would their proposals lead to segregated locals, but the manner in which Doswell and Garvin discussed Livingston's proposals was "not designed to inspire our Negro members with faith and confidence, could result only in an inadequate response to our program for organizing the South," and would "increase and aggravate the fears of our membership and stimulate their suspicions of the organization."[71]

Over the course of the next year, Vicki Garvin and three of her supporters were "reorganized" off the Executive Board. Garvin staged a sit-in of her own, objecting to her being "let go" without a proper "hearing."[72] Morris Doswell had already met with some resistance from District 65's top leadership. After successfully organizing Revlon in 1946, Doswell was soon thereafter, he recalled, more or less reorganized from the food and drug division within Local 65 to chemical and paint. Doswell recalled that, while technically it was up to him whether to stay in food and drug or go to chemical and paint, he knew he would get support from the leadership only in his position in chemical and paint. In retrospect, he thought he made a "big mistake" but, he said, it "gets around to the point in any organization blacks are involved in when you go where you are told to go." Doswell explained that if he had continued to represent Revlon workers, at that time the largest shop within Local 65, he would have constituted too much of a threat to the top leadership's power base. Livingston, Doswell recalled, had called Doswell a "rebel" and said "if we [Local 65] didn't have him, we'd have to invent him."[73]

Rebels, while good organizers, did not, apparently, fit well within Local 65's, District 65's, or the DPO's upper echelons, even before the heated discussion about Local 22. Robert Lathan, who was in charge of both Local 22 and Local 10 (representing leaf workers in Rocky Mount, North Carolina), appears to have been unsuccessful in rejuvenating the locals or in working with the increasingly rigid Osman and Livingston, or both. Over an eighteen-month period, more than half of the DPO's organizing budget had been devoted to the South and particularly to Winston Salem yet little progress had been made. Don Henderson, the DPO's secretary-treasurer, suggested that the DPO authorize a subsidy to Local 22 for a full-time organizer, but the Executive Board would only agree to send a three-person committee to study the situation.

Local 22, just months before FTA's merger with DPO, had lost a bitter NLRB election that mirrored Local 65's experiences at home in New York. Over the same two-year time period (1948–50) that put Local 65 under the Kersten spotlight for "Communist domination" in the distributive trades and propelled the formation of the independent DPO, strong Local 22-FTA and its "little sister" Local 10 had also come under attack for being "Communist-led." After a barrage of criticism from the all-powerful R. J. Reynolds Company, the AFL's rival Tobacco Workers International Union (TWIU), and the CIO's anti-Communist UTSE, Local 22-FTA lost the election in March 1950 to "no union." It was a truly stinging defeat and one that demonstrates the rising power of the anti-Communist, pro-business movement of the postwar period to squash black-led, worker-centered movements. It also, even more clearly than Local 65's history, demonstrates the precarious position the CIO felt it was in. The UTSE, having no experience organizing tobacco workers, came in to simply "destroy one of the federation's largest and most dynamic black-led locals" because Local 22-FTA's existence, like that of the other Communist-led CIO affiliates, presented more of a danger to the CIO than did business interests in this period.[74]

The committee—Cleveland Robinson (longtime District 65 organizer and vice president of the DPO), Flossie Jones (of Suffolk Local 26), and Bernard Tolkow (also an organizer from District 65)—arrived in Winston Salem on March 14, 1952. Lathan felt the committee "represented an inquisition." He explained, "in an unfriendly" manner, that he had kept the Executive Board informed about what was going on in the R. J. Reynolds plant, and that there was no need for a visit by an outside committee. Robinson, Jones, and Talkow met with the 8 members of Local 22 (4 from the Winston Leafhouse and 4 from the Export Leafhouse; down from 14,000 in 1944).[75] They also met with Viola Jones, Velma Hopkins, and Warren Williams, all of whom had been leading Local 22 organizers. The group explained that the "real leaders working in the plant refused to associate themselves with the present people who are active in Local 22 since these people are identified with those who contributed to the disintegration of the Union." Rivalries within the old Local 22 contributed to Local 22's lack of success as did Lathan's "rebelliousness" in not following "the DPO model." Local 22's members told the committee that they had trouble organizing because of tensions within the plant and, to make matters worse, they had to combat the "slanders and rumors which have been spread about the leadership of DPO and 65."[76]

Another year had passed and no progress had been made in Winston Salem. At an April 1952 DPO Executive Board meeting, Osman suggested that the DPO withdraw Local 22's charter and close the headquarters; the local's eight members would be transferred to Local 10. Robert Lathan called the decision "an attack on the Negro people." Local 26's leaders Leroy Harris and Flossie Jones, Leo Lashley from Local 19 in Memphis, and John Gilmore representing DPO Local 98 from Little Rock, Arkansas, argued that the decision was not an attack against the Negro people. Rather, large sums of money had been allocated to Local 22 "with no results."[77] The decision led the Communist Party's *Daily Worker* to accuse the DPO's leaders of turning "their backs on the largest trade union local in the entire South" and to question whether democracy in the union was deteriorating.[78] The DPO and Local 65 were clearly now distancing themselves from the Communist Party.

When Lock J. Parker celebrated the DPO's "hands-off" approach with regard to organizing black workers in Suffolk and the surrounding area, the message was directed at that portion of the DPO's membership that thought that such an approach reflected the DPO's lack of commitment to black workers. Parker's articles defended the DPO's decision not to send more white organizers to the predominantly black locals in the South. The heated discussions about this strategy also indicate that Osman and Livingston were not willing to entertain criticisms of their policies in this period. The minutes reflect that they were both concerned that neither of them be the subject of "slanderous" attacks from either within or without the union. Hardly any criticism seemed acceptable. Osman argued that "the workers in our industry . . . welcome criticism and disagreement but will tolerate no denunciations or suspicions regarding the motives of our organization." Doswell's and Garvin's criticisms, it seemed, tapped into a level of dissension within the DPO's ranks that Osman and Livingston in particular were trying hard to squelch in the name of a "united front" for the DPO as they were secretly engineering a break with the Communist Party.[79]

While the DPO was organizing in Suffolk and across the country, District 65 was adjusting to the addition to its ranks of UOPWA and FTA locals based in New York City. It had successfully signed contracts covering 15,000 workers in February 1950. These contracts, which had originally been signed prior to the break with the RWDSU, were now negotiated by a non-CIO union, indicating that the independent District 65 was holding its own. The department store locals, now a part of District 65, had also successfully battled against raiding CIO and AFL unions and signed contracts covering 10,500 workers. The FTA locals, representing 200 workers, had disaffiliated from District 65, and the UOPWA locals in New York City "were deteriorating."[80]

The DPO was also clearly disintegrating by this point. Livingston, in particular, blamed the DPO's lack of unity on the UOPWA but, as Local 65 had just a few years earlier, the UOPWA was merely continuing to work with the Communist Party just as Osman and Livingston were breaking away. After discussing the need for unity within the DPO, David Livingston called the UOPWA locals in New York City "even more backward than the department store workers." Livingston argued that a small group of a few hundred workers made decisions for the rest of the eight thousand members, that this small group "acted in total disregard for the opinions and reactions of the total membership," and that, "while they presented the UOP as a very advanced union, they did nothing effective to change the backwardness of the rank and file." The result was "widespread gossip" and general disunity that, Livingston argued, prevented it from growing.[81] Sam Neuberger, who was one of the DPO's lawyers at the time, remembered that the UOPWA was forced out of the DPO by District 65's leadership not because of any political or ideological differences but, he said, because they "just didn't bring much with them."[82] Part of the problem too, even for Osman and Livingston, was that the UOPWA remained a strong CP-affiliate.

Unbeknownst to the DPO's membership, Osman, Livingston, and Paley were, in the period 1951–52, beginning to distance themselves from the Communist Party after allying closely with it since the early years of the union, through the war, and into the immediate postwar period. After having withstood the Hartley-organized hearings in 1948, having broken from the RWDSU, and having attempted to create a left-wing alternative to the anti-Communist AFL and CIO, Livingston unbelievably denounced the Communist Party in May 1952. The break caused permanent damage, in some old-timers' estimates, to both District 65 and the DPO and was "shocking" to Sam Neuberger, who considered himself a part of the leadership's inner circle, but who, nevertheless, was not included in the decision-making process.

Despite the break with the Communist Party, which will be discussed in the following chapter, remnants of the DPO's organizing attempts survived both the break and the DPO's eventual reaffiliation with the RWDSU in 1953–54. Suffolk Local 26's fate, along with that of other locals then, was tied to these tumultuous changes. Once District 65 rejoined the RWDSU-CIO, the former

DPO locals came under the administration of the international RWDSU with mixed results. The biggest benefit to the DPO locals, and indeed one of the reasons behind District 65's decision to reaffiliate, was the decrease in raiding of DPO locals by CIO and AFL affiliates. Local 26 had fought at least two raiding attempts, one by the AFL's Teamsters and the other by the National Maritime Union-CIO.[83] For its part, Local 26 argued that affiliation with the RWDSU on a "proper basis with the membership of the DPO retaining its right to make all decisions affecting the union would be helpful to Local 26."[84]

Regaining CIO affiliation also created a new source of support for both District 65 and Local 26: the NAACP. The NAACP's support for the DPO between 1950 and 1954 was uneven at best. Local 26 maintained contact with the NAACP in the early months of 1951. Mrs. Brownie Davis of the NAACP came to speak to a meeting of Local 26, after which members decided to devote 50 cents per week to the union poll tax fund. Local 26 members paid the poll taxes out of the union fund and voted.[85] Evidence of any support for the Planters, Suffolk, Lummis, or Hiden drives from the local NAACP is conspicuously absent. Walter White, president of the NAACP, expressed support for the international DPO for its contributions fighting a "wave of terrorism" in Florida.[86] Part of the unevenness in the NAACP's support of DPO initiatives is attributable to the discrepancy between national NAACP policy and that of the local branches. The national NAACP's official policy during this period was to refuse support to any Communist-front organization. But local NAACP branches had no way of knowing whether a union like Local 26 was "Communist-dominated." Even Herbert Hill, the NAACP's labor secretary, had to check with Walter Reuther about the status of District 65 before he committed the NAACP's support to the organization. NAACP officials in Virginia most likely supported Local 26 until they got wind of the fact that it was associated with Communists, after which support dropped off. Once Reuther gave the green light and District 65's and the DPO's affiliation with the CIO was complete, District 65 built a new and solid relationship with the NAACP. CIO-affiliation helped Cleveland Robinson, secretary-treasurer of District 65-RWDSU, secure the NAACP's support for an organizing drive of some sixty production workers who were "all Negroes" at the Chesapeake Frosted Food Company in Newport News in 1955.[87]

Leroy Harris remained active in the RWDSU, joining its Executive Board soon after the merger. After the merger, however, the paper trail of Local 26 is sparse and only picks up again in 1963. Once District 65 reaffiliated with the RWDSU, the DPO's paper, the *Union Voice*, was incorporated into the *RWDSU Record*. Reaffiliation with the RWDSU had not necessarily eased many of the old antagonisms. Despite the fact that District 65 was assured it would retain a great deal of autonomy and influence within the RWDSU, newspaper coverage of District 65's work proved to be one of the first casualties of the merger. The *Union Voice* had devoted twenty or more pages in each of its biweekly issues to District 65 and the DPO locals. The *RWDSU Record*, in contrast, devoted one-half to one full page of its twenty-page biweekly publication to District 65 and the DPO locals to the dismay of many "65ers." Despite the fact that David Livingston, president of District 65, assured union members of their continued influence within the RWDSU, these workers lost one of their main sources of unity in the merger: their newspaper. The *Union Voice* had enabled workers to keep track of the progress of various locals, of civil rights agitation, of important mayoral and national elections, and of organizing strategies like the ones that proved so useful in Suffolk.

While the DPO seemed capable of organizing new workers and of making some progress in the former FTA locals, it never really constituted a sustained, left-oriented alternative to the AFL and the CIO. Not only did it not have time to develop into such a movement, but Osman and Livingston did not build a working relationship with Don Henderson, Jim Durkin, and the other leading members of the FTA and the UOPWA, the UOPWA in particular. Critics argued that Osman and Livingston saw the DPO as an avenue for them to simply create a bigger District 65.[88]

Between 1951 and 1954, District 65 continued to try to find a suitable place for itself within the labor movement, having found going it "alone" futile. By 1954, five years after the CIO's purge, CIO President Walter Reuther was satisfied that, as Communist as District 65 had been, it had adequately distanced itself from the party. Bigger dangers now came from the continued onslaught from the anti-Communist, pro-business right and from the subtle but changing nature of the CIO after five years of the Communists' absence. Reuther feared the growing push toward AFL-style "craft separatism" within his own UAW and began discouraging the CIO's campaign against Communist-led unions like the UPWA almost as soon as he became president in large part because he appreciated the Communists' efforts fighting racial discrimination in the South.[89]

6

Community Organizing under the AFL-CIO Umbrella

> There were various Congressional investigations and senatorial investigations and all sorts of attacks were being leveled against us and at the same time the McCarthy Act period [sic] was at its height and we felt that our days may very well be numbered. We were not kidding ourselves with our victories, but in retrospect, we exaggerated the dangers. We overestimated the dangers of McCarthyism. Had we known then what we know now, we would never have merged.[1]
>
> —Arthur Osman, 1968

By 1953, after five years of heading up a few of the left-led CIO refugees, the DPO and District 65 were being "attacked from the left and the right" and were on the verge of collapse. It had proved almost impossible to continue to organize without the security provided by the CIO, and the union's Executive Board finally decided to accept the CIO's terms for reinstatement. This chapter follows District 65 as it attempted to rebuild and, essentially, prove its worth to the rest of the labor movement and to civil rights organizations like the NAACP. The drama behind the union's reaffiliation efforts, which required it to clean house and rid itself of any Communists in its ranks, provided the backdrop to District 65's failed 1953 strike at the Hearn Department Store. Not only was Hearn's management able to use Taft-Hartley mechanisms to their fullest, but also support from the CIO and the NAACP was slow in coming despite District 65's new affiliation with the CIO. This chapter examines the consequences of the reaffiliation for the union's "militant" fight for economic equality and offers an analysis of the ways in which District 65's organizing strategies were affected by reaffiliation with the CIO.

David Livingston's address to District 65's General Council in May 1952 came as a shock to many of the union's members. In it he criticized the Communist press, particularly George Morris, longtime author of the *Daily Worker*'s "World of Labor." The harsh and open criticism signaled Livingston's, District 65's, and the DPO's break with the Communist Party, an affiliation Local/District 65 and the DPO had maintained since Arthur Osman first organized wholesale dry goods workers at H. Eckstein in 1934. After the announcement, Livingston then told the delegates that the DPO was dropping the UOPWA from its ranks, arguing that its top officers were "unable to discharge their duties," a veiled reference to Garvin's and others' failure to toe the DPO line.

The break with the Communist Party was for Sam Neuberger "shocking" and disappointing. As District 65's lawyer since 1943, Neuberger had seen the union and especially its officers through difficult times. He and Victor Rabinowitz, another member of District 65's legal team, had helped the union's officers withstand the barrage of questions the House of Representatives subcommittee fired at them in its 1948 investigation into Communist infiltration in the New York City distributive trades. They had helped the union's officers manipulate the Taft-Hartley law, particularly the provision pertaining to the union's hiring hall, and had developed a sense of camaraderie with District 65's leaders over the years. When Livingston signaled the union's break with the Communist Party, Neuberger walked out of the convention and resigned his post as a member of District 65's and the DPO's legal team, thus ending his relationship with a union he considered to be "one of the finest organizations there was."[2]

A slew of criticism followed the decision. George Morris had reported, before Livingston's address was delivered, that the DPO had been attempting to get back into the CIO, a move that some members of the Communist Party had been pushing for but that others considered consorting with the enemy. According to Morris, who quoted from the anti-Communist Victor Riesel's *Daily Mirror* column, Phil Murray had refused the DPO readmittance into the CIO because he was not satisfied the DPO had purged itself of its pro-Communist elements. Thus, the dramatic ouster of the UOPWA, in Morris's line of reasoning, was done in order to demonstrate that the union was free of its red taint.[3] *Daily Worker* articles also indicate that the move to oust the UOPWA had been in the works since at least October 1951, when DPO's reorganization had resulted in Vicki Garvin's and other UOPWA officers' removal.[4]

Morris Doswell, who had also questioned Livingston, continued to work for District 65 but in a less influential capacity. Doswell, a member of the Communist Party, was a liability but, unlike the whole of the UOPWA, could be relegated to a less visible position and satisfy the CIO's requirement that none of the DPO's leading officers be Communists. As frustrated as he was with "being told where to go," he was more angered by the criticism directed at the

DPO and District 65 by the Communist Party. Before Livingston's May 1952 speech signaling the union's break, the party had been extremely critical of the way in which the DPO had handled Local 22. What angered Doswell most was the fact that he had had conversations with Benjamin Davis Jr. (the Communist councilman from Harlem) over the years and had had some contact with William Z. Foster (named head of the reorganized Communist Party in 1945) and yet neither of them contacted Doswell to ask him about what was going on in Local 22, District 65, or the larger DPO before they began criticizing the organization relentlessly in the spring of 1951.[5]

Although the friction over Local 22 may have been what ultimately caused the split, other seemingly irresolvable issues between the party and District 65 had emerged after 1948. One was the "independent position" the union took on both Israel and the Marshall Plan. George Charney, a Communist Party functionary until 1958, recalled that, while the CIO and Phil Murray had led the purges of the left, the left offered them little with which to defend the Communists in the increasingly hostile anti-labor and anti-Soviet postwar period. The Communist Party forced the unions it supported during this period to continue to antagonize the CIO's leaders by denouncing the Marshall Plan, one of President Truman's most popular postwar policies, designed to tie the rebuilding of European countries' economies directly to that of the West in an overt attempt to stop Soviet influence in Europe. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan left no uncertainty as to the United States' anti-Soviet position by 1948. Regardless of the consequences, Charney recalled, the "main thing [for Communist-supported unions] was to muster open opposition, whatever the outcome and whatever the consequences." Some of the unions, he recalled, carved out an "independent position" and suffered a purge from the party, others "followed the party and went down."[6]

Specifically, District 65 (and the DPO) was attacked by the Communist Party for its "Zionism," "Jewish bourgeois nationalism," and "white chauvinism." Livingston, Osman, and Esther Letz had taken strong positions throughout the war and afterward on the importance of the creation of a separate Jewish, preferably workers,' state (a more worker-centered version of the Israel that emerged) and supported the United States' pro-Israel stance. The union's pro-Israel stance, accompanied by its less-than-stringent criticism of the Marshall Plan, went against official Communist Party policy. Any support for the United States was tantamount to supporting U.S.-led businesses and quickly led to charges of "bourgeois nationalism" in the party's view.[7]

The charge of "white chauvinism" was a bit more of a stretch and more clearly an attempt by anti-Osman/Livingston factions to isolate them. Only the harshest of critics could label them "white chauvinists," but critique was the area in which the Communist Party excelled and which Local/District 65 had used to its advantage in years prior. Osman and Livingston were Jewish, very different from "white" in this time period. Their experiences with anti-Semitism led them to identify with black men and women much more than whites. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, imbuing them with the same kinds of racist or, at least, ignorant outlook that characterized "white chauvinism" was simply wrong. More than anything, the label as applied to Osman and Livingston demonstrated the inability of their critics in the party to recognize the ways in which anti-Semitism worked similarly to racism (and sexism) and led to the types of economic oppression the Communist Party was trying to fight. Leveling the charge at two Jewish men also reflects the anti-Israel stance the Soviet Union was pursuing at the time that rendered it unsympathetic to anti-Semitism.

And yet neither Osman nor Livingston was black, obviously, and they certainly were unwilling to yield District 65's or the DPO's leadership to the union's top black organizers. By 1951–52, they were not even willing to entertain much discussion with black organizers about how to organize black workers. Their increasing rigidity was a clear sign of "chauvinism," though not "white." Ironically, Osman and Livingston had asked black organizers to take too much of the lead, pressuring them to organize whites in the South. This did not constitute white chauvinism in the Communist Party's conception; William Foster had pushed for black organizers to take the lead. What came closest to white chauvinism was his and Osman's joint decision to oust Vicki Garvin and the UOPWA. The Communist Party was motivated in this period, at the prodding of Claudia Jones, the high-ranking black Communist who first forced the party to think about the triple oppression black women faced with her influential articles in the party's theoretical journal *Political Affairs*, to use the promotion of black women within a union's hierarchy as a kind of litmus test of a union's dedication to "Negro" rights and advancement. The same charge of "white chauvinism" was leveled at Herb March of the UPWA, who had a similarly more-than-progressive record of organizing black workers in the meatpacking industry and on a much larger scale than Osman and Livingston. March had promoted black officers but was accused of "obstructing the development of black women activists."[8]

Osman and Livingston certainly obstructed Garvin's development, and she remained bitter about her experiences in the DPO years later. Their decision was as much a "chauvinistic" one as it was a product of the defensive position they were navigating throughout the early years of the Cold War. The Cold War created a ripple effect, business putting labor on the defensive, labor putting the left-led unions on the defensive, Communists putting "opportunists" and “collaborators” on the defensive, and some left-led unions like District 65 purging their own “left” contingents in order to make the union somehow more “respectable” to the powers that be (the CIO in this case). If charges of “racism” or “chauvinism” apply most to whom one throws under the bus in times of trouble, then Osman and Livingston were as “chauvinist” and discriminatory as were Joe McCarthy, Charles Kersten, and Philip Murray, their stated “enemies” just months earlier.

Just as a scathing report on District 65 and the DPO was about to appear in *Political Affairs*, Foster, realizing the situation was getting out of hand, pulled the article and called for “labor unity.” Within this context, organizers within and without the Communist Party who were indeed determined to fight “racial capitalism” were unable to withstand the debilitating pressure put on them by the right and the left, turned on themselves, and were now divided on various levels and just about conquered. In George Charney’s later estimation, the ultra-critical approach the Communists took in this period was “heartbreaking.” “District 65,” he recalled, “became an object of abuse and calumny as though it were the enemy . . . that these people tolerated our arrogance and stupidity for so long is testimony to their devotion and youth.”[9] Ironically, the Communist Party would urge unions to join the mainstream again a few years later but, by then, too many bridges had been burned for District 65 to consider returning.[10]

Given the Communist Party’s rigidity under Foster’s leadership and its anti-Israel stance, District 65’s decision to break away seems somewhat less surprising. But, as Sam Neuberger’s recollections indicate, the move, occurring as it did while the union was discussing reaffiliating with the CIO, raised questions. Was District 65 exchanging its militancy for stability? Neuberger remembered that the union’s top leaders told themselves “we’ll be more militant than ever before.” According to Neuberger, that was the moment he quit. Neuberger argued vehemently that, not only could the union have survived without rejoining the CIO, it would have been a better union. He criticized Osman, Livingston, and Paley for putting the security of the union’s strike fund over the principles they had adhered to throughout the union’s existence. Neuberger claimed that he would have rather “starve[d] and drive[n] a g—d—-truck” than meet any conditions the CIO required.[11]

Some of those conditions included “reorganizing” the union in an effort to get rid of the Communists in its ranks. During the DPO’s Executive Board’s discussion about whether to reaffiliate, opponents of the decision objected because they knew doing so would require the DPO to get rid of key people among its leadership. At an April 1952 meeting of the DPO’s Executive Board, just weeks before his May 1952 speech, Livingston read a report he had prepared in which he discussed the possibility of reaffiliating with the CIO. According to the minutes, Max Lefkowith "disagreed with the report, stating that he oppose[d] exploration with CIO because they want to destroy us and will not give us autonomy."[12] According to the minutes, Lefkowith appears to have been the strongest dissenter. John Gilmore (Local 98, Little Rock, Arkansas) and Aaron Schneider (a DPO Executive Board member whose affiliation I have been unable to track down) argued that they were leery at best of reaffiliating with the CIO. Gilmore feared that going back into the CIO would mean the DPO would "lose its good policies." Schneider, while supporting exploratory talks, nevertheless criticized the national CIO's leadership for "preparing a purge for the price of going into the CIO."[13]

Most of the DPO board members who spoke at the April 1952 meeting supported at least exploring the possibility of rejoining the CIO. John Gallagher, who worked with Local 194 in Chicago, argued that the DPO should "continue exploration talks with the CIO . . . because it will help us organize." Gallagher reminded the leaders of the other locals that what was happening to "Livingston and Paley could happen to any local leadership" (Gallagher was referring to the second round of investigations District 65 was undergoing in New York—this time at the hands of the Grand Jury and the McCarran Committee). Other members, while not necessarily recommending reaffiliation, indicated that doing so would be workable and might help the DPO in the long run. John McLemore argued that, although Local 19 in Memphis had experienced raiding by CIO locals, nevertheless rank-and-file members of Local 19 and rival CIO unions were friendly. Jack Paley maintained that "attacks will become greater and that we need strength wherever we can gather it, without abandoning the policies and practices of DPO." Cleveland Robinson, who was moving up the ranks within District 65's leadership (curiously ahead of Morris Doswell and Henry Hamilton, despite the fact that he had been with the union for less time), contended that "we have been spending too much time debating with enemies within our ranks," and Leroy Harris, of Suffolk Local 26, pointed out that anti-Communist attacks created "distortions of DPO policy . . . in many of our locals throughout the country." Finally, George White ended the discussion by voicing his support for the continued talks. He did not understand why there was so much disagreement, arguing that his main concern was "with the membership, their wages and economic conditions."[14]

Jack Paley, District 65's secretary-treasurer, recalled that discussing reaffiliating with the CIO did not signal as big a switch as it may have appeared. According to Paley, even after Local 65 disaffiliated from the CIO in 1948, Osman had maintained a "good relationship with Allan Haywood, regional director of the CIO, and Jacob Potofsky." Even though the ACWA (which Potofsky headed) had been ordered by Philip Murray to "raid" Local 65 shops in 1948, Arthur Osman recalled that Potofsky stopped raiding after a few defeats. According to Osman, Potofsky claimed afterward that he never would have agreed to Murray's orders if he had known Osman and then Local 65 were involved.[15]

Nicholas Carnes (president of District 65's Local 1250 representing department stores) provided another reason behind the seemingly sudden move back into the CIO. Not only had Osman maintained a relationship with the CIO, Carnes recalled that it was during this period that Irving Simon replaced Samuel Wolchok as president of the RWDSU. Simon had organized shoe salesmen, "was nice," and had maintained a good relationship with Local 65 and the other seceding locals' leaders over the years. Carnes recalled that they (DPO/District 65's top leaders) hoped that reaffiliating with the RWDSU-CIO would not only help them fend off raiding and anti-Communist attacks, but, with Simon as head, they hoped to build establish a better position for themselves within the RWDSU if they did rejoin.[16]

Yet the *Daily Worker* reported that Jack Paley sneered when "critics of the administration" argued that rejoining the CIO would prevent the union from voicing its collective opinion on key issues including Korea, the policies of the Wage Stabilization Board, support for the NNLC, how to advance the struggle for Negro rights, and "traditional democracy and the right to leadership 'regardless of race, creed, or political belief,'" all clear Communist Party positions. Paley was offended at the suggestion that District 65's leadership would consider compromising such issues, for these were "the policy of the union."[17]

While leading Local 65, District 65, and the DPO, Osman, Livingston, and Paley had prided themselves on their ability to retain the autonomy to organize whom and how they wanted. Indeed, the union had recruited a sizeable number of black workers and developed and implemented innovative organizing strategies to do so over the previous fifteen years. Would CIO-affiliation undercut the union's ability to continue to organize innovatively, especially those people stuck in low-wage warehouse jobs, sweepers, porters, office workers, and delivery men, all the people who fell between the cracks of labor's more industrially and craft-oriented organizing structure? At this point, they cared only about surviving the onslaught they were facing from raiding unions and now the Communist Party.

