

Some Notes on the Political Role of Labor Movements: A Philippine Case Study

By David Wurfel

The Philippine labor movement has known periods of intense political activity. Between 1938 and 1941 and again between 1945 and 1950 this activity was largely under Communist leadership. Between 1950 and 1953, however, it was under the non-Communist leadership of the Secretary of Labor.⁽¹⁾ But since 1953, unlike those in most other Asian countries, the Philippine labor movement has not been political. In fact, even in the earlier periods cited non-political unions constituted a substantial segment of the labor movement.

The present situation needs to be described and the interpretive problems it presents need to be discussed. It is our purpose here to define "political unionism", to give evidence of its non-existence in contemporary Philippine politics, and to try to analyze the factors determining the political character of labor movements in the Philippines, or elsewhere.

A Definition

A political union, as the term will be employed here, is one which is used primarily to achieve political power and only secondarily, if at all, as machinery through which to gain control of the job situation. The primary emphasis on political goals may be a faithful reflection of rank and file opinion or it may be merely the expression of a leader's ambition. The attempt to use the union for political purposes may, on the other hand, come from outside the organization entirely. Usually the outside group desiring to put the union to political use is a political party, or an individual party leader. Ruling elites as well as counter elites have recog-

(1) See the author's "Trade Union Development and Labor Relations Policy in the Philippines", *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 12 : 4 (July 1959), especially, pp.585-590.

nized the political utility of labor unions. Thus they may be manipulated by either government or opposition parties. But whether the political direction comes from within or without the union, and whether it does or does not express the true desire of the majority of union members, labor union activity which gives priority to gaining political power and second place to immediate economic goals is clear and sufficient evidence of political unionism.

The Contemporary Philippine Scene

The year 1953 was a turning point both for Philippine politics and for the Philippine labor movement. A sweeping revision of labor legislation, shifting the emphasis of policy from judicial arbitration to collective bargaining, was embodied in the Industrial Peace Act, which passed Congress in May.⁽²⁾ Secretary of Labor Figueras, who had hoped to be elected to the Senate with labor backing, was defeated in November along with other Liberal candidates. Subsequently the dominant labor organization, the National Confederation of Trade Unions, which he had controlled, collapsed. Under the Magsaysay administration, which took office in January 1954, Secretary of Labor Adevos built no union empire for himself and, in fact, kept hands off internal union affairs generally. Since 1953, despite the presence in their midst of many politically ambitious union leaders, most Philippine unions officially aspire to a political role similar to that of U. S. trade unions, and have concentrated on pressuring Congress for better labor legislation and on candidate endorsement. It should be noted that this kind of "political activity" does not have achievement of political power as its primary goal, but revision of particular government policies affecting the worker on the job. It should be remembered also that during the period in question even this kind of political activity did not constitute a major part of trade union work. The description of these activities will apply primarily to the period 1954-1956.

Influencing Legislation. The most persistent and sophisticated attempt to keep union members informed on legislation and legislators, and to encourage them to write letters to their Congressmen,

(2) Republic Act 875. See *Ibid.*, pp. 593-595.

was the work of the Political Action Committee of the Federation of Free Workers, assisted by that union's newspaper. The Free Workers, a Catholic trade union organized in 1950 with Jesuit advice, was one of the "big four" national unions of this period, along with the Philippine Association of Free Labor Unions (PAFLU), the National Labor Union (NLU), and the Philippine Trade Union council (PTUC).

The PTUC, at that time the youngest and largest trade union center in the Philippines, voted at its 1955 convention that:

Whereas, it is the duty of the Political Action Committee to inform the executive board or the convention on how Congressmen and Senators voted on economic and social reform bills so that the executive board or the convention may be guided accordingly; be it resolved . . . that the proper departments of the PTUC should secure the necessary data as above stated from the Congressional files.

But there is no indication that that motion was ever carried out. A resolution presented to the 1956 convention "that the PTUC create a political action department under the charge of a full-time director to represent the views of the organization on all matters affecting the working man", was not adopted.

Thus the broad mandate that the PTUC constitution gives the organization in the political realm has not yet been utilized. Besides constant "work for progressive labor legislation and for its effective implementation" and defense of "the civil and political rights of the working people", the aim of the PTUC is stated in its constitution to be "to work for the establishment and preservation of a just and democratic society free from anti-social concentration of economic and political power in any form". This might have been used as the constitutional basis for full-scale PTUC political involvement, but was not.

The constitution of PAFLU, the smallest of the "big four", states one of that organizations' aims to be "to initiate, foster and support any . . . legislation in the interests of the working class . . . and the country, [and] help enforce existing laws beneficial to the commonweal." The basic document of NLU, the oldest of the "big four", has no provision relating to political action.

There have been some occasions on which concerted union pressure has actually been brought to bear on legislative or administrative decision-making. The nature of the pressure has varied considerably from the American model, however, which is obviously the basis for many phrases in union constitutions. Demonstrations before the Congress building and the presidential palace have replaced letter writing as the major technique. This is due in large part to the heavy union concentration in Manila and the inability of Manila leaders to mobilize labor elements in most provincial constituencies. It also reflects the much greater importance in Philippine culture given to face-to-face contacts in comparison to correspondence, as well as labor's feeling that it must impress the public, not just officialdom, with its importance.

