

SYNDICALISM IN  
MODERN SOCIETY

Today, the French word “syndicat” designates both an association of workers and a group of producers or business concerns. In the nineteenth century, it was identified with “associations of resistance” which the law called “workers’ coalitions” and which were associations of workers, *de facto* or *de jure*, formed to improve the lot of the working class by one means or another. In this study we shall consider such organizations exclusively.

Syndicalism postulates the concept of working for wages and therefore that of separation between the worker and his means of production; it differs from the medieval corporation which united masters and journeymen, and even from those mutual societies of artisans and shop-foremen which were to provoke the Lyons insurrection of 1831. It thus implies freedom to work, where the latter is identified with a form of merchandise subject to the laws of the market. Its ancestors are to be found in the workers’ associations ousted by the authorities as soon as they arose in the shadow of the mills, and in organizations of journeymen, linked by a secret ritual and a strict discipline in their quest for available work. Certain of its early characteristics persist to the present day. Formed at first by profes-

Translated by James H. Labadie.

sional workers “freed” by the ruin of the corporations, or as an outgrowth of the journeymen’s associations, syndicalism until the twentieth century accepted only the most skilled workers; it excluded the suffering masses who were indissolubly attached to the factories where, in the last century, men and women worked side by side with their children.

For decades the union—called in the nineteenth century the league of resistance—was illegal and had to conceal itself behind mutual-aid societies or else resign itself to existence as a secret society modeled after the journeymen’s associations. Only slowly and at different times in different countries did syndicalism finally gain freedom and become integrated into the industrial society of our time. This evolution varied enormously from one country to another, depending on the time at which industrial capitalism and its typical political context appeared. Today the movement as a whole still shows signs of this varying national origin in its form and its method of action. Because of sweeping social changes which have occurred in less than a hundred years, it has been forced to adapt itself to new structures and to revise its relations with employers as well as with the state. Despite this diversity, today non-Communist syndicalism tends to unify its techniques and its aims in the industrial democracies. On the other hand, Communist-directed syndicalism still seeks to maintain or to accentuate certain methods of struggle held over from the old European syndicalist movement, with an obvious political end in view.

The evolution of syndicalism falls into four main periods. In the first, the coexistence of the corporate system and of free workers or artisans makes trade union development very difficult, if not impossible. Such was the case in France and Belgium before 1791, in Great Britain before 1815, in Germany and Sweden before 1864, etc.

The second period is that of individualist economic liberalism, where leagues or coalitions of workers are forbidden. In France it was marked by the Le Chapelier decree of June, 1791, and by the Napoleonic code. Here coalitions were considered misdemeanors “contrary” to the fundamental rights of man; they were authorized only in 1864 under the Second Empire. In Great Britain, they were forbidden by a law of 1799, even before the disappearance of guild privileges, but re-established in 1825 long before their authorization in other European countries. The same sequence occurred in Germany, a half-century later. Suppressed in Prussia in 1845, the right of coalition was recognized in 1865 simultaneously with the liquidation of the corporations.

The second period, very long in France, was short in England and reduced to nothing in Germany. This unequal development served to orient workers' movements of the various nations in quite different directions; it also explains the divergent attitudes of the state toward workers' claims. In France, unions took cover behind mutual associations, especially during the last fifteen years of the period (1849-1864). Before this, working-class hopes turned toward the state, which they hoped to conquer either by insurrection or by peaceful means; and the state, at first indifferent to their lot, was forced to intervene with restrictive laws, particularly concerning the labor of women and children. This did not weaken the monopolist situation of employers *vis-à-vis* scattered workers forced to compete for jobs. In England, the State, skilled in *laissez-faire*, never intervened at all.

The characteristics of this period are social instability accompanied by brutal changes (uprooting of artisans and peasants), and population growth creating a permanent surplus in the labor supply. These same characteristics appear during the first period in Germany, and during the third period in England. The industrial proletariat is in Sismondi's sense a sub-consumer since his wages assure him only physical subsistence; he is outside society since he lacks political rights, outside the economic realm because he is badly paid; he represents that "loss of manhood," that "decomposition" of which the young Marx speaks. Workers' groups have to prevent this decomposition; conservatives, in the truest sense of the word, they sometimes compensate for their disheartening prospects by subscribing to half-scientific, half-romantic utopias, suggested by a multitude of social reformers.

