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A NON-PROFIT MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION FOR IMPARTIAL STUDIES IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Union Membership in Great Britain and the United States

LEO WOLMAN

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THE course pursued by organized labor in the United States during the last five years has aroused general interest in the progress of American trade unionism and in comparable developments in other countries. Since 1933 American unions have multiplied in number and membership. They have organized many employees in industries, such as steel and automobiles, hitherto regarded as almost immune to unionization. They have received considerable encouragement and support from agencies of government, and much of governmental policy has been directed toward removing obstacles in the way of union growth. The laws governing trade unions—federal and state—have been thoroughly revised and elaborate administrative machinery has been set up to apply the provisions of the new legislation. In the process of adjusting itself to this new situation, the labor movement has encountered stubborn problems of internal management. It has split into two large and growing factions. The structure and policies of unions have changed radically. Aggregate membership has steadily grown until it now probably exceeds the previous peak of 5,047,800 members, reached in 1920.

American experience with organized labor and industrial relations has long appeared to stand in sharp contrast to British. Although this country had reached an advanced stage of industrialization, union membership remained until recently much smaller than in Great Britain and a majority of the employees in American industries continued to be unorganized. The persistence of this discrepancy, which ran counter to accepted theories of union growth, has proved an intriguing problem in historical interpretation. And many students of trade unionism in America and Europe, accepting British developments in industrial relations as a model to be followed by this country, have speculated as to the causes of our alleged backwardness in this crucial area of human relations.

Now that American unions are again expanding and our

labor relations appear to have entered a new phase whose goal and characteristics are still obscure, much of historical and scientific interest may be learned by comparing the size, strength, and fluctuations of the organized labor movements in Great Britain and the United States. This *Bulletin* presents statistics of union membership in these countries, 1897-1935; an analysis of the distribution of membership among industrial groups; and estimates of the percentage of employees organized in all industry and in its major subdivisions.

Such comparisons are necessarily rough and inadequate, for, aside from the difficulties of tracing changes in membership within one country, there are added difficulties in securing comparable data for two countries. Variations in methods of union accounting, in the procedure for dropping and reinstating members, in methods of dealing with the unemployed, and finally the difference between actual membership and what figures the union is prepared to publish as a measure of its strength, present insoluble problems in international comparisons of this sort.¹ But, defective and incomplete as the data are, they are sufficiently good to indicate comparative movement and extent of organization.

The formal suspension by the American Federation of Labor of the unions affiliated with the Committee for Industrial Organization and the ensuing struggle between these organizations for supremacy in the labor movement make American statistics of membership less reliable since 1935 than before. For that reason, the statistical comparisons in this *Bulletin* end in 1935. But the figures published for 1936 and 1937 by the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. shed at least some light on the course of events in the United States since then, although they are probably not

¹ For discussion of these problems in the use of American statistics of membership see the author's *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism* (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1936), Ch. I.

as accurate as earlier figures and cannot be tested for accuracy. They are, therefore, reproduced in this *Bulletin* as reported by the two organizations themselves.

I MEMBERSHIP

The annual membership of trade unions in Great Britain and Northern Ireland and in the United States, 1897-1935, is shown in Table 1 and Chart 1. During most of these thirty-nine years British unions have had a larger membership. Only in 1904 and 1905 did American membership exceed British, but the margins were very slight. Thereafter, the British excess grew larger until 1920, when it was more than 60 per cent. In the following years of declining membership, the difference again became somewhat smaller and by 1933 was reduced to nearly 50 per cent. After 1933 union recovery was much more rapid in this country than in Great Britain and in 1935 the difference in membership was less than 1,000,000, or roughly 25 per cent. Although the figures of union membership in this country since 1935 are subject to wide margins of error, there is every indication that American membership in 1937, even conservatively estimated, exceeds the British by a substantial amount.

Since 1897 both labor movements have passed through three phases and are apparently now in a fourth, whose duration is, of course, uncertain. From 1897 to 1915 there was a general advance in union membership, the British unions gaining 2,628,000 members and the American, 2,135,600. While the unions were sensitive to changing business conditions and lost members in years of business recession, the losses were generally slight; and in the United States the greatest decline was 5.9 per cent in 1909, reflecting the effects of the depression, 1907-08. In Great Britain the annual decline in membership in no year reached 2 per cent. During this period unfavorable conditions of employment and business resulted mainly in a decline in the rate of increase.

The second phase in the history of organized labor was that of the War and first post-War boom, 1915-20. The union movements of both countries nearly doubled their previous membership. Benefiting from full employment, shortage of labor, and sympathetic public policy, the British unions gained 3,989,000 members, and the American, 2,465,200.

The next phase was one of almost uninterrupted decline in union membership from a peak in 1920 to a trough in 1933. In both countries unions suffered heavy losses, the British surrendering about 4,000,000 members, or nearly one-half of their membership in 1920, and the American, more than 2,000,000, or 40 per cent of their membership at the peak. In both countries, also, the heaviest losses were in the years immediately following 1920, under the influence of the depression of 1921 and the drastic read-

justment of industry associated with it, and the loss of the unassimilated membership acquired so quickly during the War. Neither the American nor the British labor move-

TABLE 1

TRADE UNIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP AND PERCENTAGE CHANGES FROM YEAR TO YEAR
1897-1935¹

YEAR	GREAT BRITAIN		UNITED STATES	
	Total membership (000's)	Percentage change from preceding year	Total membership (000's)	Percentage change from preceding year
1897	1,731		447	
1898	1,752	+1.2	501	+12.0
1899	1,911	+9.1	611	+22.0
1900	2,022	+5.8	869	+42.1
1901	2,025	+0.1	1,125	+29.5
1902	2,013	-0.6	1,376	+22.3
1903	1,994	-0.9	1,914	+39.1
1904	1,967	-1.4	2,073	+8.3
1905	1,997	+1.5	2,022	-2.4
1906	2,210	+10.7	1,907	-5.7
1907	2,513	+13.7	2,080	+9.1
1908	2,485	-1.1	2,131	+2.4
1909	2,477	-0.3	2,006	-5.9
1910	2,565	+3.6	2,141	+6.7
1911	3,139	+22.4	2,343	+9.5
1912	3,416	+8.8	2,452	+4.7
1913	4,135	+21.0	2,716	+10.8
1914	4,145	+0.2	2,687	-1.1
1915	4,359	+5.2	2,583	-3.9
1916	4,644	+6.5	2,773	+7.4
1917	5,499	+18.4	3,061	+10.4
1918	6,533	+18.8	3,467	+13.3
1919	7,926	+21.3	4,125	+19.0
1920	8,348	+5.3	5,048	+22.4
1921	6,632	-20.6	4,781	-5.3
1922	5,625	-15.2	4,027	-15.8
1923	5,429	-3.5	3,622	-10.1
1924	5,544	+2.1	3,536	-2.4
1925	5,506	-0.7	3,519	-0.5
1926	5,219	-5.2	3,502	-0.5
1927	4,919	-5.7	3,547	+1.3
1928	4,806	-2.3	3,480	-1.9
1929	4,858	+1.1	3,443	-1.1
1930	4,842	-0.3	3,393	-1.4
1931	4,624	-4.5	3,358	-1.0
1932	4,444	-3.9	3,144	-6.4
1933	4,392	-1.2	2,973	-5.4
1934	4,591	+4.5	3,609	+21.4
1935	4,868	+6.0	3,889	+7.8

¹ Figures for Great Britain include Northern Ireland and are of membership at the end of the year; figures for the United States, which include the membership in Canada of unions whose head offices are in the United States, are of average membership for each year. The British figures are from the *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, October 1937.

to be able to respond to the recovery of the apparently both movements entered the depression near the rock bottom of their strength. Under exceptionally unfavorable conditions from the British unions lost during the depression and the American 14 per cent of their membership in 1929.

Union membership turned upward again. By 1935 membership of American unions had risen 30 per cent and was more than 400,000 greater than the British unions had increased 10 per cent in the latest year just about where they were in 1929. In 1935 the rise has continued in both countries, but comparative changes is complicated by extensions in the American labor movement.

What American trade unionism took in 1936 is a formal break between two factions within it was acknowledged by the suspension from it of ten unions affiliated with the C.I.O. This was the signal for the beginning of union activity, first by the C.I.O. and later by the A.F. of L. Within a year the C.I.O. had succeeded in many hundreds of thousands of employees in automobile, steel, metal, textile, and bus and transportation industries and in service occupations. In 1937 the C.I.O. reported that the number of unions affiliated with it had increased from 11 in

August 1936 to 30² in the autumn of 1937. At the same time the A.F. of L., moved by the opportunities for organization and the threat of its younger rival, pursued its organizing campaigns with renewed vigor and success. The result of the combined efforts of the Federation and the C.I.O. was a general and substantial increase in membership.