One example of considerable union effort to influence legislation was the question of Minimum Wage Law amendment. Though there had been constant complaint in business circles about the terrible cost to employers ever since the Law's passage in 1951, only in the first year of the Magsaysay administration was an open drive begun for the Law's amendment. In July 1954 Secretary of Agriculture Salvador Araneta, an able "sugar bloc" spokesman, urged the immediate amendment of the law to allow municipal and provincial autonomy in fixing minima.⁽³⁾ He charged that the existing nation-wide minimum of ₱2.50 per day for agricultural workers and ₱4.00 per day for industrial workers was "unrealistically" high and was therefore a major cause of unemployment, forcing employers to hire fewer men than they would at a lower wage. He repeated his charge and his proposal several times in the next few months. Secretary Adevosó counter-attacked with his marshalled arguments, and the unions gave him public support. A meeting in October of representatives from PTUC, PAFLU, NLU and some independents called for Araneta's resignation.⁽⁴⁾ It was also decided there to stage a demonstration in protest against the Araneta suggestions. Sec. Adevosó requested the unions to call it off, since Araneta charged that Adevosó was "regimenting"

(3) *Manila Times*, July 17, 1954.

(4) *MT*, October 23, 1954.

the unions in order to embarrass him.⁽⁵⁾ But the demonstration was held anyway at the Department of Agriculture building. Placard carrying demonstrators were almost all members of PTUC affiliates. Secretary Araneta was out of town.⁽⁶⁾

Demonstrators do not make policy, but the strong union support for Adevosos's articulate and well-argued defense of the Minimum Wage Law may have won one victory, i. e. in the composition of a minimum wage study commission. In October President Magsaysay had announced that "in view of the agitation from provincial governors", he would name an "executive and legislative committee which will study the conditions arising from the operation of the Minimum Wage Law".⁽⁷⁾ If this committee had included Congressmen, its hearings would have become centers of political controversy, and the "sugar bloc" would undoubtedly have been well represented. But when it was actually appointed in November, it was "non-partisan", chaired by the Secretary of National Defense with four committeemen of scientific or academic backgrounds.⁽⁸⁾ The committee's report, released several months later, supported the Minimum Wage Law in its existing form, denying that there was adequate justification for revision.

Agitation against the Minimum Wage Law was not stopped by the initiation of a study, however. In Congress a pre-session majority caucus in January 1955 approved the proposal of the House Committee on Provincial and Municipal Governments, chaired by Rep. Lamberto Macias of sugar-rich Negros, to lower the minimum wage for public works laborers in the provinces. It had the support of House majority leadership.⁽⁹⁾ Approximately the same proposal was included as a "rider" to the public works bill. Despite the Senate's initial rejection and the attempt of the House Labor Committee to delay the bill, the rider appeared in the conference committee report, fixing the public works projects' minima

(5) *MT*, October 25, 26, 1954.

(6) *MT*, October 27, 1954.

(7) *MT*, October 26, 1954.

(8) *MT*, November 18, 1954.

(9) *MT*, January 19, 1955.

at ₱2.50 instead of the legal ₱4.00, and was finally adopted.⁽¹⁰⁾

Union leaders condemned the bill several times as it went through the legislative mill. Atty. Rafael of the Philippine Labor Unity Movement⁽¹¹⁾ threatened a 10-minute nation-wide protest strike by PLUM affiliates on April 30, but there is no indication that the threat was carried out. After the public works bill was passed by Congress, PTUC and PAFLU made plans of their own for a protest demonstration⁽¹²⁾ and warned that a nation-wide sit down strike would be held if Pres. Magsaysay signed the bill with the rider.⁽¹³⁾ There was a "march on Malacañang" on August 18, at which time several leaders, including Cid of PAFLU, and Hernandez, Oca and Malonzo of PTUC presented a joint resolution asking the president's veto of the rider. Magsaysay answered that he was "studying" the possibility of a veto, but explained there might be legal impediments. He "feared" that if he vetoed the rider, the whole public works appropriation would be lost.⁽¹⁴⁾ Such a statement seemed to reveal a misunderstanding of the constitution, which specifically provides for an item veto of appropriation bills.

The President did not veto it. However, neither did the PTUC have to hold its sitdown strike. Magsaysay sought a compromise and let R. A. 1411, the Public Works Act, become law without his signature. On September 16 after another conference with labor leaders, representing all major federations except PTUC⁽¹⁵⁾, the President finally promised to follow Sec. Adevosó's suggestion that the ₱4.00 rate be continued on public works projects as long as funds held out.

A major assault on the minimum wage law had been averted, but how important the union's role had been in preventing it is difficult to gauge. Without Sec. Adevosó the result would have

(10) *MT*, May 11, 1955, August 9, 1955.

(11) *MT*, April 22, 1955.

(12) *MT*, August 14, 1955.

(13) A "public indignation demonstration" was held in Iloilo on August 15 against the rider under auspices of the Inter-Island Labor Org. *MT*, August 17, 1955.

(14) *MT*, August 19, 1955.

(15) *MT*, September 17, 1955.

certainly been different. But it is doubtful if his position would have carried as much weight without vocal union backing. Pres. Magsaysay was easily impressed by demonstrations.⁽¹⁶⁾

On another issue, however, labor injunctions by Courts of First Instance, one in which the President's responsibility was less direct, labor demonstrations were less successful. After several crippling injunctions against picketing in early 1956, weakening strikes by unions affiliated to all the national trade union centers, the unions decided to protest. They charged, with justification, that these injunctions had been issued without adherence to the procedural requirements of the Industrial Peace Act, the "Magna Carta of Labor"; they denied that Courts of First Instances had jurisdiction over labor disputes at all, if the law were properly interpreted; and they proposed an amendment to R. A. 875 to specifically deprive these Courts of such jurisdiction.