Despite the appearance of continued discussion about reaffiliation, District 65's top leaders had by April 1952 agreed on the action. With Simon heading the RWDSU, with anti-Communist committees launching another round of attacks, and with "no umbrella to protect us" and "attacks coming from the 'left' and the 'right,'" the DPO seems to have had little choice.[18] In order to comply with the CIO's anti-Communist demands, Livingston, Osman, and

Paley "reorganized" both District 65 and the DPO and cleaned house to suit the CIO's national leadership. Although the exact details of the housecleaning are sketchy, evidence indicates that, while "professed Communists" and those people who disagreed with Osman and Livingston's top leadership were not necessarily "purged," they were "reorganized" out of positions of influence in both District 65 and the DPO. Osman, Paley, and Livingston accomplished this by holding elections that pitted themselves and the people who supported them against well-known Communists for the union's top spots and most influential organizing positions. Once the elections were "held" and "won," they appointed the Communists to positions of lesser influence. According to Nicholas Carnes, this was not too difficult because the majority of the professed Communists were from the UOPWA. The UOPWA members created a great deal of dissension within both the DPO and District 65 by adhering to what David Livingston now called "mechanical left positions" and by acting as "disrupters."[19]

The only contested election appears to have been for the office of secretary-treasurer. Peter Balladino, who led the now Communist faction within District 65, ran against Jack Paley and, according to Morris Doswell, won more than 40 percent of the vote, just shy of Paley's majority. Once the Communist challenge was "elected out" of both organizations, Carnes recalled that things "ran smoothly." Doswell, however, also remembered that once Communists were elected out of positions of influence, they started to "withdraw from organizational activity" and became much less active in the union (although many remained in the union). District 65 sent its top Communist organizers (those who supported the leadership) out of New York so that the McCarran Committee's investigations and the CIO would not be able to use them to prove continued Communist influence. Al Evanoff, for example, was organizing in Chicago by 1950, Harry Busch was in Port Arthur, Texas, and Bob Burke was relocated to Salinas Valley, California. Evanoff recalled that the split with the Communists made his life difficult in Chicago because the radical elements there "no longer trusted" him. He had few people with whom to network while he tried to continue to organize workers at the Campbell's Soup Company and office workers.[20]

Official CIO affiliation was slow in coming. After attempting to attain an official CIO stamp of approval for more than a year, District 65 launched one of its more disastrous campaigns at the Hearn Department Store in New York City. Examining the situation at Hearn demonstrates the ways in which "respectability" had become crucial to the leaders of District 65 in this period. By not granting District 65 that respectability by issuing it a charter, the national CIO severely undercut District 65's efforts. By distancing itself from the Communist Party, District 65 also lost its most dedicated organizers. Hearn's workers became the newest casualties of the McCarthy-era anti-Communist hysteria.

By 1953, Nicholas Carnes's Local 1250 had represented workers in two Hearn stores (one in the Bronx and one in Manhattan) for almost fifteen years. Carnes recalled that Hearn's workers originally contacted Local 1250 around 1937. They expressed an interest in union representation soon after Local 1250 had successfully staged its first strike against the H. L. Green store just weeks earlier. Between 1937 and 1939, Local 1250, like Local 65, grew tremendously. During those years, workers from H. L. Green's, Hearn's, Macy's, Gimbel's, Bloomingdale's, and Stern's department stores came into the union. Carnes recalled that workers at Hearn were partially responsible for the union's growth during that period. Immediately after they won representation with Local 1250, they donated $2 apiece to help the small union organize more stores. (Carnes recalled that, as Local 1250 met with success, Wolchok's international URWEA broke Local 1250 up into smaller unions, creating Locals 1-S, 2, 3, and 5 in an attempt to prevent Local 1250 and the department stores from gaining too much of a power base—all of these locals later seceded from the International in 1948; see chapter 4). By 1940, the department store locals represented seven thousand workers in the New York City area. Hearn's workers were the first in the city to win the forty-hour, five-day week in March 1941.[21]

Having weathered the same storms, Local 1250 joined with Local 65 in forming the DTC, the DWU, and the DPO between 1948 and 1950, and Carnes became an integral part of all three organizations. He had maintained close contact with Osman and Livingston from the beginnings of Local 1250, having modeled the union after Local 65 (see chapter 1). In 1948, Carnes ran for Congress in the Bronx, and was a part of same American Labor Party ticket that ran Vito Marcantonio that year and that supported Henry Wallace for president. Carnes recalled that he received a great deal of support in his campaign from Local 1250 members and especially from workers at Hearn.[22] Indeed, Carnes and the department store locals attracted a great deal of attention from Congressman Fred Hartley that same year for participating in these activities. Louis Broido, the president of Gimbel's department store, provided the House subcommittee with key testimony with which to "prove" the leaders of the distributive trades in New York City were Communists and represented a threat to the country (see chapter 4).

For the four years prior to the 1953 strike, District 65 had been concerned about the situation at Hearn. The department store chain, headquartered in Philadelphia, operated stores in New York City, two of which (Fourteenth Street and the Bronx) were organized by District 65. In 1949, Hearn was sold to Albert Greenfield, who owned other department store chains organized by

District 65 so any pattern that might develop was likely to affect more than just Hearn.[23] Prior to the contract renewals in 1949, 1950, 1951, and 1952, Greenfield asked the union to give him and the Hearn stores special consideration, arguing that the chain was in bad shape and would need to go through some drastic changes in order to remain in business. District 65 agreed to work with the new management in a joint effort to keep the stores from closing. Each year, the union accepted contracts that called for less than other store employees were receiving. The cutbacks did not help business, and layoffs started in late 1951 and early 1952. Whereas in 1951, District 65 represented warehouse workers, office workers, and salespeople at the two stores, about 2,400 workers in all, by the fall of 1952 more than 1,100 workers had been laid off.[24] All of this had occurred, of course, while District 65 and the DPO's leadership were in the process of reorienting the organizations and while suffering a barrage of criticism from the right and the left as a result.

Precipitating the layoffs of 1951–52 was Greenfield's decision to cut costs by implementing a self-service method of operation, most likely a move to compete with the growing number of department stores and discount chains opening up in the suburbs.[25] Self-service meant that Hearn would now sell its television sets, radios, and furniture off the shelf rather than through a salesperson. This meant that those salespeople, many of whom were members of District 65, would lose their jobs. Surprisingly, District 65 did not put up a fight, at least early on. It saw the move toward self-service as inevitable and demanded only that the company follow strict seniority protocol when firing and rehiring its workers. District 65 hoped that those who remained would have decent jobs. So, amidst the elimination of many of the store's departments, District 65 merely tried to stop the bleeding. The union concentrated on saving each of the stores' remaining departments. Jack Paley, the union's vice president, could merely "hope and pray that the shrinking of departments stop and that our members can look to expanding departments and greater opportunities for more jobs." Despite the fact that Paley and union members knew they had a "sick baby" on their hands, they decided to keep pushing the company to save the jobs of the remaining employees. District 65 clung to its agreement with Greenfield that the union would take part in any further decisions regarding how changes in the workforce would be handled.[26]

In the winter of 1952–53, Hearn stopped consulting with the union altogether in its decisions with regard to layoffs. Hearn leased out the maintenance department to an outside contractor and, according to the union, fired forty porters who had worked at Hearn for twenty to thirty-five years. Hearn instructed the contractor not to hire the laid-off workers. Hearn's management changed its mind when District 65 threatened to strike and the contractors hired the laid-off workers. When Hearn made motions in the fall of 1952 to contract out its advertising work in its Philadelphia store, District 65 put the issue to arbitration and Hearn tried, in a demonstration of things to come, to get a court injunction to stop the union from hiring an arbitrator. The union reprimanded Greenfield, reminded him of their agreement, and the store kept the eight-person advertising department of union members on the payroll.[27]

The company continued, the union reported, to violate seniority agreements, refused to discuss discharges in advance, and "flatly refused to consult with the Union as to future plans."[28] The issue came up again in January 1953, when the company simply informed the union that it was giving its advertising work to an agency starting February 1. District 65 put together a committee of union members to talk to Hearn's management. The committee told Hearn this most recent move "represented a new attitude" on the store's part. Paley recounted that Henrietta Granoff, a member of the representative committee sent to talk to management, reported that the recent action "smelled of an attempt to test the Union's strength and break the union." Dorothy Frank recounted that the company mistook cooperation for weakness. District 65 decided not to strike at this time, however, but rather to wait until the contract expired February 28 and put the advertising issue at the top of the agenda.[29]

In a related development, in February 1953, District 65 began having trouble in its Strauss stores. There Local 1499 of the Retail Clerks International Association (RCIA) of the AFL petitioned the NLRB to represent the workers at Strauss, a "65" shop. At the same time, Strauss management began using the court system to have injunctions served against District 65. Hearn's management must have been watching closely, for the same patterns developed there a few months later.[30]

In March 1953, as the contract between Hearn and District 65 expired, Hearn demanded that it be given "a free hand in reorganizing the store on a self-service basis and leasing out concessions to non-union firms." It began leasing out concessions in the store to non-union companies and closed down a warehouse without discussing the way the changes were made with the union, as had been agreed to earlier. District 65 argued that, after it had agreed to cooperate over the years, Hearn nevertheless pursued the implementation of "sweatshop conditions." Hearn's workers met and took a strike vote.[31] The threat seemed to work temporarily, and Hearn agreed not to farm out the work.

When the contract expired in April 1953, Greenfield informed the union that he would not sign a new contract and that he wanted to eliminate severance pay; he demanded that there be no wage increases, and he proposed to eliminate grievance and arbitration machinery. When District 65 argued that Greenfield's proposals were "a violation of the law," he replied that the union should have faith in his concern for the welfare of his employees. When David Livingston informed Greenfield that, without grievance procedures, any future disagreements would be subject to a strike by the union, Greenfield replied, "Go ahead and strike whenever you please."[32]

Hearn's workers did not strike immediately. While they continued to go to work, they now did so without a contract. Hearn took advantage of the situation. What ensued were back-and-forth verbal agreements that the company repeatedly violated. Hearn told the union that the store was converting two hundred more jobs to self-service. District 65 agreed only "after the company assured us that the remaining workers would suffer no loss in earnings." Things quickly got worse. By the end of April, Hearn had decided to shut down the furniture department in the Bronx store. Salespeople there had been making $125 per month, and Hearn proposed to rehire them as attendants at $46 per month. Hearn also continued to refuse to sign a contract and wanted to renegotiate the severance pay agreement for laid-off workers. After Livingston and Bill Michelson went to Philadelphia to talk to Greenfield, Hearn's workers again took a strike vote and Hearn's management again backed off and agreed to pay full severance pay as had been agreed upon earlier. District 65 was convinced that Hearn was encouraged to attack the union now because of "the new administration in Washington [Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower had been elected president] which is determined to increase the attacks against labor."[33]

Not coincidentally, Hearn made this move just as the Grand Jury and the NLRB began questioning District 65 about its Communist ties. The Grand Jury demanded that Livingston answer questions about his Communist associations, Livingston refused, and the Grand Jury recommended to the NLRB that it decertify the union (District 65 had agreed to sign the non-Communist affidavits in 1950, soon after the formation of the DWU, granting it access to the NLRB). The union decided to answer the NLRB's questions but not those of the Grand Jury. "We made a distinction," Bill Michelson reported, "between answering questions put by the Grand Jury, who were seeking to smash our Union, and answering questions to the NLRB before whom our officers had already filed affidavits swearing that they were not members of the Communist Party." Livingston did exactly that, answering the NLRB's questions only.[34]

The eight hundred District 65 members still employed at Hearn in May 1953, one hundred of whom were African American and many of whom had participated in the store's campaigns of the 1930s and early 1940s, finally voted to strike in May. Immediately, Hearn's management began bringing in black workers to break the picket line. Yet, despite the fact that the NAACP had watched Hearn closely as part of a larger investigation of hiring practices of

New York City department stores, it shied away from supporting the strikers and speaking out against the use of black workers as scabs.[35] Before it lent its support, the NAACP sought the assurance of Walter Reuther, president of the UAW-CIO, that District 65 had rid itself of Communist influence. While District 65 and the CIO continued to negotiate the terms of their reaffiliation, Reuther's assurances were slow in coming, and Hearn's management began to use the courts and Taft-Hartley provisions against the union. With support from both the CIO and the NAACP unenthusiastic at best, District 65's pronouncement that the situation at Hearn represented "McCarthyism Turned Loose Against 65" seemed accurate.[36]

As the situation at Hearn worsened, Livingston reported that the union continued to discuss affiliation with CIO representatives. In April, according to Livingston, the "CIO was anxious to have us affiliate with them and their representatives with whom this matter was discussed stated that politics was no issue with us, that through their investigations they have found 65 and DPO to be an honest, democratic union whose decisions are the decisions of the membership and who they would be proud to be associated with." The only issue left to consider, Livingston reported, was organizational. The CIO wanted to charter a new union in the distributive field that would include District 65, the RWDSU, and the Macy local. Livingston doubted whether the other unions would agree.[37] Local 65 was still waiting for its cloak of respectability. District 65 tried during the 1952–53 talks to get the CIO to agree to grant it some autonomy in continuing to pursue those militant, that is, "Communist"-inspired, policies. District 65's leaders had agreed that CIO-affiliation was desirable as long as District 65 remained free to "maintain its democratic and autonomous rights on economic and political decisions." Basically, District 65 wanted the benefits of CIO-affiliation without a loss of autonomy. That was unlikely, and the negotiation process continued while Hearn's workers were out on strike.[38]

District 65 grew more desperate for CIO-affiliation in April as Hearn stepped up its campaign. By April, it was clear that Hearn's "backing off"—the two times workers threatened to strike—was just a strategy of appeasement. Despite what the management said, it did not recognize the seniority agreement or pay full severance pay and vacation wages to laid-off workers. In May, Hearn's workers decided that they would indeed strike if Greenfield did not agree in writing to recognize the union, abide by the seniority agreement, and pay severance and vacation pay to laid-off workers. Hearn agreed again and the two set up a meeting of each party's lawyers to draw up the written agreement. The same day the lawyers were to meet, newspapers reported that Hearn was reopening an appliance department in its Bronx store, to be staffed by new salesmen represented by Local 1499 of the RCIA-AFL. District 65's organizers and laid-off Hearn workers went to the Bronx store, stopped refrigerators from being unloaded, and sent the appliances back to the vendors. District 65 claimed to have talked to the salesmen (many of whom were black), after which they promptly quit, the union reported. The A&B appliance store refused to sell to Hearn when it found out "the score" and even threatened to sue Hearn for the expense of moving its appliances in and out of the stores.[39]

The drama continued. District 65 staged a sit-down strike after Hearn's management fired Max Klarer, a twenty-one-year veteran of Hearn and eight-year union member, for being "too close to the union." Hearn would not rest until every department was "made an American department."[40] District 65 told its Hearn members to go in but not work until the union could clarify Klarer's discharge. *The New York Times* reported that District 65 sent "two hundred persons into the Fourteenth Street to interfere with customers" and that switchboard operators "seized" the telephone board from executives who had been running it, prompting Hearn to fire the remaining eight hundred employees who had participated in the strike. The New York Supreme Court ordered Hearn's workers to "'perform their normal services in a peaceful manner'" and enjoined union members from "'interfering with normal Hearn business or its customers.'" After the judges' ruling, Hearn's management rescinded the discharge of the eight hundred workers.[41]

According to the union's account, Hearn's management and the union were unable to reach an agreement in the hours following the injunction and Hearn's workers then voted to strike, this time a walkout, at noon on May 16. The *Times* reported that 660 workers were set to strike and quoted the company's statement to the press: "'the unwarranted, illegal and destructive sit-down in our store yesterday and the unlawful strike called today are examples of the irresponsible, Communist-inspired leadership of District 65, DPOWA.'" The company's statement also asserted that the mass picketing (more than 1,500 pickets from District 65 and surrounding businesses) currently underway violated the injunction.[42] Just as the strike began, District 65's merger with the CIO finally seemed complete (although an official charter was yet to be granted). The union hoped that its new status as a CIO union would enable it to gain much needed support from local unions and the NAACP and stop the anti-Communist crusade being launched by Hearn. Hearn did not care, however, about District 65's new affiliation; it was still the same union.

Hearn's management then began using the court system more aggressively. A series of injunctions were issued limiting District 65's actions. For example, injunctions were issued limiting picketing at the Bronx and Fourteenth Street stores, in the vicinity of the warehouse, and in front of Greenfield's other stores, including Oppenheim-Collins and Franklin Simons. When District

65 picketed outside of stores in Boston, injunction proceedings began there. District 65 was prevented from picketing outside the Hearn's Bayshore store because, according to the union's account, the court said, "there was no identity of interest."[43]

By July, the allowed number of pickets was going strong in front of both of the Hearn stores. Hearn's management tried to get an injunction to stop District 65 from picketing their stores altogether and disrupting business. This ruling proved one of only two relatively favorable decisions for the striking workers.[44] Judge McNally, despite Hearn's protests, said that "the strike was a legitimate labor dispute, that the picketing was orderly and peaceful, and that the company's claims that the Hearns strikers were not Hearn employees because the company had fired them before the strike was untrue." McNally limited the number of picketers to two hundred. District 65 considered this a victory. But just as Judge McNally's decision was rendered, Greenfield petitioned the NLRB to decertify the union and continued its anti-Communist campaign against the union.[45] From here the already tenuous strike effort went downhill quickly.

District 65 believed the HUAC hearings of 1953 (yet another investigation of District 65) were called at Greenfield's request. Greenfield had threatened, the union recalled, to get the government to "destroy the union" and jail "65's" leaders if a strike were called. "The House Un-American Committee appeared," the union argued, "because Greenfield sent for them." The union further argued that the purpose of the hearings was "to provide widespread publicity for Greenfield and Hearns."[46]

While District 65 dealt with the HUAC, it tried to rally support for the strikers but had trouble even within its own ranks. By July, the other sections of District 65 had raised only $16,000 for the strikers, a disappointing sum, the union thought. District 65's leaders explained the lack of support as the rank-and-file's inability to understand the importance of the strike, although the lack of support was probably due to the dissension and lack of interest that seemed to plague the union since the break with the CP and since the talks with the CIO began. Not only were District 65's leaders concerned about the outcome of the strike; it was losing money. District 65's department store division had organized only two new shops, one with eighty-nine people, the other with two. The union had gone so far as to petition the NLRB for an election at Arnold Constable where the union would have represented salespeople and restaurant workers but withdrew the petition because of the bad press the union was receiving from the ads Hearn took out, which were being read, District 65 reported, over the loudspeaker by the Arnold Constable management. Milton Reverby advised stewards in the department store division that in addition to facing huge deficits, the weakening financial situation of the union could only create problems for the union in the future.[47]

The union's leaders and stewards tried to impress upon its members that the results of the Hearn strike would affect every one of District 65's 30,000 members. David Livingston explained that Greenfield's actions in the Hearn strike would affect future negotiations in all of the labor movement. He explained that Greenfield had been allowed to call District 65 "Communist" even though the union complied with the Taft-Hartley regulations. Now, however, a new piece of legislation, the McCarran Act, Livingston explained, proposed to set up a Subversive Activities Control Board that would have the authority to determine whether a union's leaders were Communist and, given its findings, recommend to the NLRB that it decertify a union as a result. Moreover, the NLRB would have the power to then authorize the replacement of the decertified union with another union. The law, Livingston explained, not only included officers but also "anyone in a position of influence, including delegates to our Convention." Livingston argued that Greenfield's strategy was embodied in the McCarran Act's proposed provisions and, as such, "this makes the Hearns strike not only a matter of labor solidarity, but it is our obligation to defeat this attempt to break our Union, and eliminate McCarthyism in the trade union movement."[48]

Meanwhile the company continued to act aggressively; it proposed slashing its minimum wage to $30 per week, firing many of its elderly workers, and doing away with the union security plan. After the proposals were made, the Velde Committee and HUAC began its second investigation of District 65. District 65's leaders were convinced that HUAC and even the NLRB were now taking orders from Greenfield and that the HUAC investigation was a direct attempt to break the Hearn strike. It offered as proof the fact that two of its department store organizers were called up for an investigation in addition to the union's three top officers (Osman, Livingston, and Paley). As McCarthyism was turned loose against District 65, the union appealed again, in nothing less than desperation, to both the NAACP and the CIO to gain some support and legitimacy from these well-respected organizations, a "cloak of respectability."[49] Even though the CIO reaffiliation seemed just a few weeks away in May, the benefits of its new mainstream status had yet to materialize. Assuming that the CIO charter was imminent, District 65 began to appeal to the NAACP for support. The NAACP had not worked with left-led unions, at least at the national level, since the Nazi-Soviet pact was signed in 1939.

Cleveland Robinson, head of the union's Negro Affairs Committee, had broken his ties with the Communist-led NNLC and pursued the NAACP instead. In explaining the shift, Robinson merely argued that the union's new attempts to build a relationship with the mainstream would strengthen the "cause of our Union." While he did not mention why he broke off his ties with the NNLC, Vicki Garvin, Dave Moore, and others who had also been active in the organization claimed Robinson had appeared before the HUAC and "spilled his guts," leading to its being forced to disband.[50] Robinson seems to have been instrumental in securing the "cloak of respectability" District 65 was so desperate for at this point. Some support from the NAACP materialized. Although the national NAACP hesitated, the New York NAACP "condemned the Hearn's company for their refusal to settle and their vicious attempt to use Negro workers for the purpose of strike breaking." Although the national NAACP had a tumultuous history with CP-associated unions, nevertheless, the NAACP invited District 65 to its 1953 convention, the first the union had attended in years.[51] Robinson reported that he "felt sure that the program of our members will meet the wholehearted support of the NAACP" and hoped to work more closely with the NAACP "both here in New York and out of town."[52]

By the end of July, some support from the CIO materialized as well. Walter Reuther issued a statement denouncing Greenfield's use of Communism in the strike. Reuther maintained that the issue was not Communism but Greenfield's effort to fire workers and deny them their security benefits. He restated that the CIO welcomed District 65 (although a charter had still not been issued) and called on other CIO affiliates in the New York City area to "support these valiant strikers," emphasizing that they needed and deserved the CIO's support.[53]

While the New York NAACP and the national CIO were coming around, at the end of July, Walter White, the NAACP's president, was still deciding how much support the national NAACP should pledge to Hearn's workers. White had in front of him a series of letters regarding the situation at Hearn, one from Arthur Osman, one from Cleveland Robinson (at this time District 65's secretary-treasurer), and his correspondence with Albert Greenfield, the president of the Hearn stores. Osman and Robinson appealed to White for assistance. Osman argued that Hearn's workers were "provoked into a strike" and that "every effort on their part to find a peaceful solution was frustrated by the company's utter disregard for their legal and human rights." The eight hundred people who had devoted most of their working lives to Hearn were now denied "long established health and job protection and were confronted with threats against their wage structure and seniority rights" and, because they were of retirement age, they would find it almost impossible to be hired elsewhere. Osman lamented the fact that as "tragic as the plight of these people is," few organizations showed concern. Embittered members were asking, "'Where are the great civic minded organizations? Where is the compassion of the great religious leaders? Is there no one who is moved by human suffering in our own backyard?'" Osman speculated that the lack of support might be due to the "paralysis of fear which McCarthyism has loosed upon this nation that makes it impossible for us to get much response." He appealed to White to overcome this fear and support the strikers.[54] Osman had neglected to mention to White that one hundred of the striking workers were black. Cleveland Robinson wrote White a letter the following day to that effect and added, "our effort in the fight for the social and economic advancement of our Negro people is seriously threatened by this strike, and this is of grave concern not only to myself, but to all our members, particularly our Negro members."[55]

While White did not pledge public support for the strike, he did write Albert Greenfield a confidential letter. In the letter, White appealed to Greenfield to end the strike, saying "that no useful purpose can be served by continuation of the strike" and that "calm discussion by both sides can and should lead to a satisfactory settlement." To counter Hearn's anti-Communist campaign and clear the NAACP of any Communist association, White assured Greenfield that the DPO had cleansed itself of Communism, that the NAACP "would not under any circumstances have any dealings with any Communist unions or organizations," and that "Mr. [Herbert] Hill [informed White] that the CIO assures him that the union has thrown out all of its Communist officers and members." (Herbert Hill was labor secretary of the NAACP at the time.) White included in the letter to Greenfield copies of the letters he received from Osman and Robinson and a statement issued by Walter Reuther as to the non-Communist status of the DPO. White added, "Knowing as you do how anti-Communist Reuther is, he would not have made such an unequivocal statement if the facts were not correct."[56]

While White was embroiled in endless discussions with Greenfield and other Hearn executives, a great deal was happening on the strike front. July proved to be a pivotal month. The RCIA, a rival AFL union, petitioned the NLRB for an election.[57] At the same time, Greenfield was seeking a court order to declare the striking workers ineligible to vote, arguing that they had been fired before the strike occurred. District 65 had declared that its only victory now would be to see the Hearn stores close and make an example of the strike to other employers. In this regard, District 65 reported "success." Hearn was apparently leasing out sections of its Fourteenth Street building and the union reported that Greenfield was talking to other department store owners about purchasing the 149th Street store in the Bronx. The national CIO intervened, and Louis Hollander of the New York State CIO Council discussed settling the strike with Greenfield. Greenfield apparently offered to end the strike on the condition that the pickets be called off and that the striking workers not be rehired. After Hollander's meeting with Greenfield, the CIO proposed a citywide meeting of its shop stewards to call attention to the nature of the strike to the larger CIO community. District 65 reported "labor has never been able to adequately demonstrate to the American people that the Taft-Hartley law is in effect a slave labor law. The Hearns strike is proving that this is true. This is an opportunity for labor as a whole to utilize the events at Hearns as part of a public campaign to prove to the people of this city and elsewhere that the Taft-Hartley law was not designed to promote harmonious labor relations but as an instrument to crush the rights of working men and women."[58] The CIO also set in motion plans for a citizen's committee composed of members of the ILGWU and the NAACP.[59]

By August, as the strike dragged into its twelfth week, District 65's semi-affiliation with the CIO seemed to be making a difference. New York City CIO Councils now came out in support of the strike, *The New York Times* printed reasonably supportive editorials on the union and the strike situation, and Charles Zimmerman of the ILGWU came out in support of the Hearn workers. Despite the fact that the situation seemed to be improving, District 65 and Hearn's workers faced an increasingly hostile NLRB. Greenfield used the Taft-Hartley machinery to its fullest. While District 65 proclaimed that the Hearn strike constituted a test for the entire labor movement, and that the labor movement could finish off McCarthyism with a successful end to the strike, Hearn's management went to court to seek another injunction against District 65 picketers. This time, the court was presided over by a less than supportive judge. In a devastating blow to Hearn strikers, he limited the pickets to two at each entrance of the store. At this point fifty strikers defected and went back to work. Now the national CIO took the lead in the strike and authorized mass picketing by other CIO unions in the area (although they never materialized).