How great this increase has been it is impossible, in the present state of things, to estimate with any degree of accuracy. The figures reported by the unions themselves obviously contain large and changing margins of error.

Membership of unions affiliated with the A.F. of L. is computed from the per capita tax paid to it by its affiliates. While the amount of per capita tax may be controlled by a union and on many occasions has been,³ membership statistics computed from the per capita tax figures have proved reasonably reliable and have reflected over a long period changes in the strength of the American labor movement.

The C.I.O. is a new organization. The Committee's relation to its constituent unions is not yet clearly defined.

² These numbers do not include the Typographical, and the Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers Unions, which have continued their affiliation with the A.F. of L., although active in the affairs of the C.I.O. They do include the Electrical and Radio Workers Union which, though not formally affiliated with the C.I.O. in August 1936, was closely identified with and soon joined it.

³ See *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism*, Ch. I.

Chart 1
TRADE UNIONS IN THE UNITED STATES AND
GREAT BRITAIN, TOTAL MEMBERSHIP
1897 - 1935

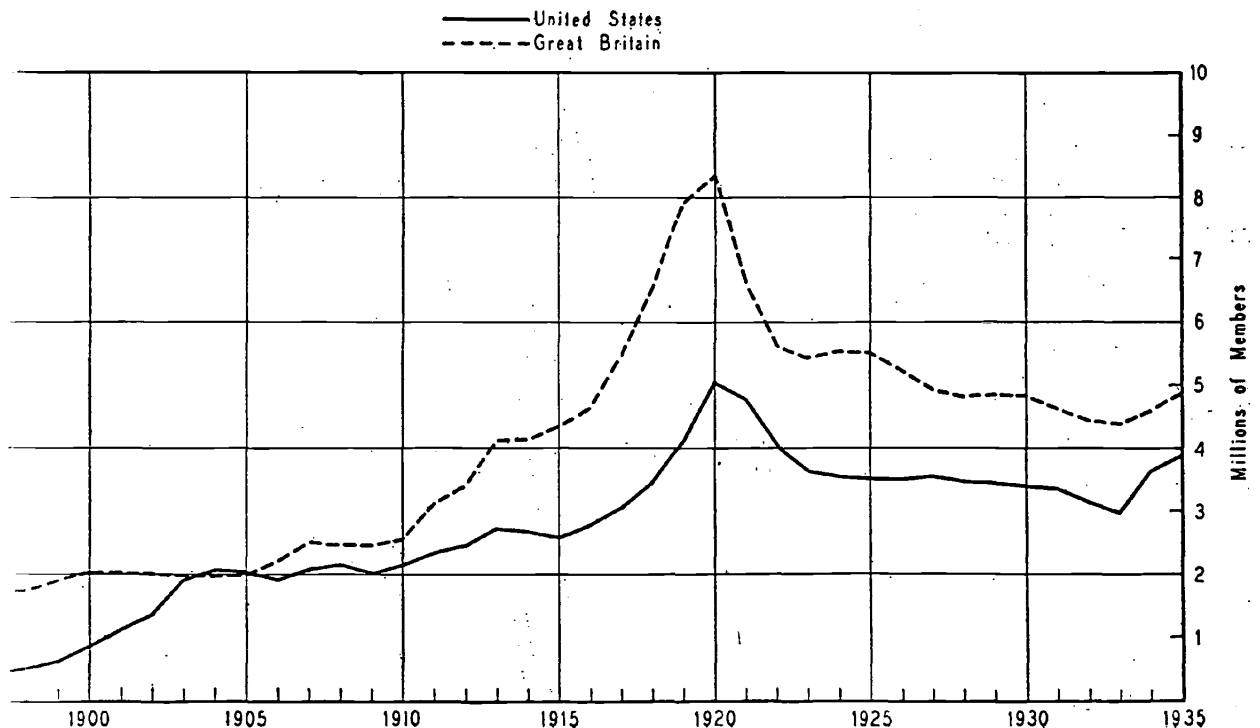


TABLE 2
REPORTED MEMBERSHIP OF UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE
COMMITTEE FOR INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION,¹ 1936 AND 1937
THOUSANDS OF MEMBERS

NAME OF UNION	THOUSANDS OF MEMBERS	
	1936 ²	1937
1 Mine Workers, United	Aug. 500	Sept. 600
2 Steel Workers Organizing Committee	10	Sept. 500
3 Automobile Workers, United	30	Aug. 400
4 Textile Workers Organizing Committee		Sept. 400 ³
5 Ladies Garment Workers, International	Aug. 160	Aug. 250
6 Clothing Workers, Amalgamated	Aug. 100	Aug. 177
7 Oil Workers International	45	Aug. 85
8 Rubber Workers, United	Sept. 25	Sept. 75
9 Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers	Dec. 17	Aug. 45
10 Flat Glass Workers, Federation of		14
11 Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers ⁴	Sept. 25	Sept. 130
12 Woodworkers, International		Sept. 100
13 Transport Workers Union ⁵		Sept. 88
14 Shoe Workers, United ⁶		Aug. 50
15 Retail Employees, United		Oct. 40
16 Fur Workers, International		May 30
17 Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union, International		Sept. 26
18 State, County and Municipal Workers		Sept. 25
19 Office and Professional Workers, United		Oct. 25
20 Marine and Shipbuilding Workers, Industrial Union of	Sept. 10	Sept. 20
21 Newspaper Guild, American		Sept. 14
22 Communications Association, American ⁷		Aug. 8
23 Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, National		Aug. 7
24 Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians, Federation of		Sept. 6
25 Federal Workers of America, United		June 4
26 Aluminum Workers of America		.....⁸
27 Die Casting Workers, National Association of		.....⁸
28 Leather Workers Association, National		.....⁶
29 Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers, United		.....⁸
30 Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific (provisional charter)		.....⁸
Directly affiliated local unions (620)		Oct. 240
Total		3,359

¹ Compiled from *Union News Service*, weekly publication of the C.I.O., and from the *Report of Director John Brophy* to the meeting of the Committee for Industrial Organization in Atlantic City, October 11, 1937.

² No total is given for 1936 since the figures for that year are incomplete.

³ This number includes 225,000 reported as under contract at the beginning of September 1937.

The jurisdictional limits of the C.I.O. unions have not been fully described. The amount of dues received by C.I.O. affiliates from their members or paid by them to the C.I.O. is not reported. For these reasons there are no standards for testing membership figures published by the C.I.O. equivalent to those available for the A.F. of L. Both sets of figures probably overestimate current membership, for unions at war with employers and one another are impelled by considerations of strategy and prestige to exaggerate their progress and strength even in normal times. And the last two years have in this respect been far from normal. At present even the two organizations challenge each other's figures. Thus the C.I.O. regards the reported membership of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, the biggest union in the A.F. of L., as considerably inflated because it does not allow for the loss of a large group of members who are alleged to have seceded from the Carpenters and to have formed a new union, the International Woodworkers, affiliated with the C.I.O. The A.F. of L., on its part, considers the membership reported by the new unions affiliated with the C.I.O. to be gross exaggerations. In connection with the current peace conferences being held between representatives of the two organizations, the Federation issued the following statement:⁴

"At today's conference the representatives of the American Federation of Labor submitted and undertook to explain their proposal to the representatives of the C.I.O. During the course of the conference, members of the Committee representing the C.I.O. made extravagant and unsupported claims of membership, but on analysis it was clear to the committee of the American Federation of Labor that the C.I.O. has little, if any, dues-paying membership other than the members of the organizations that originally belonged to the American Federation of Labor."

Under the circumstances the most that can be done is to quote the figures issued by each organization with the caution that they will require thoroughgoing revision as more information becomes available. The membership of unions associated in the C.I.O., as currently reported by it (Table 2), are taken from the weekly newspaper, *Union News Service*, published by the C.I.O. There is no evi-

⁴ *The American Federation of Labor Weekly News Service*, October 30, 1937, p. 2.

⁵ Formerly the United Electrical and Radio Workers.

⁶ This union claims 34,000 members among subway, elevated, trolley, and bus employees, and 11,300 among taxi employees in New York City.

⁷ Formed, on March 6, 1937, by the amalgamation of the United Shoe and Leather Workers Union and the Shoe Workers Protective Union, both independent of the A.F. of L.

⁸ Formerly the American Radio Telegraphists.