To impress upon the government the seriousness of its plight, and to reinforce its arguments, the labor movement approached complete unity in a mass protest on June 2. Leaders of all major federations had breakfast with Pres. Magsaysay, presenting their views to him in a conference which lasted all morning. In the meantime nearly 10,000 union members marched on the City Hall, seat of the Courts of First Instance, then on to Malacañang, a few blocks away. The breakfasting leaders joined the President on the lawn as he faced hundreds of placards asking him to request Congress to amend the Magna Carta to limit the CFI's jurisdiction. Speaking to the demonstrating unionists, Pres. Magsaysay urged them to be patient since the injunction issue was shortly to be decided by the Supreme Court; nevertheless, together with the House Labor Committee Chairman and Vice-Chmn., he promised to have introduced the necessary amendment to the Magna Carta. At the same time nearly 20,000 additional workers in factories inside Manila and out, members of PTUC, PAFLU and PLUM affiliates, walked off their jobs in protest, 11:00 a.m.

(16) In fact, he was accused by some of his critics of "governing by delegation", i. e. making decisions on the basis of the size and vociferation of delegations to Malacañang, the presidential palace, representing particular points of view.

to 12:00 noon. This was the first non-Communist political strike in Philippine labor history; it is not likely, however, to mark the beginning of a new pattern of trade union political behavior, judging from its results.

Seeming success for the unions' efforts was ephemeral. The special session of Congress, which could not act on any measure not certified to it by the President, came and went without the appearance of any bill regarding injunctions. In September the Supreme Court did indeed rule on the issue, but not entirely as the unions had wished. In a 6 to 3 decision it held that the CFI did have jurisdiction over certain labor disputes and did have the power to restrain picketing, but it likewise held that the Magna Carta's procedural requirements had to be met by the Court of First Instance in such cases, and invalidated the injunction in question for not having met them.⁽¹⁷⁾ Labor demonstrations had little effect on the nation's highest tribunal.

Candidate Endorsement. Political action by "non-political" trade unions traditionally includes endorsement of candidates as well as lobbying for or against legislation. Philippine labor leaders have undertaken this task with great relish, but with less consistency. The personalization of Philippine political relationships generally and the relative unimportance of issues, added to the personal political ambitions of the central labor leadership and the network of ties between them and leading politicians, causes much political endorsement to have little relationship to a candidate's record on labor and social welfare issues. Even though the eight-man list system for election of Senators from a national constituency tends to call greater attention to the issues and give greater importance to nation-wide interest groups than does any other Philippine political contest, the 1955 senatorial election is a good example of ineffective endorsement.

In 1955 there were two endorsing groups, the PTUC, and the "Labor Alliance", composed of the PAFLU, NLU, PLUM, and the Citizens' Labor Union, which had been formed in September. The Labor Alliance was first to publish its endorsements. Early

(17) *MT*, September 1, 1956.

in October the component unions' respective leaders, Attys. Cid, Lerum, Rafael and Ty, had sent a letter and questionnaire to all senate candidates. Half of the ten questions were general and leading, such as "What do you plan to do for labor", and the other half were fairly specific, and leading, such as "Are you in favor of repealing the minimum wage rider?" Only three candidates bothered to answer. Nevertheless the four leaders of the Labor Alliance met on October 26 and drew up a slate. In the flamboyant hyperbole of Atty. Rafael his *Labor News* ⁽¹⁸⁾ reported, "The entire strength of organized labor led by over one million votes of Labor Alliance affiliates has been committed to elect a nine-man senatorial list led by Sen. Recto, well-loved statesman and legislator." Actually, of course, no one, but the leaders, was "committed" to anyone, and the endorsements were sent to the locals so late—less than two weeks before the election—that most of the rank and file probably did not even learn of their leader's preferences. Only three out of the nine were actually elected.

The PTUC executive board, without taking the trouble to send out letters or questionnaires, met to endorse its list of candidates on November 3, one week before the election. Their slate, which was identical with that of the Labor Alliance except for one name, included four winners out of nine—but not because of union efforts.

Who were these "friends of labor"? It is interesting, first of all, to note that the majority of both PTUC and Labor Alliance tickets were made up of Liberal Party candidates. Though almost all unionists had actively supported Magsaysay in 1953, his failure either to veto the public works rider or to present a bill limiting the Courts of First Instance labor jurisdiction had cooled their ardor for his cause. Said PAFLU Pres. Cid, "Labor is disappointed with the record of the Nacionlista Party." ⁽¹⁹⁾

Three of the nine endorsees had fairly consistent pro-labor records. Senators Magalona and Peralta, both Liberals, had actively opposed the public works rider; Magalona had been one

(18) *MT*, October 31, 1955.

(19) *MT*, September 15, 1956.

of the main authors of the Industrial Peace Act. Sen. Paredes (a Liberal recently turned Nacionalista), who rightly claimed to be that Act's senatorial father, also spoke and voted against the Moreno rider.⁽²⁰⁾ All three had been absent on the roll call vote to remove home-workers from minimum wage law coverage, in February 1953, but since in the Philippines a "no" vote is such a rarity, this is perhaps the most that could be expected from "friends of labor." Only Paredes was elected.

Two others had more tenuous claims to the title of labor's "friend". Congressman Lim (NP), head of the House Labor Committee, had been legal counsel of the Mindanao Federation of Labor. His committee had tried to delay the public works rider, by refusing to report it out, but when it was forced out to the floor under special rules, Lim voted for it. Congressman Macapagal, who had had, as chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, considerable responsibility for the MWL's passage in 1951, also voted for the works bill which temporarily reduced that minimum. Both Lim and Macapagal had voted, in May 1952, for the bill removing homeworkers from MWL coverage (HB 3085). Lim was elected, but not Macapagal.

