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TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP, 1897–1962

Leo Troy

I Introduction

AMERICAN trade unions grew from a membership of 447,000 in 1897 to a high of 17,700,000 in 1957, and then declined to 15,900,000 in 1962 (table 1). This record of growth was interrupted from time to time by intervals of stability and decline.

Throughout most of the sixty-six years covered by the statistics now available, union membership grew faster than the nation's total civilian labor force, and faster than the number of employees on nonagricultural payrolls (chart 1). From the beginning of this century, union membership in the United States rose from three per cent of the labor force to a peak of 26 per cent in 1953, and declined to 21 per cent by 1962 (table 2 and chart 2). The highest level of organization among wage earning and salaried employees in nonfarm industries also came in 1953, at 33 per cent, more than five times the level in 1900, which was six per cent. After the 1953 high, it dropped to 27 per cent by 1962. One of the factors in the recent decline has been the rapid growth of employment in sectors that are largely nonunion (government, finance, trade, and services) and the

TABLE 1. — MEMBERSHIP OF AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS, 1897–1962

Year	Membership		Year	Membership	
	Total	Excluding Canadian		Total	Excluding Canadian
1897	447,000		1930	3,392,800	3,161,800
1898	500,700		1931	3,358,100	3,142,100
1899	611,000		1932	3,144,300	2,968,300
1900	868,500		1933	2,973,000	2,805,000
1901	1,124,700		1934	3,608,600	3,447,600
1902	1,375,900		1935	3,753,300	3,609,300
1903	1,913,900		1936	4,107,100	3,932,100
1904	2,072,700		1937	5,780,100	5,563,100
1905	2,022,300		1938	6,080,500	5,849,500
1906	1,907,300		1939	6,555,500	6,338,500
1907	2,080,400		1940	7,282,000	7,055,000
1908	2,130,600		1941	8,698,000	8,410,000
1909	2,005,600		1942	10,199,700	9,817,700
1910	2,140,500	2,101,500	1943	11,811,700	11,382,700
1911	2,343,400		1944	12,628,000	12,153,000
1912	2,452,400		1945	12,562,100	12,088,100
1913	2,716,300		1946	13,262,800	12,683,800
1914	2,687,100		1947	14,594,700	13,967,700
1915	2,582,600		1948	15,019,800	14,338,800
1916	2,772,700		1949	14,694,900	13,976,900
1917	3,061,400		1950	14,822,900	14,089,900
1918	3,467,300		1951	15,772,200	14,968,200
1919	4,125,200		1952	16,309,800	15,451,800
1920	5,047,800	4,881,200	1953	17,315,600	16,403,600
1921	4,781,300		1954	16,612,000	15,679,000
1922	4,027,400		1955	16,989,700	16,042,700
1923	3,622,000		1956	17,383,200	16,396,200
1924	3,536,100		1957	17,686,900	16,624,900
1925	3,519,400		1958	16,702,300	15,650,300
1926	3,502,400		1959	16,501,400	15,449,400
1927	3,546,500		1960	16,606,800	15,538,800
1928	3,479,800		1961	16,142,900	15,117,900
1929	3,442,600		1962	15,928,000	14,884,000

Source: Total membership — 1897–1934, Leo Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1936), 192–193; 1935–1962, Appendix tables A-1, A-2, and A-3.

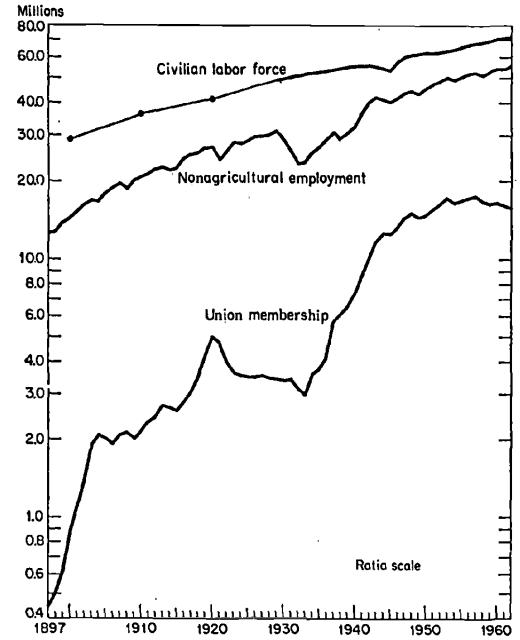
Membership, excluding Canadian members — 1910 and 1920, *Ibid.*, table 27, p. 116 (including unclassified membership given in footnote 1); 1930–1962, total membership less Canadian membership reported in Bureau of Labor Statistics, *BLS 60-2402* (mimeographed, Feb., 1960); and Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Union Membership, 1962, Summary Release* (Jan., 1964).

My greatest obligation is to the late Leo Wolman. Because of his support and interest, I was able to carry on the work which improved and expanded the National Bureau's series on union membership, the longest such record now available.

This report owes much to the valuable insights and scrupulous reading of Geoffrey H. Moore. I am greatly indebted to Gerhard Bry, Solomon Fabricant, Jacob Mincer, and Albert Rees for their comments on drafts of the manuscript. The reading committee of the NBER's Board of Directors, Messrs. H. W. Laidler, A. J. Hayes, and Nathaniel Goldfinger, contributed measurably to the final product. Other readers who provided helpful suggestions were Otis Brubaker, Albert Epstein, Everett Kassalow, H. Gregg Lewis, Philip Taft, Lazare Teper, and Leonard Linsenmayer. Special note of appreciation is due Maude R. Pech for her careful work on the figures and charts presented here, to James F. McRee, Jr., for editorial improvements, and to H. Irving Forman for his usual excellent work in drawing the charts.

