

A History of the  
Chicago Ladies' Garment  
Workers' Union

*By*

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*With an Introduction by*

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# Preface

**T**HIS VOLUME was prepared at the request of the Chicago Joint Board, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and has been written primarily with the purpose of presenting an historical interpretation of the union to its membership.

The author is greatly indebted to the following: to Mr. Paul Wallin, who read and criticized the entire manuscript; to Mr. Morris Bialis, manager of the Chicago Joint Board and vice president of the International; to Mr. Quentin Ogren, educational director of the Chicago Joint Board; to Dr. Lazare Teper, director of the research department of the International; and most particularly, to Mr. M. A. Goldstein, secretary-treasurer of the Chicago Joint Board, who has been a helpful critic throughout the period of the preparation of this work.

Acknowledgments of aid from the many other persons and agencies consulted by the author will be found elsewhere in this volume.

THE AUTHOR

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157-48. 9. Ladies Garment Workers Union, Chicago. 129749 Exemplary  
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INTERNATIONAL LADIES GARMENT WORKERS UNION LOCAL No. 12



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## *Foreword*

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**T**HE CHICAGO ghetto was a scene of high excitement on the morning of Wednesday, May 5, 1886. Some four hundred immigrants, tense and fearful, were milling about the DeKoven Street Hall preparatory to a brave adventure. They were about to venture forth from the ghetto, into the unknown "downtown" district, to challenge the might of "the bosses" and to assert their rights as human beings to a living wage. The first march of the Chicago cloakmakers—in revolt against the conditions of the sweatshop—was about to begin.

The day before, alarming rumors had reached these striking cloakmakers. The downtown manufacturers were enlarging their inside shops;\* they were hiring more "American" girls; there would be no more bundles for the ghetto cloakmakers in the contractor shops. Panic-stricken, the strikers suddenly resolved to march into the Loop, into the center of the cloak manufacturing district. They sensed only vaguely why they were to march. The results to be obtained were very uncertain. But it was enough that they would march and express their solidarity for the world to behold.

And so they marched. Four hundred strong they pushed forward toward the Loop. Their ranks were in disarray. Their steps

\* For this and similar technical and trade terms, consult the glossary on page 305.

were not in unison. But their faces reflected a new hope shining through their fears, a hope that somehow, in some manner, their demonstration would become the instrument of deliverance from economic insecurity.

Suddenly, just as they were crossing the bridge at Van Buren and Market, their front ranks halted in astonishment and consternation. Patrol wagons, appearing from nowhere, clanged to a stop in their path. Police with drawn clubs charged the bewildered immigrants, beating and clubbing them, driving them back over the bridge. They scattered and dispersed in their haste to escape the torrent of blows. Beaten in body and spirit, the cloakmakers straggled back to their own familiar ghetto streets, searching in vain for explanations of this *pogrom* in free America. At long last one of them discovered the "crime" which they had committed. The day before was the day of the "Haymarket Riot."\*

The Chicago cloakmakers who received this baptism of fire on May 5, 1886, were helpless strangers, so bewildered by their surroundings that they were unaware of the nation-stirring events occurring within a few blocks of their dwellings. Their march, however, continued. To direct this march, they created their union, which, from that day in May, 1886, until the present, has been the embodiment of their common hopes and aspirations. Despite periods of low ebb and even total non-existence, to the workers of the ladies' garment industry the union has ever been, in ideal and in reality, their fighting organ, their

\* This occurred on May 4, 1886 in Haymarket Square. The occasion was a meeting of the striking workers of the McCormick Reaper Works, protesting against the killing of four of their number by the police the day before. Toward the end of the meeting a large detail of police appeared. A bomb was thrown by an unknown person. The police began to shoot wildly in all directions. 67 policemen and 200 workers were wounded, many of them, including 7 policemen, fatally. The employers, the police, and the newspapers attributed the bomb to the anarchist group which led the strike. They raised an hysterical cry for revenge and instituted a reign of terror against the whole labor movement. August Spies, Albert Parsons, and six others were convicted, without any trace of evidence, of murder. Four were hanged, one committed suicide, two were given life terms, and one was sentenced to 15 years. Many years later Governor Altgeld, convinced that these men were innocent, pardoned those still alive.

business organization, their school and their forum, and their agency for mutual aid and cooperation. In the annals of the union, therefore, is to be found the collective biography of the workers who built and fostered it, who labored for it, often with religious devotion, and who placed their trust for the achievement of economic security and justice in the collective action of their fellow workers.