Despite continual appeals to Walter White, the national NAACP still wavered in its support. White tried to court both labor and business, writing to Walter Reuther and corresponding with Greenfield and various other Hearn officials in an effort to broker between both sides. Despite the fact that Herbert Hill, the NAACP's labor secretary, had assured White that the union was not Communist and despite his concern for the one hundred striking black workers, White continued to seek advice about whether to come out and fully support Hearn strikers. Clarence Mitchell of the Washington NAACP recommended that White continue to try to broker a settlement between the two: "because Mr. Greenfield has a very high regard for your opinion [and] if you also have reason to respect his judgment, I think he makes a very sincere statement which should be considered before we act. If Mr. Greenfield is as sincere as his letter sounds, I think we would be doing him a service if we could help to settle this disagreement."[60]

Mitchell suggested setting up an impartial citizen's bureau to include an equal number of representatives approved by the union and management and that another impartial person be obtained from the federal government to help mediate a settlement."[61] In August, after White had appeared to stay neutral in the matter, Clement V. Conole, vice president of Hearn, wrote to inform White that despite the fact that the national NAACP did not officially come out against Hearn, nevertheless, District 65, Conole reported, picketed with signs that indicated that the national NAACP had supported the strike. Furthermore, Conole said, District 65 had indicated that the NAACP agreed to participate in a committee designed to mobilize public sentiment against the recent NLRB ruling. Conole ended the letter expressing his disapproval of District 65's use of the NAACP's good name, saying, "under the circumstances, it appears to me that the use of the prestige and high standing of the NAACP and yourself by the union is entirely unjustified and improper." He asked White to please respond.[62] White responded a week later and said that Mr. Hill went to the picket line and saw that a sign was being carried that said that the New York branch of the NAACP supported the strike. Hill, White reported, asked District 65 not to carry any signs that indicated White's participation in any committee designed to mobilize public support against the NLRB. And White argued in an effort "to keep the record straight" that the union had never asked him to participate in any such committee.[63]

By September, District 65 felt the tide was turning. It felt victorious; it seemed that Greenfield's efforts to isolate the union had failed. New York City–based unions, including CIO affiliates, were now behind the strike and threatened to picket in mid-September, Hearn's busy season. At the same time Local 1499 of the RCIA withdrew its petition to represent Hearn's workers and threw its support behind the strikers instead. Even though the company did not show any signs of giving in, it had failed in its attempt, the union reported, of breaking the union and the strike by Labor Day. "District 65's accomplishments," David Livingston said, "would go down in the labor movement as a defeat against McCarthyism."[64] With renewed vigor, District 65 organized a petition drive. Since they were now restrained from picketing, they were determined to gather 500,000 signatures in support for the union's efforts instead. Phil Manheim proclaimed, "We have all waited for a long time for a change in the Hearn strike. That change has occurred. Let's resolve to take full advantage of it."[65]

Yet just as the union's spirits were rising and people were finally coming out in support of the strikers, the appellate court, again using Taft-Hartley provisions, ruled that District 65 was now prevented from picketing altogether because violence (including name calling, booing, and hissing) had been witnessed on the picket line (small as it was).[66] Gustav Amsterdam, vice president of the store, took the opportunity to write Walter White of the NLRB decision and added, "this together with the various findings by the State Courts indicates clearly that Hearns' position is in all respects justified and proper and sustains the various comments made by Mr. Greenfield and Mr. Conole." Amsterdam indicated that as soon as the union stopped the attacks the store would be able to hire back "those of its former employees when age and length of service merits special attention, notwithstanding the illegal activities inspired by the irresponsible agitators."[67] Despite the fact that Louis Hollander, president of the New York State CIO and Michael J. Quill, president of the New York City CIO, sent telegrams urging New York locals to come to "an emergency conference" at the Hotel Commodore to protest the "sweeping unheard of injunction," the Hearn strike, for all intents and purposes, was over. CIO and District 65 leaders advised Hearn strikers to go ahead and apply for reinstatement although they warned the workers that it was doubtful that they would be rehired and pledged, in that instance, to continue to support them financially.[68]

In late September, Conole wrote White to say that, given that the NAACP had taken the union's side in the matter (Conole claimed he never received White's letter stating that he personally had never supported the strike) and that the New York NAACP received a gift of money from District 65, he hoped White would recognize "the terrible injustice and vicious propaganda to which [his] organization has lent itself." Conole wanted to set the record straight and listed the company's responses to the charges the union brought since early June. Conole claimed Hearn's management did not lay off elderly workers; rather, it had simply followed the seniority provisions before and after the contract expired. Furthermore, Conole added, the arbitration procedures the union claimed Hearn would not participate in were "completely insincere" and stated that the only thing possible to arbitrate at that point was the "question of our continued existence." Conole said they did not hire black workers to scab, that the company hired and recruited workers to replace those who "illegally seized" the company's property "without regard to race, creed, or national origin." Conole hoped that White would personally investigate the situation and "take immediate steps to correct the great injustice that your organization, because of misinformation and false Communist propaganda, has done to Hearn Department Stores."[69]

In November, the court-ordered injunction finally ended the strike and District 65 was ordered to cease and desist all activity, including picketing and leaflets. For the first time, District 65 admitted "defeat" and blamed the strike on the "gang up between the NLRB and the unprecedented dishonest anti-labor injunctions handed down by the Appellate Division Court." The

New York CIO stood ready to launch a mass picket again (it had not done so in mid-September despite threats). District 65 reported that, as the New York CIO members were ready to "smash the injunction" the national CIO ordered them not to picket. Doing so, the national CIO office explained, would, after all, violate the injunction. For its part, Hearn's management was only willing to negotiate with representatives from the national CIO, not District 65. As the talks took place, Bill Michelson argued that any agreement that was reached between the two would "be essentially on Greenfield's terms, it will provide for reinstatement of the strikers and little more."[70]

In the strike's aftermath, District 65's leaders argued that Greenfield had launched his aggressive campaign against the union in the spring and summer of 1953 to accomplish three things: to keep the CIO from supporting the strike, to use the RCIA-AFL as a weapon at the NLRB, and to break Hearn workers and force them to come back to work without having made any gains and without union representation. District 65's leaders consoled themselves that Hearn had not broken the union. District 65 had not become increasingly isolated from the CIO during the strike. Rather, the union "won innumerable new friends in the labor movement."[71]

While District 65 remained solvent, it had done so at a considerable cost. It had cut its ties with the CP and its most vocal supporters, which, for all of their problems, nevertheless had provided a left-oriented, critical voice in the early months of 1950–51, both within District 65 and the DPO. The strike effort failed and those Hearn workers who did retain their jobs did so without having made any gains. The CIO, by finally granting affiliation to District 65 and the DPO, gained control of a significant portion of the department store industry and over the ways in which struggles were waged in the industry. Once District 65 relinquished some of its control over the situation to the CIO, the CIO exercised a great amount of control over District 65 and the New York City CIO-affiliates. The national CIO determined how and when Hearn's workers would gain the support of the larger New York City labor movement. Just when that support became available, the national CIO told the potential supporters to go home, that the strike was over, and to follow the conservative court's orders. Moreover, the CIO, even after it granted District 65 semi-affiliation in May, wavered in offering the strikers the benefit of that affiliation. Not only were pickets authorized but never delivered, the CIO's ambivalence had a direct influence on the willingness of the NAACP to support the strike as well. That the NAACP took its cues from Walter Reuther in this instance is not surprising given its anti-Communist stance. But that it did so at the expense of black workers indicates that McCarthyism had rendered black economic equality less important than remaining free of the Communist

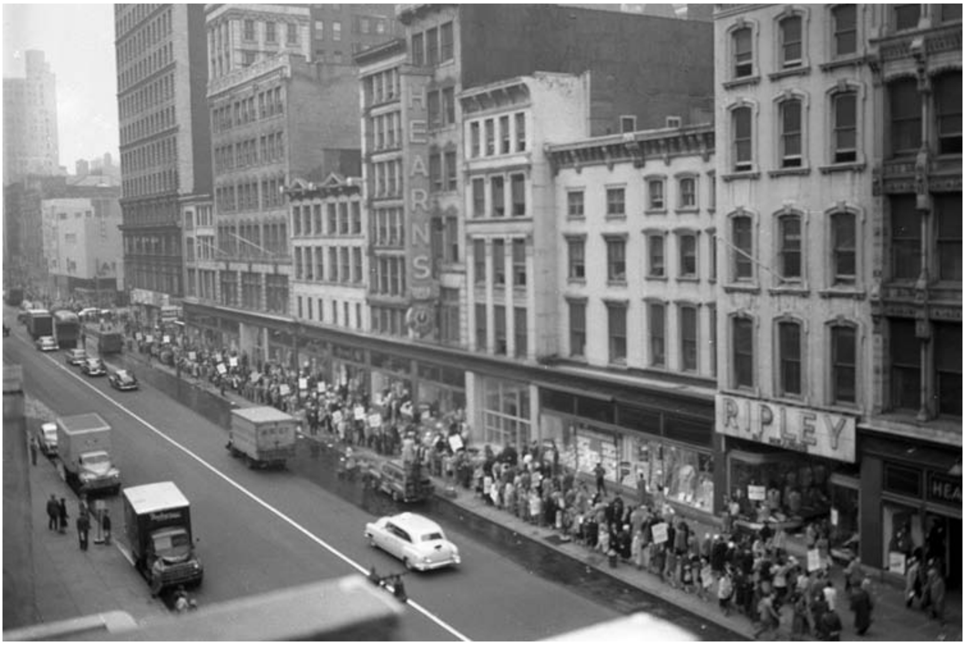
HEARNS
RIPLEY

Figure 3. “65ers” picket the Hearn Department Store. District 65 Photographs, Part 1, Photos 023, Negative Number 10796, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

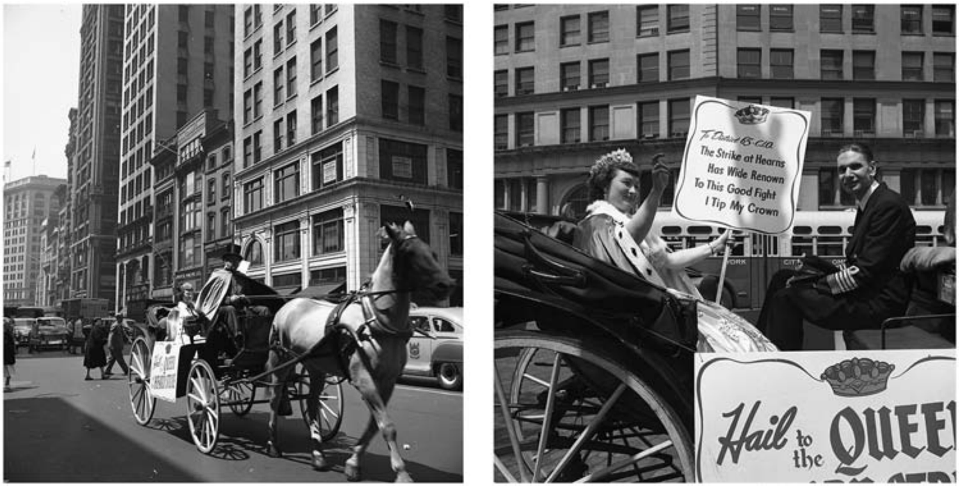
To District 65 CIO
The Strike at Hearns
Has Wide Renown
To This Good Fight
I Tip My Crown
Hail to the QUEE

Figure 4. “65ers” parade a Hearn strike queen. District 65 Photographs, Part 1, Photos 023, Negative Number 10857, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

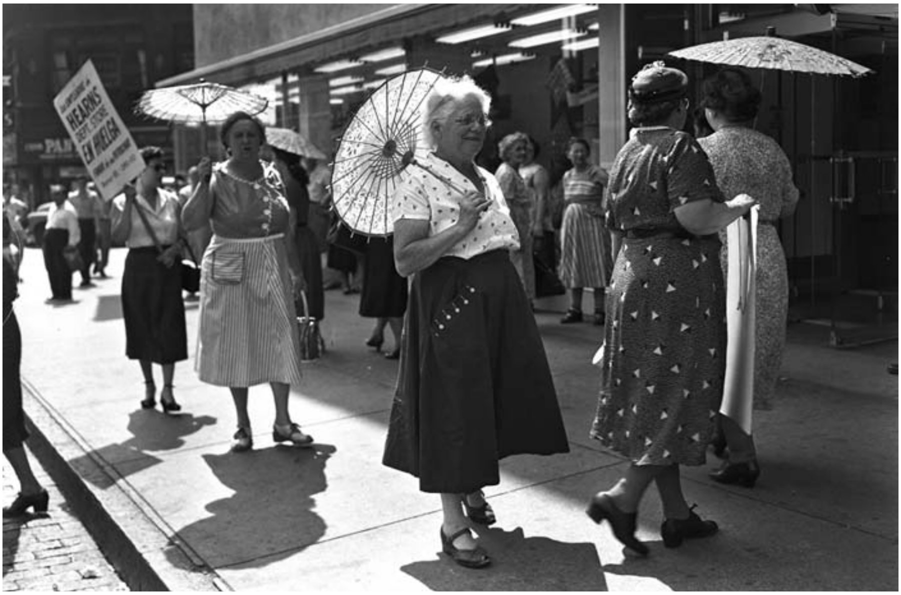
HEARNS
EN HUELGA

Figure 5. Hearn strikers. District 65 Photographs, Part 1, Photos 023, Negative Number 10925, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

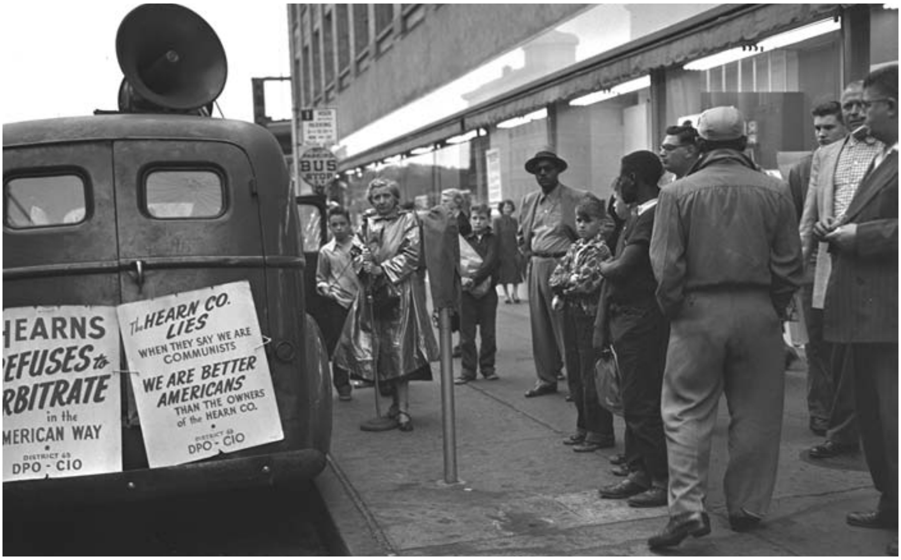
HEARNS
EFUSES to
RBITRATE
in the
MERICAN WAY
DISTRICT 65
DPO - CIO
The HEARN CO.
LIES
WHEN THEY SAY WE ARE
COMMUNISTS
WE ARE BETTER
AMERICANS
THAN THE OWNERS
of the HEARN CO.
DISTRICT 65
DPO - CIO
BUS STOP

Figure 6. District 65 argues with Hearn's management about who are the better Americans. District 65 Photographs, Part 1, Photos 023, Negative Number 10901, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

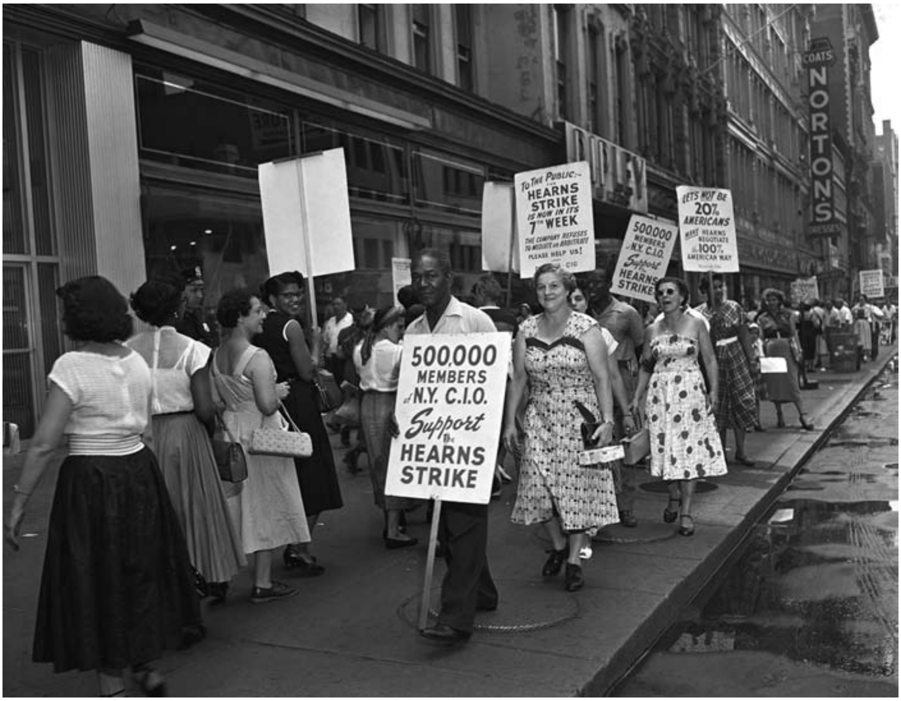
To The Public:—
HEARNS STRIKE IS NOW IN ITS 7TH WEEK
THE COMPANY REFUSES TO MEDIATE OR ARBITRATE
PLEASE HELP US!
LET'S NOT BE 20% AMERICANS
MAKE HEARNS NEGOTIATE the 100% AMERICAN WAY
500,000 MEMBERS of N.Y. C.I.O. Support the HEARNS STRIKE
COATS
NORTONS

Figure 7. Hearn strikers. District 65 Photographs, Part 1, Photos 023, Negative Number 10923, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

taint. District 65 made the painful decision to reaffiliate thinking that its new CIO-status would result in increased support from the CIO and the NAACP. While District 65's leaders told themselves they would try to retain as much autonomy as possible upon reaffiliating with the CIO, it clearly had little with regard to decisions made in behalf of the Hearn strikers.

Had the strike occurred five or six years earlier, Hearn's management team would not have been able to use the court system and the Taft-Hartley provisions so efficiently. District 65 would not have yet been ravaged by CIO and AFL raids and would have commanded more power had the situation at Hearn deteriorated. District 65 would have retained the support of the "Communist front" organizations and other left-led unions that would not yet have been weakened by the same forces that pushed District 65 to seek reaffiliation in the first place. Indeed, the strike would likely not have occurred at all, as David Livingston had argued. Yet, between 1947 and 1953, the political context had changed considerably. As witnessed in the Hearn example, District 65 was simply not as effective as a 1953 CIO affiliate as it had been when it first affiliated with the CIO in the 1930s or even when it remained independent of the CIO in the late 1940s and through the early months of 1951.

By the end of 1953, District 65 and the DPO had gone through a series of changes that had weakened the union. It was at that point that the CIO, the RWDSU, and District 65 finalized the conditions of reaffiliation. Jack Paley recalled that the union's top leaders never wanted to "be isolated." In 1952–54, they still thought the "CIO was better than the AFL." The final agreement called for the following provisions. First, the DPO locals outside of New York would be merged into the nearest RWDSU locals. Second, two of the DPO's top officers, of the DPO's choosing, were to join the RWDSU's Executive Board. District 65 retained the right to secede from the International. District 65 was also granted local autonomy. Finally, the provisions of the agreement established a per capita dues charge to be paid to the RWDSU.[72]

Of the agreement's provisions, the only real point of contention remained who, of the DPO's top officers, would move into the International. The other four points mattered little. For example, despite the concession that District 65 had the right to secede whenever it chose, given its past five years of independent status, it seemed rather obvious that District 65 would not be able to muster the resources to successfully secede from the International in the near future. With regard to local autonomy within the New York City area, the 1954 agreement was no clearer on this point than the previous jurisdictional agreements had been in years past. It would remain to be seen how jurisdictional matters would be settled between District 65 and the RWDSU. Furthermore, unlike the previous agreements between the RWDSU and then Local 65, the 1954 agreement made no mention of a warehouse division, thereby eliminating the possibility that District 65's leaders might wield influence within the International from that direction. It did seem to matter, however, who left District 65.[73]

Originally, the DPO had agreed to send Paley and Livingston to the RWDSU. Despite the agreement's proviso that the DPO be able to choose whom to send, the RWDSU, now headed by Max Greenberg (Irving Simon had died), did not accept Livingston. The RWDSU did, however, agree to the combination of Paley and Osman. Paley recalled that the decision to go into the RWDSU represented a crossroads of sorts for Osman. Osman knew, Paley recalled, that accepting a position with the RWDSU would effectively put an end to his aspirations of becoming an "elder statesman" (despite his criticisms of Sidney Hillman's similar aspirations; see chapter 2) in the labor movement. At that point, Osman accepted the fact, Paley recalled, that his political background stood in his way. Despite their reservations, Livingston, Paley, and Osman accepted the new posts. While the decision dashed Osman's aspirations, the three assumed that, since the RWDSU was headquartered in New York, they would continue to exercise "collective leadership" over District 65. With regard to District 65, not much, they thought, would change. As Paley recalled, however, "it didn't work out that way." While Paley remained in New York and was appointed to head the RWDSU's security and pension department, Arthur Osman was pressured to take on the position of "Southern Director." Osman recalled that he accepted the post, which was the equivalent to "exile in Siberia because no one expects any organization in the South," with the intent of taking a "crack at stimulating organization in the South without being too obviously the person who's doing it."[74]

Was Paley happy in the International? He recalled that, at the time, he was offered the position and he took it. While he had assumed he and Osman would use their positions within the International in District 65's favor, "Greenberg did not want to utilize" Paley other than for the security and pension plans. Although Paley proudly recalled that he helped engineer "the finest welfare and security plan in the country" for RWDSU members, nevertheless, in the first two to three years after he left District 65, Paley recalled that he felt let down. Livingston failed to include him in decisions he, Nicholas Carnes (District 65's new vice president), Cleveland Robinson (who took over for Paley as secretary-treasurer), and Bill Michelson (District 65's organizational director) made about District 65, and Paley wondered if he should have "yessed" Livingston a bit more. After the break with the CP and after District 65 rejoined the CIO, both Paley and Osman had little direct influence over what transpired in the day-to-day operation of their old union.[75]

Did the union change after the split with its Communist members? Unlike Paley, Doswell remained in the union although he did not become a member of the union's Executive Council. He recalled that District 65 was "still a militant union" and that it was "sensitive to the issues of blacks." But he recalled that District 65 "lost mobilization behind the issues" and that the union's "white and black leadership was not mobilized." Doswell wondered if "maybe we've gotten older" or perhaps, forgetful. Doswell and District 65, after a few tough years in the late 1950s, emerged from the decade mobilized around political issues, particularly civil rights–related and antiwar protests. Doswell helped organize, along with A. Philip Randolph, Cleveland Robinson, and other leading black trade unionists, the Negro American Labor Council (NALC) in 1960. The NALC not only pressured George Meany, the head of the merged AFL-CIO, to fight discrimination within the labor movement's ranks, it also spearheaded efforts to organize the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom made famous by Martin Luther King Jr. Perhaps Doswell meant that, while the union supported the efforts of civil rights activists in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it did not mobilize its membership to take the lead. The NALC, for example, adhered to A. Philip Randolph's philosophy. Randolph had been pressuring the labor movement's leaders since the mid-1930s to desegregate its locals and enforce anti-discrimination measures. Likewise, Randolph had engineered a threatened March on Washington in 1941, which resulted in the enactment of the wartime FEPC. The NALC came about because of Randolph, not because District 65 had independently mobilized its membership around the issue of discrimination or unemployment.[76]

Al Evanoff, who remained in Chicago until 1960, recalled that there was no real push to organize within the former DPO locals once they came under the leadership of the RWDSU and that, as a result, he was never involved in a real organizing campaign after 1954. He recalled, rather bitterly, that, with the strength of the CIO, the RWDSU could have targeted ten areas in the country to organize, using the DPO locals as a base, but chose not to. Instead, he recalled, the CIO's and the RWDSU's top leaders sat in their offices talking politics, figuring out where they stood, and deciding "who's gonna be who, what." By 1959, John Gallagher, a member of the former DPO's Executive Board, no longer wanted to organize in Chicago. Harry Bush (whom District 65 had sent to Port Arthur during 1952 reorganizations) was taken out of Port Arthur and moved to Memphis, Local 19. Arthur Osman, who, as the RWDSU's southern director, appears to have attempted to spur organizational efforts in the strongest of the old DPO locals, eventually sent Evanoff to Memphis as well. Evanoff recalled that he embraced the assignment. Local 19 was an all-black, "real live" local. Al Heaps, the RWDSU's regional director, quickly pulled Evanoff out of Memphis, Evanoff recalled, purportedly proclaiming that orders were given from above to "get that s—of a b——out of there." When Evanoff put in a request to relocate back to District 65 in 1960, the RWDSU agreed and Evanoff moved back to New York.[77]

Even Sam Neuberger, who kept track of District 65 after he left the organization in disgust in 1952, recalled that the union became militant again, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, after more black and Puerto Rican members "who [were]n't afraid," presumably of being labeled Communists, came into the union's ranks. During the late 1950s, however, Neuberger argued that the union had changed after the split. An organization, Neuberger explained, "can't be slightly anti-Communist and have a movement of any kind."[78] For Neuberger, the key to militancy was the oppositional framework the Communists and Communist-led unions operated within. Any organization that denounced Communism also, in his mind, accepted too many aspects of capitalism and, in doing so, a movement for significant economic change for low-wage workers was doomed.