The librarians of the New York Public Library, particularly Edward Di Roma, and those of the United States Department of Labor gave freely of their time in obtaining many of the union financial reports, vital to the method of this study, for years prior to 1948. When the reports on file at the Department of Labor became open to the public, the then Secretary of Labor, Arthur J. Goldberg, facilitated access to them. John Holcombe, former director of the Bureau of Labor Management Reports, and Herbert Lahne, research director of the BLMR, generously cooperated with me and thereby greatly eased the task of securing the data from which most of the recent figures of this paper were computed.

CHART 1. — TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP, WAGE AND SALARIED EMPLOYEES IN AGRICULTURAL ESTABLISHMENTS, AND CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, 1897–1962



SOURCE: Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 2. — EXTENT OF UNION ORGANIZATION, 1897–1962

Year	Total Civilian Labor Force (thousands)	Total Non-Agricultural Employees (thousands)	Union Membership [a] as % of Civilian Labor Force (A)	Civilian Labor Force (B)	Nonagricultural Employees (A)	Nonagricultural Employees (B)
1897		12,631			3.5	
1898		12,802			3.9	
1899		13,984			4.4	
1900	28,800	14,339	3.0		6.1	
1901		15,258			7.4	
1902		16,284			8.4	
1903		16,999			11.3	
1904		16,811			12.3	
1905		18,035			11.2	
1906		19,066			10.0	
1907		19,691			10.6	
1908		18,786			11.3	
1909		20,232			9.9	
1910	36,100	20,988	5.9	5.8	10.2	10.0
1911		21,443			10.9	
1912		22,353			11.0	
1913		22,828			11.9	
1914		22,359			12.0	
1915		22,497			11.5	
1916		24,767			11.2	
1917		25,508			12.0	
1918		25,617			13.5	
1919		25,754			16.0	
1920	41,200	25,877	12.3	11.8	19.5	18.9
1919		27,088			15.2	
1920	41,200	27,350	12.3	11.8	18.5	17.8
1921		24,382			19.6	
1922		25,827			15.6	
1923		28,394			12.8	
1924		28,040			12.6	
1925		28,778			12.2	
1926		29,819			11.7	
1927		29,976			11.8	
1928		30,000			11.6	
1929	49,180	31,339	7.0		11.0	
1930	49,820	29,424	6.8	6.3	11.5	10.7
1931	50,420	26,649		6.2		11.8
1932	51,000	23,628		5.8		12.6
1933	51,590	23,711		5.4		11.8
1934	52,230	25,953		6.6		13.3
1935	52,870	27,053		6.8		13.3
1936	53,440	29,082		7.4		13.5
1937	54,000	31,026		10.3		17.9
1938	54,610	29,209		10.7		20.0
1939	55,230	30,618		11.5		20.7
1940	55,640	32,376		12.7		21.8
1941	55,910	36,554		15.0		23.0
1942	56,410	40,125		17.4		24.5
1943	55,540	42,452		20.5		26.8
1944	54,630	41,883		22.2		29.0
1945	53,860	40,394		22.4		29.9
1946	57,520	41,674		22.1		30.4
1947	60,168	43,881		23.2		31.8
1948	61,442	44,891		23.3		31.9
1949	62,105	43,778		22.5		31.9
1950	63,099	45,222		22.3		31.2
1951	62,884	47,849		23.8		31.3
1952	62,966	48,825		24.5		31.6
1953	63,815	50,232		25.7		32.7
1954	64,468	49,022		24.3		32.0
1955	65,847	50,675		24.4		31.7
1956	67,530	52,408		24.3		31.3
1957	67,946	52,904		24.5		31.4
1958	68,647	51,423		22.8		30.4
1959	69,394	53,380		22.3		28.9
1960	70,612	54,404		22.0		28.6
1961	71,603	54,224		21.1		27.9
1962	71,854	55,841		20.7		26.7

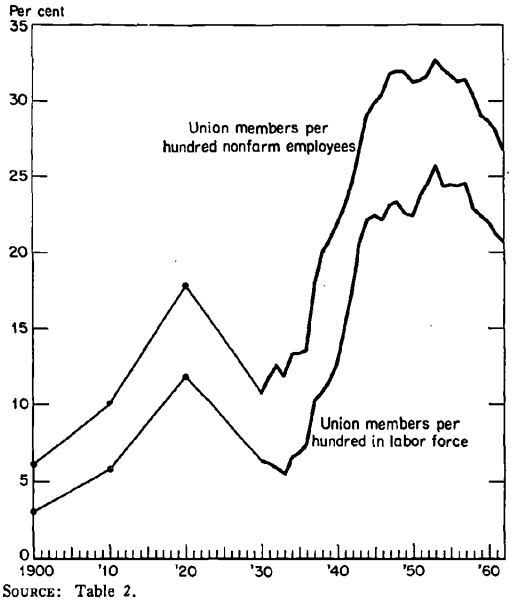
SOURCE: Civilian labor force — 1900–1910, includes persons ten years and older; 1920, 14 years and older; Clarence D. Long, *The Labor Force Under Changing Income and Employment* (Princeton: for NBER, 1958), table A-2, less armed forces in the United States from table A-5, p. 296. (Figures given by Long for 1930, 1940, and 1950 are 48,600,000, 52,500,000, and 58,800,000, respectively.) 1929–1962, labor force 14 years and older, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, Annual Supplement Issue (Sept. 1963), table A-1, p. 1. Nonagricultural employees, 1897–1920, John W. Kendrick, unpublished worksheets; 1919–1962, Bureal of Labor Statistics, *Bulletin 1312-1*, 2.