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## *Introduction*

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**M**R. CARSEL'S history of the Chicago locals of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union is a fascinating and almost unique study. Most books on labor problems discuss broad national movements and issues but do not touch the living, breathing, local units which are the basic realities. In short, most such books seem unable to see the trees because of the forest. Mr. Carsel's book tells the interesting story of the men and women who during the last half century have made women's clothing in Chicago, and of their struggles to establish a greater degree of industrial democracy.

Time after time they formed their unions and obtained a measure of recognition only to have them disintegrate because of unemployment in the dull seasons and in the periods of business depression. But the believers in unionism always returned with an ever increased determination so that the periods of organization became longer. The volume is also interesting as a study in economic history as it shows an industry which by the force of fashion changed from the production of relatively heavy fabrics in the form of "cloaks and suits" to the lighter dresses made of silk, rayon and (in the lower price range) of cotton as well. Certain products such as shirt-waists around which powerful unions were built in the past have completely disappeared and are now as dead as the dodo.

Mr. Carsel's study also shows the difficulty of maintaining a strong industry in a city like Chicago where the styles do not originate. A companion study of the industry in New York would show the influence of the "prestige" shed by the attire of the leaders of the stage and of leisure-class society upon the concentration of industry and of the gravitational pull which is thus exercised. Even more interesting would be the degree to which recent growth of the industry in Los Angeles is associated with the rise of the movie industry and the imitation of the dresses of the movie stars. Chicago has had few of these advantages, and that may be one reason for the difficulties which the industry has experienced in this city.

It is an inspiring story to see how the principles of industrial democracy have, through the efforts of thousands of workers, taken root in a great industry, and to realize the extent of the struggle to make those ideals survive despite the pressure of the markets. There have been magnificent leaders of the local union, such as Bisno, Schlesinger, Goldstein, Bialis and many others, but it has, in the last analysis, been the aspirations and sacrifices of the great masses of the workers which have been the decisive factor. These workers, mostly of foreign stock, have grasped the principles of democracy and of true Americanism and have struggled for them. They have sought an adequate wage, hours which would permit them leisure, protection against capricious discharge and some share in the shaping of their destiny. Nor have they been indifferent to the problems of efficiency and economy inside the industry, and at the same time they have been interested in creating a better society and have fostered education, music, and art.

Mr. Carsel writes well and has a worthy subject for his talents. I have enjoyed reading this book, and I feel sure that others will obtain an equal degree of pleasure from it.

PAUL H. DOUGLAS

*Part I*

The Period of Seasonal Unionism

1886-1914



## *A Sweated Industry*

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AT THE TIME of the 1886 strike of the Chicago cloak-makers, the ladies' garment industry was still relatively young in Chicago. It was not until 1860 that the women's clothing industry had become important enough to be listed in the United States Census. Prior to that time, most women in Chicago, as elsewhere in the United States, still made practically all their own garments at home, sewing by hand the rough "linsey-woolsey" materials of the time. Only those who could afford the luxuries of life made use of tailors and seamstresses, patronized custom tailors, or even bought European creations.<sup>1</sup>

"Store-clothes" began to appear upon the Chicago streets with increasing frequency as the new industry developed with almost incredible rapidity. In 1860, the whole industry employed, throughout the United States, only 5,700 workers, who produced about \$7,000,000 worth of goods. Twenty years later, this number had grown to 25,000 and the value of the yearly product to \$32,000,000. By 1900 the industry, already among the most important in the nation, gave employment to 83,000 workers in 2,700 plants, and boasted an annual product valued at almost \$160,000,000. Chicago participated in this rapid development of the industry. In 1870 it had only 9 factories employing 491 people. In 1880, the number of shops had increased to 19, the

number of workers to almost 1,600, and the output was valued at \$1,600,000. By 1900, 151 shops employing almost 4,000 people, had an annual product valued at well over \$9,000,000.<sup>2</sup>