⁹ Not reported.

dence that the membership reported is dues-paying or that it represents even the number of employees who have formally joined an organization. The membership of the Textile Workers Organizing Committee (United Textile Workers) is, for example, given as 400,000. This figure is reported to include 225,000 employees under contract at the beginning of September 1937. Total reported membership, then, presumably comprises 225,000 employees working for employers under contract with the union and 175,000 not under contract. It is probable, since the union is new and there are few closed-shop agreements, that the number working under contract exceeds actual membership in those shops and will continue to do so until the union becomes well established and generally accepted by the workers. The remaining membership of 175,000 claimed by the union is a round figure unsupported by data either on dues receipts or initiation fees. Figures for some unions are so large that they are hard to reconcile with the known strength of unions in the past or with the number employed in the industries over which these unions apparently claim jurisdiction. It may safely be estimated that the total membership of 3,357,800 currently claimed by the C.I.O. in many instances represents potential rather than actual membership and that it exceeds actual membership considerably. It will take a long time to determine the extent to which the membership reported by the C.I.O. has become dues-paying.

Membership of the unions affiliated with the A.F. of L. is reported as the average for the fiscal year ending August 31. Figures are given also each year for the month of August. From 1936 to 1937 average membership reported by the Federation for the fiscal year ending August 31 declined from 3,422,398 to 2,860,933, or more than 500,000, owing to the suspension of ten unions because of their affiliation with the C.I.O. Since these unions claimed somewhat more than 1,000,000 members at the time of their suspension, the growth of the unions remaining in the Federation made up nearly half of the loss in this year. The Federation reported its membership in August 1937 to be 3,271,726, or 314,841 below August 1936.

The gains made by A.F. of L. unions were in the main among old and established organizations long affiliated with the Federation. For it, unlike the C.I.O., has failed to profit from the creation and affiliation of new unions, apart from increases in the number and membership of 'local trade and federal labor unions'. From August 31, 1936 to August 31, 1937 the number of these organizations increased from 914 to 1,406 and their membership from 90,990 to 232,700. Approximately half of the increase, 1935-37, in the total membership of the unions that retained their affiliation with the Federation was contributed by relatively few unions. Thus the Carpenters re-

ported 100,000 more members in 1937 than in 1935, the Teamsters, 73,900, the Hotel and Restaurant Workers, 50,100, the Hod Carriers, 47,300, the Machinists, 45,500, and the Electrical Workers, 41,200. The membership of fifteen A.F. of L. unions showing the greatest rise, 1935-37, is given in Table 3.

TABLE 3
A.F. OF L. UNIONS WITH LARGEST INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIP
1935-1937¹
(in thousands)

UNION	AVERAGE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP			INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIP 1935-37
	1935	1936	1937	
1 Carpenters	200	300	300	100
2 Teamsters	137	161	211	74
3 Hotel and Restaurant Workers	57	74	107	50
4 Hod Carriers and Common Laborers	52	65	100	48
5 Machinists	93	114	138	45
6 Electrical Workers	130	170	171	41
7 Longshoremen	40	41	61	21
8 Railway Clerks	73	88	89	16
9 Painters	66	67	80	14
10 Building Service Employees	28	35	42	14
11 Retail Clerks	7	10	19	12
12 Bakery and Confectionery Workers	22	26	33	11
13 Meat Cutters	20	19	30	10
14 Firemen and Oilers	15	21	24	9
15 Government Employees	14	22	21	7
Total	954	1,213	1,426	472

¹ Report of the A.F. of L. Executive Council to the 57th Annual Convention, October 4, 1937, pp. 13-14. Figures are for the average membership for the year ending August 31.

The third category of labor unions in American industry is comprised of independent unions that are affiliated with neither the A.F. of L. nor the C.I.O. Its membership in 1935 was roughly 570,000. Since 1935 a few large independent unions, such as the Marine and Shipbuilding Workers, the United Shoe and Leather Workers, and the Progressive Miners of America, have become affiliated with the C.I.O. or the A.F. of L. Membership in the group of independent unions has therefore shrunk and is now practically limited to the railroad brotherhoods. Allowing for the growth of the brotherhoods since 1935, membership of independent unions in 1937 may safely be estimated as not exceeding 550,000.

Accepting the figures reported by the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. and the estimated membership of independent unions, the total number of union members claimed by all American unions in August-September 1937 is 7,179,526.

Unions affiliated with the A.F. of L.	3,271,726
Unions affiliated with the C.I.O.	3,357,800
Independent unions	550,000

The membership of British unions is not yet available beyond 1936. In that year, when the British unions had 5,307,689 members, their membership probably exceeded the American by roughly one million. In 1937, allowing for some further growth of British membership and accepting the exaggerated claims by American unions, this situation is reversed and American membership probably exceeds the British, although by how much is hard to estimate. Since 1933 American unions have apparently more than doubled their membership and have now the largest on record. In Great Britain between 1933 and 1936 the unions gained over 900,000 members, or 20.8 per cent, but remained, in the latest year for which data are available, with three million fewer members than in 1920.

II INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF UNION MEMBERSHIP

Gross changes in the number belonging to unions are the consequence not alone of general increases and declines in membership but also of shifts in the position of individual unions or groups of unions. These shifts reveal themselves in the changing composition of the labor movement and appear to be common to all countries in which it has failed to achieve complete unionization. At any one time union membership in both Great Britain and the United States is concentrated in relatively few groups of unions. And the group that occupies a predominant position at one time frequently fails to do so at another.

The reasons for these differences are many. Fluctuations in union membership are often closely identified with changes in employment in the industry over which a given union claims jurisdiction. Consequently, established unions in industries with expanding employment will retain a greater proportion of their membership during periods of declining business than unions in less stable industries, and will also grow more in times of increasing business. Industries, likewise, differ in the propensity of employees to join unions or in their views as to the need for organization. In the United States, for example, white collar workers stood aloof from trade unionism, and their union membership was until recently quite negligible. In Great Britain, employees whose wages and working conditions

are protected by labor legislation, as in the clothing industry, appear to depend more on the law than on membership in a union.

There is, finally, the purely statistical problem of satisfactorily classifying the available figures of membership, for most unions cannot furnish a breakdown of their membership into the available classifications of industry and occupations. For this reason tabulations showing the distribution of membership by industrial groups often exaggerate membership in one group and understate it in another. Several of the American unions of construction employees, notably the Carpenters and Electrical Workers, claim jurisdiction over employees following these trades in manufacturing industries but are unable to classify their membership accordingly. Therefore, total union membership reported for the building trades is too large. The Transport and General Workers' Union in Great Britain covers employees in several industries. Its membership cannot be divided into its components and the total membership "is included in the group with which the majority of its members is believed to be connected."⁵ Union membership in the group of transportation and communication in Great Britain is accordingly overstated. On the other hand, there is no counterpart of this union in the United States and the common and unskilled labor that belongs to unions is in this country classified in the industry or occupation in which it works. For such groups as transportation and communication, and agriculture, comparisons of the industrial distribution of British and American membership are, therefore, somewhat misleading.

The concentration of membership in a few groups of unions in Great Britain and the United States is shown for 1935 in Table 4. Five groups of unions accounted for 76 per cent of total British membership and 69 per cent of total American. The groups of unions in transportation and communication lead in both countries, and the unions in mining, quarrying, and oil producing rank third. The differences between the two countries are striking. Building trades unions in the United States

⁵ *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, October 1937, p. 380.

TABLE 4
TRADE UNIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, MEMBERSHIP IN THE LARGEST FIVE INDUSTRIAL GROUPS, 1935

GREAT BRITAIN ¹			UNITED STATES		
GROUP	Membership	Percentage of total	GROUP	Membership	Percentage of total
Transportation and communication	1,328,541	27.3	Transportation and communication	726,100	18.7
Public service	723,429	14.9	Building trades	627,200	16.1
Mining, quarrying, and oil	628,836	12.9	Mining, quarrying, and oil	602,300	15.5
Metals, machinery, and vehicles	592,543	12.2	Clothing	427,500	11.0
Textiles	432,387	8.9	Public service	312,900	8.0
Total, above groups	3,705,736	76.1	Total, above groups	2,696,000	69.3
Total, all unions	4,868,226	100.0	Total, all unions	3,888,600	100.0

¹ Including Northern Ireland. Membership figures are from the *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, October 1936.

are the second largest group and include one-sixth of total membership. But in Great Britain this group of unions is not in the first five groups at all. This difference is due to two factors. In both countries the building trades are strongly organized, but in the United States the construction industry is much larger than in Great Britain, and American union membership is consequently greater. In 1935, and also for many years before, unionism in the metal and textile industries was considerably stronger in Great Britain than in this country. The large aggregate membership in these groups of unions in Great Britain has thus reduced the relative position of the building trades unions there, and the small membership of the textile and metal unions in the United States has raised the relative position of unions of building employees here.

