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continued to function, it was retained in our series. Thus the Industrial Trades Union is included in our series after 1951.

Small discrepancies exist between our series as presented here and those for 1939 and 1953 in *Distribution of Union Membership Among the States, 1939 and 1953*.<sup>16</sup> In Table 1 of that publication, total membership in the United States, excluding Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Canal Zone, and Canada, was reported at 6,577,700 in 1939 and 16,217,300 in 1953. If membership in the excluded areas had been included, the figures would have been 6,730,300 in 1939 and 17,147,200 in 1953. The present figures, shown in table 1 of this paper, are 6,555,500 for 1939 and 17,315,600 for 1953.

The reduction of some 175,000 in 1939, or about two per cent of our revised figure, was principally in unions affiliated with the AFL. Total membership in the AFL was recorded at 3,994,500, while the present estimate is 3,878,000, a drop of 116,000. The chief revision was made in the membership of the Carpenters, reducing that union's figure in 1939 from 316,000 (including the Territories and Canada) to 214,800, a reduction of 101,200. The earlier estimate was the figure reported to us in a letter from the union; the later was based on dues receipts.

Our revisions increased the total for 1953 by about 168,000, slightly less than one per cent. Once again, the changes principally affected affiliates of the AFL, but in this instance involved a larger number of unions. For example, the original figure of 100,000 for the Bricklayers was revised on the basis of per capita receipts to 133,500. Similarly, the IBEW was estimated at 547,100 in the earlier report and 568,600 now, while the figure of the Hod Carriers was revised upward from 430,000 to 445,600.

#### IV Need for Improved Statistics on Union Membership

Although statistics on labor organizations are of unquestioned importance, there are not only differences in total membership reported in widely used series but also serious gaps in the data on characteristics of union membership.

<sup>16</sup> Occasional Paper 56 (New York: NBER, 1956).

Principally, these deficiencies are in the industrial and geographic distribution, and in coverage.

For example, a recent study by H. Gregg Lewis, which endeavored to gauge the impact of unions on interindustry wage structure, was handicapped by the lack of time series on the industrial distribution of union strength. He was forced, he notes, to make his own estimates of extent of unionism by industry from "fragmentary information."<sup>17</sup>

Beginning with 1956, the BLS has published figures biennially of membership by industry, derived primarily from union estimates of the allocation of their membership among industry groups. Since the figures include Canadian members of United States trade unions, comparing them with union membership in the United States would overstate the degree of organization of industry.

Our report on union membership by state for 1939 and 1953 was the first of this type and we have not brought the figures up to date. Subsequently, the BLS began issuing estimates of AFL-CIO membership by state. However, these figures are the unverified claims of state AFL-CIO bodies and, of course, do not include membership of the independents (reported at 3,045,000 by the BLS for 1960). In the absence of a complete and reliable series on union membership by state, it is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate quantitatively the effect of right-to-work laws on union growth and stability. This is an important public issue in the labor-management field.

Rare and uncertain though the statistics may be on union membership by industry or state, the situation is worse when anyone seeks data cross-classified by industry and state. At present no such figures exist for all states.

In large measure, gaps in total membership and its geographic distribution can be filled in by use of the union financial reports filed with the United States Bureau of Labor-Management and Welfare Reports. While there are nearly 50,000 reports, most of the unions be-

<sup>17</sup> H. Gregg Lewis, "The Effects of Unions on Industrial Wage Differentials," in *Aspects of Labor Economics*, Conference of the Universities-National Bureau Committee for Economic Research (Princeton University Press for National Bureau of Economic Research, 1962), 333.

long to about 170 national and international unions and these account for 90 per cent or more of total membership. To these should be added about 1,600 local and regional independent reports. Since unions of government employees and of government-owned corporations are not required to file, it would be necessary to make special arrangements to tabulate these.

Accurate determination of the industrial affiliation of membership nationally and by

state will require the addition of questions relating to union membership and representation in the industrial and business censuses and the decennial Population Census. Indeed, if this were done in the Population Census, cross-tabulations might be obtained on the characteristics of union members, such as occupation, sex, and age, as well as industry and location. If these steps were taken, a substantial improvement in the quality and coverage of union statistics would result.