The first phase in the development of the Chicago industry, as elsewhere in the United States, took the form of comparatively large shops (later to become known as inside shops) connected with wholesale houses. The factories of firms such as Beifeld and Company, usually located in the downtown district, averaged over 83 workers per plant, were generally well-lighted, and frequently furnished power for operating machines. Most of the workers were English-speaking, though few were native by birth. Of the 1,583 workers employed in the Chicago industry in 1880, 1,488 were women and girls. The operator was often an "all around worker," who took the garment from the cutter and handed it finished to the examiner. Wages were in the neighborhood of \$4 a week; there were usually ten hours in a day; and conditions of work were generally on a par with those in other industries of the day.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1880's, however, the character of the Chicago industry changed radically. Structurally, the trade was revolutionized by the rapid development of the contracting system. Shops multiplied in number and shrank in size. The sweatshop developed, demoralizing the industry and plaguing the worker. Men, needed to wield the new heavy cutting knife and to furnish foot power for sewing machines, began to invade the trade in increasing numbers. Most of these male newcomers were from among the "new immigrants" then swarming to the shores of America. Jewish newcomers from Poland and Russia, in particular, poured into the rapidly expanding needle trades. In New York, they soon dominated these trades, constituting 75% of the labor force, and crowding out the Swedish, German, Irish, and other earlier immigrant groups. In Chicago, other groups were not so easily displaced. In fact, as late as 1900, the Jews constituted but a fourth of the labor force in the Chicago garment trades.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, this element was particularly important in the Chicago ladies' garment industry: first, because the majority of both the contractor shop owners and workers were Jewish, and secondly, because the beginnings of trade unionism among the cloakmakers were largely associated with this group.

In the twenty years between 1880 and 1900 some 600,000 Jews, propelled out of their European homes by economic restrictions, religious persecutions, educational and political discriminations, and the dreaded official *pogroms* of Czarist Russia, hopefully set out to start life anew in the promised land of America. Most of these, naturally, settled in their port of arrival. However, as early as 1882, some two thousand Russian Jews had sought a home in Chicago. Some wandered into the city; others were sent here by Eastern immigrant-aid societies; and still others came from the small towns and rural areas in the Middle West and South where they had first settled. Relatives and *landsleute* came on the heels of the first comers. By 1900, the Jewish population of the city was about 75,000, of which two-thirds were Russian-Polish in origin.<sup>5</sup>

In the usual fashion of immigrants, these newcomers found the process of adjustment to a strange environment none too easy. The first groups were taken in hand by a special Russian Refugee Aid Committee, which installed them in temporary quarters on the near West Side between Canal and Halsted, a neighborhood housing even then a small Jewish population. The permanent homes of these and of later arrivals tended to be in the same locality, which soon became known as the Chicago ghetto. This neighborhood offered special attractions to the newcomers. Rent was cheaper than elsewhere. Landlords were not finicky about the nativity or habits of their tenants, especially since they asked no embarrassing questions about plumbing or repairs. To the eyes of uncritical poverty-stricken refugees the houses, though old, seemed to be in fairly good shape; some even boasted of leafy trees and small gardens along their wooden

sidewalks. Furthermore, this area was the nearest thing to home in the huge strange city in a strange land. Here one could see other bearded men and shawled women and hear the sweet familiar cadence of Yiddish spoken freely in the streets. The Jewish father could find a synagogue and the Jewish mother a *kosher* butcher shop. Relatives, friends, and *landsleute* were here to lend a helping hand, or, at the least, to offer words of counsel based on longer experience. Work could be found here, amidst people one knew, and on jobs which did not impose labor on *Shabas* day. In short, here one could be "at home," instead of being a bewildered stranger in hostile surroundings.