These differences in the composition of the British and American labor movements have existed for many years. They are shown in Tables 5 and 6, which give actual union membership in the two countries, classified by industrial groups, and the percentage of total membership in each industrial classification for selected years, 1910-35. In each year the five groups in Great Britain with the largest membership have been transportation and communication; mining, quarrying, and oil; metals, machinery, and vehicles; textiles; and public service. In the United States, on the other hand, the composition of the first five groups has changed radically between 1910 and 1935 with the growth of unions in the clothing industry and among employees in public service, and with the declining importance of unions in the metals, machinery, and vehicle industries since 1920 and in the food, drink, and tobacco industries since 1910. The most striking changes in the American situation were the decline of unionism in the metals, machinery, and vehicle industries and the rise of unionism in clothing and public service. The unions of metal workers reached their peak in 1920 but were at their lowest ebb in the prosperous years of the 1920's when organized labor all but disappeared from the mass production manufacturing industries of this country. At the same time the unions of clothing workers were able to retain an appreciable share of the large gains made during the boom years of the War. In Great Britain, unions in transportation and communication have had since 1920 the largest membership of any group. And in the United States the same group has held first place except in 1929, when the American building trades unions, reflecting the vast expansion in construction and shrinking employment on railroads, displaced the transportation unions. In Great Britain the group of transportation and communication unions has held its position in recent years more securely than in this country, primarily because of the large membership of the Transport and General Workers' Union, whose jurisdiction lies outside the railroad industry.

It is difficult, for reasons already considered, to project this picture into 1937. The British figures are not available beyond 1936 and such American figures as we have are far from reliable. British conditions have probably not changed radically in the last year. If, for lack of better data, we use statistics of membership in 1937 published respectively by the C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. and our own estimates of the membership of independent unions, it is possible to compare the distribution of British membership in 1936 with American in 1937, and thus view the broad changes in American trade unionism since the advent of the C.I.O. and the progress of organization in mass production industries. Membership in the largest five groups of unions in Great Britain in 1936 and in the United States in 1937 is shown in Table 7.

In Great Britain the largest five groups of unions have remained substantially intact, except that unions in the metals, machinery, and vehicle industries have replaced in rank the mining, quarrying, and oil unions. The change is, however, slight and is mainly due to the marked expansion of business in the iron and steel and associated industries of Great Britain in recent years. Among American unions there has been a radical shift in the centers of union strength. Even allowing for the unreliability of the data, unions in the metals, machinery, and vehicle industries for the first time claim a larger membership than the strong unions in transportation and building, and rank first in this list of American unions. Most of this change in the position of the metals group is due to the growth of the steel, automobile, and electrical and radio workers unions, affiliated with the C.I.O., and of the machinists union, affiliated with the A.F. of L. Changes in the composition of the two labor movements are shown for selected years, 1910-37, in Chart 2.

III EXTENT OF ORGANIZATION

Estimates of the strength of organized labor in different countries, or in the same country at different times, are misleading if they rest on membership alone, for a labor movement with a large membership in a small country is obviously stronger than one with the same membership in a larger country. A more accurate index of relative union strength, therefore, is the ratio of membership to population, or better still to that portion of the working population which is organizable into unions. Thus the population of Great Britain, 44,634,000 in 1930, was something more than one-third of the population of the United States, 122,775,046. By this standard, union membership in Great Britain was, in 1930, 10.5 per cent of population, and in the United States, 2.6 per cent.

Deriving similar ratios of the relation of membership to working population, or to that part of the working popu-

TABLE 5

TRADE UNIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, MEMBERSHIP IN INDUSTRIAL GROUPS, SELECTED YEARS¹

INDUSTRIAL GROUP	GREAT BRITAIN					
	1910	1920	1922	1929	1933	1935
Agriculture, horticulture, etc. ²	6,179	210,584	92,831	34,794	30,616	31,474
Mining, quarrying, and oil	740,205	1,157,536	850,405	623,141	563,027	628,836
Building trades	153,374	563,273	389,340	309,816	259,826	274,507
Textiles	384,252	833,831	657,279	594,876	455,413	432,387
Boots and shoes	34,694	99,054	84,256	89,338	88,527	92,054
Clothing	33,049	137,007	81,069	70,141	64,942	74,545
Lumber and woodworking	37,560	86,968	64,693	65,111	51,555	54,369
Paper, printing, and bookbinding	74,242	227,349	186,479	183,682	185,697	194,368
Pottery, glass, and stone	13,646	55,734	40,481	24,917	22,139	19,660
Metals, machinery, and vehicles	371,102	1,171,535	867,698	612,785	518,659	592,543
Food, drink, and tobacco	16,605	35,101	28,631	29,509	29,468	30,098
Transportation and communication	337,920	2,496,235	1,359,454	1,281,784	1,115,501	1,328,541
Railway transport	116,477	617,914	443,363	419,197	381,591	416,437
Water transport	40,531	193,472	101,943	103,444	68,276	72,609
Other transport and general labor, and communication	180,912	1,684,849	814,148	759,143	665,634	839,495
Public service ³	253,305	670,081	584,146	600,008	650,874	723,429
Entertainment and sports	12,494	51,881	35,824	29,478	20,440	24,387
Commerce and trade	72,023	400,155	217,616	238,949	267,817	295,583
Restaurant and domestic service	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous ⁴	24,436	150,251	83,511	66,482	62,166	71,445
Total	2,565,086	8,346,575	5,623,713	4,854,811	4,386,667	4,868,226

INDUSTRIAL GROUP	UNITED STATES					
	1910	1920	1922	1929	1933	1935
Agriculture, horticulture, etc. ²	0	0	1,900	0	600	1,100
Mining, quarrying, and oil	274,900	438,600	386,600	270,800	354,600	602,300
Building trades	459,000	887,900	826,300	919,000	582,700	627,200
Textiles	21,000	149,100	36,900	35,300	16,100	80,300
Boots and shoes	41,700	97,700	82,200	40,400	75,000	103,700
Clothing	97,800	374,500	310,000	218,100	336,100	427,500
Lumber and woodworking	24,000	21,200	11,400	12,700	8,000	10,000
Paper, printing, and bookbinding	89,700	164,000	160,500	162,500	153,100	161,700
Pottery, glass, and stone	59,900	51,400	49,500	37,700	27,100	49,600
Metals, machinery, and vehicles	196,300	858,800	505,800	211,400	179,600	236,600
Food, drink, and tobacco	122,800	180,900	98,800	64,600	57,700	102,200
Transportation and communication	480,500	1,256,100	1,039,000	892,200	609,300	726,100
Railway transport	383,600	963,600	821,700	724,700	490,100	513,100
Water transport	52,800	164,000	120,000	63,500	37,100	60,700
Other transport and general labor, and communication	44,100	128,500	97,300	104,000	82,100	152,300
Public service ³	58,400	161,400	170,700	246,600	296,300	312,900
Entertainment and sports	60,200	98,600	107,200	135,000	127,300	128,300
Commerce and trade	15,000	20,800	16,700	10,000	5,000	7,200
Restaurant and domestic service	66,400	111,300	121,600	112,200	86,600	133,700
Miscellaneous ⁴	72,900	175,500	102,300	74,100	57,900	178,200
Total	2,140,500	5,047,800	4,027,400	3,442,600	2,973,000	3,888,600

¹ British figures are from the *Ministry of Labour Gazette* and the *Abstracts of Labour Statistics of the United Kingdom* and include Northern Ireland. American figures are from Leo Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism*. They have been reclassified to make them more comparable with the British figures.

² A considerable number of agricultural workers in the United Kingdom belong to a general labor union whose membership is

included under 'other transport and general labor'. In the United States local unions of agricultural workers are included in the 'miscellaneous' group.

³ Not elsewhere classified.

⁴ Includes workers in chemicals, leather, rubber, brushes, musical instruments, etc.; also clerks, foremen, professional workers, etc., when not classified by industry.