If one part of the working class is hostile to the idea of property, another wishes to turn to its own profit this human right, declared inalienable in 1789. To those who asked him to enlarge the electoral body, Guizot used to answer: "Get rich!" The workers sought an illusory enrichment and a more real liberty in associations or cooperatives of production, substituting communal or phalanstery property for the taboo of individual property.

Mutual societies, authorized by law, were not only the façade of the resistance leagues, but also the private insurance of the proletariat, though they accepted only skilled workers.

The third period is that of the development of unions which, though not yet legalized, solidified as a growing force and were rapidly concentrated in large federations or central organizations. Their acknowledged aims were wage increases, reduction of the working day, improvement of working conditions, and universal suffrage wherever it did not yet exist.

The monopoly passed from employers to employees who by their force or simply by their presence obtained from the State new edicts or limitations on abusive working conditions. The essential weapon was the strike, sometimes replaced by arbitration; it was used not only to gain momentary benefits or suppress legal inequalities between workers and wage-earners (the law of master and servant), but also to codify and regulate their reciprocal relations by means of collective agreements. If I am not mistaken, England showed the way in 1871 when collective agreements were authorized by law. It was assumed that the agreements would be honored, since they were deprived of sanctions and provided for the creation of arbitration committees. Other countries followed, but the collective contract assumed international importance only in the twentieth century (in France, as a matter of fact, not until 1936). The signing of collective contracts implies recognition by the employers of the unions as authorized representatives of factory personnel. The institution of shop delegates is an application of this.

In its third period the syndicalist movement became aware of economic realities and the historical role of the capitalist method of production. Before this, the labor movement in effect opposed technical progress or, at least in its cooperative organizations, favored a certain stabilization of technique. The capitalist factory seemed a frequently monstrous accident. A labor organization (Louis Blanc) or cooperatives under state protection (Lassalle) or an exchange bank (Robert Owen) or free credit (Proudhon)—such institutions were to overcome the injustices of capitalism. These reforming schemes were widely supported among the working-class elite.

On the other hand, capitalist industry during the third period is considered to be the motive force of economic progress and a necessary stage in human evolution. In the United States the unions adapted themselves to this situation and have not tried to change it. Under Marxist influence, European unions pinned their revolutionary hopes on the wearing-out of a capitalism which would have exhausted its possibilities as a constructor of productive forces. Before thinking of a future step, extremely vague, European unions attempted to integrate the working class into current society by obtaining for it the maximum that could be derived from increased production. Only the revolutionary French syndicalist movement, the C.G.T. (*Confédération Générale du Travail*) is an exception in the early part of this century,<sup>1</sup> obstinately holding to a revolutionary goal; despite

1. We are not considering the Hispano-Latin unions which operate in an atmosphere closer to the 19th century than to the 20th.

### *Syndicalism in Modern Society*

this aim one of the leaders of the C.G.T., Griffuelhes, wrote in 1911 that "the working class depends upon a healthily active capitalism in order to grow and improve its lot" and thus voiced the almost universal sentiments of labor union members in industrial countries.

The fourth period is that of the spread, often aided by legislation, of collective agreements; their importance increases with the increase of national productivity. The State decrees a minimum wage, engages directly or indirectly in insurance, and redistributes income among wage-earners by means of withholding taxes or, as in Great Britain, influences buying power by price control and subsidies. This period dates from the beginning of the first World War and has taken on an organic character since 1945. Alongside employers and wage-earners acting as bilateral monopolies, the State intervenes as a third party, occasionally arbitrating and, using the levers of credit, taxation, and nationalization of industries, becomes the real regulator of the workers' standard of living.

In this present period may be noted, with the broadening of management committees in most countries, (a) the possibility (at least theoretical) for workers to participate in the organization of the companies; (b) the increased spread of industry-wide bargaining committees; (c) the experiment in Germany of a beginning of co-management with direction shared by employers and unions. These are the hard-come-by seeds of what may come to be called "industrial democracy."