[a] In columns (A), Canadian membership is included in total membership; in columns (B), it is excluded (see table 1).

decline of employment in some sectors that have been strongly unionized (manufacturing, mining, and railroads).

These figures reflect new estimates of union membership and differ in method of compila-

CHART 2. — EXTENT OF ORGANIZATION OF THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE AND OF NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES, 1900–1962



SOURCE: Table 2.

tion from those presently reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Essentially, the new estimates represent annual average dues-paying membership. The historical trends revealed by the figures are described briefly in the following pages; sources and methods of estimation are discussed in section II; a comparison with the BLS estimates and methods is presented in section III; and some suggestions for further improvement in statistics of union membership are offered in section IV.

Trends in Membership and Extent of Organization

Ideally, membership should be compared only to those in the labor force who are eligible and potential members of unions. Figures of the eligible and potential would be difficult, perhaps impossible to agree upon, and no time series of these currently exist. Consequently, we use available alternatives, nonfarm employment and the civilian labor force.

In calculating extent of organization we exclude Canadian membership in American unions, but otherwise use the same total membership figures to compare with the labor force and with nonfarm employment. This is not strictly correct, since in the latter comparison we should exclude those union members who are unemployed, employed on farms, or self-employed. Since our figures do include some of these categories of members, the ratio of membership to nonfarm employment may be slightly higher than it should be. On the other hand, the employment figures include corporate executives and other supervisory employees who are not potential union members, and this tends to make the ratio too low. Details on the employment status of union members are scarce, and in any event the effect of these factors on the ratios to nonfarm employment would be minor (see section II).

Shifts in the composition of the labor force and of nonfarm employment have had important effects on the series on extent of organization shown in table 2 and chart 2. The long-term decline in agricultural employment, which historically has been nonunion, has tended to bring about a somewhat faster gain in unionization of the labor force than in organization of nonfarm employment. For example, as noted above, membership as a percentage of the labor force increased more than eightfold between 1900 and 1953, whereas there was only a five-fold increase in the percentage of nonfarm employees who were union members.

Unemployment is another factor with a differential impact on the two measures of extent of unionization, since it is included in the labor force concept and varies according to business conditions. Between 1930 and 1933, for example, when unemployment rose, the proportion of the labor force organized fell from 6.3 to 5.4 per cent, while that of nonfarm employees unionized rose from 10.7 to 11.8 per cent. Conversely, when unemployment declined rapidly, as in wartime, the extent of organization of the labor force grew more than that of nonfarm employees. From 1941 to 1945, the labor force ratio gained 7.4 percentage points and the nonfarm employment ratio, 6.9 points. The same pattern appeared during the Korean War.

This paper briefly recapitulates the trends in membership from 1897 to 1933 described by Leo Wolman,[1] and then those shown by the

[1] Leo Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1936), chapters II–IV.

new figures, which cover the period 1933–1962 (table 3).

TABLE 3. — TRENDS IN UNION MEMBERSHIP AND EXTENT OF ORGANIZATION, 1897–1962

	Change in Total Membership		Change in Ratios of American Membership to: Labor Force	Change in Ratios of American Membership to: Non-agricultural Employment
		(per cent)		(per cent)
1897–1904	1,625,700	363.7	n.a.	8.8
1904–1914	614,400	29.6	n.a.	−0.3
1914–1920	2,360,700	87.9	n.a.	7.5
1920–1923	−1,425,800	− 28.2	n.a.	−5.7
1923–1929	− 179,400	− 5.0	n.a.	−1.8
1929–1933	− 469,600	− 13.6	− 1.1	1.6
1933–1939	3,582,500	120.5	6.1	8.9
1939–1945	6,006,600	91.6	10.9	9.2
1945–1950	2,260,800	18.0	− .1	1.3
1950–1953	2,492,700	16.8	3.4	1.5
1953–1957	371,300	2.1	− 1.2	−1.3
1957–1962	−1,758,900	− 9.9	− 3.8	−4.7

SOURCE: 1897–1962 — table 1. From 1933 to 1962 — figures relating to the extent of organization of the civilian labor force and nonagricultural employment exclude Canadian members and are the *absolute* differences derived from table 2. For years prior to 1933, total membership figures are compared with the civilian labor force and nonagricultural employment.
n.a. = Labor force data not available.

Between 1897 and 1914, union membership increased more than six times, the largest relative increase for any peacetime period of like duration. The bulk of the increase (from 447,000 in 1897 to 2.7 million in 1914) was attained by 1904. Small reductions in membership in 1904–1906, 1908–1909, and 1914–1915 were apparently associated with depressions in business activity.

The onset of World War I did not immediately bring gains to unions in this country; in fact, there was a small decline in 1915. But, thereafter, unions increased their numbers, with the tempo accelerating upon the United States' entry into the war and continuing until 1920, when membership reached a peak in excess of five million. The over-all gain from 1914 to 1920, about 2.3 million, nearly doubled the size of the union movement. Most of the increase went to established unions in railway transportation, shipbuilding, metalworking, and apparel.