Ex-Senators Osias and Pecson, both Liberals, were former school teachers, and their legislative careers displayed their special interest in education. Neither had taken a particularly constructive stand on labor legislation, however. Senator Recto was chosen for his nationalist sentiments and his skill as an oppositionist. Union leaders who publicly endorsed him privately admitted that he was no "friend of labor". Not only had he never sponsored any labor legislation, nor opposed antilabor legislation, but he had vigorously attacked the land reform bill in that same year. His extra-governmental income came from legal fees in payment for services rendered to large corporations. Only Recto won.

On the ninth nominee the two slates diverged. The Labor Alliance chose Governor Juan Chioco of Nueva Ecija (NP) who had had a rather liberal policy vis-a-vis tenant unions in his province. The PTUC chose Social Welfare Administrator Mrs. Pacita

(20) See *MT*, August 9, 1955.

Madriral-Warns, daughter of a millionaire ship-owner. Said the official PTUC message of endorsement.

Although Mrs. Warns has been raised with the traditional silver spoon in her mouth, her unceasing work for the less privileged since she became Social Welfare Administrator became a turning point in her life. Touched deeply by bony arms raised in supplication for the simple needs in life, . . . Mrs. Warns gave up a life of ease to dedicate her time for the underprivileged.

After the election investigations revealed that she had diverted over ₱100,000 of Social Welfare Administration money to her campaign, which had been the most lavish bid for the Senate which the Philippines had yet seen. The bid was successful.

It should be added that whatever inconsistencies there were in this list of endorsees should not be blamed entirely on the endorsers. As long as labor leaders insisted on putting up a full nine-man ticket⁽²¹⁾ the choice they had available of truly pro-labor candidates was extremely limited.

The Federation of Free Workers was wiser and made no endorsements, even though it did send out questionnaires. The answers, from ten candidates, were published in the *Free Worker*.⁽²²⁾ Since the "proper" answer could easily be surmised from the question, and was, in most cases, the one given, the replies were not very meaningful. The FFW concentrated its political activity in the Manila mayorial contest, supporting Mayor Lacson wholeheartedly against ex-Secretary Figueras, who had harrassed the FFW when he headed the Labor Department. The FFW was the only labor group to campaign strongly for Lacson. Former NACTU affiliates, the PLUM, and others, backed Figueras. Lacson won.

One of the most politically-minded labor leaders, Atty. Cipriano Cid, admitted that labor had "very little" influence on the national elections. Roseller Lim, who was elected in 1955 with labor's endorsement, said in November 1956 in answer to union threats of retaliation for his public probe of unions' funds, "There

(21) One seat was for the unexpired term of Vice-President Garcia, who was a senator when elected to the higher post.

(22) October 1955.

is no such thing as a labor vote."⁽²³⁾ Communication between national leaders and the rank and file is poor. And even if it were much better, extra-union loyalties would still determine the votes of many laborers.

Cid attributes labor's lack of political success to its failure to establish ties with small farmers. This is probably true. But in the past only the Communists were able to establish such liaison; it is a difficult task which non-Communist labor leaders are not likely to accomplish in the near future.

Politically Ambitious Union Leaders

Though the Philippines does not now have any political unions, it has had a long tradition of political unionists, which continues until the present. Labor leadership has been an important avenue to success in a society with a considerable degree of upward social mobility. And, since in a highly political society, the greatest success is political success, the end of the avenue has usually been political office. In 1938 a popular Manila columnist wrote:⁽²⁴⁾

While workers elsewhere unite and organize and drive toward a determined and definite goal, dying a thousand heroic deaths for economic opportunity and freedom, Philippine labor all along has been content to meet and banquet annually, listen to a solemn speech of the Secretary of Capital, and wrangle on the next batch of officers to collect fees and graduate ultimately into a government job.

The entrance of union leaders into the political elite has not, however, created a permanent element of that elite with its first loyalty to the interests of labor, despite the neat equation set forth by the NACTU official, Ruperto Cristobal:⁽²⁵⁾

The more labor leaders elected to different elective positions the better for the free trade union movement because many will work for the immediate accomplishment of its objectives—the elimination of poverty and realization of happiness, peace and prosperity in our country.

(23) *MT*, November 11, 1956.

(24) Frederico Mangahas in the *Tribune*, January 16, 1938.

(25) "Government Guidance in the Labor Movement", *Labor Golden Book*, 1951, p. 58.

Only a very few such politicians have remained real friends of labor.

This is true because, in the first place, one-time labor leaders who have achieved high public office are a handful, easily absorbed into an elite composed of employers and landlords. Because the former labor leader wants elite social status, he quickly adopts elite values. Secondly, most men who reached the heights of labor leadership were themselves well-educated and from middle class families. Their union activity was commenced after they had set political goals for themselves and not before. They were thus never completely "committed" to the cause of labor. Even for some sons of working class families, who rose to powerful position, for example, Jose Figueras, trade union activity was only used as a means to an end after they had begun the socio-political climb.

An observation which is somewhat more difficult to explain is that politically ambitious labor leaders intent on entering the political elite have generally not felt the necessity of bending unions to their political purposes. They have, on the whole, chosen to use the techniques of Philippine politics traditionally utilized by members of the elite themselves, i. e. money, familial and fictic relationships, all designed to create mutual obligations quite distinct from the role of union leader. This would seem to be a tribute to the openness of the Philippine political elite.

Some Cyclical and Structural Factors Affecting Labor's Role

In order to evaluate more adequately the factors contributing to the political character of Philippine unionism, we must look at the nature of trade union movements generally. The first great question is why do workers organize? And the second, like unto t, is why does their organization assume different forms and purposes in different countries at different times?