Finally, Herbert Hill asked Arthur Osman in a 1968 interview about the repercussions of rejoining the RWDSU. Osman explained:"There were various Congressional investigations and senatorial investigations and all sorts of attacks were being leveled against us and at the same time the McCarthy Act period [sic] was at its height and we felt that our days may very well be numbered. We were not kidding ourselves with our victories, but in retrospect, we exaggerated the dangers. We overestimated the dangers of McCarthyism. Had we known then what we know now, we would never have merged."[79] Hill then asked Osman specifically about the impact of the decision on the black worker. "Would you say," Hill asked, "that, in retrospect—you made an error, that you should have maintained your status as a separate international union—that there was a vast potential for organization, especially among black workers?" Osman responded, "Definitely," that they had made a mistake. He explained that, at the time, they "honestly believed that most of the decent trade unions would not only be run out of the labor movement but would be jailed, imprisoned and incarcerated in concentration camps and things of that sort."

CONCLUSION

Community-Based, Civic Unionism during the Height of the Civil Rights Era

As Arthur Osman worried about being forced underground or, worse, put into a concentration camp, the nation was compelled to confront the horrors of the Jim Crow South as news of Emmett Till's murder surfaced. During the late 1950s, District 65, now presided over by David Livingston, began to establish a working relationship with Martin Luther King Jr. and A. Philip Randolph. The union staged a rally to protest Till's murder, sent money to Martin Luther King Jr. in support of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and, by 1960, was helping lay the groundwork for what would become the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. This book concludes with an examination of the changed role labor unions, especially those on the left end of the political spectrum, took during the civil rights era having gone from leading the fight for racial equality to immersing the contest for better jobs into the larger civil rights movement that was underway.

Historian Joshua B. Freeman asks in his book on working-class New York, "What are we to make of the story of Communism and anticommunism in Cold War New York? Who won and who lost? And what difference did it make for the city and its working class?" To answer these questions, he provides incredible examples of the ways in which, after years of bitter antagonism, the DPO reaffiliated easily with the CIO, the New York CIO Council solicited Local 1199, and the New York UE merely switched affiliation to its bitter rival, the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE). Freeman explains that this complex "mercurial behavior" is attributable to the similarities and differences in the philosophies of the Communists and anti-Communists. Once the most threatening aspect of the Communist left—its structure (rather than its programs)—was decimated, the two sides found common ground in the issues they both supported. Thus, after Arthur Osman, in Freeman's terms, "renounced Soviet firstism," he and the DPO were allowed back into the CIO. Once the NAACP was assured that the DPO was no longer a Communist threat, it supported it in a 1954 NLRB election with an AFL rival. Freeman argues that the DPO's switch from supporting the NAACP rather than the Communist-led NNLC was not as big of a reversal as it might appear. Apart from the NNLC's pro-Soviet stance, the two organizations, Freeman argues, "fundamentally agreed about racial equality, integrationism, and the importance of organized labor." Once the structural threat was gone, the remaining elements of the pro-Communist left, Freeman argues, were absorbed into a "hegemonic liberalism."[1]

But as easy as it might have been for Communists and anti-Communists to come back together by the mid-1950s, as the Hearn example in particular demonstrates, there was a heavy price to pay. The NAACP, the CIO, the NNLC, and District 65/DPO may have agreed on the basic fundamentals of racial equality but they certainly did not agree on how to achieve it. The CIO particularly was much more willing to tie itself to the Democratic Party and to the federal government than were the NNLC and the DPO (before it reaffiliated). As chapters 1 and 2 demonstrated, Local 65 was most effective organizing low-wage workers when it targeted them specifically and when it used "catch-all" area-based strategies rather than craft or industrially oriented, job-based approaches. Local 65's version of community-based, civic unionism, one that was designed to confront the discriminatory manifestations of the capitalist, "for-profit" system, was subsumed into the larger civil rights–era struggles. The overt capitalist critique all but vanished, and for low-wage workers, that critique was what rendered their existence as part of never ending supply of cheap labor visible. Without that critique, it became easier for people to urge low-wage workers to "get an education" and "pull themselves up by their bootstraps." District 65's anti-capitalist structuralist critique was replaced with a more individualistic one.

Allying meant that the liberal, anti-Communist CIO's vision of racial and gender equality predominated. As Freeman argues, without the Communist-led unions, the advance of women in the labor movement was slowed and a "profound sexism" accompanied the growth of the 1960s New Left.[2] I would add that without the Communist left, a sustained attempt to combat the institutional structures that promoted racial discrimination and segregation slowed as well. The "for-profit" system was rarely criticized in the early 1960s for its dependence on cheap sources of labor, kept cheap by the continued use of wage scales separated by a worker's race, gender, and/or ethnicity. A. Philip Randolph continued to argue with the AFL-CIO's top leadership into the 1960s thirty years after he first pressed William Green, president of the then AFL, to combat discrimination and put an end to segregated locals within the AFL in 1934. District 65 supported Randolph in his efforts, as it had in 1934. It had tried, in the intervening years, to push the labor movement, along with other left-oriented labor unions, to take a more radical approach to the organization of black workers, but anticommunist liberalism, which emphasized inclusion in the system itself rather than a critique of its structural limitations, prevailed.

The NALC was a good example of the kind of liberal critique that took center stage during the early years of the Cold War and into the early 1960s. Instead of confronting the free enterprise system and pressuring politicians to implement policies designed to eradicate low-wage work and push instead for some version of full employment, the NALC confronted George Meany and the AFL-CIO (the AFL and CIO had merged in 1955) and took the AFL-CIO to task for the policies it maintained that worked to exclude black workers.[3]

Cleveland Robinson, District 65's secretary-treasurer, joined A. Philip Randolph, Morris Doswell, and other leading black trade unionists in forming the organization. Randolph, Robinson, and other black labor leaders, along with Herbert Hill and the NAACP, were increasingly frustrated with the lack of action on the part of the AFL-CIO to combat racial discrimination within the labor movement. Despite the AFL-CIO's pledge at its 1955 merger convention to throw a significant amount of its resources to anti-discrimination measures, by 1960, a number of AFL-CIO locals were still segregated with the tacit support of their national parent body. Randolph continually chastised AFL-CIO president George Meany for such blatant hypocrisy to no avail. In a now infamous exchange, A. Philip Randolph, representing his BSCP-AFL, introduced a resolution, as he had at the 1934 AFL convention, at the 1959 AFL-CIO convention that all segregated locals of the union be liquidated. Members of the segregated locals argued that they preferred that arrangement. Randolph and others replied that that arrangement normally worked against the interests of the all-black locals. Finally, George Meany intervened and questioned Randolph about his ideas of democracy and tolerance, arguing that if that's how black members wanted it, then the arrangement should stay. Meany accused Randolph of not caring what Negro members thought and asked him, "Who in the hell appointed you as guardian of the Negro members in America? You talk about tolerance." Following the exchange, the resolution, along with all of the others A. Philip Randolph's BSCP introduced, were defeated.[4]

Most black labor leaders were hardly surprised by the events at the 1959 AFL-CIO convention. Randolph, Robinson, and more than seventy other black labor leaders had met a few months before the AFL-CIO convention to "consider the problems confronting the 1,500,000 Negroes who are members of Organized Labor." Those participating agreed that a national organization was needed to serve as a "clearing house" for these problems and "establish strong lines of communication among [N]egro trade unionists." The national organization was to voice the frustration of black trade unionists across the country who declared:

> We resent Jim Crow locals; we deplore the freezeout against Negroes in labor apprenticeship and training programs; we disclaim the lack of upgrading and promotional opportunities for Negroes; we repudiate the lockout against Negroes by some unions; we, above all, reject "tokenism," that thin veneer of acceptance masquerading as democracy. Since hundreds of thousands of Negroes are the victims of this hypocrisy we ourselves must seek the cure, in terms of hundreds of thousands, in the dimensions of a mass organization.[5]

After the AFL-CIO convention, they stepped up their efforts and set a date for the founding convention: May 27–29, 1960, at the Statler Hilton Hotel in Detroit, Michigan.[6] The new NALC immediately divided itself into units. There was a national governing body, twenty-three local chapters, eighteen national vice presidents, and seven lay members elected to the national board.

As Cleveland Robinson said at the 1959 meeting calling for the creation of the NALC, there had been to that point a long established precedent for the founding of such an organization. Other minority groups, Robinson pointed out, had organized committees for the purpose of their "protection and advancement." Robinson thought the only fair criticism of the NALC would be that it had not been created earlier.[7] Yet Robinson must have remembered attending the founding convention nine years earlier of the NNLC in Chicago at which he was elected to the post of vice president. The NNLC's goals had been similar to those of the NALC, the only difference being that it was spearheaded by members of "Communist-dominated" unions that had been expelled by the CIO. The NNLC was itself considered "Communist-dominated" and was forced to disband in 1956.[8] Robinson had resigned his position with the organization in 1953 when District 65 was in the process of cutting its ties with the CP and rejoining the CIO, and members of the NNLC accused him of selling them out when he testified in front of the HUAC in 1953.

By the 1959 AFL-CIO convention, the NALC argued that the gap between Negro and labor communities had only widened since 1955. What was emerging after five years of neglect on the part of the national AFL-CIO and growing hostility between Randolph and Meany was an increased lack of trust between black workers and the unions that represented them, what Randolph called a "crisis of confidence." Randolph predicted that that gap would continue to widen as long as the AFL-CIO delayed implementing its own policies on racial discrimination. Indeed, although the NALC continually tried to liken itself to other offshoots of the AFL and CIO, namely, the Jewish Labor Committee, its very existence proved the growing discontent among an increasingly organized and vocal group of black trade unionists.[9] Randolph and the NALC fully expected that the AFL-CIO would respond to its constant criticism of the AFL-CIO's discriminatory policies by fixing them. The negative publicity alone, the NALC thought, would force the AFL-CIO to do something.[10]

After Hearn, District 65 not only began to seek alliances with anti-Communist organizations like the NAACP, it decided in 1955 to step up its organizing campaigns in the department store industry. By 1955, District 65 was no longer on the defensive, but could it go back to the old days? The union was in good financial condition and nothing now stood in its way.[11] Three months later, after committing its resources to organizing "non-selling" employees of department stores, the union reported some success. Still relying on a combination of organizers' hard work and on rank-and-filers' efforts to "organize

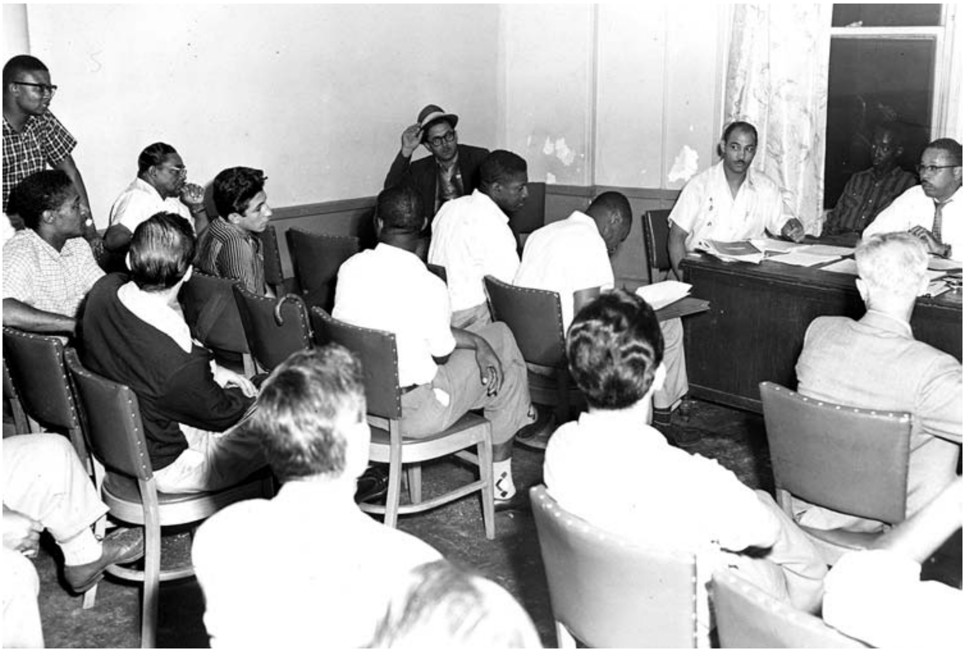

Figure 8. Union meeting with "65ers" working at Corrugated Products, in the union's "processing" division, Morris Dowell running the meeting. District 65 Photographs, Part 2, Photos 023, Folder 029, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

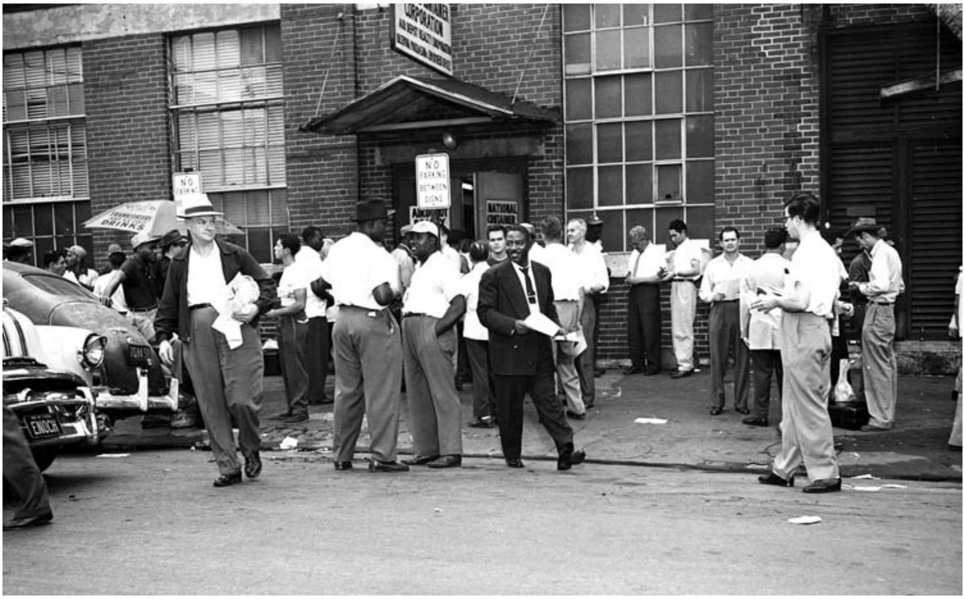
NO PARKING
NO PARKING BETWEEN SIGNS
NATIONAL CONTAINER
BRINKS
ENOCH

Figure 9. Leafleting outside National Container, August 1954. District 65 Photographs, Part 2, Photos 023, Folder 30, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

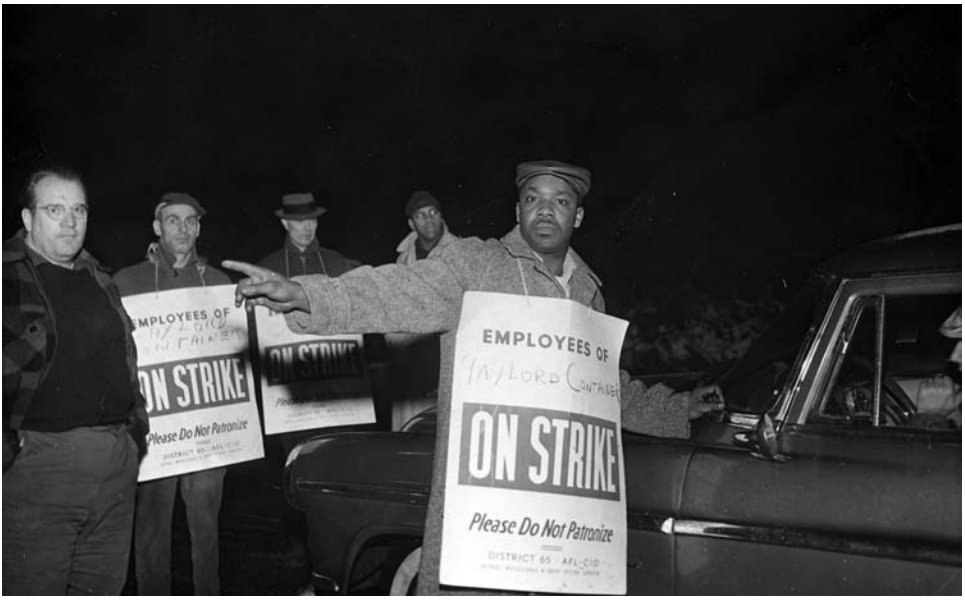
EMPLOYEES OF
Gaylord Container
ON STRIKE
Please Do Not Patronize
DISTRICT 65 AFL-CIO

Figure 10. On strike at Gaylord Container, one of many underway in late 1954 in the union’s corrugated/paper processing division. District 65 Photographs, Part 2, Photos 023, Folder 32, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

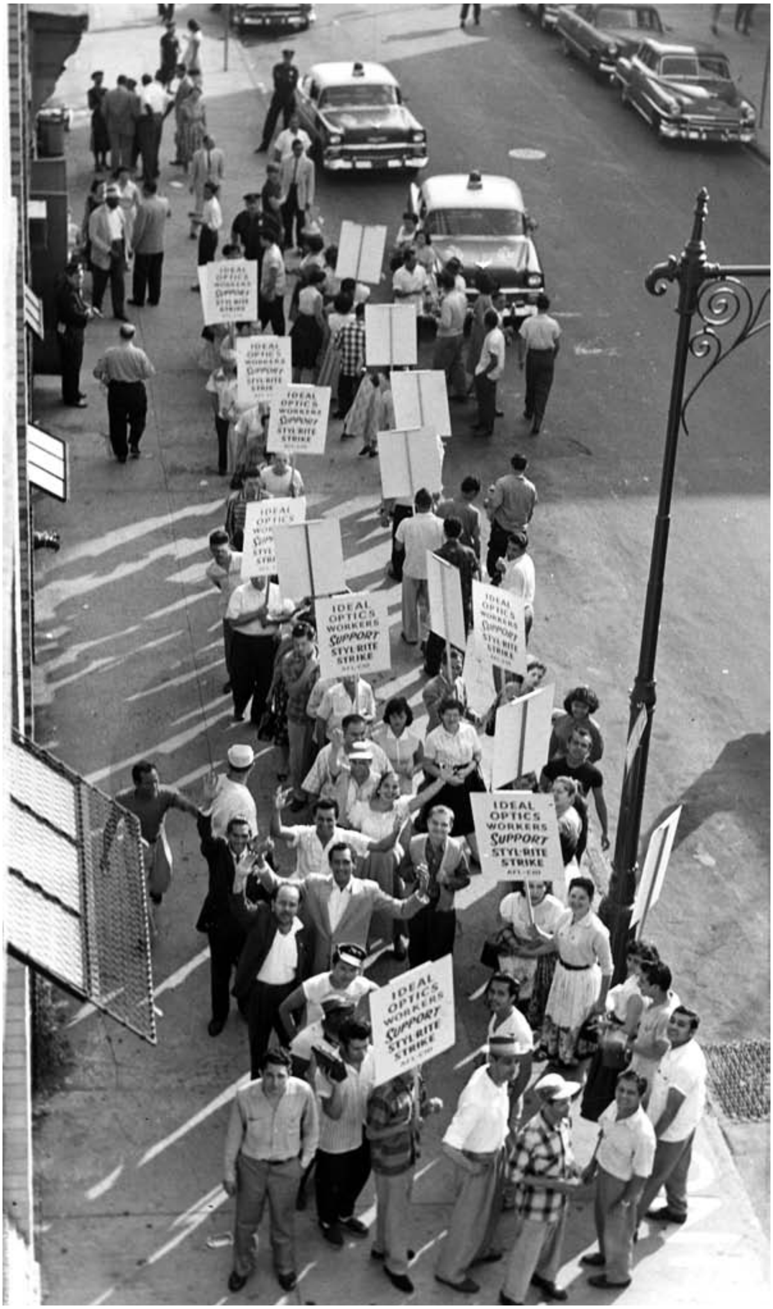
IDEAL
OPTICS
WORKERS
SUPPORT
STYL-RITE
STRIKE
AFL-CIO

Figure 11. Ideal Optics workers support "65ers" on strike at Styl-Rite optics. Sympathy strikes were declared illegal as part of the Taft-Hartley provisions. District 65 Photographs, Part 2, Photos 023, Folder 114, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

the *store* next door," the union reported that employees in numerous stores had expressed interest in District 65: Bloomingdale's in New Rochelle and Stamford, the Hempstead A&S Store, and Stern's store in Great Neck. Despite changes in the union's leadership and affiliation, it went about organizing similarly. It intended to organize one small store one at a time, generate interest in the union, and then let the union's actions sell themselves.[12] The union was organizing Gertz stores in Jamaica and Flushing, May's in Glen Oaks, Arnold Constable in New Rochelle, and Martin's in Brooklyn; its organizing drive was gathering momentum in 1955.