From its pinnacle in 1920, the American labor movement lost in excess of two million members by 1933, when it touched a low of just under three million. The drop began with a decline in employment in the industries that experienced most of the wartime growth — shipbuilding and metalworking. The sharp business recession of 1920–1921 caused a further and broader reduction in membership. In addition, the unsuccessful shopmen's strike on the railways in 1922, involving an estimated 400,000 workers, curtailed much of the wartime union growth in that industry. By the end of 1923 — only three years after attaining a high of more than five million members — the American labor movement's losses ran to nearly 1.5 million.

Except in 1927, union membership continued to drop throughout the remaining years of the twenties. However, the over-all loss of about 180,000, between 1923 and 1929 was modest, compared to the years immediately preceding and following.

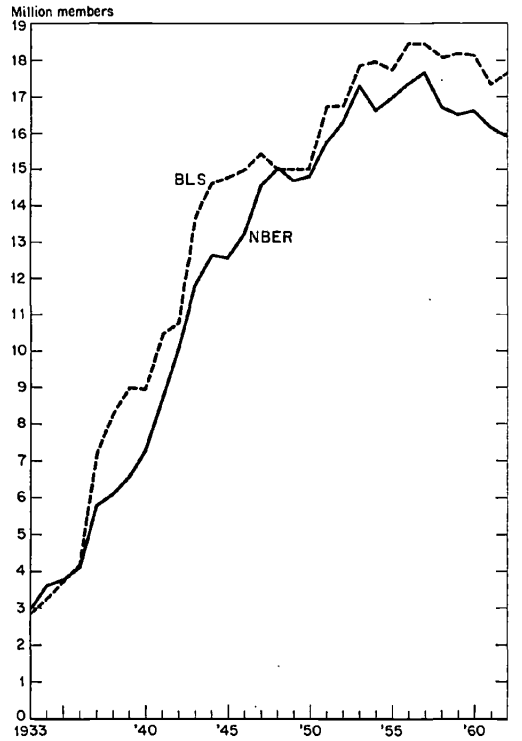
Under the impact of the depression, 1929–1933, unions gave up nearly another half-million members. As a result, union membership in 1933 was about at the level it had reached just prior to America's entry into World War I, seventeen years earlier. In that year, 1916, it was 2.8 million.

Despite persistently high levels of unemployment throughout the years 1933–1939, organized labor added almost 3.6 million members to its ranks. In fact, by 1937 membership reached 5.8 million, exceeding the peak of 1920. Unionization of the labor force rose from 5.4 in 1933 to 11.5 per cent in 1939, and among nonagricultural employees from 11.8 to 20.7 per cent (table 2). Significantly, too, union membership ran counter to a major cyclical decline in 1937–1938. On an annual basis, nonagricultural employment fell by less than six per cent, but membership climbed by more than five per cent during that recession.

Although the New Deal era (1933–1939), which brought with it important legislation affecting unions, ranks as one of the most significant in terms of union growth, nevertheless the gains in membership were not as large as official statistics have indicated. This is one of the major findings of our study.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' figures, shown in chart 3 (see also table 10), total membership grew from 2.9 million in 1933 to almost nine million in 1939. The gain exceeds that indicated by our data by some 2.5 million. The primary reason for this discrep-

CHART 3. — MEMBERSHIP OF AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS, ACCORDING TO BLS AND NBER ESTIMATES, 1933–62



SOURCE: Table 10.

ancy is the BLS's reliance on the CIO claim of four million in arriving at its total membership figure for 1939. Our figure for that year, by contrast, is 1.8 million for the CIO, or 2.2 million below that used by the BLS. Basically, our data are derived from financial reports [2] of individual unions; our figure for the CIO in 1939 compares favorably with that derived from dues received by the CIO in that year and reported confidentially at the time by Philip Murray.[3]

For the World War II period, 1939–1945, our figures show a total gain of over six million, indicating that the war years accounted for a larger growth in union members than the New Deal era, a finding that also differs from the official statistics and is a result again of the difference in sources and methods. The BLS shows a gain for the same period (chart 3) of 5.8 million, which is less than the increase its figures show for 1933–1939.

The relative increase in membership between 1939 and 1945 (92 per cent) slightly exceeded the 88 per cent achieved during World War I. Membership during World War II rose to a peak in 1944 at 12,628,000. In 1945, it dropped slightly to 12,562,000, marking the first interruption in the climb of union membership since 1933. With reconversion underway in 1944–1945, total employment in nonagricultural establishments declined slightly — some 3.6 per cent — from 41,883,000 to 40,394,000, and total union membership paralleled this decline, although to a lesser degree.

The post-World War II years to 1950 were markedly different from the period following 1920. It will be recalled that within three years of the peak membership of five million in 1920, unions lost 1.4 million, or 60 per cent, of their wartime gains. In contrast, between 1945 and 1950, they added 2.3 million to the World War II increase of six million members.

Although union membership (after deducting Canadian members) during 1945–1950 increased at a slightly slower pace than did the labor force, it rose faster than nonfarm employment. The extent of the labor force organized dropped from 22.4 per cent in 1945 to 22.3 per cent in 1950, while the percentage of nonagricultural employees organized rose 1.3 points to 31.2 per cent by 1950. During that period there was one brief decline in union membership, associated with the recession of 1948–1949, which reduced nonagricultural employment by 2.4 per cent and union membership, excluding Canada, by 2.5 per cent.

During the Korean War, in the main, the union growth pattern of World War II was reestablished. Over-all growth in membership from 1950 to 1953 was more rapid than in the labor force or in nonagricultural industries. The ratios of union membership to the labor force and to nonfarm employees rose to all-time highs in 1953, 25.7 per cent and 32.7 per cent, respectively.