The first, and still most prevalent, answer to the first question is that workers organize in order to transform the political, and as a result the economic, institutions under which they live. This transformation may be violent, extra-legal, and revolutionary, or peaceful, legal and evolutionary. Marx is the greatest prophet

of the first school of thought, and the Webbs, perhaps, of the second. Adherents of both socialist ideologies have attempted to put them into practice, with varying degrees of success. The "initiated" look upon success as an indication of their "correct" concept of labor's "true" aspirations; their opponents call it an alien imposition on an essentially non-political class.

But the socialist doctrine that workers want to gain political power to transform economic society does not help explain *why* they desire that transformation. American economists and historians have given us some plausible explanations: that workers want to achieve higher social status, present economic well-being, and assurance of future economic well-being, more commonly known as security.⁽²⁶⁾ Exponents of these theories agree, however, that achievement of such goals does not necessitate a prior political transformation to a labor government; some even contend such a transformation would be destructive to such an achievement.

According to the Commons-Perlman theory, the most widely accepted one in America, "job consciousness", the desire to control scarce job opportunities, is the "true" union motivation.⁽²⁷⁾ Says Perlman flatly, "unionism and the striving for shop control are identical".⁽²⁸⁾ He calls "the same age-long drive by labor for an enlarged opportunity for Tom, Dick and Harry through collective control", "the philosophy native to labor",⁽²⁹⁾ thus endowing it with as much dogmatic correctness as Marx does class consciousness.

Despite his dogmatism, however, Perlman is a skilled historian and his generalizations are richly exemplified from Russian, German, British and American experience. He believed that "the victory of trade unionism over politics" was the result of a method "which

(26) See Mark Perlman, *Labor Union Theories in America* (Evanston: Row, Peterson, and Co., 1958).

(27) See Selig Perlman, *A Theory of the Labor Movement* (New York: Kelley, 1949), and Philip Taft, "Commons-Perlman Theory: A Summary", Industrial Relations Research Association, *Proceedings*, 1950, pp. 140-5.

(28) Perlman, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

(29) *Ibid.*, pp. 317-18.

keeps testing social theory in the crucible of concrete experience".⁽³⁰⁾ But he did not believe that "experience" could ever lead trade unions into politics. Even if one accepts the thesis that "job control" is a basic motivation of trade unionism, and he makes a convincing case, Perlman's own keenly analytical histories permit one to observe that experience is a versatile teacher, providing impetus for change from the economic to the political tactic, as well as from the political to the economic. Social movements seem to seek the line of least resistance to achieve their goals.⁽³¹⁾ The changing political and economic environment determines whether workers may achieve social status and economic welfare more effectively through political organization and action or through a trade unionism which concentrates its activities within the economic relationships of industry.

Cyclical. What kind of experiences, or environmental changes, are most important? Their classification might be called the cyclical determinants of the character of labor movements. We can say in general that economic crisis, be it inflation or increasing unemployment, stirs labor to action.⁽³²⁾ If social security legislation enacted within the existing political framework meets minimal requirements and the legal climate for trade union organization and collective bargaining is favorable, labor will emphasize job control, since it is most immediately related to the goals

(30) *Ibid.*, p. 105.

(31) Paradoxically, however, too little resistance saps their vigor. Labor unions must constantly maneuver between the Scylla of oppressive opposition and the Charybdis of debilitating success. For example, while U. S. trade union membership more than doubled from 1933 to 1938, the depths of the depression, during the five years of prosperity from 1947-1952 the percentage of union members among wage and salary employees actually dropped slightly. (See Irving Bernstein, "Union Growth and Structural Cycles", *IRRA, Proceedings*, 1954, p. 209; and Daniel Bell, "Discussion", *op. cit.*, p. 233.)

(32) See Bernstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-230. Evidence from India presented by Ornati shows that trade union members there often pay dues only just before or during strikes, and expect immediate results. They generally consider themselves "members" only in periods of strife. (See Oscar Ornati, *Jobs and Workers in India* (Cornell Univ., Institute of International Industrial and Labor Relations, 1955), p. 110.) This is also true in the Philippines.

workers seek.⁽³³⁾ If, on the other hand, legal impediments to union activity are great, and social security legislation is inadequate, labor will perforce become more political in its orientation. Should both labor's union and political activities be effectively suppressed, as was true in Japan from 1910 to 1917, ideological development, which will tend to be radical, is the only alternative.

For example, in Germany until 1890 most trade unions were, except for the decade 1869-78, illegal. Thus advised of the desirability of the control of state power to protect workers' organizations, labor, given freedom after 1890, was for a while intensely political. However, as it became apparent that political labor, the Social Democratic Party, was not going to be strong enough to achieve power in a short period of time and thus produce favorable legislation, and as unions, freed from repression, increased in numbers, size, and services to their members, the bulk of unions veered from the political path and by 1906 had become independent of the Party. Increased legal and economic status during World War I confirmed the unions' political "neutrality".

The mere existence of a "socialist" or "labor" party does not necessarily indicate political unionism. The essential question is whether unions are used primarily as machinery for job control or for achieving political power. Defined in this way, it is clear that the German labor movement in the first half-century of Germany's industrial revolution, moved from political to non-political unionism.

British unionism might appear to have taken the opposite course.⁽³⁴⁾ As early as the 1850's British unions were given legal recognition and some protection, "with the aid of middle-class friends." Only from 1871-1875 was picketing illegal. Unions organized mutual benefit funds, eschewed extensive social legislation, became craft-, not class-, conscious, and developed their own rank and file leadership. Only in the depression of the early

(33) Perlman hinted at one factor when he said "Given the opportunity to exist legally . . . the trade-union mentality will eventually come to dominate" Quoted in Philip M. Kaiser, "Discussions", IRRR, *Proceedings*, 1954, p. 176.