In time, this area, already ripe for the slums in the early 1880's, deteriorated to its inevitable end. No new houses were built, the old houses remained unrepaired, and factories and workshops invaded the neighborhood, often moving into residential buildings, even into the very homes of the ghetto inhabitants. Congestion accentuated the process of deterioration and gradually the neighborhood began to show the worst features of tenement house conditions. Every available bit of space, even to the cellars below the street level, was let at abnormally high rentals. Chimneys were defective, stairs were rickety, ventilation was poor, and plumbing either faulty or non-existent. In 1905, only one family in every forty could boast of a bathtub. By that date, some enterprising landlords were already beginning to emulate New Yorkers by erecting dark masses of tenements as fit homes for the slum dwellers.<sup>6</sup>

Such clannishness and crowding was of course by no means peculiar to the Jewish group. The same was true of every other immigrant group of the time. Among the Italians, cases were reported of "several families living huddled together in one large room, with mere boards and curtains for partitions between their scanty household goods." Bohemians and Poles averaged "one family to each room."<sup>7</sup> Sanitary conditions in these areas were reported to be worse than in similar areas in the older

Eastern cities of New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. The amazing growth of Chicago—its population increased tenfold between 1860 and 1890—had already led to dangerous overcrowding by 1881. The newcomers were to be the chief victims of this lack of housing facilities caused by the swelling tide of migration into the city.

The choice of occupations for the recent arrivals was as limited as the choice of residence. Work had to be found in a hurry, and could generally be obtained only within the confines of their own area and in occupations in which friends or relatives were engaged. Under such limited conditions of choice, most of the Jewish workers who did not become peddlers gravitated toward the growing needle and cigar trades. The garment trades were particularly inviting to them. Many of them had been tailors in the old country. Others, derisively called "Columbus tailors" because they learned the trade in the United States, began as helpers and gradually worked their way up to machine operating. Jobs could be obtained rather easily. The employment bureau of the United Hebrew Charities, opened in 1884, found positions for some with the Siegels, the Beifelds, the Kuppenheimers, and other large German-Jewish firms. As the contracting system developed, it became even simpler "to get on" with a *landsmann* or a relative. Best of all, this trade seemed to offer great opportunities. It was a "coming" business. Shops could be very small and operate on a shoestring. Here was a way of becoming independent in short order, of saving up a few dollars and graduating from the ranks of the workers into the circle of the bosses.<sup>8</sup>

On the basis of the needs, hopes, and enforced clannishness of these immigrant groups, the contracting system of the needle trades blossomed forth in new glory. Contracting, of course, was nothing new to America, but its complexion changed drastically after 1880. The old contractor was a mere middleman, usually a saloon-keeper rather than a tailor, who distributed the

materials to homes and lodging houses in his neighborhood and expected completely finished garments brought back to him. The new contractor was himself a tailor by trade, had the work done in his own shop, and utilized to the full the advantages of division of labor. The ladies' garment industry provided fertile soil for the flourishing of the new system. Foot-power sewing machines were cheap and could be bought on installments or rented by the month. Shops could be equipped almost anywhere, in a cellar, an attic, or even a single room of an apartment. With as little as fifty dollars, a man could set up a contracting shop, hire workers who did not expect to make their fortunes from operating or pressing, and produce women's cloaks and suits which would eventually be worn by the most discriminating ladies. The manufacturers and wholesalers, for whom the contractors worked, encouraged the growth of this system. The contractor absolved them from responsibility of recruiting and training additional workers for their rapidly expanding industry. He saved them the trouble of adjusting the labor force to seasonal fluctuations and changes of style. He reduced their overhead expenses by savings on rent, light, power, and supervision of the workers. And, because the growing number of contractors soon began to engage in cut-throat competition for bundles, the manufacturers became the beneficiaries of steadily declining wages both in the outside contractor shops and in their own inside plants.<sup>9</sup>

Contracting shops often began ideally enough. In 1882, the Bisno family, recently arrived in Chicago, found employment with the firm of Beifeld and Company. According to Abraham Bisno's autobiographical sketch, "the American girls who worked in the factory objected to work together with the foreign Jews, so the family was obliged to take work out to their home and their home became the workshop. Father was the tailor. Both sons were the machine operators and the mother was the finisher." Within a period of four years this family shop



SWEATSHOP DAYS



A SEGMENT OF A MODERN SHOP



expanded to give employment to four more relatives and neighbors, and the family "acquired hopes to be equal with other people."<sup>10</sup> In time, however, the contractor as a type came to be dominated by more mercenary motives than achieving a modest compensation or lending a helping hand to brothers in need of work. He began to seek out the most helpless of the latest arrivals, taking advantage of their ignorance and credulity, and exploiting them to the full, hoping thereby both to enrich himself and to keep his victims indefinitely dependent upon his bounty.<sup>11</sup>