The slowdown in membership growth which appeared between 1947 and the onset of the Korean War resumed after 1953. Following the end of the war, the 1953–1954 business reces-

[2] See section II.

[3] Murray reported a membership of 1,700,000, based on dues received by the CIO from November 1938 to May 1939. See W. Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 585.

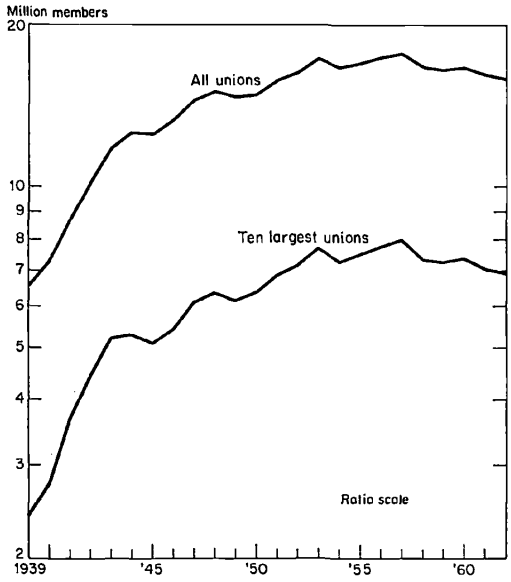
sion contributed to a reduction of 4.4 per cent in total American union membership. Thereafter, aggregate membership climbed slowly, reaching a historic peak of 17.7 million in 1957. Beginning with the recession of 1957–1958, the advance turned into a decline, and continued into 1959. After a small upturn in 1960, membership fell again in 1961 and 1962. By 1962 unions had over one and three-quarter million fewer members than at the peak in 1957. As a result, in 1962 the extent of organization of the labor force (20.7 per cent) and of nonagricultural employment (26.7 per cent) were below the historic levels of 1953 and about the same as those prevailing in 1943 (table 2). Measured this way, union organization slipped back about twenty years.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' estimates of union membership also show this recent cessation of union growth. After touching a peak in 1956, union membership, according to the BLS, dropped in four of the next six years and, although it turned up slightly in 1962, stood 847,000 below the historic high.

Membership of the Ten Largest Unions

The general course of unionism after 1939 can be traced from the membership records of the ten largest unions, ranked according to their standing in 1960. These were the ten largest for most, although not all, of the period 1939–1962. Their share of total membership ranged from a low of 36.8 per cent in 1939 to a high of 45.2 per cent in 1957, and stood at 44.4 per cent in 1960. Two years later, the share of these ten unions edged down to 43.5 per cent of the total. Their statistical record between 1939 and 1962 is depicted in chart 4, and changes in membership over specific intervals are shown in table 4.

CHART 4. — MEMBERSHIP OF ALL UNIONS AND OF TEN LARGEST UNIONS, 1939–62



SOURCE: Table 4 and Appendix tables A-1, A-2, A-3.

TABLE 4. — MEMBERSHIP CHANGES OF THE TEN LARGEST UNIONS, 1939–1962 [a]

		Membership			Change in Membership					
		1939	1960	1962	1939–1945	1945–1950	1950–1953	1953–1962	1939–1962	
		thousands								%
1	Teamsters	441.6	1,480.6	1,366.6	202.9	412.9	141.6	167.6	925.0	209.5
2	Automobile Workers	165.3	1,136.1	1,073.6	726.5	16.6	508.6	− 343.4	908.3	549.5
3	Steelworkers	225.0	944.7	878.5	510.7	131.9	233.7	− 222.8	653.5	290.4
4	Carpenters	214.8	756.6	633.8	256.0	246.1	69.8	− 152.9	419.0	195.1
5	Electrical Workers (IBEW)	125.1	690.0	710.2	221.4	103.5	118.6	141.6	585.1	467.7
6	Machinists	178.0	686.8	666.3	492.1	− 108.0	184.7	− 80.5	488.3	274.3
7	Hod Carriers	157.5	442.5	421.3	24.0	185.3	78.8	− 24.3	263.8	167.5
8	Hotel, Restaurant Employees, and Bartenders Union	210.9	434.2	437.3	71.5	102.3	17.1	35.5	226.4	107.3
9(a)	Mine Workers, United	478.5	204.7	151.5	23.6	4.4	− 86.2	− 268.8	− 327.0	− 68.3
9(b)	Mine Workers, United Dist. 50	16.5	200.8	201.4	73.5	64.3	62.4	− 15.3	184.9	1,120.6
10	Garment Workers, Ladies	201.5	393.1	394.8	71.6	112.3	13.4	− 4.0	193.3	95.9
	Total, ten unions	2,414.7	7,370.1	6,935.3	+ 2,673.8	+ 1,271.6	+ 1,342.5	− 767.3	4,520.6	187.2
	Total, all unions	6,555.5	16,606.8	15,928.0	+ 6,006.6	+ 2,260.8	+ 2,492.7	− 1,387.6	9,372.5	143.0
	Per cent, ten unions of all unions	36.8	44.4	43.5	44.5	56.2	53.9	55.3	48.2	

SOURCE: Appendix tables A-1, A-2, A-3.
[a] Unions are ranked according to their size in 1960.