(34) See Perlman, *op. cit.*, Chapter 4.

1890's did unionists see the need for more aggressive political leadership; the socialists gave it to them in *both* the trade union and the political field. The Taff Vale decision of 1901, allowing unions to be sued for damages, even as a consequence of legal acts, created a new need for political action. But even after the formation of the British Labor Party in 1906, the Trade Union Council, which was clearly not dominated by the party, never lost its primary concern for job security. When labor came to power, the "pure" trade unionism of the TUC was so ingrained that it refused to relinquish union rights of job control even to a Socialist government as employer.⁽³⁵⁾ It is obvious that the TUC was not used *primarily* as machinery for achieving political power. Thus British unionism, though politically conscious, is not in the strictest sense "political".

In the Philippines the post-war peak of political trade unionism, under Communist leadership, came in 1949. This was caused by a combination of inflationary pressure, increased insecurity of union organizations, and inadequate social security or minimum wage legislation—with no prospect of improvement. By late 1953 the economic, legal, and administrative climate of trade unionism had improved, at the same time the most radical political leadership was removed. It is not surprising, therefore, that the character of the union movement changed also.

Structural. These cyclical determinants do help to explain, therefore, the shifts of emphasis in the history of a national trade union movement. But if one should want, instead, to compare Britain with Germany, or Europe with Asia, or the Philippines with its neighbors, one must concentrate on structural rather than cyclical factors, i. e. on more permanent aspects of the national culture. Structural determinants of the character of a labor movement may be classified under the headings politico-legal, social, economic, and ideological. The American environment made job-conscious unionism inevitable in the U. S., but as we shall see it is not so everywhere.

One of the most oft-mentioned and most obvious determinants

(35) See Kaiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-174.

of labor's political role is the electoral system. A presidential system which usually requires a national majority to elect, or at least gives an absolute advantage to the party with a plurality, as in the U. S. or the Philippines, is a strong, perhaps decisive, deterrent to the development of third parties. (Within a parliamentary system, of course, the single member district, in comparison with any type of electoral list, also discourages third parties, but not so effectively. It at least presses third parties to extend their class basis rapidly in order to become number two, as in Britain.) Since the traditional pattern for socialist or labor parties is to emerge first as third parties vying with two conservative groupings, e. g. in Great Britain or Japan, discouragement for a third party is discouragement for a labor party also. Though a labor party does not necessarily mean political unionism, it is certainly an indispensable part of it. The Philippines is the only country in Asia, besides Vietnam, with a constitutionally strong and popularly elected president. We have already witnessed there the inherent instability of a third party which does enter the field.

Another political factor of some importance for the labor movement is the extent of suffrage in a country and the period at which it was granted.⁽³⁵⁾ The disenfranchisement of laborers during the early growth of unions in England and Germany, for example, contributed to a feeling of class consciousness and became one of the foci of labor's political agitation. In the U. S., however, universal manhood suffrage preceded union development, so that organized labor, from the first, could participate in the electoral process on a legally equal footing with other economic groups. The Philippine pattern is more similar to the American than is any other in Asia. In 1916, shortly before the first significant growth of trade unions, the Philippines was granted universal literate manhood suffrage, with the literacy qualification so liberally interpreted as to be a minor handicap for those who really wanted to vote. In contrast, universal manhood suffrage was a battle cry of the Japanese labor movement for a generation and

(36) See Perlman, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

the subject of agitation for a decade before it took effect in 1928. When labor had to fight for the franchise, its political consciousness was understandably intensified.

As already noted, changes in the legal climate for union and leftwing political activity cause cyclical shifts in the character of the labor movement. In the long run too, differing legal climates in different countries help determine distinct labor union development. Governments ruling in the civil law tradition have always regulated economic relations in more detail than those in common law countries. The greater the degree of legal intervention in the national economic life, the more important becomes power over legislation, and the courts, for a labor movement. The contrast between civil law France, Germany, and Italy, on the one hand, and common law Britain and the U. S., on the other, is clear. Japan, emerging from a feudal period in which government attempted to regulate every detail of private life, borrowed heavily in the process of Westernization from the German legal system.

In colonial Asia the metropolitan traditions were imposed on indigenous legal systems. For the Philippines this has meant some confusion. Spain brought civil law, which the American regime modified, but did not entirely set aside. Through the practice of *stare decisis*, the Philippine Supreme Court introduced many American legal precedents. Furthermore, the Philippine's most important pieces of labor legislation—workmen's compensation, minimum wage, and industrial peace acts—are consciously patterned after American law. Thus today Philippine labor legislation and judicial practice contains both American and Spanish elements, but is closer to the former.

Philippine social legislation, though not so comprehensive as to stifle trade unionism, has been liberal enough and was enacted early enough in the history of the labor movement to reduce significantly incentives for unions to achieve political power in order to improve upon the existing law. (The recent Social Security Act, however, if fully implemented, will encroach on the benefit systems which unions have already won by collective bargaining, and has been recognized by some leaders as a threat

to strong unionism.)

Seymour Lipset has stated very clearly the significance of some of these same factors in determining labor's political role: ⁽³⁷⁾

. . . Where the workers were denied economic and political citizenship rights, their struggle for redistribution of income and status was superimposed on a revolutionary ideology. Where the economic and status struggle developed outside this context, the ideology with which it was linked tended to be that of gradualist reformism.