The French Revolution almost simultaneously abolished the corporative regime and forbade professional coalitions in the name of the Rights of Man, which were interpreted by the Constituent Assembly as the negation of every intermediary body between the individual and the State. Long struggles marked by republican or working-class insurrections developed and the syndicates or resistance groups existed in fact before Napoleon III authorized the coalitions in 1864 and before the Republic legalized unions in 1884. Within fifteen years French syndicalism acquired both a strength and a set of original characteristics which clearly differentiated it from that of neighboring countries. It affected an apolitical view which meant hostility to *all* parties including socialist parties, refusal to collaborate with the State, and contempt for all social legislation. But unlike American unions (and British unions in the 19th century), also independent of parties and of the State, its apolitical character is not that of neutrality; it fed on a revolutionary ideology, a blend of Marxism and anarchist doctrine doubtless explained by the fact that twice before (in 1848 and in 1871), govern-

ment elected by universal suffrage had been responsible for the massacre of Parisian workers. This tendency also reflects the almost universal opposition felt by French citizens toward a State in which they had so often since 1789 lost confidence because of revolutions or other acts of force; these in turn had merely oppressed or deceived the citizens. Contempt for universal suffrage brings with it contempt for the masses who exercise it; and French syndicalism, magnifying the decisive role of active minorities, never pretended that the improvements gained were of any value in themselves or were anything other than so many steps toward the violent overthrow of society. Convinced that its mission was to build a society of free men out of the ruins of bourgeois democracy, French syndicalism at the beginning of this century was clearly differentiated from that of its industrial neighbors, who worked essentially toward improving the life of the working class. Its only important counterpart in Europe was the foundation of the Spanish C.N.T., an anarchist central which, inspired with the spirit of Bakunin, was to play a leading role until the fall of the Republic.

The attitude of French syndicalism led it to scorn mutualism and even cooperation, and to avoid the heavy and complex structures of the British, Belgian, and German labor movements. The first World War, introducing the first features of labor participation in state or international organisms, was destined to upset the French syndicalists' ideas and bring them closer to those of their European neighbors. Thus the C.G.T. proposed its system in France for nationalization of industries at the same time that German unions were developing their project of *Planwirtschaft* (1920). Had it not been revived (with modifications in its ideological bases) by the Russian Revolution, the mystique of insurrection would have yielded to a politics of "presence" or active participation in economic organisms and of legislative reform. Communism succeeded anarchosyndicalism, utilizing for its partisan political ends the permanent resentment of a large part of the French proletariat; it was even more successful than might have been expected in throwing the unions off balance, because the latter, scorning the material bonds provided by mutualist or cooperative endeavor, were in effect united only in their ideas and for the purpose of direct action. It is noteworthy that, in nations where syndicalism was as much or even more a material organization of worker solidarity than a current of ideas and passions, it resisted Communist pressure, even in the difficult circumstances which followed both world wars.

Syndicalism in Italy, destroyed by the fascist regime, had to begin again from nothing after 1945; this gave communism a fine opportunity to direct

### *Syndicalism in Modern Society*

the reconstruction of the movement. In France, where the syndicalist movement was interrupted only during the German occupation, such an explanation is not valid, and another must be sought in some enduring trait of the French proletariat. The tradition of political revolutions has had two results which are complementary despite their contradictory appearances: on the one hand, a sizeable portion of the working class, imbued with the Jacobin spirit of the population as a whole, has believed that the State should be responsible for its security and standard of living, and that therefore the working class itself has no reason to create autonomous institutions to maintain them; on the other hand, it continues to believe fervently that the current political regime is not that of the working class, and that official administrations even when supervised by syndicalist central organizations are strangers to it. Until now it has preferred to claim direction and oppose construction. Formerly, in the liberal state, it was anarchistic syndicalist; today, in the welfare state, it is communistic. As a result of the presence in France of a large Communist group within the working class, the syndicalist movement is weaker and more divided there<sup>2</sup> than in any other industrial country with the possible exception of Italy; this checks the development of contractual agreements, which play such an important part in the modern industry of our day.