By and large, the unions which showed the greatest increases during the war years were those newly organized in manufacturing, especially the ones affected by wartime increases in employment, such as in transportation equipment (the Auto Workers and the Machinists) and steel. After the war there was a reversal. The Auto Workers, the Steelworkers, and the Machinists, all of which had made heavy gains during the war, saw their growth curtailed and the Machinists suffered a substantial loss. The postwar decline of the Auto Workers becomes even more striking if their membership in 1950 is compared with their wartime peak in 1944. They showed a loss of over 150,000 (908,000 compared with 1,065,100).[4]

In contrast to these changes, other unions shown in table 4, which fell behind in average growth during the war (the Teamsters, the Carpenters, and the Hotel, Restaurant and Bartenders unions), gained in membership well above the average in the postwar period from 1945 to 1950. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, its membership divided between manufacturing and nonmanufacturing industries, extended its wartime growth but at a diminished rate.

The IBEW repeated its World War II growth pattern during the Korean War. Impressive advances were scored by the Auto Workers, the Steelworkers, and the Machinists. The Teamsters, the Carpenters, the Ladies Garment Workers, and the Hotel unions all gained too, but, as in 1939–1945, fell behind the average.

[4] During the war period, unions reached their peaks in different years, partly because of differences in the peaks of employment among industries, and perhaps, also, because of the financial reporting practices of unions. Thus, the Boilermakers (with a substantial membership in shipbuilding), the Carpenters, and the Hod Carriers touched highs in 1943 and thereafter declined. The Marine and Shipbuilding Workers, with membership principally in ship construction, scaled a high in 1944, along with the Auto Workers and the Machinists, as noted in the text.

Construction employment reached a peak in 1942 of 2,170,000, which figure is a calendar average. On the other hand, the Carpenters at this time used a fiscal year ending June 30, while the Hod Carriers used a calendar year. The lag in the Carpenters' membership may therefore be partly attributable to the differences in reporting years, but this would not explain the lag of the Hod Carriers. It seems likely that the decline in construction employment in 1942–1943 was accounted for primarily by nonunion employment.

Only three of the unions shown in table 4 increased in size between 1953 and 1962. These three were the Teamsters, which added 167,600; the IBEW, which gained 141,600; and the Hotel Union, which edged up 35,500. As a group, the ten largest unions accounted for over half the total loss in membership between 1953 and 1962. Except for the United Mine Workers (in coal mining), the principal losers were the leading gainers during the Korean War: the Auto Workers, the Steelworkers, and the Machinists. Meanwhile, the Teamsters, the IBEW, and two unions not shown in table 4 — the Retail Clerks (over 157,000) and the State, County and Municipal Employees (over 106,000 after allowing for absorption of the Government and Civic Workers Organizing Committee in July 1956) — continued to make impressive gains, although the rate of increase of all slowed considerably after 1957.

In 1962, the Teamsters registered a loss in membership, the first in about twenty years. Between 1961 and 1962, they dropped 122,000 members. The IBEW's membership remained stationary in 1961, but in the next year climbed almost three per cent to a record high of 710,200.

The United Mine Workers (in coal mining), which had gained members during World War II and even until 1950, shrank by more than 300,000 within a decade as its membership paralleled the decline in mining employment. To a large extent, losses during the Korean War were offset by District 50 (membership in manufacturing, public utilities, and miscellaneous industries), but even this fast-growing section of the union declined between 1953 and 1962.

As a result of its over-all decline, the United Mine Workers (including District 50) dropped from the list of the largest ten unions in 1962 and was replaced by the Retail Clerks. By 1962 the total membership of the UMW declined to 352,900, while that of the Retail Clerks climbed to 382,000.

There are also a number of changes in the rankings of the ten largest unions. In 1961, the Carpenters gave way to the IBEW as the fourth largest union and dropped another notch, to sixth position behind the Machinists by 1962. The Hod Carriers and the Hotel Union exchanged seventh and eighth places in 1962.

The Ladies' Garment Workers moved into ninth position and the Retail Clerks into tenth in 1962.

Membership by Affiliation

The Committee for Industrial Organization was formed in November 1935 by eight unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.[5] The new organization maintained its identity until it merged with the AFL in December 1955 as the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. The records of AFL and CIO membership are shown in table 5 and chart 5. For present purposes, we shall merely call attention to the affiliation changes that affected the membership of the organizations.

TABLE 5. — UNION MEMBERSHIP BY AFFILIATION, 1935–1962 (THOUSANDS)