The momentum again encouraged people to red-bait the union, still an effective technique in 1955. Particularly onerous were the efforts of management at Stern's Great Neck store and at the A&S Warehouse, where management red-baited the union and intimidated and bribed their employees. District 65 redoubled its efforts to take advantage of the NLRB in an effort to have the non-selling, warehouse employees recognized as their own unit and thereby eligible to request an election on union representation. When employers began firing people for joining District 65, the union set up picket lines outside of the A&S store in Hempstead and the Bloomingdale's store in Stamford. In Stamford, the union was able to enlist the support of the Social Affairs Commission of the Brooklyn Episcopalian Diocese, which requested that the company at least hire a mediator to resolve the dispute.[13]

District 65 was encouraged by the store drive and anticipated that the impending merger of the AFL and the CIO would further invigorate its efforts, a new source of "inspiration" for the union. Michelson reported that the union was glad to have spent the previous months "setting our house in order so that we might be prepared to capitalize on the opportunities that will be present."[14]

Having cleaned house, the NAACP was less leery of supporting District 65's campaigns. The reluctance witnessed during the Hearn strike all but vanished. By the latter half of the 1950s, each organization began to solicit the other's support. Herbert Hill, labor secretary of the NAACP, intervened on District 65's behalf during its organizing drive at A&S in Brooklyn. After District 65's organizers had gathered support for union representation among the store's warehouse workers, A&S officials started an effective counter-campaign. Workers who had expressed interest in District 65 now refused to authorize union representation. At that point, Hill personally spoke to a black worker who had both changed his mind and sent the union a "letter of resignation." Hill convinced the man to rejoin the union (i.e., to reinstate his initial signature of support) by speaking to him about District 65 and the benefits of union representation. Hill told him that District 65 had a good reputation overall and that the union fought "against discrimination and race hatred."[15]

District 65 also supported the efforts of the NAACP. Through its Negro Affairs Committee, District 65 publicized the NAACP's campaigns, recruited members for the organization, and invited prominent NAACP members to speak at the union's headquarters. In 1955, District 65 publicized the NAACP's efforts in the Emmett Till case. Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP lawyer who had just argued the *Brown v. Board of Education* case successfully in front of the Supreme Court, came to the union's headquarters to speak to the General Council in October 1955. He explained the situation in the South as one of "open season on Negroes." Not only had fourteen-year-old Emmett Till been murdered, his murderers had been set free by an all-white jury. Two other Mississippians, Reverend Walter Lee and LaMarr Smith, had recently been killed. Marshall explained to District 65's five hundred-member General Council how the practice of lynching worked to intimidate Negroes in the South and prevent them from exercising their constitutional rights. Marshall called on the members of District 65 to protest the Mississippi atrocities and make their protests known to the Democratic and Republican Parties and the federal government.[16]

After David Livingston presented the NAACP with a $1,000 check, union members discussed the situation in Mississippi at length. District 65's Negro Affairs Committee worked with the NAACP to organize a protest rally in the garment district, one of the first mass demonstrations against Till's murder. Frank Brown, who was in charge of District 65's garment section, had coordinated the distribution of 100,000 leaflets in the garment district. Valerie Robinson, who had spoken so eloquently for the passage of the FEPC and other CIO-PAC initiatives (see chapter 3), and Frank Patton, both organizers for District 65 and members of its Negro Affairs Committee, had distributed leaflets at subway entrances in Harlem. Members of the General Council, still composed of stewards who represented two dozen or so members, had been circulating information about the rally and encouraged members to take an additional hour off at lunch to attend. Congressman Adam Clayton Powell; Max Greenberg, president of the RWDSU; Reverend Harrington of the Manhattan Community Church; and Ruby Hurley, the NAACP's southern director who had attended Emmett Till's murderers' trial, addressed the crowd. Cleveland Robinson pointed out the significance of the garment district rally: it was the first to be called in a predominantly white community and he pointed out "that a successful rally of this sort will give great encouragement to the Negro people and others who are fighting racist terror." He explained that the events were particularly shocking to District 65's members, who "valued better than anything else the unity of our membership regardless of race or color."[17]

The Emmett Till case and the protest rally brought District 65 and the NAACP together and generated interest in the NAACP among the union's

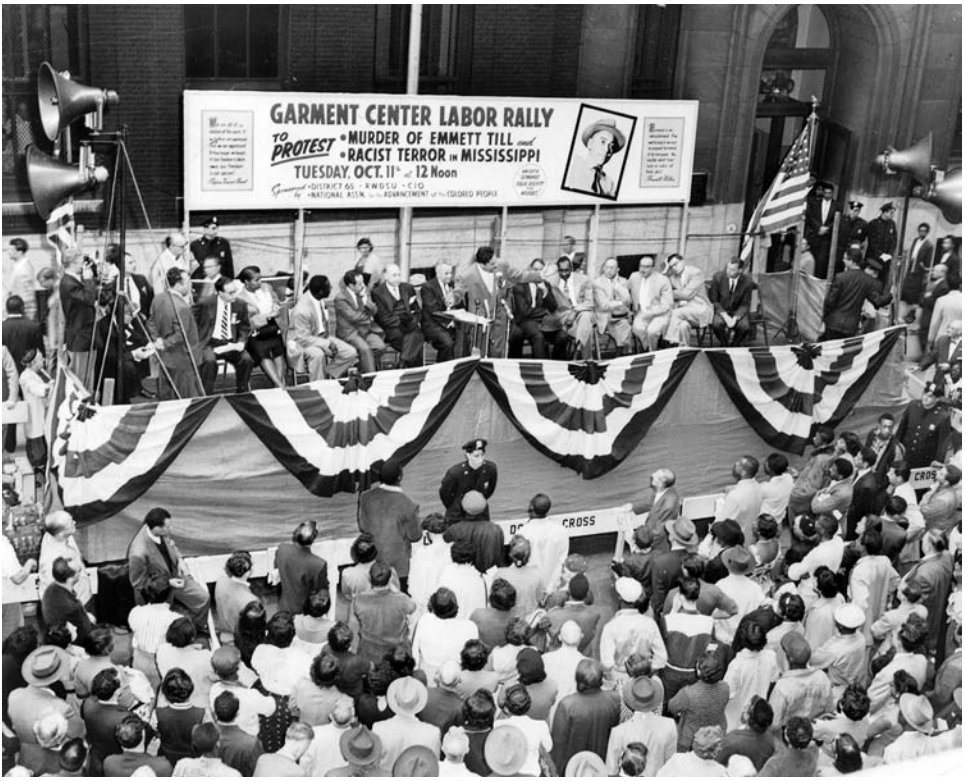
GARMENT CENTER LABOR RALLY
TO PROTEST
• MURDER OF EMMETT TILL and
• RACIST TERROR in MISSISSIPPI
TUESDAY, OCT. 11th at 12 Noon
• DISTRICT 65 • RWDSU • CIO
• NATIONAL ASSN. for the ADVANCEMENT of the COLORED PEOPLE
CROSS

Figure 12. Emmett Till Rally, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell speaking, four people seated from left: David Livingston, Ruby Hurley, Cleveland Robinson, Arthur Osman. District 65 Photographs, Part 2, Photos 023, courtesy of the Tamiment Library, New York University.

members. After the October 5, 1955, General Council meeting, District 65 initiated a drive to get its members to join the NAACP under the slogan, “Let There Be No More Emmett Tills.” The union appealed to its members to “join with the NAACP Against Race Hatred and Bigotry.” It distributed leaflets to its members that explained where to get applications for membership, the cost of the membership, and that membership included a subscription to the NAACP’s journal, *The Crisis*.[18]

The following month, the union reported that the rally had been a success, that it had given the union “a great lift.” Sol Molofsky, longtime organizer and recreation director and now District 65 Executive Council member, suggested that the union use this spirit to turn out in equally large numbers to two social events currently being organized, one by the Negro Affairs Committee and the other by the Spanish Affairs Committee. “Well attended affairs,” Molofsky argued, “help in making our Union, District 65, a true organization of brothers and sisters.” Most events put on by the union were well attended but there was a danger, Molofsky warned, of these turning into “Jim Crow socials.” The only way to avoid that scenario was for the union’s “white and non-Spanish speaking members” to “wholeheartedly support these events.”[19]

In addition to establishing a Spanish Affairs Committee circa 1955, the latter half of the 1950s witnessed a number of organizing campaigns and a few strikes in which the majority of the workers involved were Puerto Rican. It no longer made sense to District 65 then to discuss unity in only Negro-white terms. In February 1958, District 65 celebrated “Brotherhood Week” simultaneously with its annual celebration of “Negro History Month.” In typical “65” fashion, the union sponsored a social event that included entertainment as well as distinguished speakers. The guest of honor at the celebration was Eleanor Roosevelt. Thurgood Marshall spoke yet again to the union’s members along with Judge Manuel Gomez. The celebration was intended to serve as a demonstration of the union’s unity in the face of outside threats from the Soviet Union and the U.S. South. The year 1957, District 65 argued, had witnessed two particularly significant events: the Soviet Union had taken the lead in the space race and the nation watched as high school students in Little Rock attempted to integrate Little Rock’s Central High School and put the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to the test. District 65 took the opportunity in 1958 to organize the Brotherhood Celebration to demonstrate and reaffirm its commitment to unity. “It is these events,” Hattie Young reported, “that are saying to people everywhere, ‘We better learn to live as brothers if we are to survive.’”[20] The union reported that the Brotherhood Rally was a success. Fifteen hundred people attended the event held at the Hotel Commodore on February 26.[21]

By the early 1960s, the NAACP, District 65, and the NALC combined their efforts to organize one of the more famous demonstrations of the mid-twentieth century for black equality: the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In early 1963, after having bandied the idea about for more than two years, members of the NALC Executive Board put into motion concrete plans to initiate a March on Washington. The NALC had sent letters announcing the event in February, hoping to gather support. The March, which has become so readily identified with Martin Luther King Jr. and the push for civil rights in the South, was the brainchild of the NALC. The NALC originally intended that the March be “for the purpose of jobs for our people in government and in industry” and described it as “one of the most important undertakings of

NALC since its inception." The NALC projected that the March would be a success if at least 30,000 people attended, which meant it was the responsibility of each local chapter to "produce from their area a minimum of 1500 people." The letter ended by stating that it was regrettable that a march is necessary "100 years since the Emancipation Proclamation" but, the letter continued, "we must have job equality in 63 and if we must march to get it, then march we must."[22]

The time seemed right if not overdue. Charles McDew, the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), wrote a letter calling on the NALC to do something about the high rates of Negro unemployment. McDew wrote to Randolph about the shock he and members of SNCC felt upon learning that the unemployment rate for Negroes now stood at 20 percent. He commiserated with Randolph about the unenviable position members of the civil rights movement were in, "begging for an end to race bias in trade union and in industry when, in fact, there are no *jobs*!" McDew called on the NALC to "initiate broadly based action to do something about the problem of Negro unemployment." Randolph was able to respond that, indeed, the NALC was at that moment preparing for a March for Jobs on Washington in the next few months.[23]

The NALC had no trouble garnering support for a March on Washington. It originally intended to hold the March in the spring of 1963, but as more people and organizations became involved, their schedules were accommodated. During the spring of 1963, the NALC that organized the March, generated publicity for it, and coordinated the efforts of everyone involved. Randolph made a clear distinction between the more labor-oriented NALC and the more civil rights–oriented organizations working for political gains in this era. He fully intended that the March emphasize the push for "economic" rights as well as "civil" rights. In March, the NALC issued a press release announcing that at its upcoming board meeting it was scheduled to discuss a "Negro Job Rights March and Mobilization on Washington, D.C." The release emphasized that an "economic disaster hangs over the heads of Negroes with joblessness of black workers mounting to frightfully higher levels month after month, with no prospects of relief in sight." The demonstration intended to highlight the depression-like conditions experienced by Negroes across the country, to move President John F. Kennedy to enact the Youth Opportunity Bill and federal fair employment practices legislation, to "stir organized labor to press for major public works programs to provide jobs now," and to arouse America's conscience and educate American business.[24]

The NALC met with representatives from the NAACP, the National Urban League, the Congress of Racial Equality, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the SNCC, and the National Council of Negro Women in

April and formed an official organizing committee. Cleveland Robinson was appointed chair, L. Joseph Overton director, and Richard Parrish treasurer—all NALC members—and the committee decided to call the demonstration "The Emancipation March for Jobs."[25]

Until very recently, historians had largely forgotten the "jobs" component of the famous March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. They emphasized instead the role Martin Luther King Jr. played during the March in galvanizing Americans, including President Kennedy and Vice President Lyndon Johnson, to move more quickly to guarantee African Americans civil rights. King's "I Have a Dream . . ." speech has become the symbol of the civil rights movement of the era. Because Martin Luther King Jr. so captured the spirit of the civil rights movement at that 1963 march, the demonstration has since become closely associated with the southern civil rights movement even though it was organized by black trade unionists at District 65's headquarters in New York who wanted to draw attention to the high rates of unemployment and underemployment black Americans experienced. King's own continued critique of the capitalist system had too been largely ignored until very recently with the publication of his more "radical" speeches. King had long championed labor unions' fight for "economic" equality. He spoke each year at Local/District 65's headquarters and clearly thought the fight for better jobs was central to the freedom struggle. From the mid-1950s Montgomery Bus Boycott to his 1966 participation in the "Poor People's Movement" based in northern, urban, and racially segregated Chicago and until his death during the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike, King did not separate economic and civil rights the way historians and our collective memories have.[26]

More than likely, the reason for this rather large omission has to do with the way in which King so beautifully captured the turmoil that was occurring across the country as people took up the mantle from Emmett Till's mother, Rosa Parks and Joanne Robinson, the Little Rock Nine, James Meredith, and Diane Nash and the students who sat in at the lunch counters in the South and pushed southerners to stop denying black Americans basic civil rights like voting and the humiliation associated with being segregated. Perhaps though, too, our collective memory has glossed over the economic component of the March because it is so difficult for Americans to reconcile their belief in the American capitalist system with its byproducts: the continual exploitation of people, more often than not, of color, recent immigrants, and women. As difficult as it was to fight for an integrated South and for equal access to the vote, enough people by 1963 were convinced and the civil rights movement realized significant gains, including the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act passed the following year. By contrast, into the twenty-first century, the country is comfortable with the "norm" that menial, manual, and low-paid service and distribution jobs be filled by disproportionate numbers of men and women of color under legal and illegal circumstances. Only a handful of unions are taking on District 65's fight and they are doing so under brutal anti-labor conditions and within the context of intense infighting.

In 1966, the NALC decided to abandon its "attack upon the AFL-CIO on account of race bias" and adopt instead a strategy of "alliance and cooperation" to try and close the gap between the labor and civil rights movements. It suggested that the AFL-CIO join the war on poverty, support a $2 minimum wage, and participate in voter registration drives in the South. At the same time, the NALC pushed the larger civil rights movement to shift its emphasis from "conventional civil rights demands to one of focus on economic issues, principally jobs."[27]

Morris Doswell, a longtime member and organizer for District 65 and now president of the New York chapter of the NALC, and Joe Brown, vice president of the New York NALC, criticized the shift in strategy. In a letter to Randolph, Doswell and Brown detailed the ways in which blatant discrimination against Negro and Puerto Rican workers ran rampant in New York City. Doswell alerted Randolph to specific AFL-CIO unions that participated in discriminating against their own members by not processing their complaints and by looking the other way when no Negro or Puerto Rican members were hired on local construction sites. Doswell and Brown believed the original intent of the NALC to root out such practices in organized labor was the better strategy and formally "rejected the position taken by the National Executive Board."[28]

What had happened to the push for black economic equality? Why had such a gap emerged between the labor and civil rights movements? The evidence presented here indicates that in the years between 1938 and 1963, the climate changed dramatically. Whereas economic equality was discussed and pushed for broadly in the 1930s as an obvious response to the Depression, during World War II and the early Cold War years, the growing sense of American patriotism and anti-Communism eclipsed any efforts to critique the American economic system. More than that, however, this book demonstrates that organizations like District 65 and the NAACP were profoundly affected by the McCarthy period. In order to survive, they had to cut their ties with radical black unionists, their supporters, and the vast network they had created during the 1930s and World War II. A. Philip Randolph may have regretted the lack of an economic agenda in the civil rights movement in 1966. He had, however, made choices that severely affected the degree of radicalism with the black trade union movement in the preceding two decades, as had the NAACP. The NAACP had refused to associate with Communists. In doing so, it protected its branches from HUAC-sponsored investigations but it also relegated the fight for black economic equality to the back burner only to be resurrected in various locations and in a piecemeal fashion. The demand for a concerted national effort for economic equality had presented itself over and over again, but without a unified national network to tap into movements lost strength and were confined to local attempts to gain economic parity among workers.

By the late 1960s, however, times had changed again. Gene Eisner, who worked for the union's legal defense team, recalled that District 65 had become so strong on civil rights by the late 1960s that it was able to dictate to companies that they include affirmative action policies in their contracts. Like Sam Neuberger, part of Local 65 and the DPO's legal team fifteen years earlier, Eisner described his days with District 65 as some of the most exciting of his career.[29] District 65 continued to try to tap into any larger movement that offered it the chance to pursue its goals of economic equality for its racially and ethnically diverse members.

In 1969, District 65 decided, yet again, that it no longer needed the AFL-CIO's protection and tried, yet again, to become a part of an umbrella organization that better suited its organizing goals. History repeated itself as District 65 disaffiliated from the RWDSU-AFL-CIO. District 65's jurisdictional disputes with other RWDSU locals, with the ILGWU, the ACWA and other unions in New York, and with the AFL-CIO were symptomatic of the same differing "orientation" it maintained throughout its history toward organizing low-wage workers, the "poor." At Local 26's headquarters in Suffolk, Virginia (the local that represented workers at Planters discussed in chapter 5), District 65 and eleven RWDWU locals voted to disaffiliate and together become the National Council, Distributive Workers of America (NCDWA). The NCDWA, with Cleveland Robinson as president, claimed 40,000 members "scattered in 15 states and as far as Los Angeles and Phoenix" and pledged to "extend our hands to those who have seen the doors of opportunity slammed in their faces," especially "black Americans, Mexican Americans, poor whites, and the American Indians."[30]

The move came at the same time that UAW broke from the AFL-CIO to form the ALA with which the NCDWA, and other "renegade" unions, immediately affiliated. The ALA, another attempt at a third labor federation representing low-wage workers, intended to launch a "national drive to organize poor people in great numbers," particularly "the millions of workers throughout the country who work in small plants and aren't in any industry or union." The Executive Council of the AFL-CIO considered the proposed ALA a "dual organization" and threatened to suspend any of its affiliates who joined or supported the organization. At issue, yet again, was the approach the labor movement should take to organize the people, more often than not people of color, who were stuck in "dead-end jobs." For more than thirty-five years, Local/District 65 had been trying to find a home through which to best fight against an economic system that produced low-wage, dead-end jobs more often filled by racial and ethnic minorities and immigrants. The union fought to keep the structural critique and accompanying organizing strategies at the forefront along with the "invisible" people whose lives and futures were affected by the maintenance of that system.[31]

The affiliation with the ALA was the best, and unfortunately shortest, of Local 65's thirty-five years of attempts to become a part of a labor movement that was oriented toward organizing the lowest-paid of American workers. The labor movement was in a completely different position by 1969. No longer embroiled in anti-Communist disputes and able to bring fifteen years of civil rights protest to bear on the "plight" of poor workers, at least one of the AFL-CIO's foundational unions was ready to try and push George Meany and the labor movement in a more radical direction. By 1968, Walter Reuther convinced Frank Fitzsimmons, "caretaker" of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (in Jimmy Hoffa's absence), that the two should leave the AFL-CIO behind.

Walter Reuther had taken stances both in favor of civil rights and against the Vietnam War and had attempted to have the UAW join the International Conference of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) directly (as opposed to virtually through the UAW's affiliation with the AFL-CIO) as a way to add his own voice to the organization. Fitzsimmons, too, had taken left-leaning stances on civil rights and the Vietnam War and was attempting to bring some respectability back to the Teamsters in the wake of Jimmy Hoffa's corruption scandals. The two huge unions, then, found themselves outside the AFL-CIO fold, with millions of members and with similar political perspectives. Under Reuther's direction, the two unions formally broke from the AFL-CIO and joined forces, becoming what historian Nelson Lichtenstein calls "outcast trade unions" as a result. During exploratory talks in the spring and summer of 1968, Fitzsimmons exclaimed, "By God, I predict within six months the AFL-CIO will be coming to us asking how to restructure the American labor movement."[32]

Almost immediately, District 65 began negotiations with Reuther and the ALA to bring both District 65 and its NCDWA into the new labor federation. District 65/NCDWA was one of several smaller, "progressive," unions targeted by Reuther as a potential ALA affiliate.[33] The ALA offered the NCDWA/District 65 a much stronger financial base from which to organize than had the DPO fifteen years earlier and an all-important like-minded organizational approach designed to target lower-paid, less stable workers. The ALA also tried to recruit the larger American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees

(AFSCME), the United Farm Workers, the American Federation of Teachers, the United Electrical Workers, the ILWU, Hospital Workers Local 1199, the International Chemical Workers, and the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers. Reuther's hope was that the ALA, several million strong and with foundational unions that already tended to organize outside what had become traditional industrially oriented and skills-based bounds, might launch a "national drive to organize poor people in great numbers," particularly "the millions of workers throughout the country who work in small plants and aren't in any industry or union." [34]

Just as District 65/NCDWA was engaged in negotiations with Walter Reuther to affiliate with the ALA, Arthur Osman granted controversial NAACP labor secretary and labor historian Herbert Hill an interview. It was in the two days of interviews in July 1968 that Osman accused the leaders of the ILGWU, one of the most successful labor organizations in New York City at the time, of engaging in "unconscious racism." "It is so much a part of their makeup," Osman argued, "that that they are not even aware of it and they would deny it." The ILGWU's error, according to Osman as was elaborated on in chapter 2, was that it organized around the more stable, skilled job categories within the garment industry and left the people in the "dead-end" or peripheral jobs (stock boys, messengers, clerks, delivery drivers, home workers) unorganized and underpaid. It was the ILGWU's "orientation" that made it racist in Osman's estimation. Osman, no doubt, was emboldened in his criticism by the hope that, through the ALA, his now thirty-five-year quest to find a home in a differently oriented labor federation would be realized.

While negotiating a merger with the ALA, District 65 and the NCDWA (technically independent, having disaffiliated from the RWDSU-AFL-CIO but not yet having merged with the ALA), and one of its locals, 1199B (a spin-off of Local 1199 headquartered in New York City), was engaged in a southern version of the spectacular New York Hospital Workers' Strike of a decade earlier. Walter Reuther marched through the streets with SCLC's Ralph Abernathy and Andrew Young to protest the city's insistence on paying hospital workers under the federal minimum wage of $1.60 per hour. The ALA contributed $10,000 to the strike and the AFL-CIO countered with $25,000 in an effort to bring Local 1199B back into the AFL-CIO to which the ALA countered with another $25,000. The strike ended after four months but within days of having reached an agreement with Local 1199B-NCDWA, Charleston's black community was "aroused" again when the hospital refused to hire back twenty-two of the striking workers.[35]

In typical fashion District 65 fashion, the NCDWA then organized much smaller, but numerous, concurrent drives in the area. Also in Charleston, the

NCDWA supported the two hundred employees of the Charleston Sanitation, Waterworks, and Engineering Department, who walked off the job after stalled negotiations with the mayor of Charleston, who refused to raise the wages of the "mature men, fathers and grandfathers, some with 30 to 35 years of service with the city," whose take-home pay ranged from $45 to $62 per week. Like the Charleston Hospital Workers, the striking municipal workers gained the quick support of Ralph Abernathy and the SCLC, whose convention was held in Charleston during the strike. To avoid negotiating with the striking workers and the NCDWA, the mayor transferred white workers from the Parks Department to drive the city's garbage trucks and brought in prisoners to pick up trash cans. The NCDWA also supported 150 "non-professional workers," mostly women, on strike at the Louise Obici Hospital in Suffolk, Virginia, and seventy-five men in nearby Mackey's, North Carolina, who worked for the Williams Lumber Company, by sending support payments of $15 per week to the each striking worker. It also, in August 1969, supported the fifty workers on strike in Newport News, Virginia, at a "laundry and nursery." In his report to Pat Greenhouse (vice president of the UAW), Cleveland Robinson wrote, "Under normal circumstances, workers who go out on strike can be expected to hold out on their own for some time because of their income and preparations etc. In these cases, however, we are learning the harsh, cold facts, relative to the conditions of such workers and the true meaning of poverty. Sad to say, there are not enough of us in the labor movement who really understand it."[36]

At least now, however, Robinson could write Reuther and Greenhouse and anticipate (and get) both financial and philosophical support. Within months, however, Walter Reuther would die in a plane crash, and the ALA began its swift collapse. It would cease to exist altogether by 1972. After what looked like a promising start, the ALA's short existence buttressed by the longer history of Local/District 65 and the NCDWA, reveals a long, protracted struggle within the labor movement over "orientation." Working to organize the "poor" is a completely different struggle than organizing on a plant by plant, business by business, basis. It requires a different mindset, one less oriented toward bringing a "big" corporation to the bargaining table and one more oriented toward bringing small, twenty-five-, fifty-, and one hundred-person plants, warehouses, and offices in an "area" into a conglomerate (hodge-podge) labor union that represents "workers" of all kinds rather than "autoworkers," "teachers," "electrical workers," and "waitresses," all defined by the jobs they do and not by their positions as "workers" rather than a business or company owners, managers, and mayors. And yet the wall-to-wall, density approach, the one responsible for the biggest upsurge in the labor movement since the 1970s under the SEIU banner, lends itself to a decentralized organizing structure and the tendency for inordinate amounts of power to accumulate at the executive levels. When that happens, the very low-wage workers the movement is designed to benefit are further removed from positions of power and become quickly “disaffected” once again. Local/District 65 struggled throughout its history to find the right “home” for organizing low-wage workers. In the early twenty-first century, that struggle continues.

Abbreviated Chronology

List of Local/District 65's Various Affiliates

1933: The WDGW is founded by Arthur Osman, remains independent

1933–35: The WDGW maintains a relationship with the UHT

1935: The WDGW establishes a federal charter with the AFL, becomes Local 19932-AFL of the WDGEU

1937: Local 19932-AFL breaks from the AFL, leaning toward the CIO

Summer 1937: Osman's Local 19932 joins David Livingston's Local 65, a wholesale textile workers' union organized by the CIO's Textile Workers Organizing Committee and Phil Manheim's wholesale shoe workers' union to form Local 65 of the United Wholesale and Warehouse Employees of America under the direction of the CIO

1937: Local 65 joins Samuel Wolchok's retail clerks' union, which had just broken from the RCIPA-AFL, to form the URWEA under the direction of the Committee for Industrial Organization

1940: Despite affiliation with the URWEA, Local 65 calls itself the United Wholesale and Warehouse Employees of New York, Local 65, CIO

circa 1943: The URWEA becomes the URWDSEA-CIO

circa 1947: The URWDSEA renames itself the RWDSU-CIO

1948: Local 65 and eight other left-leaning locals in New York City break from the international RWDSU to form the DTC

February 1950: DTC adds a new local, drops another, and becomes the DWU

October 1950: DWU joins the FTA and the UOPWA to form the DPO; Local 65 becomes District 65 of the DPO

1953: District 65 and the DPO rejoin the RWDSU-CIO headed by Max Greenberg

1969: District 65 breaks from the RWDSU-AFL-CIO to form the NCDWA, which was affiliated with the ALA (founded by the UAW and Teamsters Unions)

1979: District 65 affiliates directly with the UAW

1994: District 65 declares bankruptcy

Notes

Introduction: Renegade Union

1. All of the published work on Local/District 65 focuses on its efforts to organize among department store and clerical workers, and less on its attempts to organize racial and ethnic minorities and/or warehouse and other service workers, especially those employed in what were considered menial positions; see Daniel Opler, *For All White Collar Workers: The Possibilities of Radicalism in New York City's Department Store Unions* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007); Minna Ziskind, "Labor Conflict in the Suburbs: Organizing Retail in Metropolitan New York, 1954–1958," *International Journal of Labor and Working Class History* 64 (2003): 55–73 and "Citizenship, Consumerism, and Gender: A Study of District 65, 1945–1960" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2001); and John Hoerr, *We Can't Eat Prestige: The Women Who Organized Harvard* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997). For analyses of early twenty-first-century attempts to organize in the service sector, see Ruth Milkman, *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement* (New York: Russell Sage, 2006) and Steven Henry Lopez, *Reorganizing the Rust Belt: An Inside Story of the American Labor Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

2. For descriptions of the climb up from pushcart peddler to clerk to shop owner to big business owner, see Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1976), ch. 5 ("Slum and Shop") and Amy Zimmer's account of her great-grandfather's and great uncles, the Ecksteins, rise up on Orchard Street in "From Peddlers to Panini: The Anatomy of Orchard Street," in Jerilou Hammett and Kingsley Hammett, eds., *The Suburbanization of New York* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), pp. 53–62.