The situation in Belgium offers a perfect contrast to that of France. Springing from the Napoleonic empire, Belgium for a long time experienced the economic and judicial evolution of France. In the 19th century, the country merely felt the repercussions of French revolutions and periods of reaction. Having obtained the right of coalition at the same time as the French (1866), the Belgian working class, despite some cultural opposition, found a powerful unifying element in its great struggle for universal suffrage. It concentrated all its material and institutional strength in the Labor Party, founded in 1885 to work for universal suffrage, while workers in France were quarreling about the best way to utilize this right in a vast number of parties and unions. This fundamental aim, which was to remain such for thirty-five years, produced a feeling of unity among organizations as apolitical as mutual societies and cooperatives, not to mention unions. The Labor party, drawing its strength from the collective support of the most varied kinds of workers' institutions, was rather a center of worker

2. To the two main unions which grew out of the old C.G.T. must be added the Christian C.F.T.C., important during the past ten years, as well as numerous independent or autonomous unions which too often quarrel jealously about "ideas" on which they pretend to have a monopoly.

coordination than a party founded upon a precise ideology uniting only those who adhered to its dogmas. To this picture was added the strong communistic tradition inherited from the Middle Ages, transmitted by the bourgeoisie to the proletariat, and finally producing autonomous workers' institutions of which the unions are but one element among others within the semi-liberal state. From this there developed among Belgian syndicalists a pragmatic spirit, where the aftereffects of a certain revolutionary mystique appear not as the motive power but as the spiritual justification of an activity exclusively oriented toward immediate achievements. There resulted also a lack of interest in, not to say a distrust of, projects of nationalized economy,<sup>3</sup> except for a short period in which the Labor party adopted the Marxian plan, which was never carried out. The violence to which Belgian unions sometimes resort is always accompanied by remarkable prudence vis-à-vis a capitalist regime whose very existence depends upon its capacity to compete on the world market.

The potential field for socialist unions would be considerable in this country where 70% of the population are wage-earners were it not for the growing strength of Christian unions. Religious and sometimes national disputes (between Flemish and Walloons) inhibit the development of unified strength within the working class.

In Sweden syndicalism is of recent date: the corporations were not suppressed until 1864, at about the same time as in Germany. But despite the intellectual influence of German socialism, the Social Democratic party was founded in 1889 by unions following the example of the Belgian Labor Party. As in Belgium, the struggle for universal suffrage, where even the general strike was used, served to orient the union and political activity of the workers. But in spite of significant political victories and the existence of a social democratic government almost uninterruptedly for twenty-four years, Swedish syndicalism has always refused to become involved in the apparatus of the state and has been satisfied to enjoy, rather, its benevolent protection in realizing a social contractual system unique in the extent and the importance of the problems resolved.

Proudhon liked to contrast the terms "contract" and "law," "society" and the "state" (even the socialist state). The Swedish labor movement has successfully created a nice synthesis of socialist currents, in making of the state not a social legislator but rather the protector of collective agree-

3. This distrust was justified in doctrine by E. Vandervelde in his book *Le socialisme contre l'Etat* (Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1918), written against the "militant socialism" in which Germans and Russians had seen the prologue to working-class socialism (1919).



## *Syndicalism in Modern Society*

ments freely negotiated between labor and management organizations. Proudhon would have triple reason to rejoice, first at this new right, independent of the state, then at the concomitant disappearance of strikes and lockouts by mutual agreement of the two sides, and finally at the progress of worker influence and initiative in the most varied fields. For the old jungle where general strife was widespread, the contractual edifice substitutes general coexistence. Thus Sweden, like its Scandinavian neighbors, appears to today's European syndicalists as the Fortunate Islands seemed to Plato's contemporaries: a place where the mutual recognition of men by men wiped out Hobbes's curse, still stamped on the laws of even the most democratic states.

If in Belgium and in Sweden the unions (*syndicats*) established political parties, in Germany it was the parties that created the unions. The political and national backwardness of Germany matched that of its social structure; but all of these caught up with other countries in a single decade of the 19th century. Almost simultaneously, the suppression of the corporations, the right of coalition, the birth of workers' parties, the creation of unions, universal suffrage, and the political unity of the Reich, not to mention the great industrial expansion of 1860–1873, upset the historical scene and instituted social relationships which in France or in England, for example, had crystallized only after seventy-five or a hundred years of revolution or strife.