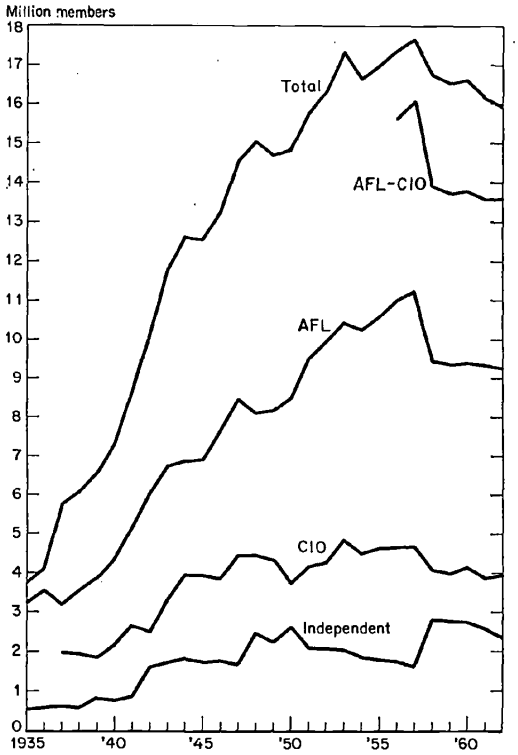
	AFL (1)	CIO (2)	AFL–CIO (3)	Unaffiliated (4)	Total (5)
1935	3,218.4			534.9	3,753.3
1936	3,516.4			590.7	4,107.1
1937	3,179.7	1,991.2		609.2	5,780.1
1938	3,547.4	1,957.7		575.4	6,080.5
1939	3,878.0	1,837.7		839.8	6,555.5
1940	4,343.2	2,154.1		784.7	7,282.0
1941	5,178.8	2,653.9		865.3	8,698.0
1942	6,075.7	2,492.7		1,631.3	10,199.7
1943	6,779.2	3,303.4		1,729.1	11,811.7
1944	6,876.5	3,937.1		1,814.4	12,628.0
1945	6,890.4	3,927.9		1,743.8	12,562.1
1946	7,652.0	3,847.3		1,763.5	13,262.8
1947	8,467.2	4,450.9		1,676.6	14,594.7
1948	8,094.7	4,450.8		2,474.3	15,019.8
1949	8,143.2	4,314.0		2,237.7	14,694.9
1950	8,494.0	3,712.8		2,616.1	14,822.9
1951	9,497.4	4,182.9		2,091.9	15,772.2
1952	9,977.4	4,261.4		2,071.0	16,309.8
1953	10,438.0	4,837.9		2,039.7	17,315.6
1954	10,258.0	4,494.4		1,859.6	16,612.0
1955	10,593.1	4,608.3		1,788.3	16,989.7
1956	11,015.3	4,623.5	15,638.8	1,744.4	17,383.2
1957	11,226.1 [a]	4,640.3 [a]	16,078.4	1,608.5	17,686.9
1958	9,417.3 [a]	4,059.9 [a]	13,890.6	2,811.7	16,702.3
1959	9,338.2 [a]	3,982.8 [a]	13,714.9	2,786.5	16,501.4
1960	9,377.5 [a]	4,133.9 [a]	13,881.3	2,725.5	16,606.8
1961	9,311.9 [a]	3,865.8 [a]	13,567.8	2,575.1	16,142.9
1962	9,238.2 [a]	3,957.6 [a]	13,575.7	2,352.3	15,928.0

SOURCE: Appendix tables A–1, A–2, A–3.

[a] Starting with 1956, columns (1) and (2) show the membership of unions affiliated with the AFL and the CIO in 1955. New unions are included in the merged federation only (col. 3). Thus the Paperworkers, CIO, merged with the Paper Makers, AFL, and the combined membership is shown in the AFL–CIO column. Independent railway unions which affiliated since the merger are also shown in the AFL–CIO total. Consequently, the sum of columns (1) and (2) does not equal column (3) except in 1956.

[5] The unions and their membership follow: Clothing Workers (120,000), Hatters (22,100), Ladies' Garment Workers (179,300), Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (15,900), United Mine Workers (580,000), Oil Workers (40,500), and Textile Workers (100,000). Charles Howard, president of the International Typographical Union (76,000), affiliated as an individual. The Hatters and the Typographical Union remained with the AFL when the Committee was reorganized as the Congress of Industrial Organization. The Ladies' Garment Workers affiliated with the Committee, but not with the Congress when it was set up in 1938.

CHART 5. — UNION MEMBERSHIP BY AFFILIATION, 1935–62



SOURCE: Table 5.

The AFL lost nearly 338,000 members between 1936 and 1937 owing to the disaffiliation of six unions forming the original Committee for Industrial Organization, together with a number of smaller unions. The combined membership of the six in 1936 was 1,035,800. Thus if the disaffiliated membership is deducted, the AFL actually increased its ranks between 1936 and 1937, and thereafter continued to grow without interruption until 1947–1948. The disaffiliation of the Machinists after World War II, with a reported membership in 1946 of 630,000, was offset by the reaffiliation of the

United Mine Workers, which, with District 50, was estimated to have 640,700 members in 1946. The Miners left again by the end of 1947, and their departure (with a membership of 722,300 in 1948) accounts for the decline in AFL totals between 1947 and 1948. In 1951, the Machinists rejoined the AFL.

The next interruption in the growth of the AFL coincided with the business downturn of 1953–1954. Membership recovered by 335,000 in 1955, bringing total AFL strength to 10.6 million on the eve of its merger with the CIO. Thus the rivalry, which began with memberships at about a 1.6:1 ratio in favor of the AFL in 1937, ended with an AFL margin of 2.3:1 in 1955.

The CIO's record of growth was interrupted more frequently than the AFL's, primarily because of numerous disaffiliations and expulsions, but also because more of its affiliates represented workers in industries sensitive to business cycles. The first interruption came in 1942, when the United Mine Workers withdrew; next, at the time of the partial reconversion in manufacturing from war to consumer production, 1944–1945; declines occurred during each of the recessions of 1948–1949, 1953–1954, and 1957–1958. The largest drop in CIO membership occurred in 1950 as a result of the expulsion of eleven unions charged with Communist domination. Their total membership in 1949 was 756,700.[6] Most of the more than three-quarters of a million members expelled in 1949–1950 were eventually recaptured by CIO unions. Of the eleven expelled, four were still functioning in 1960, though with reduced memberships. These four were the Longshoremen, the Communications Association, the Mine-Mill Union, and the Electrical Workers.

[6] The expelled unions (listed in chronological order of expulsion) and their membership were: Electrical Workers (427,800), Farm Equipment Workers (43,000), Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (74,000), Office and Professional Workers (31,500), Public Workers (14,000), Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers (22,500), Communications Association (10,000), Fur and Leather Workers (55,300), Longshoremen and Warehousemen (62,100), Marine Cooks (6,500), Fishermen and Allied Workers (10,000).