TABLE 6
TRADE UNIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL MEMBERSHIP
IN INDUSTRIAL GROUPS, SELECTED YEARS

INDUSTRIAL GROUP	GREAT BRITAIN ¹						UNITED STATES					
	1910	1920	1922	1929	1933	1935	1910	1920	1922	1929	1933	1935
Agriculture, horticulture, etc.	0.2	2.5	1.7	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	.....²	.....²
Mining, quarrying, and oil	28.9	13.9	15.1	12.8	12.8	12.9	12.8	8.7	9.6	7.9	11.9	15.5
Building trades	6.0	6.8	6.9	6.4	5.9	5.6	21.4	17.6	20.5	26.7	19.6	16.1
Textiles	15.0	10.0	11.7	12.3	10.4	8.9	1.0	3.0	0.9	1.0	0.5	2.1
Boots and shoes	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.8	2.0	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.0	1.2	2.5	2.7
Clothing	1.3	1.6	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	4.6	7.4	7.7	6.3	11.3	11.0
Lumber and woodworking	1.5	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.1	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3
Paper, printing and bookbinding	2.9	2.7	3.3	3.8	4.2	4.0	4.2	3.2	4.0	4.7	5.2	4.2
Pottery, glass and stone	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.4	2.8	1.0	1.2	1.1	0.9	1.3
Metals, machinery and vehicles	14.5	14.0	15.4	12.6	11.8	12.2	9.2	17.0	12.6	6.1	6.0	6.1
Food, drink and tobacco	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.6	5.7	3.6	2.5	1.9	1.9	2.6
Transportation and communication	13.2	29.9	24.2	26.4	25.4	27.3	22.5	24.9	25.8	25.9	20.5	18.7
Railway transport	4.5	7.4	7.9	8.6	8.7	8.6	17.9	19.1	20.4	21.1	16.5	13.2
Water transport	1.6	2.3	1.8	2.1	1.6	1.5	2.5	3.2	3.0	1.8	1.2	1.6
Other transport and general labor, and communication	7.1	20.2	14.5	15.6	15.2	17.2	2.1	2.6	2.4	3.0	2.8	3.9
Public service	9.9	8.0	10.4	12.4	14.9	14.9	2.7	3.2	4.2	7.2	10.0	8.0
Entertainment and sports	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	2.8	2.0	2.7	3.9	4.3	3.3
Commerce and trade	2.8	4.8	3.9	4.9	6.1	6.1	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2
Restaurant and domestic service	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.1	2.2	3.0	3.3	2.9	3.4
Miscellaneous	0.9	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.5	3.4	3.5	2.5	2.1	2.0	4.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

¹Including Northern Ireland.

²Less than one-tenth of one per cent.

lation which is eligible to membership, raises many difficulties. Comparable data are usually not available for the same dates. Definitions and methods of collecting data vary considerably from one country to another. Trade union practice and prevailing conceptions of organizability are, likewise, not everywhere the same and from time to time change even within one country, as they have recently in the United States. Under the circumstances, comparisons of the extent of union organization, measured in this way, are far from precise and do no more than suggest differences in general orders of magnitude.

Probably the simplest index of the relative extent of labor organization is the ratio of membership to the gainfully occupied population. Both Great Britain and the

United States take a census of occupations every ten years. Although these counts differ in many details and are not made for the same years, they yield data broadly comparable for the present purpose. Union membership and population gainfully occupied in Great Britain and the United States are given in Table 8. The British population figures are for the census years, 1911, 1921, and 1931, and the American for 1910, 1920, and 1930. To avoid some of the fortuitous effects of these differences in the census year, British union membership is given for 1910, 1920, and 1930 as well as for 1911, 1921, and 1931, and the percentages of occupied population in trade unions are computed from both sets of membership figures. In either case, union membership in Great Britain is found

TABLE 7
TRADE UNIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN, 1936, AND IN THE UNITED STATES, 1937
MEMBERSHIP IN THE LARGEST FIVE INDUSTRIAL GROUPS

GREAT BRITAIN, 1936 ¹			UNITED STATES, 1937		
GROUP	Membership	Percentage of total	GROUP	Membership	Percentage of total
Transportation and communication	1,504,885	28.4	Metals, machinery, and vehicles	1,322,800	19.7
Public service	764,719	14.4	Transportation and communication	1,080,300	16.0
Metals, machinery, and vehicles	686,044	12.9	Building trades	836,500	12.4
Mining, quarrying, and oil	678,974	12.8	Mining, quarrying, and oil	732,000	10.9
Textiles	429,050	8.1	Clothing	522,100	7.8
Total, above groups	4,063,672	76.6	Total, above groups	4,493,700	66.8

¹Including Northern Ireland. Membership figures are from the *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, October 1937.

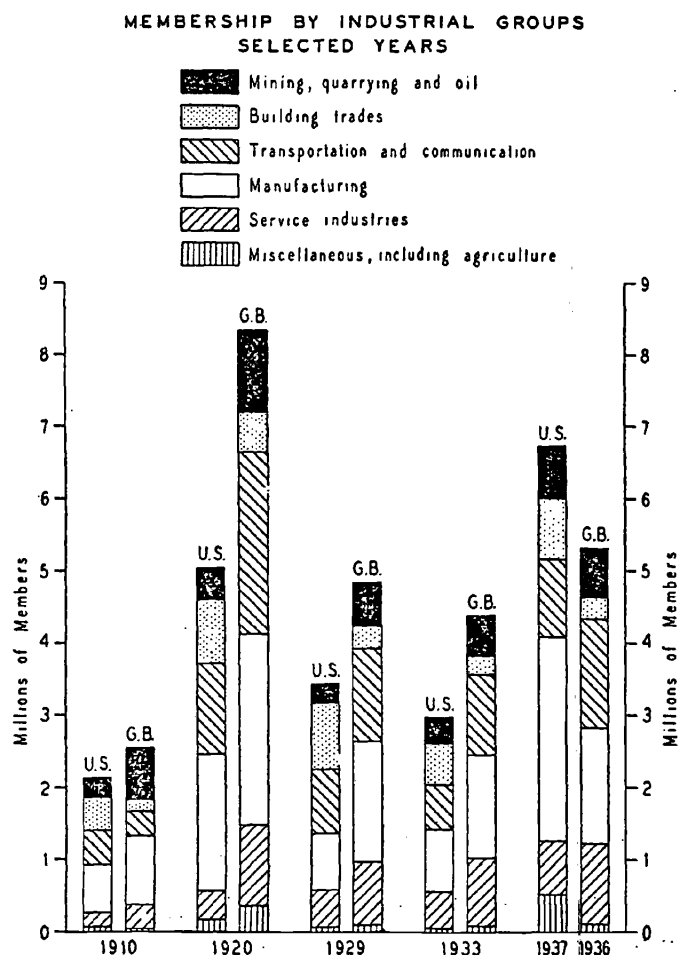
to be proportionately more than three times larger than in the United States.

The unreliability of recent estimates of American union membership, and the fact that the next census of occupations will not be taken in Great Britain until 1941 and in the United States until 1940, make it difficult to extend these figures beyond 1931 and 1930. But on the basis of the reported increase in the number of members of both British and American unions since 1930 and rough estimates of the gainfully occupied population in recent years, the percentage of the occupied population belonging to unions in 1937 may be estimated as slightly in excess of 25 in Great Britain and of 12 in the United States.

Quite similar results would be obtained if union membership in each of these countries were compared with that part of the gainfully occupied population which can be described as the wage earning and lower salaried classes, exclusive of agricultural labor. It has been estimated that the number of such employees in the United States in 1930 was roughly 30 million.⁶ In Great Britain in the

⁶ Leo Wolman, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

Chart 2
TRADE UNIONS IN THE UNITED STATES
AND GREAT BRITAIN



census year 1931 the number of employees answering the same description would appear to be approximately 15 million. The percentage of non-agricultural employees who were members of unions in the United States in 1930 was, therefore, 10.6, and in Great Britain in 1931, 30.0

Among employees attached to the principal divisions of industry in the United States and in Great Britain there is naturally a striking diversity in the extent of trade unionism. The percentage of workers organized, by broad industrial and occupational categories, is shown for census years since 1920 in Table 9 and in Appendix Table I. All industries and occupations, barring the relatively unimportant group of recreation and amusement, were much more thoroughly organized in Great Britain than in this country. The British unions were relatively two to three times stronger in practically every group. Among school teachers, organization in the United States was negligible but in Great Britain it covered approximately three-fourths of those attached to this occupation. Coal mining had the highest percentage of organization in Great Britain and

TABLE 8
TOTAL TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP, TOTAL OCCUPIED POPULATION
AND PERCENTAGE OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION
GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, CENSUS YEARS

YEAR	GREAT BRITAIN ¹	YEAR	UNITED STATES ²
TOTAL OCCUPIED POPULATION			
1911	18,354,000	1910	38,167,000
1921	19,357,000	1920	41,614,000
1931	21,055,000	1930	48,830,000
TOTAL TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP			
1910	2,541,000	1910	2,101,500
1920	8,276,000	1920	4,881,200
1930	4,709,000	1930	3,189,500
PERCENTAGE OF OCCUPIED POPULATION IN TRADE UNIONS			
1910	13.8 ³	1910	5.5
1920	42.8 ³	1920	11.7
1930	22.4 ³	1930	6.5

¹ England, Scotland, and Wales only; membership of unions in Northern Ireland and in the Irish Free State, and of oversea branches of British unions has been deducted.

² Figures for American unions exclude their membership in Canada.