Lassalle, founder of German socialism, did not believe in unions because of his so-called "iron law of wages," drawn from Ricardian theory; however, as a good disciple of Hegel, he believed in the economic and spiritual mission of the State. For him and his successors unions are, above all, political instruments; for his Marxist or liberal adversaries, there are no basic differences among the more subtly shaded opinions. In the subsequent history of Social-Democracy, a Bebel was to emphasize the impotence of unions compared to the *Konzerns*, and a Kautsky was to proclaim the inability of the proletariat to adopt a revolutionary ideology. The bonds between unions and the Social Democratic party were to be on a purely personal basis, but those responsible for the first were to follow strictly the politics of the second, which acted as the only guide of the conscience and hopes of the working class.

The first war, which brought the unions closer to the state, provided them with relative autonomy of action and a new line of thought expressed in projects of *Arbeits-gemeinschaft*, as well as the rather mythical

conception of an “economic democracy” under the Weimar Republic. Persecution under Hitler and, after 1945, the institution of the Federal Republic were to bring socialists and Christians closer together in a single, powerful central organization whose independence in regard to political parties was by this very factor somewhat increased. And a miracle occurred: German unions took a favorable position on the European coal and steel plan despite the hostility of the Social Democrats! Will this independence survive the split, always possible, between socialists and Christians? This is at least doubtful, unless the split reflects what some call the “Ameri- canization” of the German working class: an indifference toward ideological constructs and a tenacious, well-disciplined quest for worker progress stemming from industrial progress.

For a long time the unions accepted only skilled workers and organized not by industrial plant but by trades. This developed partly from the strong traditions of the guild system, but also from the fact that manpower situations were so diverse. A union cannot survive without a certain fixity of manpower, at least within a given trade: the journeyman’s societies organized the geographic mobility of their members, but jealously closed the doors of the profession to newcomers. During the 19th century, worker defense meant establishing a vigilant guard around each trade, designed to keep wages up by limiting the labor supply. This conservative attitude was understandable in that it helped save from absolute ruin those artisans who were uprooted by technical progress and it protected them insofar as possible from the population flood of former farm-dwellers and immigrants. The result was that the wages of professionals were five or six times as high as those of workers left without protection and hopelessly abandoned to contingent fluctuations. It took a depression as severe as that of 1847–1848 to throw the skilled workers themselves into the streets. The political consequences of this are well known.

When the sections of the first International were founded in 1864, they accepted skilled workers exclusively. To the differentiation between unskilled laborers and professionals there was added in Germany, if Bebel is to be believed, antagonism between former guild workmen and factory workers, which retarded union development for a generation.

England had shown how to organize a union as early as 1825, but their development was delayed by various reasons arising out of Irish immigration, the failure of Robert Owen’s schemes, and Chartist agitation. Revived, thanks to the prosperity which followed 1848, the professional

## *Syndicalism in Modern Society*

unions had become an impressive force by 1875. The slowing-down of Irish immigration permitted them to penetrate the larger mines and textile mills; women and children were still numerous in the latter.

After 1880, England declined before the growth of new competitors, Germany and the United States; unemployment developed, affecting first the unskilled workers, who, with the support of public opinion, revolted. A new form of unionism developed among the unskilled. Their leaders, however, were skilled workers like John Burns and Tom Mann, who provided them with officers and educated them in the union point of view; but these new extra-professional unions were unable to collect heavy dues or to provide insurance for their members. Finally they had recourse to the state; inspired by Bismarck's reforms, the British workers claimed insurance against unemployment, illness, old age. The appeal to the state and the necessity of turning to Parliament were to bring about the creation of the Labor party.

Today, the structure of the trade unions is as complex as the varied origins of each union and the various needs encountered during two World Wars. Side by side with the old unions of trades numbering some few hundred and grouping, perhaps, but a few dozen members, there are powerful industrial unions (metalworkers, railwaymen, miners) and finally two sprawling unions of workers whose jobs are not sharply defined: the Transport and General Worker's Union and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers. The first, a mixture of dockers, transport workers, goods-handlers in commerce and industry, etc., has about a million and a half dues-paying members. Such a conglomeration necessitates a very strong bureaucracy whose word is law in the annual congresses of the Trades Unions. On the other hand, the lack of a professional or even an industrial bond among the members facilitates wildcat strikes launched against the advice of union directors.