3. See Howe's descriptions of work on the Lower East Side, including wage rates, in *World of Our Fathers*, p. 157.

4. See Karen Pastorello, *A Power Among Them: Bessie Abramowitz Hillman and the Making of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), ch. 6 for statistics on laundry workers' wages and the ACWA's campaigns to organize them; for wage rates and the Riis description, see Gus Tyler, *Look for the Union Label: A History of the International Ladies Garment Workers* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 23–24. For more on the ILGWU, see Alice Kessler-Harris's classic, "Where are the Organized Women Workers?" and other essays in *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007). Kessler-Harris describes one woman's reluctance to join the ILGWU, even though "$6 a week was not enough to pay, the Lord helps me out" ("Where are the Organized Women Workers?" p. 32).

5. On the impact of Section 7a on the growth of CIO-affiliated unions, see Robert Zieger, *The CIO, 1935–55* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 17–18.

6. For a description of organized labor's impact on raising the standard of living in the postwar period, see Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), especially chs. 2 and 3; see Lopez, *Reorganizing the Rust Belt*, for statistics and an analysis of the impact of deindustrialization on union organizing and on the standard of living and on the SEIU's recent work organizing service workers in Pittsburgh. Kim Phillips-Fein has written extensively about the ways in which pro-business forces slowly and methodically dismantled New Deal initiatives that supported union organization; see *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010). Jefferson Cowie traces the ways in which pro-business legislation encouraged U.S. corporations like RCA to close plants in the United States and move to Mexico in search of non-union, "cheap" labor, further weakening unions' ability to wage campaigns for improved working conditions here in the United States; see *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (New York: New Press, 2001). See also the essays in Nelson Lichtenstein, ed., *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) for analyses of how Americans' thinking shifted toward a pro-corporate mentality over the course of the twentieth century.

7. There are too many histories of unionization efforts outside the factory-oriented mass production industries to list. I include here examples that directly address the ways in which people had to overcome the societal assumptions associated with the work they did in order to make gains. See Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Tony Gilpin, et al., *On Strike for Respect: The Clerical and Technical Workers' Strike at Yale University, 1984–85* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Michael Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007) on sanitation workers; Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the*

California Food Processing Industry, 1930–50 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987) and Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican-American Workers in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) on Mexican American men and women who grew, harvested, and processed foodstuffs; see Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid Twentieth Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) and Rosemary Feurer, "The Nutpickers' Union, 1933–34: Crossing the Boundaries of Community and Workplace," pp. 27–50 in Staughton Lynd, ed., *"We Are All Leaders": The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996) on African American women who, like Mexican American men and women, also worked as agricultural "processors" in the South and Midwest.

8. Alice Kessler-Harris has written extensively about the ways in which societal assumptions are embedded in the wages people earn and in economic policy and its enforcement; see *A Woman's Wage* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990) and *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

9. For classics on the Knights of Labor and the IWW, see Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983) and Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969; abridged version, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

10. Steve Early, *The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers' Movement or Death Throes of the Old?* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), pp. 5–11.

11. Interview with Arthur Osman by Herbert Hill on July 12, 1968, in New York City, housed as part of the Oral History Collection, *Blacks in the Labor Movement*, at the Walter P. Reuther Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan[hereafter Hill interview with Osman], p. 19.

12. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, pp. 7, 13–14; interview of David Livingston (Local 65's second president after Osman) by Herbert Hill on April 1, 1969, in David Livingston's office at 13 Astor Place and housed as part of the Oral History Collection, *Blacks in the Labor Movement*, at the Walter P. Reuther Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan [hereafter Hill interview with Livingston], p. 2; Dorothy Fennell, "The Union's Inspiration: Making Trade Unionists Among New York City Wholesale Workers, 1933–1937, for Presentation at the Conference on David Montgomery's Work and Teaching, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, June 4–6, 1993," paper in author's possession, p. 29.

13. Howard Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets? The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 14. For the ILGWU's basic organizing philosophies, see Tyler, *Look for the Union Label*, p. 286.

14. Osman recalled a debate he had with Mike Cashell of the Teamsters about whom to target. Cashell argued that if Osman organized warehousemen, there'd be no money to divide up but if he focused on higher-paid drivers and platform men, at least, Cashell

argued, he could get the boss to give them a raise, said Cashell, Osman recalled, "'if you got to divide the pie with everybody, you're just going to get crumbs'"; see Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 8.

15. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, pp. 1–2; Hill interview with Livingston, pp. 4, 10.

16. See also Leon Fink's interview with Leon Davis, June 13, 1979, *National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, Local 1199, Records, 1938–1972*, housed at the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, collection 5680oh, box 1, ff 19 "Leon Davis V," pp. 1–2. Joshua Freeman explains that there existed numerous "discontent groups," or budding unionists, in the New York City transit industry that would likely not have formed the successful Transport Workers Unions without the organizing efforts of the Communist Party; see Joshua B. Freeman, *In Transit: The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933–1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 41–42; for organizing efforts in the department stores in New York, see Opler, *White Collar Unionism*; for the beginnings of Local 1199 and the pharmacists' union, see Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: A History of Hospital Workers' Union, Local 1199* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), pp. 20–21.

17. See Robin D. G. Kelley's seminal work *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993) and Hosea Hudson and Nell Irvin Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: The Life and Times of a Black Radical* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993); Michael Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor: Black and White Workers in Chicago's Packinghouses, 1904–1954* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997) and Roger Horowitz, *"Negro and White, Unite and Fight": A Social History of Industrial Unionism in Meatpacking, 1930–1990* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988) and more recent work by Rosemary Feurer, *Radical Unionism in the Midwest* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006) and Randi Storch, *Red Chicago: American Communism at its Grass Roots* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

18. For more on Randolph and the NNC, see Erik Gellman, "Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress, 1936–47" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2006). Thomas Sugrue describes the influence of the Communist Party on black civil rights activists including of course W. E. B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes, Mary McLeod Bethune, Ralph Bunche, Bayard Rustin, Richard Wright, Paul Robeson, and Dorothy Height, all of whom, he says, "found themselves in the Communist orbit in the 1930s"; see Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), p. 23. Recent scholarship is examining the radical elements of the civil rights movement; see Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008).

19. See Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic, 1984) for just one of many comprehensive volumes on the Commu-

nist Party and Storch, *Red Chicago* for less of an analysis of the party itself and more on its broader influence on working-class Chicagoans. Historians have produced volumes on Communists' involvement in the labor movement; three among many that have helped me to interpret Local 65's history are Feurer, *Radical Unionism in the Midwest*, Judy Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, *Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and the essays in Lynd, ed., "*We Are All Leaders*."

20. See James Wolfinger, "An Equal Opportunity to Make a Living and a Life: The FEPC and Postwar Black Politics," *Labor: Studies in the Working Class History of the Americas* 4 (Summer 2007): 65–94; Kenneth Burt, "The Fight for Fair Employment and the Shifting Alliances among Latinos and Labor in Cold War Los Angeles," pp. 79–109 in Shelton Stromquist, ed., *Labor's Cold War: Local Politics in a Global Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

21. I found no hard evidence that either Osman or Livingston belonged to the party, although Morris Doswell, one of the union's first black organizers, did. Harvey Klehr finds that Osman "was a close Party ally"; see Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, p. 235.

22. Hoerr, *We Can't Eat Prestige*, p. 60.

23. See Paul Mishler, *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Political Culture in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) and Judy Kaplan and Lynn Shapiro, *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998) for examples of how Communist organizers created tight-knit social networks around a left-oriented understanding of the world and a specific political agenda.

24. As a result of Elizabeth Faue, Dana Frank, and Lizabeth Cohen's now classic works, we take for granted the fact that workers draw on all aspects of their lives when they engage in work-related struggles; see Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers and their Struggle, 1919–1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), and Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

25. For an analysis of District 8 of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America's (UE) robust critique on the impact of the capitalist system on the American working class and the union's development of civic unionism as a response, see Feurer, *Radical Unionism in the Midwest*.

Chapter 1. Community-Based, "Catch-All" Organizing on New York's Lower East Side

1. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 10.

2. Amy Zimmer, Teddy Eckstein's great-great niece, wrote an article on the history of the family business; see "From Peddlers to Panini: The Anatomy of Orchard

Street," in Jerilou Hammett and Kingsley Hampett, eds., *The Suburbanization of New York: Is the World's Greatest City Becoming Just Another Town?* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), pp. 52–61; for descriptions of the conditions in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russia that drove so many Russian Jews to emigrate, see Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 18–23.

3. Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, pp. 159–161.

4. For descriptions of the climb up from pushcart peddler to clerk to shop owner to big business owner, see Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, ch. 5 ("Slum and Shop"); for more on Osman's motivations to organize a union, see Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," pp. 5–6; and Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 10.

5. Edward Robb Ellis, *The Epic of New York City, a Narrative History* (New York: Kodansha, 1997 [1966]), p. 551.

6. National statistics from Stephen Brier et al., *Who Built America: Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society*, vol. 2 (New York: Worth, 2000), p. 368; New York statistics from George J. Lankevich, *American Metropolis: A History of New York City* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 163.

7. Both Nancy Foner and Joshua Freeman provide statistics for 1910 and 1950 respectively for a variety of occupations held by New Yorkers. Freeman finds that, by 1948, there were 35,000 wholesale establishments in New York employing 315,000 workers. Freeman's statistics are not broken down into types of wholesale establishments, which included everything from beer, wine, and liquors to sporting goods, grocers, furniture, and lumber. I include statistics for only wholesale dry goods establishments, taken from the 1935 Census of Business, Wholesale Distribution. I also used the 1930 U.S. Census's breakdown of the population of New York City by occupation. It lists 12,941 "wholesale dealers, importers, and exporters" and 19,732 "retail dealers" in "dry goods, clothing, and boots, and shoes" working in New York in 1930; that Census does not list "proprietors" or other business-related statistics so it's difficult to tell how many wholesale establishments existed in 1930 as opposed to 1935, after the Depression had hit. Of the population statistics reported in the 1930 Census, it is impossible to determine how many of the 17,764 "laborers, porters, helpers in stores," 20,048 "shipping clerks," 25, 904 "messenger, errand, office boys or girls," 93,598 "stenographers/typists," 34,745 "clerks in stores," or the 1,331 "laborers in warehouses," worked specifically in wholesale, as opposed to in both wholesale and retail. The same is true for the 188,458 "salesmen and saleswomen" and the 13,321 "deliverymen" who could have worked in either retail or wholesale trades; the vast majority, it has to be assumed, worked in retail. The 1930 Census lists 3,203 people working in paper box factories (some of which would be organized by Local 65) and 716 people working in button factories. For a breakdown of the proportion of Jewish and Italian immigrants working in the garment industry between 1880 and 1910, see Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK*, pp. 79–89; Joshua Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (New York: The New Press, 2000), p. 19; U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, *1930 Census, Vol. 4. Occupations, by States. Reports by states, giving statistics for cities of*

25,000 or more (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1933), pp. 1088–1103; and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Business: 1935, Wholesale Distribution* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1937), vol. III, p. 46.

8. Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, pp. 8–9.

9. Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, pp. 9–11.

10. Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, pp. 9, 15–16.

11. Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK*, pp. 79–89; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 451–53, 581–86.

12. Seth M. Scheiner, *Negro Mecca: A History of the Negro in New York City, 1865–1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), pp. 48–51; Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK*, p. 89.

13. Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619–1973* (New York: International Publishers, 1974), pp. 131, 134–35.

14. Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker*, p. 188; Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 255; Tyler, *Look for the Union Label*, p. 181.

15. Beth S. Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression, Uncertain Promise* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 15–17.

16. Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression*, pp. 18–20.

17. Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression*, p. 19; Jackson, *Encyclopedia of New York City*, p. 1273.

18. Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890–1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 206–9.

19. James Parton, *Captains of Industry* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896 [1884]); Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 159.

20. Jerome Weidman, *I Can Get It For You Wholesale* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1937); Josh Lambert, *American Jewish Fiction* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2009), p. 48.

21. Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 48.

22. Fraser, *Labor Will Rule*, pp. 43, 83–90; Tyler, *Look for the Union Labor*, p. 286; Robert D. Parmet, *The Master of Seventh Avenue: David Dubinsky and the American Labor Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p. 169.

23. Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, pp. 108–10.

24. Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, p. ix.

25. Hill interview with Livingston, p. 10; Leon Fink interview with Leon Davis, June 13, 1979, *National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, Local 1199, Records, 1938–1972*, housed at the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, collection 5680oh, box 1, ff 19 "Leon Davis V" [hereafter Fink interview with Davis V], pp. 1–2

26. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 5.

27. Kyril Fitzlion and Tatiana Browning, *Before the Revolution: Russia and its People under the Czar* (New York: Overlook Press, 1978).

28. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 3.

29. This is the popular account of the union's origins, which appears in the collection's guide and in encyclopedia entries written about the union. See David Paskin, "District 65, UAW," in Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Don Georgakas, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 195–97.

30. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, pp. 10–11; Hill interview with Livingston, pp. 1–2.

31. For the origins of the TWU, see Freeman, *In Transit,* ch. 3, especially pp. 40–45.

32. Fink interview with Davis V, p. 1.

33. Dorothy Fennell has a lesson plan for one of Local 65's history courses that traces the union's origins to the TUUL; see "Union's Inspiration," p. 34, n. 19.

34. Al Ellis, "The Choice is Clear," *New Voices*, June 1936, pp. 5, 15.

35. Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg interview with Leon Davis, January 5, 1976, *National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, Local 1199, Records, 1938–1972*, housed at the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, collection 5680oh, box 1, ff 15 "Leon Davis," [hereafter Fink/Greenberg interview with Davis], p. 16.

36. Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," p. 9; Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, pp. 3–4.

37. Fraser, *Labor Will Rule*, pp. 87–89; Parmet, *Master of Seventh Avenue*, p. 97.

38. Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," p. 9.

39. Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," pp. 9–10.

40. Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," pp. 9–10.

41. I do not have a good sense of exactly who, among the union's original organizers, belonged to the Communist Party with the exception of Morris Doswell, who stated unequivocally that he did belong to the party. Dorothy Fennell alludes to the existence of party members among the original organizers gathered at Arthur Osman's house but does not name them; see Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," p. 11.

42. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 5.

43. Hill Interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 4.

44. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 6; Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," p. 10.

45. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 6.

46. See Hill interview with Livingston, p. 6.

47. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 17.

48. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 19.

49. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 19–21.

50. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 23.

51. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 29–30.

52. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, pp. 32–33.

53. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 4.

54. Milkman, *L.A. Story*.

55. Lynd, ed., *"We Are All Leaders,"* pp. 1–26.

56. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, pp. 1–2.

57. Report of 1936 AFL Proceedings, p. 728.

58. Report of 1936 AFL Proceedings, p. 730.

59. Report of 1936 AFL Proceedings, p. 730.

60. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 9.

61. Report of 1936 AFL Proceedings, p. 727.

62. Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, p. 219.

63. Earl Ofari Hutchinson, *Blacks and Reds: Race and Class in Conflict, 1919–1990* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995), pp. 55–56.

64. Hutchinson, *Blacks and Reds*, pp. 55–56.

65. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 7.

66. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 7; Hill interview with Livingston, p. 2; Fennell, "Union's Inspiration," p. 29.

67. Dennis Hevesi, "David Livingston, 80, Labor Advocate, Dies," *The New York Times*, March 19, 1995, p. 47; Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression*, pp. 23–34.

68. "CIO Textile Drive Wins First Victory," *The New York Times*, March 30, 1937, p. 11; Fraser, *Labor Will Rule*, pp. 154–55.

69. Hill interview with Livingston, p. 6.

70. Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* pp. 122–25.

71. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 12.

Chapter 2. Getting beyond Racial, Ethnic, Religious, and Skill-Based Divisions

1. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 8.

2. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 14.

3. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, pp. 3–4.

4. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, pp. 3–4.

5. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 68.

6. "Unity—The Path to Greater Security, President Arthur Osman's Annual Report to Joint Meeting of Executive Board and General Stewards on February 17," *New Voices*, February 15, 1941, p. 5.

7. "Organizational Quota for New Fiscal Year," *New Voices*, June 1938, p. 3.

8. "Unity—The Path to Greater Security," p. 5.

9. "Organizing Wholesale," *New Voices*, January 1939, pp. 1 and 5.

10. "Shop Stewards Launch U.W.W.E.'s 1939 Drive For 10,000 Members," *New Voices*, January 1939, p. 1. Local 65, despite its affiliation to Samuel Wolchok's URWEA, called itself the United Wholesale and Warehouse Employees of New York, Local 65, CIO.

11. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, p. 3.

12. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, pp. 15 and 18.

13. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 20.

14. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, p. 18.

15. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census of Business, Wholesale Distribution, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1935), pp. 25–26.

16. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 31.

17. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 15.

18. David Paskin interview with Morris Doswell, Collection NS#19, Tamiment Library and Robert Wagner Archives, New York University, New York, New York [hereafter Paskin interview with Doswell], February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 1, side A.

19. Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 1, side A.

20. David Paskin interview with David Livingston, Collection NS#19, Tamiment Library and Robert Wagner Archives, New York University, New York, New York [hereafter Paskin interview with Livingston], May 17, 1982, NS#19, #9, Tape 6, side A.

21. Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 1, side A.

22. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 15.

23. Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 139.

24. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 9.

25. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 17.

26. Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 17.

27. Alice Cook, *Union Democracy: Practice and Ideal* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 45.

28. David Paskin interview with Sam Neuberger, Collection NS#19, Tamiment Library and Robert Wagner Archives, New York University, New York, New York [hereafter Paskin interview with Neuberger], October 13, 1982, NS#19, #25a, Tape 1, side A.

29. David Paskin interview with Jack Paley, Collection NS#19, Tamiment Library and Robert Wagner Archives, New York University, New York, New York [hereafter Paskin interview with Paley], July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26a, Tape 1, side A.

30. David Paskin interview with Nicholas Carnes, Collection NS#19, Tamiment Library and Robert Wagner Archives, New York University, New York, New York [hereafter Paskin interview with Carnes], March 1, 1982, NS#19, #22b, Tape 2, side A.

31. Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg interview with Moe Foner, December 23, 1975, *National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, Local 1199, Records, 1938–1972,* housed at the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, collection 5860oh, box 1, ff26, “Moe Foner II,” [hereafter Fink/Greenberg interview with Foner II], p. 19.

32. Cook, *Union Democracy*, pp. 70–73.

33. David Paskin interview with Al Evanoff, Collection NS#19, Tamiment Library and Robert Wagner Archives, New York University, New York, New York [hereafter Paskin interview with Evanoff], NS#19, #24b, July 22, 1985, Tape 1, side A.

34. Cook, *Union Democracy*, pp. 71–73.

35. Paskin interview with Paley, July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26a, Tape 1, side B.

36. “10,000 By ’41,” *New Voices*, March 1, 1940, p. 6.

37. “Paper Warehousemen All Set To Press Forward For First Union Contracts in Ten Plants,” *New Voices*, September 1, 1940, p. 1.

38. Paskin interview with Paley, July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26b, Tape 2, side A.

39. Paskin interview with Livingston, May 17, 1982, NS#19, #9, Tape 6, side A.

40. “Brooklyn Drive Goes Over 500 Mark As Brite and Liberty Are Signed,” *New Voices,* October 15, 1940, p. 1.

41. “Meeting Endorses Third National Negro Congress,” *New Voices*, May 1, 1940, p. 6.

42. George Davis, “National Negro Congress Joins Hands With Labor,” *New Voices*, May 15, 1940, p. 2.

43. Davis, “National Negro Congress Joins Hands With Labor,” p. 2.

44. “Friends of 65 Movement Hums; Brooklynites Hold Dance March 22,” *New Voices*, March 1, 1941, p. 8.

45. Paskin interview with Livingston, May 17, 1982, NS#19, #9, Tape 6, side A.

46. Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 1, side B.

47. Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 1, side B.

48. Murray Levine, “Negro-White Unity,” *New Voices*, February 15, 1941, p. 3.

49. David Beiles, “Joint Action of Members Routs Anti-Negro Bias of Employers,” *New Voices* (March 1, 1941), p. 7.

50. Beiles, “Joint Action of Members,” p. 7.

51. Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, pp. 42–43.

52. For the history of completely different ways in which hiring halls were used by unions to either maintain or confront racial segregation, see Nelson, *Divided We Stand* and *Workers on the Waterfront*; and Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?*.

53. Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 1, side B.

54. Paskin interview with Paley, July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26b, Tape 2, side A.

55. Paskin interview with Livingston, May 17, 1982, NS#19, #9, Tape 6, side A.

56. Paskin interview with Paley, July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26b, Tape 2, side A.

57. Paskin interview with Carnes, March 1, 1982, NS#19, #22c, Tape 3, side A.

58. Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 2, side A.

59. The ILGWU organized drivers as part of its Teamsters division, which was not part of the separate AFL-affiliated Teamsters union.

60. Union buttons were green at the time. Local 65’s members were issued a different button each time they paid their dues. The union required members to wear the buttons so that they could be identified as in good standing. After the struggle with Local 102, Local 65 issued only green buttons to acknowledge the attacks members withstood; see Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, part 2, p. 5.

61. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, p. 6.

62. Irving Baldinger, “Steward Plan 7,000 in Seven Months Drive,” *New Voices*, March 15, 1941, pp. 1 and 3.

63. Baldinger, “Steward Plan 7,000 in Seven Months Drive,” pp. 1 and 3; Irving Baldinger, “7000 At Membership Meeting Hail New Organizing Program,” *New Voices*, April 1, 1941, p. 2; “Largest Union Program, Includes ’7 in 7’ Drive, $200,000 Defense Fund, and New Auxiliary,” *New Voices*, May 1, 1941, p. 1.

64. David Livingston, "'65 Tops 10,000 Membership," *New Voices*, June 1, 1941, pp. 1 and 5.

65. "Union Enters 1941 in Stride to Fulfill Security Goal," *New Voices*, January 1, 1941, pp. 2–3.

66. Arthur Osman, "Our Problems, Responsibility for Strikes Where It Really Belongs," *New Voices*, April 1, 1941, p. 4; "Schiffenhaus Shop Presses for Pact in N.J.," *New Voices*, April 1, 1941, p. 2; "NYMCO Workers Press for Opening of Negotiations," *New Voices*, March 15, 1941, p. 1.

67. "Strikes Called in Van Brode and Admiration," *New Voices*, June 1, 1940, p. 2.

68. "Negotiations for Pact Open at Archbilt Paper," *New Voices*, June 1, 1940, p. 1.

69. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, pp. 10–11.

70. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, pp. 12–13.

71. Osman occasionally bought, through his "associate," Teamsters cooperation in strikes Local 65 engaged in. It helped if teamsters in the area "agreed" not to pick up merchandise from a warehouse that was on strike, for example. With regard to the ILA, Osman recalled that he was "taken" by John Ryan when, after Local 65 tried to negotiate a $21 minimum, an ILA local came to the workers with a $30 minimum. Osman and the workers thought they had better sign the contract with the ILA. The ILA never enforced the contract. Osman argued that the ILA and ILGWU locals who competed with Local 65 were "soft enforcers"; they would sign a good contract and collect union dues, but never enforce the contracts' terms; see Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, pp. 13–14, 17.

72. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, p. 12.

73. *New Voices*, July 1, 1941, p. 3; July 1, 1941, p. 8; July 15, 1941, p. 8; July 15, 1941, p. 8; July 15, 1941, p. 3; August 1, 1941, p. 1; August 1, 1941, p. 3; August 1, 1941, p. 8; August 15, 1941, p. 3; September 1, 1941, p. 1; October 15, 1941, p. 1; November 1, 1941, p. 6; November 15, 1941, p. 1; December 1, 1941, p. 1; December 1, 1941, p. 7; December 15, 1941, p. 1; December 15, 1941, p. 2; January 1, 1942, p. 1.

74. "$1,512,370 Wage Increases Won in Past Year," *New Voices*, December 15, 1941, p. 1.

75. Percentages are very rough. Osman claimed 20 percent of the union's members were black in 1948; see Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 15. Osman wrote that one-third of the union's membership consisted of women by 1940; see Arthur Osman, "Our Problems, Women Must Share Leadership," *New Voices*, October 15, 1940), p. 4. By 1968, Osman claimed that 40 percent of the union's 35,000 members was black and Hispanic; see Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, p. 24.

Chapter 3. "Like a Scab over an Infected Sore"

1. Ethel Braun, "Raps 'Special Seniority' for Any Group," *Union Voice*, September 16, 1945, p. 23.

2. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 111.

3. Lichtenstein, *Labor's War At Home*, pp. 51–53 and 79–81; Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 146.

4. Paskin interview with Paley, July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26b, Tape 2, side A.

5. David Paskin interview with Milton Reverby, Collection NS#19, Tamiment Library and Robert Wagner Archives, New York University, New York, New York [hereafter Paskin interview with Reverby], January 26, 1981, NS #19, #11, Tape 1, side A.