³ The British census years are 1911, 1921, and 1931. We present, however, percentages for 1910, 1920, and 1930 based on comparisons of union membership in 1910, 1920, and 1930 with the working population in 1911, 1921, and 1931, respectively, on the assumption that the size of the working population did not change materially between 1910 and 1911, 1920 and 1921, and 1930 and 1931. The figures for the census years are as follows:

Year	Total trade union membership	Percentage of occupied population in trade unions
1911	3,110,000	16.9
1921	6,561,000	33.9
1931	4,497,000	21.4

TABLE 9
PRINCIPAL DIVISIONS OF INDUSTRY
PERCENTAGE OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION AMONG EMPLOYEES
GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, CENSUS YEARS¹

DIVISION OF INDUSTRY	GREAT BRITAIN				UNITED STATES	
	1920	1930	1921	1931	1920	1930
Mining, quarrying, and oil production	95.6	56.1	80.6	52.0	39.6	22.4
Coal mining	98.2	59.0	82.5	55.0	50.9	33.0
Other mining, quarrying, and oil	56.8	20.6	52.4	13.3	13.7	2.4
Manufacturing and mechanical industries, incl. construction	55.5	32.1	47.5	30.6	22.2	12.2
Transportation and communication ²	77.8	50.8	61.5	46.5	37.1	20.2
Service industries						
Clerical and commercial service	20.1	9.3	13.3	9.7	5.6	3.2
Recreation and amusement	69.9	26.7	60.2	22.8	50.5	35.8
Teaching (school)	70.8	77.8	71.8	77.8	1.1	0.5

¹ See Appendix Table I for the figures on which these percentages are based.

² Exclusive of shop craft and clerical workers. These may be found under manufacturing industry and clerical service, respectively.

was also highly organized in the United States. From 1920 to 1930 both labor movements suffered a severe decline in membership and consequently, in position. Thus, in 1930, 69 per cent of the employees in the important and largest category of all—the manufacturing, mechanical, and construction industries—were unorganized in Great Britain, and 88 per cent were unorganized in the United States.

To obtain comparisons between union membership and the number of employees more frequently than once in ten years is possible only for a few classes of employment, since there is no current equivalent of the decennial census of occupations in either Great Britain or the United States. For coal mining and steam railroad transportation there are annual figures of employment for both countries. The biennial Census of Manufactures in the United States gives the average number employed in factory industries in odd years, and the British Census of Production affords analogous figures for 1924 and 1930. The percentage of employees in trade unions in manufacturing, coal mining, and steam railroad transportation is shown for various years, 1923-35, in Table 10 and the detailed figures on which these percentages are based are given in Appendix Tables II-IV.

In all the years for which there is a record, coal miners and railroad employees were in both countries more completely organized than factory labor. British industries were more thoroughly unionized than American, but the difference was greatest in manufacturing. Since 1933 the extent of organization seems to be rising in both countries, and the increase in the membership of the coal miners union in this country has been so great that the percentage of coal miners organized reached 93.9 in 1935, and in 1934 exceeded the percentage in Great Britain for the first time. Figures of union membership in Great Britain in 1936 and in the United States in 1937, cited above, indicate

that the percentage organized has risen considerably since 1935, particularly among factory employees in this country.

The large division of manufacturing industry, which in 1935 covered 7,378,000 employees in the United States,

TABLE 10
MANUFACTURING, COAL MINING, AND STEAM RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION, PERCENTAGE OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION AMONG EMPLOYED WORKERS, GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, 1923-1935¹

YEAR	MANUFACTURING ²		COAL MINING		STEAM RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION ³	
	Great Britain	United States	Great Britain	United States	Great Britain	United States
1923		12.7	75.7	57.1	70.2	44.7
1924	38.8 ⁴		79.1	58.9	72.3	45.6
1925		12.4	81.7	55.4	75.3	45.2
1926			69.5	47.6	71.4	43.2
1927		12.1	64.8	49.0	60.5	43.5
1928			64.3	45.3	60.8	45.2
1929		10.9	64.4	37.4	65.3	44.6
1930	35.1 ⁴		64.9	31.8	68.3	49.0
1931		14.1	65.1	48.2	65.9	51.2
1932			68.9	64.9	66.7	56.3
1933		16.2	71.6	61.5	67.4	51.0
1934			74.7	90.6	69.3	49.7
1935		17.6	82.8	93.9	71.7	53.2

¹ For the figures on which these percentages are based see Appendix Tables II, III, and IV.

² Figures for the United States include workers in shop crafts on railroads; figures for Great Britain include them only when they are employed by private contractors or manufacturers, not by the railroads directly.

³ Figures for the United States exclude workers in shop crafts and on street railways; figures for Great Britain include shop craft workers, supervisors and officials, and workers in ancillary businesses connected with steam railroads. They include also street railway workers.

⁴ See Appendix Table IV, footnote 1.

and in 1930, 4,286,000 in Great Britain, is composed of a great variety of industries. These industries differ in size, the composition of their work-force, their profitability, their wages and working conditions and also in the state of union organization among their employees. The extent of the variation is shown in Table 11 which gives, in each census year, 1923-35, the percentage of employees organized among important subdivisions of manufacturing industry. Once more the British industries are generally more completely organized than the American. The two largest classes of industry—metals, machinery, and vehicle, and textile—were approximately half union in Great Britain, and less than 15 and 10 per cent, respectively, in the United States. Of the industries listed in

Table 11 only three—clothing, clay, glass, and stone, and food products—had higher percentages of organization in this country. The most striking difference is in the clothing industry whose relative organization in America is three times that of Great Britain. The advances made by organized labor in the United States under the influence of legislation and C.I.O. activities have radically affected the relative position of unionism in manufacturing industries since 1935. Allowing for considerable and indeterminate margins of error in estimating the membership of American trade unions in 1937, it is safe to say that the percentage of organization in the American metal, machinery, and vehicle, and textile industries is now much closer to the British figure.

TABLE 11
MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, PERCENTAGE OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION AMONG EMPLOYED WAGE EARNERS
GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, 1923-1935¹

DIVISION OF MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY	GREAT BRITAIN		UNITED STATES						
	1924	1930	1923	1925	1927	1929	1931	1933	1935
Clothing	25.0	20.8	54.6	55.8	47.1	35.5	41.8	65.6	67.3
Paper, printing, and bookbinding	66.9	58.4	26.7	26.8	27.1	25.2	29.6	30.8	28.6
Boots and shoes	72.9	80.5	20.2	23.7	22.3	19.1	17.6	38.3	50.6
Clay, glass, and stone products	16.1	12.8	14.3	12.6	12.9	13.2	17.9	18.8	20.9
Metals and their manufactures ²	49.9	41.3	10.5	9.6	9.6	8.8	12.1	12.8	12.0
Lumber products and woodworking	53.8	42.4	8.9	9.1	10.0	9.9	15.8	12.2	9.5
Food, drink, and tobacco products	7.3	7.6	9.2	9.3	8.6	7.4	7.9	7.5	11.3
Textile mill products	51.5	56.1	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.9	1.7	7.8
All other products	7.9	6.3	4.9	4.0	4.1	4.6	6.0	5.9	5.9
All manufacturing industries	38.8 ³	35.1 ³	12.7	12.4	12.1	10.9	14.1	16.2	17.6

¹ For the figures from which these percentages are derived, see Appendix Table IV.

² Including iron and steel and their products, non-ferrous metals and their products, machinery and transportation equipment. Figures for the United States cover shop craft workers on steam

railroads. Figures for Great Britain cover only such railroad repair work as is performed by private contractors or manufacturers, not by the railroads directly.

³ See Appendix Table IV, footnote 1.

IV SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the history of their development since 1890 the British and American organized labor movements have had many common experiences. Union membership in both countries increased steadily, with relatively few and slight setbacks, from the middle '90's to 1920. In that year both the British and the American unions profiting from the War boom of business and employment and the friendly policy of government, achieved a membership roughly double its pre-War size. The depression of 1921 caused a huge decline in membership. Contrary to experience, the expected rise in membership following the turn in business in 1922 failed to materialize in either country. Instead, the decline continued throughout most of the 1920's and was accelerated again during the depression of 1930-33. Altogether the British unions lost 4,000,000, and the American, 2,000,000 members from the peak in 1920 to the trough in 1933. With the next upturn in business, in 1932-33, the long period of decline appears to have come

to an end. By 1936 the British unions had 900,000 more members than in 1933; by 1937 the American claimed 4,000,000 more.

Throughout most of the long period, 1897-1935, union membership in Great Britain was substantially larger than in the United States. Not counting the earliest years of this period, when organized labor in this country was recovering from internal warfare and the depression of 1893, and the A.F. of L. was just getting on its feet, the British unions began to draw away from the American about 1906 and were not overtaken again until 1937. In 1920 the British unions claimed 8,348,000 members, the American only 5,047,800; even in 1935 British membership exceeded American by approximately 1,000,000. Since 1935 a kaleidoscopic succession of events has so transformed the American labor movement that its membership began to climb at an exceptional rate and the unions claim a gain in two years of about 3,500,000 members.