American unionism did not have the heritage of guild sectionalism to cope with, but it had to erect a solid structure out of a tumultuous wave of immigrants. In the 1880's a gigantic effort to organize on an industry-wide basis and to channel the population flood was carried on by the Knights of Labor; of Proudhonian and libertarian inspiration, this movement was the American counterpart of the great trades union movement of Robert Owen in England in the 1830's. Dealing with masses of workers who vacillated between poverty in the East and flight to the West, the Knights of Labor attempted to instil a working-class consciousness and to create a psychological rather than a material solidarity among their members.

Several bloody incidents and the prudently obstinate resistance of unions organized by trades precipitated the collapse of the Knights. In an America which was still being created, there was no intellectual or psychological link which could counteract the spirit of adventure which in its own way led workers to test the equality of chance, or the selfish but solid professional bonds established by the American Federation of Labor beginning in 1886.

Nothing is more useful to the existence of unions than a fixed labor supply. England, and in another way Germany, have demonstrated this fact for sixty years (inflation and depression, upsetting the social class structure of Germany, slowed down and then paralyzed the labor movement). In the United States, as long as the two outlets of immigration and westward migration remained open, mass unionism was inconceivable; the movement had to remain introverted, as the psychologists say, and Malthusian. Its situation may be compared to that of the bourgeois communes of the Middle Ages, claiming franchises and privileges, but not imposing its mark on society as a whole.

Three important circumstances made possible the creation of mass unionism in the United States: the first was the restriction of immigration following the first World War; the second, a reversal of population displacement noticeable since the beginning of this century, i.e., the rural exodus to the cities which followed the settlement of the land; the third is the collapse of management resistance following the great depression of 1930 and the institution of the New Deal. The problem was different from that of 1890, and it may have been a failure to understand this fact that caused the American Federation of Labor (A.F. of L.) to split, giving rise to the Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.). In the large key industries, the C.I.O. gained resounding victories following a series of strikes including sitdowns (1938); but these victories were possible only after passage of the Wagner Act and with the support of the federal agencies. The political atmosphere plays a decisive role in the birth of unions where professional bonds are lacking. We have seen that the British unions of unskilled workers turned to the state for guarantees of security. In the United States, the intervention of the federal or state governments is generally accompanied by insurance wholly or partially financed by management; and this insurance is the fruit of collective agreements. Thus a close and reciprocal relationship is established between the union and the collective agreement (factory- or industry-wide); one cannot exist without the other, for the collective agreement, by the "union shop" clause, aids union recruiting.

## *Syndicalism in Modern Society*

If the political situation was decisive in the creation of mass unions in the United States, in France it would seem to be the determining factor of their existence. Since the beginning of the century, French syndicalism had been organized on an industry-wide basis, limiting and then repudiating the "trade" unions, but this organization was largely an empty framework. The absence of material links provided by mutual societies or cooperatives, as well as of collective agreements, kept away workers preferring a little security to the proselytism of revolutionary unions. When French industry underwent its great transformation between 1920 and 1930, recruiting hundreds of thousands of specialized workers among apprentices and immigrants at a time when the labor movement was split on the Communist issue (all workers in the party were specialized), syndicalism was shown to be incapable of organizing the new labor groups. The political victory of the Popular Front and numerous sitdown strikes were required to create a new mass syndicalism in place of the old which had depended upon the active minorities. But the real organizer of the new groups was not, as in other countries, the traditional union apparatus but rather that of the Communist party, which was practically the master of the key federations after their return to the C.G.T. As a result the new unions faced the vicissitudes of internal and even international political conflicts. Born in 1936, they fell apart in 1939. Reborn in 1945, they began to fall apart again in 1947 with the cold war. Yet French syndicalism which had been legalized in 1884 did not really become competent in the plants until 1936 with the creation of shop delegates. This achievement has been held, enhanced by that of industry-wide committees since 1945, but it has not sufficed to keep up membership in individual unions. Whether the latter survive depends upon their individual political leanings and on whether as spokesmen for labor they are listened to or not.