6. Paskin interview with Reverby, January 26, 1981, NS#19, #11, Tape 1, side A.

7. "Harlem Group Carries On," *Union Voice* [changed its name from *New Voices* to *Union Voice* in 1945], February 21, 1945, p. 18.

8. Paskin interview with Livingston, May 17, 1982, NS#19, #9, Tape 6, side A.

9. See Hoerr, *We Can't Eat Prestige*.

10. Arthur Osman, "Our Problems, Women Must Share Leadership," *New Voices*, October 15, 1940, p. 4.

11. Osman, "Our Problems," p. 4

12. Osman, "Our Problems," p. 4; see photo entitled, "Class in Session," with caption: "Women's Place is in the Union, alongside their brothers in positions of leadership in Local 65, as these sisters show. Here's a scene of one of the regular sessions of the Union's class in Women Leadership which meets every Wednesday evening under the guidance of Esther Letz and Molly Genser." *New Voices*, March 1, 1941, p. 7; see also a letter to the editor by Florence Bushman of section E-4 who wrote that she was "receiving a swell education in the Women's Trade Union Class" and encouraged other women to attend. *New Voices*, March 15, 1941, p. 5.

13. Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 3–5.

14. Paskin interview with Reverby, January 26, 1981, NS#19, #11, Tape 1, side A.

15. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 213.

16. Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, pp. 3–6.

17. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 214.

18. Phil Manheim, "How War's End Will Affect 65's Jobs," *Union Voice*, August 19, 1945, p. 7.

19. Martha Biondi finds that Local 450 of the left-led UE representing workers at the Sperry Gyroscope Company voted to adjust their seniority plan to enable black workers to retain skilled jobs in December of that year; see Martha Biondi, "The Struggle for Black Equality in New York City, 1945–1955" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1997), pp. 55–56.

20. Amy White, "65's Negro Leaders Map Program on Job Problems," *Union Voice*, June 10, 1945, p. 22.

21. See David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. DuBois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), p. 528 and ch. 14 for more on the shift in DuBois's thinking.

22. Pearl Schrank, "Modify Seniority to Keep Negro Jobs," *Union Voice*, September 2, 1945, p. 3.

23. Braun, "Raps 'Special Seniority' for Any Group," p. 23.

24. Parts of FDR's 1944 State of the Union address are reprinted widely; for a recent treatment, see Cass R. Sunstein, *The Second Bill of Rights: FDR's Unfinished Revolution and Why We Need it More than Ever* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), pp. 12–13.

25. The quote is recounted in William Chafe's *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 78.

26. Phil Manheim, "How War's End Will Affect 65's Jobs," *Union Voice*, August 19, 1945, p. 7; "Status of the Needle Processing Division," no date [January–March 1945], *Records of District 65-UAW*, Tamiment Library and Robert Wagner Archives, New York University, New York, New York [hereafter *District 65 Papers*], box 10, folder 9, pp. 1–2; "Needle Processing Annual Report," February 13, 1946, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 1. Globe Sales won several government contracts before and during the war to manufacture cotton products (work suits, mattress covers, slings) for the army, which contracted to the lowest bidders who were then required to complete the orders in a specified number of days; for listings of Globe Sales' successful bids, see "Army Lists Orders on More Textiles," *The New York Times*, June 27, 1940, p. 42; "Army Buys Towels and Barracks Bags," *The New York Times*, July 26, 1940, p. 32; "Trade and Industrial Developments, Current Business Conditions and Trends, Offer Less Socks Than Army Seeks," *The New York Times*, August 20, 1940, p. 28; "Big Army Orders for Textiles Let," *The New York Times*, November 9, 1940, p. 27; "Army Purchases Textile Supplies," *The New York Times*, February 25, 1941, p. 40; "Army Orders $5,335,458, Many Awards to New York Concerns Listed by War Dept.," *The New York Times*, October 17, 1941, p. C40; "Army Places Orders of $36,441,941 in Day," *The New York Times*, August 15, 1941, p. 24; and, "500 Plants Named to Speed War Aid," *The New York Times*, April 20, 1942, p. 28.

27. For the most recent histories of Local/District 65's work organizing among department store workers, see Opler, *For All White Collar Workers*; Ziskind, "Labor Conflict in the Suburbs" and "Citizenship, Consumerism, and Gender."

28. Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party during the Second World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p. 210.

29. Fraser, *Labor Will Rule*, p. 529.

30. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 241.

31. Esther Letz, "Report on PAC," General Council Meeting, July 29, 1946, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 4, "District 65 General Council July–Aug, 1946," p. 2; Lillian White, "The Negro Unionist, Fighting Through With PAC," *Union Voice*, July 7, 1946, p. 11.

32. "Local 65 General Council Meeting, Monday July 29, 1946," *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 4, p. 12.

33. "Local 65 General Council Meeting, Monday July 29, 1946," *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 4, pp. 14–17.

34. "Local 65 General Council Meeting, Monday July 29, 1946," *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 4, p. 22.

35. Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, p. 55.

36. Biondi, "Struggle for Black Equality," pp. 41–45.

37. Louis Kesselman, *The Social Politics of FEPC: A Study in Reform Pressure Movements* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), p. x.

38. Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, pp. 59–60.

39. Quoted in Kesselman, *Social Politics of FEPC*, p. 156.

40. For more on Marcantonio, see Gerald Meyer, *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician, 1902–1954* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

41. Biondi, "Struggle for Black Equality," pp. 45–52.

42. See "Report on Municipal Election of 1945, Rendered to the Executive Council on Sept. 15, 1945 and the General Council on Sept. 24, 1945," *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 1, p. 2.

43. See "Report on Municipal Election of 1945, Rendered to the Executive Council on Sept. 15, 1945 and the General Council on Sept. 24, 1945," *District 65 Papers,* box 2, folder 1, p. 3.

44. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 245.

45. As cited in Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 245.

46. "Proceedings at the General Council Meeting of Local 65," September 30, 1946, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 5, pp. 15, 17, 20–23.

47. "Status of the Needle Processing Division," no date [January–March 1945], *District 65 Papers*, Box 10, Folder 9, pp. 1–2. Local 65 complained after the war that the NWLB had set the wages in warehouses at a low $26 per week, indicating that Local 65 was not entirely happy with the NWLB's performance; see Molly Genser, "Report on Collective Bargaining," May 25–26, 1946, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 3, p. 1.

48. When Patsy Rotavero, the division director, left in 1945, the division decided to talk to Jack Paley about electing Henry Hamilton, who served as division secretary, to take Rotavero's place as director beginning January 1946; see "Minutes of Needle Processing Executive Board," December 4, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 2.

49. "Grievance Machinery," no date [January–March 1945], *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 4. At one point Henry Hamilton recommended to shops that were having trouble negotiating contracts to send workers to "our hiring hall to try and get better jobs"; see "Minutes of the Needle Processing Division," January 17, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p, 1.

50. Local 65 educated its new stewards and members about the importance of using the hiring hall to maintain union wages. It argued that the use of the hiring hall was the best defense against employers' persistent reliance on low wages and homework; see "Hiring Hall Report," no date [February 1946], *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, pp. 1–2. Needle processing set up a committee made up of six rank-and-filers to study piece work rates; see "Minutes of the Needle Processing Division Executive Board," May 15, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 1.

51. "Needle Processing, Minutes of Executive Board Meeting," March 13, 1946, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 2.

52. For more on the role of the steward, see "Minutes of the Needle Processing Division," January 17, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 1. Rotavero discussed the "large number of stewards who do not function properly" with the needle processing division's Executive Board; see "Minutes of the Needle Processing Executive Board Meeting," August 22, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 1. Stewards had not been checking for dispatch slips from the union's hiring hall when new workers came

into the shop, thereby enabling their employers to hire non-union workers; see "Minutes of the Needle Processing Executive Board Meeting," September 20, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 1. For more on controversy regarding paying union dues, see "Minutes of the Needle Processing Division, April 19, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 1.

53. Fraser, *Labor Will Rule*, pp. 345–46; "Woolworth Girls Strike in 2 Stores," *The New York Times*, March 18, 1937, p. 1; "Girls Scream, Weep, as they are Ousted from Woolworth Branch," *The New York Times*, March, 19, 1937, p. 1; "Mayor Acts to End Sit-Downs," *The New York Times*, March 20, 1937, p. 5; "Woolworth Strikers Win Tentative Pact," *The New York Times*, March 30, 1937, p. 17.

54. Fraser, *Labor Will Rule*, pp. 345–46.

55. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 172.

56. See Andrew Kersten, *Labor's Home Front: The American Federation of Labor during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), for detailed histories of NWLB-mediated disputes between labor and business during the war.

57. Martin Glaberman, *Wartime Strikes: The Struggle Against the No-Strike Pledge in the UAW during World War II* (Detroit: Berwick Editions, 1980), pp. 6–7.

58. Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), pp. 196–206.

59. "CIO Strike Hits Montgomery Ward," *The New York Times,* April 13, 1944, p. 13; "Ward Won't Obey on Union Contract, Seizure Expected," *The New York Times,* April 26, 1944, p. 1; "Executive Order and Other Documents in the Seizure of Montgomery Ward," *The New York Times,* April 27, 1944, p. 14.

60. "Avery Again Bars Obedience to NWLB," *The New York Times,* December 19, 1944, p. 16; "President Orders Army to Take Over Ward's in Chicago," *The New York Times,* December 28, 1944. p. 1; "Army Seizes Ward Stores; Avery Still Defies NWLB," *The New York Times,* December 29, 1944. p. 1; "Ward is Accused as 'Failing' in War," *The New York Times,* December 29, 1944, p. 9. George G. Kirstein, *Stores and Unions: A Study of the Growth of Unionism in Dry Goods and Department Stores* (New York: Fairfield Publications, 1950), p. 86.

61. "Union Hits Ward Strike," *The New York Times*, December 19, 1944, p. 16; Kirstein, *Stores and Unions*, p. 86.

62. Kirstein, *Stores and Unions*, p. 86.

63. For more on the Communist Party's positions on these issues, see Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?* pp. 120–21, 132, 137–38, 161, 163–65, 167; for more on the organization of the Negro Labor Victory Committee, see correspondence between Al Berknopf [staff organizer for Local 65] to Ewart Guinier, May 16, 1942; Guinier to Financial Secretary, Local 65, July 27, 1942; Dorothy K. Funn to Morris Doswell, October 20, 1942; all correspondence found in *Papers of the National Negro Congress*, Part IV, box 85, folder "Wholesale and Warehouse Employees Local 65, 1942–43," found on microfilm reel 9, frames 1068, 1072, and 1073.

64. "Minutes of the Needle Processing Division Executive Board Meeting," January 17, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 2.

65. Kirstein, *Stores and Unions*, pp. 85–90.

66. See note 1.

67. "Report on Union Solidarity, Delivered at Needle Processing Executive Board Meeting Feb. 13 and Miscellaneous Membership Meeting February 19th, 1946," *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 1.

68. "Needle Processing Annual Report," February 13, 1946, *District 65 Papers*, box 10, folder 9, p. 1.

69. "Needle Processing Division Reviews Gains," *Union Voice*, May 26, 1946, p. 21.

70. "Says Henry Hamilton is Credit to Negro People, " *Union Voice*, May 26, 1946, p. 23.

71. "Minutes of the General Council Meeting," June 18, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 1, folder 18, p. 15; Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 1, side B; "Revlon Wins Closed Shop and 22% Pay Lift," *Union Voice*, April, 14, 1946, p. 21.

Chapter 4. Attacked from the Right and the Left

1. House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee report no. 16, 80th Congress, 2nd session, "Investigation of Communist Infiltration into Labor Unions which Serve the Industries of the United States, Interim Report, The Distributive Trades of New York City," December 17, 1948, pp. 38–39.

2. Paskin interview with Robinson, June 4, 1982, NS#19, #12, Tape 1, side B.

3. Paskin interview with Robinson, June 4, 1982, NS#19, #12, Tape 1, side A.

4. Paskin interview with Robinson, June 4, 1982, NS#19, #12, Tape 1, side B.

5. Paskin interview with Robinson, June 4, 1982, NS#19, #12, Tape 1, side B.

6. Paskin interview with Robinson, June 4, 1982, NS#19, #12, Tape 1, side B.

7. Paskin interview with Robinson, June 4, 1982, NS#19, #12, Tape 1, side B.

8. Paskin interview with Robinson, June 4, 1982, NS#19, #12, Tape 1, side B.

9. Doswell suggested organizing Revlon at a June 18, 1945, General Council meeting; see "Report on Organization, Minutes of the General Council Meeting," June 18, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 1, folder 18, "General Council (Minutes and Proceedings), Apr–Jul 1945," p. 15.

10. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 245; "Report on PAC, November Elections," no date [August–September 1946], *District 65 Minutes*, box 10, folder 9, p. 1.

11. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 246.

12. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, pp. 245–47.

13. Paskin interview with Neuberger, October 13, 1982, NS#19, #25a, Tape 1, side B; Paskin interview with Evanoff, July 22, 1985, NS #19, #24b, Tape 2, side A; Paskin interview with Robinson, June 4, 1982, NS #19, #12, Tape 1, side B; Bob Burke, "Report to the General Council Meeting," November 29, 1948, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 15, p. 2. Dadourian and Local 65 had entered into a series of negotiations in March 1947, at the contract's six-month mark and during the union's wage-reopening phase, which indicated that Dadourian was not happy negotiating with Local 65 and was willing to

do whatever it took not to cooperate with the union. Normally during wage-reopening negotiations and even contract renewals, Local 65 and the employer were able to negotiate terms without bringing in an outside arbitrator or resorting to a strike. Dadourian and Local 65 could not settle in March on a wage increase and they sent their case to an arbitrator. The arbitrator accepted Aslanyan's evidence that the "union's rates were excessive." Local 65 wanted to establish minimums like those it negotiated in the wholesale and warehouse industries; Dadourian claimed that was not a fair comparison and offered evidence in the burlap industry, which was contracted with the TWU of minimums of 60 cents per hour, rather than the $1.00 minimum sought by Local 65, and less than the 65 cents Dadourian currently paid; see "Memorandum, Dadourian Export Corporation, Local 65-CIO, March, 1947," *District 65 Shop Files*, box 84, folder 15, pp. 1–10 and appendices. The enactment of Taft-Hartley gave Dadourian more resources with which to fight Local 65, including arbitration, injunctions, and decertification proceedings. Cleveland Robinson claimed Local 65 lost Dadourian because the company simply was willing to spend whatever money it took to beat the union. Few unions, he said, can beat an employer who was willing to use endless amounts of money; see Paskin interview with Robinson, June 4, 1982, NS #19, #12, Tape 1, side B.

14. Fraser, *Labor Will Rule*, pp. 399–401.

15. Esther Letz, "Report on International, Minutes of the General Council Meeting," July 30, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 1, p. 2.

16. Jack Paley, "Report on Our International Since Last Meeting," Minutes of the General Council Meeting, July 30, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 1, pp. 1–2.

17. Jack Paley, "Report on Our International Since Last Meeting," Minutes of the General Council Meeting, July 30, 1945, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 1, pp. 1–2; "Minutes of General Council Meeting," March 25, 1946, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 2, p. 33.

18. Esther Letz, "Report on URWDSEA convention in Akron, Ohio," General Council, June 24, 1946, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 3, p. 3.

19. "Minutes of General Council Meeting," March 25, 1946, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 2, p. 37.

20. "Minutes of General Council Meeting," March 25, 1946, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 2, p. 39.

21. See Bob Burke's comments in "Verbatim Minutes of General Council, 7/30/45," *District 65 Papers*, box 1, folder 18, pp. 15–17.

22. See Jack Paley's comments in "Verbatim Minutes of General Council, 7/30/45," *District 65 Papers*, box 1, folder 18, p. 22.

23. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, pp. 264–68.

24. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, p. 260.

25. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, pp. 259–60; Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?* p. 220.

26. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, pp. 271–72.

27. Nelson Lichtenstein, "Introduction," in C. Wright Mills, *The New Men of Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp. xvi–xvii.

28. By the time of the 1948 hearings, Wolchok informed the Kersten Committee that the International URWDSEA was made up primarily of law-abiding members, that "they are not Communist" except for the locals associated with the three "Communist" members of the International's Executive Board: Arthur Osman (Local 65), Nicholas Carnes (Local 1250), and Samuel Kovenetsky (Local 1-S). The three had not signed the non-Communist affidavits; see Subcommittee report no. 16, p. 17.

29. David Livingston, "Officer's Report, Third Biennial Convention, Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Union, Local 65, CIO," May 29–31, 1948, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 3, p. 3.

30. Paskin interview with Paley, July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26a, Tape 1, side B.

31. David Livingston, "Officer's Report, Third Biennial Convention, Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Union, Local 65, CIO," May 29–31, 1948, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 3, p. 4.

32. A. H. Raskin, "House Group to Cite 9 Unionists in Contempt in Store Inquiry," *The New York Times*, July 10, 1948, p. 1.

33. Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998), p. xiii.

34. Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945–1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 32.

35. The House Committee on Education and Labor published the full transcripts of the thirteen days of hearings in an 804-page volume entitled *Investigation of Communism in New York City Distributive Trades: Hearings Before a Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, Second Session* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1948) [hereafter House of Representatives, *Investigation of Communism*]; the House Committee on Education and Labor published an abbreviated forty-two-page version (Subcommittee report no. 16) of the larger transcripts in December 1948. The committee attempted to highlight what it felt was most important in the abbreviated version adding more weight to those bits of testimony included in both the longer and abbreviated versions. I refer to the committee as the "Kersten Committee" in the text.

36. Subcommittee report no. 16, p. 1.

37. Subcommittee report no. 16, pp. 2, 6–7.

38. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*, pp. 1–2, 5–6, 32.

39. Subcommittee report no. 16, p. 22; House of Representatives, *Investigation of Communism,* p. 87.

40. American Business Consultants, Inc., an "independent research organization," employed twelve people, including John G. Keenan, its president and a lawyer; Kenneth Bierly, its vice president and a former FBI agent; Jeremiah Buckley, a former FBI agent who was in charge of research; and, Harry Morgan, former vice president of the American Communications Association-CIO, who was also involved in research. Keenan told the Kersten Committee that American Business Consultants, Inc. was devoted to "acquiring as much information as we possibly can on all types of Com-

munist activities, and second, exposing that information to the best of our ability"; House of Representatives, *Investigation of Communism,* pp. 367, 369.

41. Subcommittee report no. 16, p. 9. In the House Committee's abbreviated version, the words "hidden there" are added. Kirkpatrick's original testimony reads, "They remained in the American Federation of Labor until the CIO was first organized"; House of Representatives, *Investigation of Communism,* p. 371.

42. Subcommittee report no. 16, pp. 19, 21; House of Representatives, *Investigation of Communism,* pp. 87, 95.

43. Subcommittee report no. 16, p. 9; House of Representatives, *Investigation of Communism,* p. 372.

44. Subcommittee report no. 16, pp. 9–11, 19, 25, 26; House of Representatives, *Investigation of Communism,* p. 377–78.

45. Subcommittee report no. 16, pp. 23–24, 26, 30.

46. Subcommittee report no. 16, pp. 7–9.

47. Subcommittee report no. 16, pp. 11, 38–42.

48. "Resolution Delivered General Council," September 14, 1948, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 14.

49. Paskin interview with Carnes, March 1, 1982, NS#19, #22b, Tape 2, side B.

50. Minutes, General Council Meeting, September 20, 1948, box 2, folder 14, pp, 17, 55.

51. Minutes, General Council Meeting, September 20, 1948, box 2, folder 14, pp. 8, 15.

52. Minutes, General Council Meeting, September 20, 1948, box 2, folder 14, pp. 10–11, 13.

53. Bob Burke, "Report to the General Council Meeting," November 29, 1948, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 15, p. 2.

54. Arthur Osman's comments at "Minutes of Special Stewards Meeting," July 6, 1948, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 13, p. 4.

55. Arthur Osman's comments at "Minutes of Special Stewards Meeting," July 6, 1948, *District 65 Papers*, box 2, folder 13, p. 4.

56. Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin use Max Kempelman's 1946 characterization of CIO unions as falling in the "Communist camp," the "anti-Communist camp," and the "uncertain and shifting" camp; see Steppan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*, pp. 12–18.

57. Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*, pp. 14–15.

Chapter 5. A Third Labor Federation?

1. Nicholas Carnes, "Convention Report to First General Council Meeting of District 65," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 3, p. 2.

2. "Proceedings of the Founding Convention of the DWU, Distributive Workers Union," *1199 Papers*, collection 5206d, box 56, folder "DWU 1950," pp. 15–16; Murray Kempton, "Osman the Obscure," *New York Post,* June 2, 1950, p. 46, clipping found in

1199 Papers, collection 5206d, box 56, folder "DWU 1950." For the Communist Party's stance on the creation of a left-wing third labor federation, see Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*, pp. 297–327, in which they argue that the Communist Party encouraged left-wing trade unionists *not* to split with the CIO.

3. The historiography tends to mention the DPO in a concluding paragraph to a larger study of the various left-led or Communist-dominated unions that merged to form the DPO in 1951. For example, both Karl Korstad and Michael Honey end their respective studies of locals within the FTA in the early 1950s just as the DPO was formed; see Karl Korstad, "Black and White Together: Organizing in the South with the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (FTA-CIO), 1946–52," in Steve Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), pp. 69–94, and Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights*.

4. Zieger, *CIO, 1935–55*, pp. 287–88. For more on the negative assessments liberals within the CIO held for the disruptive and traitorous actions of the pro-Soviet unions, see Zieger, *CIO 1935–55*, pp. 291–92. See also Joshua Freeman's account of Michael's Quill's decision to break his fifteen-year association with the Communist Party; Freeman, *In Transit*, pp. 237, 292–93, 296–302.

5. Steve Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 2.

6. To the new District 65, department store locals added 11,000 members, UOPWA added 11,000, and FTA added 500. Paley reported that "there was some difficulty in getting Local 1199 to immediately become a part of Local 65, but even without them we will have about 40,000 members"; see Jack Paley, "Report on Merger," delivered to the General Council, August 28, 1950, *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 3, p. 1. For some evidence of Local 1199's apprehension, see "'1199' to Remain Autonomous," *1199 Drug News* (September 1950), *1199 Papers*, collection 5206d, box 142, folder "1199 News Sept. '50," p. 4.

7. Jack Paley, "Report on Merger," delivered to the General Council, August 28, 1950, *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 3, pp. 3–4. For information on the UOPWA locals in New York and the difficulties they faced after the CIO expulsion, see Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, pp. 48–50, 83–84.

8. Arthur Osman, "One Union, Bigger, Better," Report to the Founding Convention, Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers of America, October 6–7, 1950, *1199 Papers*, collection 5206d, box 56, folder "DWU 1950," pp. 8–12.

9. Osman, "One Union, Bigger, Better," pp. 16, 18.

10. Steve Rosswurm argues that "no other CIO union could begin to match the FTA's accomplishments in organizing some of the most downtrodden and dispossessed in the U.S. working class" in these areas; see "Introduction: An Overview and Preliminary Assessment of the CIO's Expelled Unions," in Rosswurm, ed., *CIO's Left-Led Unions*, p. 4.

11. Research on the Cold War is voluminous. I include here only a few of those authors who speak directly about the Cold War and labor: Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*; Ronald Filippelli and Mark McColloch, *Cold War in the Working Class: The Rise and Decline of the United Electrical Workers* (Albany: State University of New York

Press, 1995); Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights*; Barbara Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

12. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights,* p. 214.

13. At best, the DPO seems to have experienced uneven success. Karl Korstad details the fate of Local 22 of the FTA in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, a local that the DPO decided to disband due to lack of progress, in "Black and White Together," pp. 69–94 in Steve Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992); see Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights* for details of FTA Local 19 in Memphis, which remained active as a DPO local.

14. Little has been written about the pathbreaking attempts of District 65 (and later the RWDSU) to set up union-administered health insurance, death benefits, and pension plans for workers whose companies failed to provide similar packages. According to Maurice B. Better, by the late 1960s, the RWDSU operated a health and pension plan "which included the entire southeast region of the United States . . . a pioneering effort for that union"; see Better, "Recent Unionism Among the Unskilled in the South: The Retail and Wholesale Trades and Service and Public Service Workers," in Merl E. Reed, Leslie S. Hough, and Gary M. Fink, eds., *Southern Workers and Their Unions, 1880–1975: Selected Papers, the Second Southern Labor History Conference, 1978* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1981), p. 191. I have not conducted enough research on District 65's and later the RWDSU's implementation of their health and security plans to bear Better's conclusions out.

15. Catherine Parker, "Union Merger was a Family Affair," *Union Voice*, January 14, 1951, p. M7.

16. Parker, "Union Merger was a Family Affair," p. M7.

17. Lock J. Parker, "Planters Peanut Shop Plans for New Contract Rest Period Bias Hit," *Union Voice*, January 14, 1951, p. 13.

18. Lock J. Parker, "How Planters Workers Feel About Nickel Offer," *Union Voice*, January 28, 1951, p. 2.

19. Lock J. Parker, "Osman, Henderson, Visit Southern DPO Locals," *Union Voice*, January 28, 1951, p. 3.

20. Lock J. Parker, "2nd Suffolk Peanut Plant Organizing," *Union Voice*, January 28, 1951, p. 15.

21. Lock J. Parker, "Report Majority at Suffolk Peanut," *Union Voice*, April 8, 1951, p. 13.

22. "Suffolk Peanut Election On; DPO Victory Seen," *Union Voice*, December 16, 1951, p. 3.

23. "Suffolk Peanuts Votes DPO, 159–4" and "Local 26 Won Election Conducted by NLRB," *Union Voice*, December 30, 1951, pp. 1 and 3.

24. "Wage Petition," *Union Voice*, April 8, 1951, p. 13.