Gradualist reformism is not identical with non-political unionism, nor revolutionary ideology with political unionism, but their is considerable correlation in both cases.

Closely related to the politico-legal factors which help to determine labor's political complexion is the impact on the labor movement of the role of government itself in economic activity. The greater the number of state-owned enterprises, the more limited are the rights of collective bargaining and the right to strike, forcing labor to seek concessions by other means. And if state enterprises are operated by conservative governments, as has been the case in Germany and Japan, workers are more likely to look upon state control under labor governments as the most feasible solution to their difficulties. Even without state ownership, extensive and closely supervised economic planning tends to place the state in a position of supporting wage control, no matter what its long range welfare goals may be. This too stimulates political activity by unions.

No major industrial nation has had less state enterprise than the U. S., which is one of the important causes for non-political unionism in that country. Likewise, the Philippines stands in somewhat the same relation to Asia as the U. S. does to Europe. Government plays a smaller role in economic development in the Philippines than in almost any other Asian country, even though the Philippine government is still operating several enterprises

(37) "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, LIII (March 1959), p. 93.

established by the Commonwealth before the war.⁽³⁸⁾ The trend is now toward even less governmental activity. Some government corporations are being sold to private business, and some political leaders with business backgrounds ask for "the end of all controls" with as much vehemence as an anti-New Dealer in the 1930s. (Controls on trade show no signs of abating, but they have only a very indirect effect on labor.) Even that government enterprise which does exist, however, such as the Manila Railroad, shipyards, textile mills, etc., has not had the deadening influence on job-oriented trade unionism that might have been expected, since government corporation employees, an important segment of unionized workers, have been permitted to bargain collectively and to strike. Furthermore, a few such corporations now include union leaders among their directors. Considering this aspect of the government's economic role, therefore, non-political unionism in the Philippines is understandable, and no political tendency should be expected.

The government does not manifest its economic influence only through the ownership of enterprise, however, but also through its control over the monetary system. A government which is able to prevent rapid inflation is able at the same time to discourage political unionism, for inflation removes responsibility for the level of real wages from the hands of the employer and justifiably turns workers attention toward government policy. Though the Philippines has had a surprising degree of price stability throughout most of the post-war period, when compared with other Southeast Asian countries, the last two years have witnessed events which would seem to indicate that rapid inflation may be a real danger. Here, then, is one factor which might bring about changes in the character of the Philippine labor movement.

Social structure has been another important determinant of the character of labor movements. Class consciousness in one prerequisite of vigorously political unionism, but is not likely to de-

(38) Government's role in gross fixed capital formation in 1955; according to the *Economic Survey of Asia and Far East* (1956, p.194), was: Philippines, 28%; Korea, 20%; India, 30%; Japan, 41%; and Burma, 54%.

velop in a society with considerable freedom for upward social mobility. The American dream of "rags to riches", regardless of its reality or unreality today, is so widely believed as to prevent even a modicum of class consciousness among American workers.⁽³⁹⁾ A large percentage consider themselves "middle class". This has been one of those factors which clearly distinguishes the British, and more especially the European, from the American scene.

Again the Philippines is closer to the American pattern than are other Asian countries, though one must not make the mistake of equating Philippine and American social structure—in a comparison between the two the Philippines' would emerge as rigidly hierarchical. As the result of a long period of Westernization, including intense indoctrination in the "American dream" in the early 1900's, on top of an indigenous society only loosely structured by Asian standards, Filipinos are today permitted a relatively high degree of social mobility. Furthermore, the *desire* to rise socially and economically is so great that it is easy for ambitious workers to be lured from class loyalty by the expectation of status and monetary reward within the existing societal patterns. This tendency has not only weakened political unionism, but "pure" trade unionism, as well.

The economic prerequisite of upward social mobility is job opportunity, created either by full employment or by a frontier, or both. The "dream" must have some substance to be believed. America has had frontier, and has had, with the exception of a few periods, full employment. It was in this environment that Perlman could imagine exclusively job conscious trade unionism to be inevitable.⁽⁴⁰⁾ To say, as Perlman did, that opportunity in America has been "limited" is a truism which is of no assistance in attempting to draw international comparisons.

The Philippines also has had a frontier. There has been significant voluntary mass migration from all overcrowded areas, except Central Luzon, to Mindanao and to the Cagayan Valley in Northern Luzon, so that "going to Mindanao" is an alternative

(39) See S. Perlman, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

(40) See Taft, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

in the minds of many who have not chosen it. The Philippines has had a rapidly expanding economy too. But now the easily accessible, highly productive free land is practically exhausted, and land grabbers and speculators have a hand in distributing much of what is left. Chronic unemployment, already over the million mark, is growing steadily. It is these trends which, if they continue for long, could kill the still unsubstantial "Filipino dream" and drive trade unions to espousal of radical solutions for the difficulties at hand.