Syndicalism today faces another type of social evolution: the rapid growth of the salaried middle class (white-collar workers, executives, management staff), which assumes greater importance as the number of wage-earning workers is stabilized or even decreases.<sup>4</sup> Syndicalism cannot draw

#### 4. Some approximate wage-earner to salaried ratios:

United States:	1 salaried to 1 wage-earner
Great Britain:	1 salaried to 2 wage-earners
France:	2 salaried to 3 wage-earners
Sweden and Belgium:	1 salaried to 2 wage-earners

Management staff and civil service workers are included in the salaried group.

on an organic tradition which does not exist; the psychology and the aspirations of these new classes, varying from country to country, must be understood. In the United States, "white-collar workers" are unorganized. The essential task of the newly consolidated A.F. of L.-C.I.O. will be to unite them with the rest of the workers. In England, most office employees remain outside the Trades Union Congress. In Germany and in Sweden they are organized in their own separate unions. In France, a huge majority of *fonctionnaires* belong to one or another of the large unions, but administrative employees have their own organization.

This short summary shows that the relations between different categories of salaried workers cannot be reduced to the simplicity of syndicalism's original aims.

Syndicalism at the present time has three main objectives. The first is the establishment of collective agreements setting the wages and providing for scaled improvements while application for the covenant is pending, as well as various advantages and benefits, such as vacations and insurance supplements. In England, since the second World War, a weekly minimum wage is guaranteed. In the United States the guaranteed annual wage is a gigantic step forward. The Anglo-Saxon tradition is winning out over the old practices of European Marxist syndicalism. France in its turn is presently following the trend toward collective agreements,<sup>5</sup> despite Communist opposition, which pretends to see in them a limitation to the "principle of the class struggle" and to the right to strike. The fact is that collective agreements do not suppress strikes but submit them to arbitration procedure or simply to mediation while they are in progress.

The second objective is to seek state intervention in guaranteeing minimum buying power or to extend the system of social security; to this end unions are turning to political action whether they are independent (United States, France) or more or less linked to Labor or Christian parties.

The third objective is doubtless the most difficult to systematize: it involves worker participation in the organization of the company by means of committees. In the United States such committees do not exist. They exist in England despite the tacit opposition of the labor high command. Elsewhere, they originate in the unions or are elected from the union's governing staff. The expected technical and economic education of the workers has not generally materialized and most of the committees are content to supervise their benevolent works in a spirit of collective pa-

5. Those concluded at the Renault and SNECMA plants have opened a new way to effective and democratic syndicalism.

## *Syndicalism in Modern Society*

ternalism. Only the German unions, in mines and the steel industry, are experimenting with real co-management. It is still too early to pass judgment on this; but it is sure that the presence of syndicalists in the conduct of industry is indeed the source of the difficulties foreseen by Sidney Webb fifty years ago, when he criticized the revolutionary motto "The mines for the miners."

Despite these diverse national developments, non-Communist syndicalism today has a common structure and common goals in the various industrial democracies. In unifying great masses of men it has been systematized and centralized and, in the eyes of its critics, it has ossified. However, to take but the American example, the most dynamic sort of action is compatible with the presence of a powerful bureaucracy, if the latter is able to utilize competently and intelligently the enormous force provided by large membership. In fact, a centralized union high command can be compared to a government with its bureaus and research services, but it must be superior to a government in social psychology, since its only means of action are persuasion and the confidence it succeeds in inspiring.

An osmosis has taken place between the Anglo-Saxon and the Marxist traditions of European unions: militant Marxism is but a respected memory, and the trades union practice of collective bargaining has penetrated unions of Marxist origin; the "welfare state" is a common objective of all these movements, even that of the United States.

The growing role of the state in "the administration of things," to use Saint-Simon's phrase, and the extension of the salaried middle class, have brought about a situation in which the unions, become like private enterprise partners of the state, can no longer separate worker welfare from the general welfare. The working class is no longer either Sismondi's proletariat or Marx's "decomposition of society"; integrated with the salaried group, it tends by this very fact to become integrated into society, on both an economic and a political basis. Economically, the employee, whether he is a wage-earning production worker or not, is a consumer of industrial products who, through his buying power, has become the principal regulator of modern industry's mass production. Politically, depending upon the amount of activity in which he engages, his role in the state can surpass that of all other social groups. Thus in less than a century syndicalism has become one of the decisive forces of modern society.