25. Lock J. Parker, "Win Holiday Pay at Hiden," *Union Voice*, October 7, 1951, p. 3.

26. "Local 26 Members Win 15c Raise at Hiden Storage," *Union Voice*, November 4, 1951, p. 2.

27. Lock J. Parker, "Pact Talks at Planters," *Union Voice*, April 22, 1951, p. 3.

28. "Vote Full Support to DPO Members at Planters Peanut" and "Full Support Pledged in Fight Looming at Planters Peanut Co.," *Union Voice*, April 22, 1951, pp. 1 and 3.

29. Minutes, Distributive, Processing and Office Workers of America, National Executive Board Meeting, April 12–14, 1951, 13 Astor Place, New York City, *1199 Papers*, collection 5206d, box 56, folder "Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers of America," [hereafter DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1951], p. 7.

30. "Planters Peanut Pact Settled on 8.6c Package Covering 1200" and "Planters Peanut Settled; 1,200 Get 8.6c Package," *Union Voice*, May 6, 1951, pp. 1 and 2.

31. "Vacation Gains Okayed at Va. Peanut Plant," *Union Voice*, October 7, 1951, p. 3.

32. "Strike Threat Ends Planters Wage Stall," *Union Voice*, December 30, 1951, p. 2.

33. "Negotiations Open for DPO Contract in Suffolk Peanut," *Union Voice*, January 13, 1952, p. 2.

34. "Contract Near Completion at Suffolk Peanut," *Union Voice*, March 9, 1952, p. 14; "Suffolk Peanut Contract Near," *Union Voice*, March 23, 1952, p. 2.

35. "Suffolk to Open New Union Home in June," *Union Voice*, May 20, 1951, p. 2.

36. "DPO Suffolk Local Opens its New Home" and "DPO Suffolk Home 'Dream Come True,'" *Union Voice*, July 15, 1951, pp. 1 and 2.

37. Irving Baldinger, "Happy Birthday in Suffolk," *Union Voice*, January 15, 1952, p. 2.

38. Catherine Parker, "DPO, at Home in Suffolk," *Union Voice*, February 10, 1952, p. M1.

39. Baldinger, "Happy Birthday in Suffolk," p. 2.

40. Lock J. Parker, "Talks Open at Planters Peanut," *Union Voice*, March 23, 1952, p. 2.

41. "Interest Seen High as Talks Open at Planters," *Union Voice*, April 6, 1952, p. 15.

42. "Planters Peanut Contract Talks Deadlocked," *Union Voice*, May 4, 1952, pp. 1 and 2.

43. "Planters Peanut Contract Talks Deadlocked," pp. 1 and 2.

44. "Planters Peanut Still Deadlocked on New Terms," *Union Voice*, May 18, 1952, p. 2.

45. Kenneth Sherbell, "Security Plan Won at Planters Peanut," *Union Voice*, June 1, 1952, p. 2.

46. "Planters Workers Vote to Start Suffolk Security Plan Tomorrow" and "Security Plan Payments Now Voted at Planters," *Union Voice*, June 29, 1952, pp. 1 and 2.

47. This technique of presenting the union with a "take it or leave it" offer is commonly referred to as "Boulewarism," a term coined after the name of Lemuel Boulware, president of General Electric. For more information on Boulewarism, see Lisa Kannenberg, "The Product of GE's Progress: Labor, Management, and Community Relations in Schenectady, New York, 1930–1965" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1999) and Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009).

48. Sherbell, "Security Plan Won at Planters Peanut," p. 2.

49. Sherbell, "Security Plan Won at Planters Peanut," p. 2.

50. Sherbell, "Security Plan Won at Planters Peanut," p. 4.

51. Sherbell, "Security Plan Won at Planters Peanut," p. 4.

52. Sherbell, "Security Plan Won at Planters Peanut," p. 4.

53. President Leroy Harris, Secretary-Treasurer Flossie Jones, Vice President I. J. Baker, business agent Robbie Mae Riddick, and the trustees and stewards of Local 26 led the negotiations committee. Kenneth Sherbell of District 65 also participated. Local 26 gave quite a bit of credit for the success of the negotiations to Arthur Osman, president of the DPO and founder of District 65. Osman participated in all of the negotiations and traveled to Suffolk to personally conduct the final negotiations that led to the agreement; see Sherbell, "Security Plan Won at Planters Peanut," p. 4.

54. Parker, "DPO, at Home in Suffolk," p. M1.

55. Leroy Harris, "A Southern Worker Discusses DPO Policy in the South," *Union Voice*, August 12, 1951, p. M6.

56. Irving Baldinger, "DPO Policy is Put to Work," *Union Voice,* June 17, 1951, p. 3.

57. Baldinger, "DPO Policy is Put to Work," p. M1.

58. See Griffith, *Crisis of American Labor*, p. 38 and chs. 1 through 3 in general for the CIO's attempts to implement a northern model in the South; see also Solomon Barkin and Michael Honey, "'Operation Dixie': Two Points of View," *Labor History* 31 (Summer 1990): 373–85.

59. Joan Nicklin, "Questions Union Policy in the South," *Union Voice*, July 15, 1951, p. M6; Harris, "Southern Worker Discusses DPO Policy in the South," pp. 3 and M6.

60. This sentiment appears again and again in the District 65 papers; for a specific example, see Cleveland Robinson, "Report on Negro History, 2/7/51," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 4, p. 8.

61. Catherine Parker, "District 65ers Salute Negro and White Unity," *Union Voice*, March 11, 1951, p. 9.

62. Harris, "Southern Worker Discusses DPO Policy in the South," p. M6.

63. Paskin interview with Evanoff, July 22, 1985, NS#19, #24c, Tape 3, side A.

64. Karl Korstad, "Black and White Together," pp. 83, 92.

65. See Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*, p. 9 for the quote and the book for the history of Local 22; Karl Korstad, "Black and White Together," pp. 69–94.

66. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1951, pp. 15.

67. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1951, p. 15.

68. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1951, p. 15.

69. "Celebrating Women's History Month with Vicki Garvin," March, 1998, *Vicki Garvin Papers*, New York Public Library, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture [hereafter *Vicki Garvin Papers*], box 1, folder "Personal Papers," pp. 4–6.

70. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1951, p. 16.

71. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1951, pp. 16–17.

72. "Dear Samoi," handwritten letter from Vicki Garvin, September 16, 1995, *Vickie Garvin Papers*, box 2, folder "Letters from Gavin 1987–1995," p. 3.

73. Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 1, side B.

74. Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*, p. 396.

75. Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*, p. 211.

76. Minutes, General Executive Board Meeting, Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers of America, April 15–17, 1952, 13 Astor Place, New York City, *1199 Papers*, collection 5206d, box 56, folder "Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers of America," [hereafter DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1952], pp. 7–9.

77. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1952, p. 9.

78. *Daily Worker* article clipping, no title, November 20, 1951, RWDSU Local 15-A Records, box 668, folder 668/75; Abner Berry, "On the Way, They're Trying to Bury the Pride of Local 65," *Daily Worker,* May 18, 1952, RWDSU Local 15-A Records, box 668, folder 668/75.

79. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1951, p. 20.

80. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1951, p. 1.

81. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1951, p. 10. In the series of interviews David Paskin conducted in the early 1980s, District 65's top leaders concurred that the UOPWA locals were ineffective. Evanoff recalled that they "passed fine resolutions but had no membership"; Paskin interview with Evanoff, July 22, 1985, NS#19, #24c, Tape 3, side A. Livingston said the UOPWA had only a paper membership; see Paskin interview with Livingston, May 17, 1982, NS#19, #9, Tape 6, side A.

82. Paskin interview with Neuberger, October 3, 1982, NS#19, #25a, Tape 1, side B.

83. Local 26 member James Davis called a meeting of workers to be held not at Local 26 headquarters but at the National Maritime Union hall. Once there Davis and Max Sussman of the CIO tried to persuade workers at the Hiden Storage Company in Newport News to join the CIO. Local 26 members called the union headquarters in Suffolk "right away" and held another emergency meeting there where they voted unanimously to remove Davis from a position of leadership within Local 26 but allowed him to remain as a rank-and-filer; see Lock J. Parker, "Local 26 Slaps Down CIO Raid," *Union Voice*, June 17, 1951, p. 4.

84. "Suffolk Stewards Okay DPO Talks on CIO Tie," *Union Voice*, February 24, 1952, p. 2.

85. Lock J. Parker, "Drive for 100% at Va. Peanut Plant," *Union Voice*, February 25, 1951, p. 14.

86. "NAACP Welcomes DPO Action," *Union Voice*, January 27, 1952, p. M6.

87. Local 26 had expanded and created a separate Local 27 in Newport News; see Cleveland Robinson to Herbert Hill, March 17, 1955, *Papers of the NAACP* housed at the New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York, part 13, series A, reel 13, frame 0683.

88. Fink and Greenberg interview with Leon Davis, *1199 Papers*, collection 5680oh, box 1, folder 17 Leon Davis III, p. 8.

89. Lichtenstein, *Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, pp. 322–26.

Chapter 6. Community Organizing under the AFL-CIO Umbrella

1. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, p. 1.

2. Paskin interview with Neuberger, October 13, 1982, NS#19, #25a, Tape 1, side B. Neuberger had a difficult time talking about this period in the union's history. Even though he felt betrayed by the union, years later, he still felt uncomfortable saying anything that might "hurt the union"; see Paskin interview with Neuberger, October 13, 1982, NS#19, #25b, Tape 2, side A.

3. George Morris, "World of Labor, DPOW's New 'Friends' Show Their Cards," *Daily Worker* (New York), March 14, 1952, found in *RWDSU Local 15-A Records, 1938–73*, Special Collections Department, Pullen Library, Georgia State University [hereafter *RWDSU Local 15-A Records*], box 668, folder 668/75.

4. *Daily Worker* article clipping, November 20, 1951, found in *RWDSU Local 15-A Records*, box 668, folder 668/75.

5. Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 2, side A.

6. George Charney, *A Long Journey* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), p. 170.

7. George Morris, "World of Labor, The Meaning of Osman's 'Live and Let Live' Line," *Daily Worker*, January 25, 1952, *RWDSU Local 15-A Records*, box 668, folder 668/75; James R. Barrett, *William Z. Foster and the Tragedy of American Radicalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), pp. 243–45.

8. Barrett, *William Z. Foster*, pp. 244–45; Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*, pp. 6–7, 30, 57.

9. George Charney, *Long Journey*, p. 170.

10. George Charney, *Long Journey*, p. 170.

11. Paskin interview with Neuberger, October 13, 1982, NS#19, #25b, Tape 2, side A.

12. Lefkowith headed DPO Local 1282 representing workers at the Boston Mutual Life Insurance Company. Lefkowith had apparently survived the October 1951 reorganization of the UOPWA organizers, possibly because of the strength of the Boston local; see DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1952], pp. 10–11.

13. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1952, pp. 10–11.

14. DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1952, pp. 10–11.

15. Paskin interview with Livingston, May 17, 1982, NS#19, #9, Tape 6, side A; Paskin interview with Paley, NS#19, #26a, Tape 1, side B; Hill interview with Osman, July 12, 1968, p. 24.

16. Paskin interview with Carnes, March 1, 1982, NS#19, #22c, Tape 3, side A.

17. George Morris, "World of Labor, Distorting the Discussions Won't Do Dist. 65 Any Good," *Daily Worker*, February 23, 1952, *RWDSU Local 15-A Records*, box 668, folder 668/75.

18. Paskin interview with Carnes, March 1, 1982, NS#19, #22c, Tape 3, side A; DPO National Executive Board Minutes, April 1952, p. 10.

19. Paskin interview with Carnes, March 1, 1982, NS#19, #22c, Tape 3, side A; Paskin interview with Livingston, May 17, 1982, NS#19, #9, Tape 6, side A.

20. Paskin interview with Carnes, March 1, 1982, NS#19, #22c, Tape 3, side A; Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 2, side A; Paskin interview with Evanoff, July 22, 1985, NS#19, #24c, Tape 3, side A.

21. Paskin interview with Carnes, March 1, 1982, NS#19, #22b, Tape 2, side A.

22. Paskin interview with Carnes, March 1, 1982, NS#19, #22b, Tape 3, side A.

23. In New York City, Greenfield controlled Oppenheim-Collins, Franklin Simon, Bonwit-Teller, John David, and Loft's and had just purchased controlling interest in Botany Mills, where District 65 had organized textile workers. Greenfield was also powerful in Philadelphia, where he controlling interests in hotels and in the Philadelphia Transit Company,; see Bill Michelson, *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 3.

24. Bill Michelson, "Organization Report, General Council Meeting, June 10, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 1.

25. Between 1959 and 1965, 95 percent of all new retail jobs would open in suburban stores, leaving blacks and Puerto Ricans out of the expanding retail job market. The move out to the suburbs had begun in the 1920s and by the 1940s, the process of "decentralizing retail dollars away from downtown," was underway; see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption* (New York: Knopf, 2003), pp. 258 and 288.

26. Jack Paley, "8th General Council Joint Meeting," January 6, 1953, *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 10, p. 7.

27. Jack Paley, "8th General Council Joint Meeting," January 6, 1953, *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 10, p. 7; Bill Michelson, "Organization Report, General Council Meeting, June 10, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 2.

28. Bill Michelson, "Organization Report, General Council Meeting, June 10, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 2.

29. Jack Paley, "8th General Council Joint Meeting," January 6, 1953, *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 10, p. 7.

30. Pete Stein, "Organizational and Collective Bargaining Report, Downtown Council Meeting, February 2/3, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 10, p. 7.

31. "Minutes of the 10th General Council Meeting, Bronx-Long Island Division Meeting, March 2, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 4.

32. Bill Michelson, "Organization Report, General Council Meeting, June 10, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 2.

33. "Minutes of the 11th General Council Joint Meeting, April 8, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 3; Bill Michelson, "Organization Report, General Council Meeting, June 10, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 3.

34. Bill Michelson, "Organizational Report, Report to the General Council Meeting, Tues, January 6, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 10, p. 7.

35. See Shirley Freeman to Walter White, August 21, 1945, *Papers of the NAACP* housed at the New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York [hereafter *NAACP Papers*], part 13, series A, reel 2, frames 0862–3.

36. "NAACP Convention Report, July 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 4.

37. "Minutes of the 11th General Council Joint Meeting, April 8, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 4.

38. George Morris, "World of Labor; Distorting the Discussions Won't Do Dist. 65 Any Good," *Daily Worker*, February 23, 1952, *RWDSU Local 15-A Records*, box 668, folder 668/75. Morris presents evidence that between 1952 and the completion of the merger in 1953, the CIO would break off negotiations if District 65 did not appear cleansed enough,; see George Morris, "World of Labor, DPOWA's New 'Friends' Show Their Cards," *Daily Worker*, March 14, 1952, *RWDSU Local 15-A Records*, box 668, folder 668/75.

39. See report, title handwritten, "Dept Store Org Coll Barg Rpt, May 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 4.

40. Bill Michelson, "Organization Report, General Council Meeting, June 10, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 4.

41. "Hearn's Rescinds Discharge of 800; Stores Act on Court Order that also Directs Union to Cease Interference," *The New York Times*, May 14, 1953, p. 22.

42. "Strike at Hearns Defies Injunction, Walkout Begins at Noon over Starting of Self Service and Cut in the Staff," *The New York Times*, May 15, 1953, p. 12; Bill Michelson, "Organization Report, General Council Meeting, June 10, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 4.

43. Bill Michelson, "Organization Report, General Council Meeting, June 10, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 11, p. 5.

44. In May, District 65 found out that it was indeed free to seek arbitration in the advertising case. The union had filed for arbitration in February and Hearn went to court to stop District 65 from seeking arbitration. See report, title handwritten, "Dept Store Org Coll Barg Rpt, May 1953," *District 65 Papers* box 3, folder 11, p. 5.

45. "Minutes of the Fourteenth General Council Downtown-Midtown Division Meeting, District 65, Monday, July 6, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 4.

46. "Minutes of the Fourteenth General Council Downtown-Midtown Division Meeting, District 65, Monday, July 6, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 4.

47. Milton Reverby, "Report on Collective Bargaining, July 7, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, pp. 3–4.

48. "Minutes of the Fourteenth General Council Downtown-Midtown Division Meeting, District 65, Monday, July 6, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 5.

49. "Minutes of the Fourteenth General Council Downtown-Midtown Division Meeting, District 65, Monday, July 6, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, pp. 2, 4.

50. Dave Moore to Vicki Garvin, December 30, 1992, *Vicki Garvin Papers*, box 2, folder "Letters to Garvin, 1952–92."

51. "NAACP Convention Report, del'd to 7/53 GC Mtgs.," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 2.

52. "Minutes of the Fourteenth General Council Downtown-Midtown Division Meeting, District 65, Monday, July 6, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 2.

53. "July 1953" appears across the first page, *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 1.

54. Osman to White, July 22, 1953, *NAACP Papers*, series 13, part A, reel 12, frame 0536.

55. Robinson to White, July 23, 1953, *NAACP Papers*, series 13, part A, reel 12, frame 0534.

56. White to Greenfield, July 24, 1953, *NAACP Papers*, series 13, part A, reel 12, frame 0532.

57. "July 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 4.

58. "Minutes of the Fifteenth General Council Meeting, Midtown Division, August 3, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 2.

59. "Minutes of the Fifteenth General Council Meeting, Midtown Division, August 3, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 2.

60. Mitchell to White, August 6, 1953, *NAACP Papers*, series 13, part A, reel 12, frame 0552.

61. Mitchell to White, August 6, 1953, *NAACP Papers*, series 13, part A, reel 12, frame 055.

62. Conole to White, August 13, 1953, *NAACP Papers*, series 13, part A, reel 12, frames 0550–1.

63. White to Conole, August 20, 1953, *NAACP Papers*, series 13, part A, reel 12, frame 0549.

64. "Minutes of the Sixteenth General Council Meeting District 65 Joint Meeting, Tuesday, September 1, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 4; Bill Manheim, "Organizational Report, General Council, September 1, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 6.

65. "Minutes of the Sixteenth General Council Meeting District 65 Joint Meeting, Tuesday, September 1, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 12, p. 4.

66. "Minutes of the Sixteenth General Council Meeting, Department Store Section, District 65, October 7, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 13, p. 2.

67. Amsterdam to White, September 3, 1953, *NAACP Papers*, series 13, part A, reel 12, frames 0547–8.

68. "Minutes of the Sixteenth General Council Meeting, Department Store Section, District 65, October 7, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 13, p. 2; telegram, Hollander and Quill to Leon Davis, received October 9, 1953, *National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, Local 1199, Records, 1938–1972*, housed at the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, [hereafter *1199 Papers*] collection 5206d, box 65, folder "New York State CIO Council."

69. Conole to White, September 22, 1953, *NAACP Papers*, series 13, part A, reel 12, frames 0544–45.

70. "Minutes of the Seventeenth General Council, Joint Meeting, District 65, November 4, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 13, p. 2.

71. "Minutes of the Seventeenth General Council, Joint Meeting, District 65, November 4, 1953," *District 65 Papers*, box 3, folder 13, p. 2.

72. Paskin interview with Paley, July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26b, Tape 2, side A.

73. Paskin interview with Paley, July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26b, Tape 2, side A.

74. Paskin interview with Paley, July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26b, Tape 2, side A ; Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, p. 2.

75. Paskin interview with Paley, July 15, 1982, NS#19, #26b, Tape 2, sides A and B; Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 2, side A.

76. Paskin interview with Doswell, February 2, 1982, NS#19, #37, Tape 2, side A.

77. Paskin interview with Evanoff, NS#19, #24c, Tape 3, side B.

78. Paskin interview with Neuberger, October 13, 1982, NS#19, #25b, Tape 2, side A.

79. Hill interview with Osman, July 13, 1968, p. 1.

Conclusion

1. Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, pp. 91–92.

2. Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, p. 93.

3. For more on the NALC, see Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619–1973*, pp. 332–54, and Lisa Phillips, "National American Labor Council," in Nina Mjagkij, ed., *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations* (New York: Garland, 2001), pp. 496–98.

4. Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619–1973*, p. 329.

5. "Pre-convention summary for the press, Negro American Labor Council," attachment in a letter from August Meier to Bernice Wilds, August 2, 1963, *Richard Parrish Papers, Additions*, housed at the New York Public Library, Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives & Rare Books Division, New York, New York, [hereafter *Richard Parrish Additions*]), box 2, folder 8, pp. 3–4.

6. Program, "Freedom, Justice, Equality; Founding Convention Negro-American Labor Council," *Richard Parrish Additions*, box 3, folder 9, p. 1.

7. "Pre-convention summary for the press, Negro American Labor Council," attachment in a letter from August Meier to Bernice Wilds, August 2, 1963, *Richard Parrish Additions*, box 2, folder 8, pp. 3–4.

8. Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619–1973*, pp. 293–311; Phillips, "National Negro Labor Council," pp. 473–76.

9. The NALC likened itself to the UHT, the Jewish Labor Committee, the Italian Chamber of Labor, and the Catholic Association of Trade Unions; see "Negro American Labor Council," *Richard Parrish Additions*, box 1, folder 12, p. 1.

10. "NALC Launches Campaign to Desegregate Southern AFL-CIO State Federations, July 12, 1961," *Richard Parrish Additions*, box 3, folder 13, pp. 1–2.

11. "Minutes of the Fifteenth General Council Meeting District 65, CIO—Wednesday, September 7, 1955," *District 65 Papers*, box 4, folder 1, p. 3.

12. Bill Michelson, ""Organization Report," *District 65 Papers*, box 4, folder 1, p. 7.

13. Bill Michelson, ""Organization Report," *District 65 Papers*, Minutes, box 4, folder 1, pp. 5–6.

14. Bill Michelson, ""Organization Report," *District 65 Papers*, Minutes, box 4, folder 1, p. 8.

15. “Minutes of the 20th General Council Meeting District 65, CIO—Wednesday, January 11, 1956,” *District 65 Papers*, Minutes, box 4, folder 2, pp. 1–2.

16. “Minutes of the Sixteenth General Council Meeting District 65, CIO—Wednesday, October 5, 1955,” *District 65 Papers*, Minutes, box 4, folder 1, p. 3.

17. “Minutes of the Sixteenth General Council Meeting District 65, CIO—Wednesday, October 5, 1955,” *District 65 Papers*, Minutes, box 4, folder 1, p. 3; “Report on the Emmett Till Case, General Council Meeting, October 5, 1955,” *District 65 Papers*, Minutes, box 4, folder 1, pp. 2–4.

18. Leaflet, “NAACP Membership Drive in District 65 RWDSU-CIO, Let There Be No More Emmett Till’s,” *District 65 Papers*, Minutes, box 4, folder 1.

19. “Report to General Council Meeting, General Council Meeting, Wednesday, November 2, 1955, Delivered by Sol Molofsky,” *District 65 Papers*, Minutes, box 4, folder 1.

20. “Report on the 1958 Brotherhood Celebration, Direct Mail-1, Monday February 10, 1958, Delivered by Hattie Young,” *District 65 Papers*, Minutes, box 21, folder 18, p. 1. 21. “Direct Mail Membership Meeting I and II, Monday, March 17 and Tuesday, March 18th, 1958,” *District 65 Papers*, Minutes, box 21, folder 18, p. 1.

22. Form letter, L. Joseph Overton to “Dear _____,” n.d., *Richard Parrish Additions*, box 1, folder 3, pp. 1–2.

23. Letters, McDew to Randolph, January 21, 1963, and Randolph to McDew, February 19, 1963, *Richard Parrish Additions*, box 2, folder 8.

24. Press release, “NALC Ponders Negro Jobs Rights March and Mobilization on Washington,” n.d., *Richard Parrish Additions*, box 3, folder 13.

25. “Meeting on Emancipation March on Washington,” April 10, 1963, *Richard Parrish Additions*, box 3, folder 2, pp. 1–3.

26. Martin Luther King Jr. with Michael Honey, *“All Labor Has Dignity”* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011); William P. Jones, “Unknown Origins of the March on Washington: Civil Rights Politics and the Black Working Class,” *Labor: Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* (Fall 2010), pp. 33–52.

27. Press release, “Negro American Labor Council Shirts from Strategy of Attack to Alliance with Union Labor,” January 11, 1966, *Richard Parrish Additions*, box 3, folder 13, pp. 1–2.

28. Letters, Morris Doswell and Joe Brown to A. Philip Randolph, February 23, 1966, and A. Philip Randolph to Doswell and Brown, March 16, 1966, *Richard Parrish Additions*, box 5, folder 18.

29. Author’s telephone conversation with Gene Eisner, June 1, 1998.

30. “Black Leader Elected as New Union Head,” *Daily World*, June 3, 1969, p. 5, *Cleveland Robinson Papers (part of the District 65 collection)*, box 5, folder 11; “District 65 Votes Disaffiliation from RSDWU-AFL-CIO,” *News from District 65 RWDSU/AFL-CIO*, *Cleveland Robinson Papers*, box 5 folder 11.

31. “Declaration of Purpose,” *District 65 Cleveland Robinson Papers*, box 10, folder 15; Gene Grove, “Something New in the House of Labor, reprinted from the Chicago Sunday Times, March 30, 1970,” *District 65 Cleveland Robinson Papers*, box 5, folder 11.

32. Lichtenstein, *Most Dangerous Man*, pp. 430–32.

33. Lichtenstein, *Most Dangerous Man*, pp. 430–32; David Livingston to Walter Reuther, March 7, 1969, District 65, Cleveland Robinson Papers, box 2, folder 5.

34. Alliance for Labor Action, Statement of Purposes and Objectives and Constitution, May 26–27, 1969, *District 65, Cleveland Robinson Papers*, box 1, folder 1.

35. Cleveland Robinson and Frank Brown to Walter Reuther, August 20, 1969, District 65 Cleveland Robinson Papers, box 1, folder 15; "Dist. 65 reaching 90% of $100 pay floor goal," *Daily World*, October 30, 1969, p.7, *District 65 Cleveland Robinson Papers*, box 2, folder 5.

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