Sources of the membership figures were the CIO Convention *Proceedings* for three unions, the Farm Equipment Workers, the Communications Association, and the Fishermen; the *CIO NEWS* for two, the Public Workers and the Food, Tobacco Workers; and the remaining six were computed from per capita receipts.

The merger of the AFL and CIO at the end of 1955 brought together 15.6 million unionists, and in 1957 the AFL–CIO reached a peak of 16.1 million. Thereafter it declined to 13.9 million as a result of the expulsion of the Teamsters, the Bakery Workers, and the Laundry Workers in December 1957, and because many affiliates lost membership in the general decline since 1957.

Membership of Local and Regional Independent Unions

The lack of a comprehensive annual (or other periodic) series on local and regional independent unions creates a gap in the statistics of union membership. Only about fifty such unions are included in our annual membership figures (table 1), although for a single year (1960) we have records of over 1,600 local and regional independents (table 6).

By our definition, a local independent is a union that is not affiliated with a national organization or the AFL–CIO and is not employer-dominated.[7] As a rule, it is limited to one employer and one plant, but it may represent more than one plant of a single employer whether or not the plants are located in one state. A regional independent differs from the local independent in that it represents workers of more than one employer and may be spread over two or more states. Usually the membership of such a union is largely concentrated among the employees of a single employer or in one region of the country.

Local and regional unions are frequently described as "company dominated" organizations. However, company dominated is a technical and legal finding made only by the NLRB and the courts after a careful examination of facts. When the NLRB does find employer domination of a labor organization — independent or affiliated — it disestablishes the organization. Disestablishment wipes out the tainted union; it cannot appear in a Board-conducted election and can never represent the employees in collective bargaining.

Table 6 shows a membership in 1960 of almost 550,000 in over 1,600 local and regional

[7] The effect of including the membership of local independent unions in our series in contrast to the BLS', which excludes them, is discussed in section III.

TABLE 6. — MEMBERSHIP OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL INDEPENDENT UNIONS BY REGION AND STATE, 1960

	Unions [a]	Membership	Unions with Membership not Available
New England	198	66,900	17
Maine	14	4,500	1
New Hampshire	6	3,300	0
Vermont	5	1,500	1
Massachusetts	115	39,700	9
Rhode Island	38	5,200	4
Connecticut	20	12,700	2
Middle Atlantic	552	198,400	41
New York	243	98,200	15
New Jersey	128	38,800	10
Pennsylvania	181	61,400	16
East North Central	381	140,400	28
Ohio	131	50,200	14
Indiana	53	15,100	1
Illinois	88	53,100	4
Michigan	64	8,800	4
Wisconsin	45	13,200	5
West North Central	80	15,700	21
Minnesota	12	1,300	2
Iowa	13	1,000	4
Missouri	42	11,000	12
North Dakota	1	200	0
South Dakota	0	0	0
Nebraska	1	100	1
Kansas	11	2,100	2
South Atlantic	68	46,000	14
Delaware	3	1,900	1
Maryland	21	7,100	1
District of Columbia	4	6,100	0
Virginia	13	16,300	2
West Virginia	10	11,600	5
North Carolina	4	800	1
South Carolina	3	300	0
Georgia	4	300	1
Florida	6	1,600	3
East South Central	30	6,700	3
Kentucky	13	3,700	0
Tennessee	10	2,100	2
Alabama	6	800	1
Mississippi	1	100	0
West South Central	108	28,000	12
Arkansas	1	200	0
Louisiana	40	10,400	4
Oklahoma	7	1,600	1
Texas	60	15,800	7
Mountain	22	3,000	12
Montana	6	600	1
Idaho	0	0	3
Wyoming	3	500	2
Colorado	3	100	2
New Mexico	2	800	0
Arizona	1	100	1
Utah	7	900	1
Nevada	0	0	2
Pacific	164	44,100	16
Washington	13	10,000	2
Oregon	16	2,000	5
California	128	31,200	8
Alaska	3	200	0
Hawaii	4	700	1
United States	1,603	549,200	164

[a] Excludes those for which membership was not computed.

independent unions. The majority are of the single-employer type. In addition to those for which membership figures could be constructed, there were 164 unions whose financial reports were either not available or did not include sufficient data from which to compute figures.

Our estimates of membership of local and regional independent unions are based on reported dues receipts divided by per capita dues, obtained from the files of the United States Bureau of Labor-Management Reports and the New York State Department of Labor. Since the BLMR requires filings only by unions in interstate commerce, the New York State reports were examined in order to find additional local independent unions. In this way, we were able to add nearly 100 unions, not listed in the federal files, with a combined membership in excess of 18,000. It seems certain, therefore, that a complete census of local independent unions would raise both the number and membership above that shown here.

II Sources and Methods of Deriving Union Membership Statistics Since 1934

Although there are a variety of ways of defining union membership, for measurement purposes we have adhered, whenever possible, to the definition that only those paying dues to a union or for whom dues are paid to a federation such as the AFL, the CIO, or the AFL-CIO are members. Consequently, to the fullest possible extent, in this report we have reported union membership on a dues-paying basis.

This concept of membership has the merit of greater precision than some other concepts, but it is not ideal for all purposes. For example, to a union, total membership may include those paying regular dues, both those in arrears and those up to date in their payments; the unemployed, whether or not they pay any dues; those on strike, honorary members, persons in the armed forces, retired persons, and sick, disabled, or inactive individuals. All or many