This rate of advance the British unions have been unable to equal. Even if they have gained as many members in 1936-37 as they did in 1935-36, or 500,000, their membership in the latest year would remain more than a million less than that claimed by the American unions.

Relative to the size of the total population, or to the number of wage earners and salaried employees, the British

unions have been substantially the stronger. It may be roughly estimated that the relative numerical strength of organized labor in Great Britain has for many years been triple that in this country. The disparity is less in 1937 than before, but the advantage still lies with the British movement.

Another striking difference between the two labor move-

APPENDIX TABLE I
PRINCIPAL DIVISIONS OF INDUSTRY, EXTENT OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION AMONG EMPLOYEES
GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, CENSUS YEARS¹

	1920 ²	GREAT BRITAIN		UNITED STATES		
		1930 ²	1921	1931	1920	1930
Mining, quarrying, and oil production						
Number of employees	.....	.....	1,210,662	1,086,759	1,055,898	953,427
Union membership	1,157,536	610,101	976,184	564,935	418,000	213,100
Percentage organized	95.6	56.1	80.6	52.0	39.6	22.4
Coal mining						
Number of employees	.....	.....	1,135,150	1,007,102	733,936	621,661
Union membership	1,114,659	593,713	936,653	554,373	373,800	205,100
Percentage organized	98.2	59.0	82.5	55.0	50.9	33.0
Other mining, quarrying, and oil						
Number of employees	.....	.....	75,512	79,657	321,962	331,766
Union membership	42,877	16,388	39,531	10,562	44,200	8,000
Percentage organized	56.8	20.6	52.4	13.3	13.7	2.4
Manufacturing and mechanical industries, incl. construction						
Number of employees	.....	.....	5,867,223	6,084,109	12,140,420	13,517,512
Union membership	3,258,620	1,952,230	2,787,673	1,864,210	2,699,000	1,640,800
Percentage organized	55.5	32.1	47.5	30.6	22.2	12.2
Transportation and communication ³						
Number of employees	.....	.....	1,517,210	1,671,335	2,870,398	3,505,253
Union membership	1,180,584	848,602	933,223	776,675	1,065,900	709,700
Percentage organized	77.8	50.8	61.5	46.5	37.1	20.2
Service industries						
Clerical and commercial service ⁴						
Number of employees	.....	.....	2,426,996	3,277,118	4,766,150	6,579,315
Union membership	487,209	303,418	321,645	316,512	265,200	207,900
Percentage organized	20.1	9.3	13.3	9.7	5.6	3.2
Recreation and amusement						
Number of employees	.....	.....	74,258	98,833	204,111	355,803
Union membership	51,881	26,350	44,668	22,507	103,100	127,300
Percentage organized	69.9	26.7	60.2	22.8	50.5	35.8
Teaching (school)						
Number of employees	.....	.....	282,500	294,795	752,055	1,044,016
Union membership	199,923	229,393	202,854	229,242	8,600	5,200
Percentage organized	70.8	77.8	71.8	77.8	1.1	0.5

¹ Figures for the United States compiled from Leo Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism*, pp. 200, 217-21. Percentages of trade union organization in both countries are based on compilations from the respective Censuses of Occupations of the number of employees, excluding employers, managers, and officials. The Census of Occupations for the United States covered, in each year, all workers aged 10 years or over; the corresponding age limit for the British Census was 12 years in 1921 and 14 in 1931.

Union membership figures for the United States are exclusive of Canada. Figures for union membership in Great Britain include membership in Northern Ireland and in oversea branches, although the figures for the number of employees cover only England, Scotland, and Wales. The error thus introduced, however, is very slight.

² The British census years are 1921 and 1931. We present, however, percentages for 1920 and 1930 based on comparisons of union membership in 1920 and 1930 with the working population in 1921 and 1931, respectively, on the assumption that the size of the working population did not change materially between 1920 and 1921, and between 1930 and 1931.

³ Exclusive of shop craft and clerical workers. These may be found under manufacturing industry and clerical service, respectively. The membership of general labor unions has been deducted from the British membership figures.

⁴ Includes railway clerks.

ments has been in the dispersion of membership and organization. In the United States, except for trades such as teamsters, only four industries—transportation, building, coal mining, and clothing—were highly organized until very recently. In Great Britain, although railroad, building, and coal mining labor was among the most completely organized, there was a high percentage of union membership in the textile and metal and allied industries, among public servants, and among common laborers, with fairly substantial organization also among clerical workers and sales people. It was only after 1935, when the organizing campaigns of the C.I.O. in the so-called mass production industries began to be crowned with success, and both the C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. directed their activities toward organizing retail stores, hotels, and restaurants, and the employees of local and central governments, that American unionism in these occupations and industries aspired to the heights long before reached in Great Britain.

Concerning the causes of these very substantial differences in the development of organized labor in Great Britain and the United States, there are many hypotheses and explanations. The heterogeneity of the population, the wide geographical dispersion of industry and labor, the existence of independent unionism in the form of company unions, the state of the labor law, the structure of unions, the relatively higher wages, and the opposition of employers to organized labor are all factors in the Ameri-

can situation that help to explain the course trade unions have followed in this country and their present condition.

Of these factors, one of the most influential has been the size of the country, the far-flung dispersion of shops and factories, and the very high mobility of American industry. The territory to be covered in organizing employees is so vast that the cost of organizing has always been formidable, and at times prohibitive. Organizing campaigns, therefore, must be undertaken by unions that already have adequate reserve funds and whose members are willing to be taxed for the prosecution of further organizing activities. Added to this initial cost of organizing is the expense of continuously widening the area of unionizing campaigns to gather new industries into the fold as well as employers who have moved their plants, whether to procure tax exemption, to gain the benefits of a changing localization of industry, or to escape dealing with organized labor.

Closely associated with the mobility of American industry and the unwillingness of the majority of American employers to bargain with trade unions has been the development of plant or shop unions. While not unknown in Great Britain, they are much rarer than here. In this country they have proved an effective obstacle in the path of trade unionism, partly because they were sponsored by the employer and hence had his support, and partly because they met many genuine needs of the employees. Un-

APPENDIX TABLE II
COAL MINING, EXTENT OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION AMONG EMPLOYED WAGE EARNERS
GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, 1923-1935

YEAR	GREAT BRITAIN ¹			UNITED STATES ²		
	Number employed ³	Union membership ⁴	Percentage organized	Number employed	Union membership	Percentage organized
1923	1,181,844	894,824	75.7	862,536	492,900	57.1
1924	1,192,144	942,485	79.1	779,613	459,100	58.9
1925	1,083,785	885,789	81.7	748,805	414,700	55.4
1926	1,096,948 ⁵	762,916	69.5	759,033	361,100	47.6
1927	1,005,053	651,554	64.8	759,177	372,300	49.0
1928	921,260	592,379	64.3	682,831	309,400	45.3
1929	939,367	605,361	64.4	654,494	245,100	37.4
1930	914,328	593,713	64.9	644,006	205,100	31.8
1931	851,623	554,373	65.1	589,644	284,200	48.2
1932	803,615	553,959	68.9	527,623	342,300	64.9
1933	773,640	553,631	71.6	523,336	321,800	61.5
1934	772,847	577,190	74.7	567,061	513,800	90.6
1935	754,321	624,929	82.8	565,672	531,000	93.9

¹ Including Northern Ireland.

² Membership figures for 1923 to 1934 from Leo Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism*, p. 229. Employment figures are from the U. S. Bureau of Mines, *Mineral Resources of the United States*.

³ Figures reported in the *Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom*, 80th number, 1937, pp. 298-9 are compiled from the *Annual Reports* of the Mines Department and from information

supplied by the Mines Department and by the Government of Northern Ireland.

⁴ *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, October of each year.

⁵ The figures for England, Scotland, and Wales are for March 13, since the majority of coal mines were idle during a considerable period of the year owing to a protracted dispute. The total number employed on December 11, 1926 was 943,605.

til a few years ago, this type of association had probably as many members as the organized labor movement. Since 1933 their rights have been progressively restricted and many of their practices, such as receiving financial assistance from employers, are now forbidden by law. A fair number have changed their form and continue to exist in many industries. Their future is uncertain, depending, as does the whole course of labor relations in this country, on the stability of the present organized labor movement.