A rigid, hierarchical social structure, in addition to creating class consciousness, can serve to encourage political unionism in another way. Since paternalism from higher to lower and deference from lower to higher is an integral part of such a structure, collective bargaining by workers as equals with employers is, in that setting, a contradiction in terms. Collective bargaining can only operate after there has been a considerable depersonalization of economic relations, which is, in turn, a result of the progress of industrialization. But some traditional social structures are more easily depersonalized than others. Japanese society has been a particularly tough nut to crack, with unionism and collective bargaining having made almost no headway to date in small owner-managed enterprises. Political unionism makes an end run around employer paternalism into a realm of activity less fettered by traditional obligations to seek some of the same ends. Thus national unions and federations in Japan are primarily political instruments, while less than half the enterprise unions engage in collective bargaining.⁽⁴¹⁾

In under-developed areas foreign capitalists and managers, who have usually introduced the corporate business form, have never been bound by ties of paternalism to their workers. Since depersonalization causes the worker to seek status in the union, it is in foreign enterprises that unionism grows first, and with foreign managers that the collective bargaining relation is most easily

(41) See Solomon B. Levine, "Labor Patterns and Trends", *The Annals*, Vol. 308 (Nov. 1956), pp. 102-112; also "The Labor Movement and Economic Development in Japan", IRRA, *Proceedings*, 1954, pp. 48-59.

established. (In S. E. Asia one must qualify "foreign" by adding "Western", since overseas Chinese employers are among the most resistant to unionism.) In the Philippines the native entrepreneurial class is especially strong, and the role of foreign enterprise less important in relation to that class than in some neighboring countries. One would thus expect that this situation would deter the spread of collective bargaining, and to some extent it has. But, counter-balanced by a relatively open society, it has not made a noticeable contribution to political unionism.

Paradoxically, with the introduction of one other factor, nationalism, the presence of foreign employers may actually assist the growth of political unionism. In Indonesia, for example, the large number of foreign enterprises has caused resentment. Nationalist sentiment directed against Dutchmen has identified capitalism and colonialism, thus making socialism patriotic. Such sentiment has given a substantial boost to the most political kind of trade unionism.

One attribute of a loosely structured society is that educational opportunities are available for workers. Compared to Europe, this was true of America, thus providing an additional impetus to the development of rank and file union leadership. Compared to the rest of Southeast Asia, the Philippines has provided unusual educational facilities for the masses. Though this did not, in the past, actually produce very many union leaders from the ranks, because of the preference given lawyers by a system of judicial arbitration, it now provides the basis for a fairly sophisticated labor education program designed to train such leadership. Said Perlman of the labor movement, "Given the opportunity to . . . develop a leadership from its own ranks, the trade union mentality will eventually come to dominate." Free, compulsory elementary education and one of the highest literacy rates in the world did not produce either rank and file leadership or "trade union mentality" in pre-war Japan, however. As already mentioned, other social factors were producing contrary tendencies.⁽⁴²⁾

(42) See Solomon Levine, *Industrial Relations in Postwar Japan* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958), pp. 59-66.

The question of leadership, and necessarily of ideology, leads us to consider a complex of factors affecting trade unions' development which is peculiar to Asia. In Europe and, with qualification, in the U. S. socialist and trade union ideology, growing out of observations of the social impact of industrialization, developed only slightly later than the growth of an urban labor class. Thus ideology interacted with trade union experience, while rank and file leadership developed side by side with intellectual leadership. In fact, in Britain labor leaders had considerable practical experience before socialism gained currency among trade unions. In Asia, however, trade union and socialist philosophy was imported from the West at about the same time as industrialization. In Southeast Asia there was little industrial labor and almost no trade unionism before the Bolshevik revolution. In Japan a pre-Bolshevik socialism was introduced within a few years after the beginning of industrialization in the 1880's. Politically-minded intellectuals, equipped with a full-blown socialist philosophy were the founders of a major segment of the Asian trade union movement. In most countries "pure" trade unionism never had a chance. In addition to the social and cultural barriers to collective bargaining, rank and file leadership was lacking. Nor was it encouraged by the intelligentsia.

In the Philippines, the timing was again slightly different. Industries were established somewhat earlier than elsewhere in Southeast Asia, and numerous workers associations of different types had sprung up in and around Manila before Marxism was introduced in 1925. There was thus already in existence experienced non-Communist labor leadership to oppose the spread of pro-Communist unions.

In South and Southeast Asia an additional complicating factor was nationalism. In some periods of pre-war colonial rule nationalist political activity was more rigidly suppressed than trade union organization; a few nationalist leaders therefore

turned to union activity as an alternative.⁽⁴³⁾ Thus the union was early viewed as a political tool, even by non-Marxists. But the utilization of labor unions as a major force in the nationalist struggle has been for the most part a post-war phenomena, especially in Burma, Malaya.

Perhaps the most important distinction between the Philippines and its closest Asian neighbors is to be found in the differing degrees of recency and intensity of their respective nationalist experiences. The assurance of Philippine independence, to be given in 1946, created no incentive for either pre-war or early post-war nationalist leaders to multiply mass organizations to support the nationalist cause. Yet the liberation struggle was precisely the necessity which mothered the TUC (B) in Burma, the Confederation Generale Chretien du Travail Vietnamien, and SOBSI in Indonesia. This is a kind of political unionism even more purely political in origin and current operations than that of post-war Japan, where the local unions have an economic emphasis, even though national unions and federations are almost exclusively concerned with politics. Except for SOBSI, these unions have come under government control.

In summary, then, we can say that non-political trade unionism is the Philippine pattern, practically unique in Asia, because of the presidential system of government, the early granting of extensive suffrage, a predominantly private enterprise economy plus a liberal labor policy in government corporations, considerable upward social mobility based on a history of job opportunity, a relatively late introduction of Marxism, and an easily won independence. Increasing unemployment, vanishing free land, and the threat of inflation are present trends which seriously threaten this pattern, however.

(43) e. g. Tan Malakka in Indonesia, Mahatma Gandhi, briefly, in India, and Isabelo de los Reyes in the Philippines, who soon learned that union organization was no more acceptable than nationalist organization to the colonial government. However, this phenomena was not nearly so widespread in the area as is implied by George Lichtblau, in "The Politics of Trade Union Leadership in Southern Asia", *World Politics*, VII (October 1954), pp. 84-101.