Probably the most potent change in the status of American unions since 1933 has been the rewriting of the laws governing trade unions. In the history of the legal position of unions in Great Britain and the United States there has been a slow but substantial liberalization of the law. Most of the disabilities from which unions suffered in their early periods have been removed and most of the practices of organized labor sanctioned. In the opinion of many students of labor in the United States, the existing law and the judicial interpretation of it had failed in practice to afford employees and their unions the guarantees they needed in order to exercise the right to combine in unions and to bargain collectively with employers through representatives of their own free choice. The National Labor Relations Act, signed by the President July 5, 1935 was designed to remedy the defects in existing statutes. Its effect has, no doubt, been to stimulate organ-

ization and to break down the resistance of employers to dealing with organized labor.

Union structure, which has played so large a role in the labor controversies of this country, does not appear to have been an equally serious factor in Great Britain. In many of the highly organized industries of that country, employees belong to either craft or semi-industrial unions which join together for purposes of common action into loose federations, much after the fashion of the unions of train service, shop craft, and maintenance of way employees on the American railroads. In Great Britain, also, two large unions—the Transport and General Workers' Union and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers—with a combined membership in 1935 of nearly 800,000, draw their members from a variety of industries. They have nevertheless apparently avoided the disastrous consequences of warfare over conflicting jurisdictional claims. Thus a combination of craft, semi-industrial, and separate unions of unskilled and common labor has succeeded in achieving and preserving a high percentage of unionization in many British industries, while at the same time preserving the autonomy of workers organized in craft unions. It remains to be seen whether the purely industrial, or vertical union, will prevail in the United States or whether arrangements like the British will in time be more generally adopted in American industry.

APPENDIX TABLE III
STEAM RAILWAYS, EXTENT OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION AMONG EMPLOYED WAGE EARNERS
GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, 1923-1935

YEAR	GREAT BRITAIN			UNITED STATES ¹		
	Number employed ²	Union membership ³	Percentage organized	Number employed	Union membership	Percentage organized
1923	681,778	478,492	70.2	1,335,399	596,600	44.7
1924	700,573	506,854	72.3	1,285,226	586,300	45.6
1925	702,062	528,764	75.3	1,288,333	582,700	45.2
1926	689,264	491,861	71.4	1,330,532	575,300	43.2
1927	683,077	413,319	60.5	1,311,862	571,200	43.5
1928	677,148	412,037	60.8	1,256,331	567,300	45.2
1929	642,137	419,197	65.3	1,265,613	564,600	44.6
1930	656,530	448,362	68.3	1,135,993	557,000	49.0
1931	615,592	405,741	65.9	959,495	491,300	51.2
1932	597,971	399,084	66.7	786,178	442,700	56.3
1933	566,300	381,591	67.4	741,020	377,800	51.0
1934	575,048	398,393	69.3	765,270	380,600	49.7
1935	580,766	416,437	71.7	756,093	402,300	53.2

¹ Figures for 1923-34 from Leo Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism*, pp. 230-1. Figures for 1935 are derived in the same way as in this volume. The number employed excludes workers on street railways and in maintenance of equipment and stores on steam railways. It also excludes executives, officials, and staff assistants on steam railways.

² Figures for 1923 and 1924 from *21st Abstract of Labour Statistics of the United Kingdom*, p. 22. Data for 1925-35 from Ministry of Transport report on *Railways (Staff)*. The particulars in this report relate to all staff employed by the railway companies

of Great Britain (excluding the Manchester Ship Canal); staff employed by the London Passenger Transport Board in connection with their railways (street railways); all staff employed by the Railway Clearing House.

Employees of railways in Northern Ireland are not included, since data are not available after 1925.

³ *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, October of each year. Includes only those union members classified in the 'railway service' group. Union membership in Northern Ireland is included.

APPENDIX TABLE IV

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, EXTENT OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION AMONG EMPLOYED WAGE EARNERS
GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES, 1923-1935

DIVISION OF MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY	GREAT BRITAIN ¹		UNITED STATES ²						
	1924	1930	1923	1925	1927	1929	1931	1933	1935
Clothing									
Number of wage earners	309,243	331,592	537,727	505,468	545,108	579,427	508,136	496,330	615,816
Union membership	77,409	68,948	293,800	282,300	256,600	205,800	212,600	325,500	414,200
Percentage organized	25.0	20.8	54.6	55.8	47.1	35.5	41.8	65.6	67.3
Paper, printing, and publishing									
Number of wage earners	290,292	319,845	527,019	536,766	553,040	591,381	511,350	460,486	540,507
Union membership	194,218	186,744	140,600	144,000	150,100	149,100	151,200	142,000	154,600
Percentage organized	66.9	58.4	26.7	26.8	27.1	25.2	29.6	30.8	28.6
Boots and shoes									
Number of wage earners	120,934	112,602	225,216	206,992	203,110	205,640	181,374	190,914	202,113
Union membership	88,193	90,591	45,400	49,000	45,300	39,300	31,900	73,200	102,300
Percentage organized	72.9	80.5	20.2	23.7	22.3	19.1	17.6	38.3	50.6
Clay, glass, and stone									
Number of wage earners	192,999	205,864	351,692	353,036	350,017	328,417	222,856	173,000	233,205
Union membership	31,061	26,248	50,300	44,600	45,200	43,200	40,000	32,600	48,800
Percentage organized	16.1	12.8	14.3	12.6	12.9	13.2	17.9	18.8	20.9
Metals and their manufactures³									
Number of wage earners	1,408,777	1,454,853	3,227,036	3,002,738	2,916,050	3,268,403	2,183,435	1,830,220	2,417,739
Union membership	703,358	600,603	337,900	289,100	279,300	288,600	264,600	233,800	290,300
Percentage organized	49.9	41.3	10.5	9.6	9.6	8.8	12.1	12.8	12.0
Lumber and woodworking									
Number of wage earners	122,892	149,326	931,816	921,266	862,667	876,383	509,665	454,171	579,012
Union membership	66,157	63,326	83,200	83,800	86,500	86,600	80,500	55,300	55,000
Percentage organized	53.8	42.4	8.9	9.1	10.0	9.9	15.8	12.2	9.5
Food, drink, and tobacco									
Number of wage earners	369,596	389,283	817,317	795,902	793,248	852,380	735,128	753,562	887,985
Union membership	27,013	29,742	75,000	73,900	68,500	63,200	58,200	56,700	100,600
Percentage organized	7.3	7.6	9.2	9.3	8.6	7.4	7.9	7.5	11.3
Textile mill products									
Number of wage earners	1,198,203	997,282	1,145,966	1,093,199	1,101,724	1,077,596	870,642	938,798	1,027,200
Union membership	617,093	559,700	35,000	36,200	35,100	35,200	34,000	16,000	80,300
Percentage organized	51.5	56.1	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.9	1.7	7.8
All other products⁴									
Number of wage earners	332,063	325,738	996,802	961,331	1,000,805	1,031,346	784,115	758,255	875,268
Union membership	26,219	20,426	48,800	38,600	41,500	47,500	46,900	44,700	51,700
Percentage organized	7.9	6.3	4.9	4.0	4.1	4.6	6.0	5.9	5.9
All manufacturing industries									
Number of wage earners	4,344,999	4,286,385	8,760,591	8,376,698	8,325,769	8,811,243	6,506,701	6,055,736	7,378,845
Union membership	1,830,721	1,646,328	1,110,000	1,041,500	1,007,300	958,500	919,900	979,800	1,297,800
Percentage organized	42.1	38.4	12.7	12.4	12.1	10.9	14.1	16.2	17.6

¹ Including Northern Ireland. Membership figures compiled from data published in the *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, October of each year. Figures for number of workers are from the *Fourth Census of Production of the United Kingdom, 1930*, Parts I and V, and are the number reported as 'operatives'. Operatives are defined as including "all wage earners employed in or about the works (including foremen, van and lorry drivers and warehousemen) or in outside work of construction and repair" (see Part V, p. 85). Outworkers are excluded. Data refer only to firms that employed more than ten (five for Northern Ireland) persons on the average during the census years. If the number estimated to have been employed by the small firms and by firms from whom no information was received are included, the figures for 'all manufacturing industries' become:

	1924	1930
Total number of operatives	4,716,000	4,692,300
Total union membership	1,830,721	1,646,328
Percentage organized	38.8	35.1

² Figures for 1923-33, adjusted to make them comparable with similar data for Great Britain, from Leo Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism*, pp. 224-27. Revisions have also been made in the 1933 employment figures given there in order to make them comparable with the figures for 1935. Canadian union membership has been deducted in all years.

³ Including iron and steel and their products, non-ferrous metals and their products, machinery and transportation equipment. Figures for the United States cover shop craft work on steam railroads. Figures for Great Britain cover only such railroad repair work as is performed by private contractors or manufacturers, not by the railroads directly.

⁴ Includes leather, chemicals, rubber products, musical instruments, and brushes.