With the manufacturers' encouragement, with a more than ample immigrant labor force ever at hand, and with the possibilities of opening up shops on the proverbial shoestring, the contracting system expanded rapidly in Chicago during the 1880's and 1890's. By 1893, the Illinois factory inspectors found that it was not unusual for cloak firms to have twenty or more contractors working for them. F. Siegel and Brothers, for example, employed 26 such shops; others, such as Joseph Beifeld and Company and Griswold Palmer and Company, 22 each. By 1896, F. Siegel and Brothers alone had 44 contractors. Thirteen inside firms controlled a total of 170 outside shops. The number of workers in the contractor shops—about 1,800—was almost twice as large as the labor force of all the inside firms.<sup>12</sup>

It was these larger firms, rather than the contractors themselves, who derived the benefits of this system. In Chicago, as elsewhere, the few large manufacturers with their own inside shops dominated the entire industry. The contractors were, to all practical purposes, merely their foremen and organizers of immigrant labor. Themselves at the mercy of the manufacturers, the contractors came to the back door of the inside shop—hat in hand like beggars—to underbid each other in fierce competition for the cut bundles. They, in turn, shifted the burden of the industry upon their workers and developed the sweatshop to new proportions.

The victimization of immigrant labor through the sweatshop system was nothing new to the garment trades or, for that matter, to the United States. Since the 1830's, each successive immigrant group had entered American industrial life through the door of the sweatshop. The garment trades, always the responsibility of immigrant workers, suffered from the system from the very beginning.<sup>13</sup> The horror and degradation of the sweatshop, however, reached its apex in the garment industries of the 1890's. The workers in these trades found America, not the land of equality and prosperity of which they had dreamed, but a place where they were pressed into service at all hours of the day and night, were forced to work under the most unsanitary conditions, and were paid most inadequate wages. The victims, as well as the sweaters, were of all nationalities and creeds; in Chicago they spoke nine different languages and were of three different faiths. All, however, achieved homogeneity upon the altar of industrial exploitation.<sup>14</sup>

The various investigations of the sweatshop evil in the Chicago garment industries of the 1890's revealed a situation which even the formal language of official reports labeled as the degradation of human beings "carried to a point beyond which [it] is impossible to go."<sup>15</sup> The cloak sweatshop was usually in the worst tenement building, in a basement, an attic, a flat over a saloon, or a shed over a stable, facing an unpaved alley "and always noxious with the garbage and refuse of the tenement house." The stairs were always rickety, the passageway narrow and dirty. The premises were overcrowded with tenants and the staircases swarmed with children. Often, the shop consisted of a single unventilated room; in one case twenty-nine people worked within the confines of a space twenty by twenty-eight feet. Odors from sinks and closets with defective plumbing, from gasoline used in pressing, and from the refuse of the alley and the stable combined to make a stench unbearable alike in winter and summer. One of Beifeld's contractor shops boasted of

lavatories which saw no water "for days and weeks" and which emitted "frightful odors."<sup>16</sup> Bernstein's shop at 159 W. Taylor Street, was a "low-ceiled and dirty" room over a stable.<sup>17</sup> Goldstein's shop at 18 Newberry was in the attic of a frame cottage, the sloping roof of which was so low that one could not stand upright except in the very middle. In 1894, of the 120 contractor shops in the Chicago cloakmaking trade, only four were not on such premises.<sup>18</sup>

The hours of work in these sweatshops were always indefinite and, during the busy season, apparently interminable. Even in the slack season men frequently worked sixteen hours a day. In the busy season, they often worked all night. Because wages were low and the need great, the workers ignored all bodily needs and vied with each other in coming earliest and leaving latest. Men worked themselves to exhaustion, leaned against the bundles in the shop to snatch a few winks of sleep, and awoke with a start to resume the driving of their tired bodies. One worker testified before a congressional investigating committee that "the man who works the longest has the key" to the shop.<sup>19</sup> Another worker reported that he never did find out when work began. He had tried coming at six, five, and four in the morning on successive days, and each time everyone else was already working.<sup>20</sup>

The monetary rewards for this type of health-sapping toil were, as was to be expected, of the lowest, and were continually being driven downward. In 1882, the average weekly wage of the cloakmaker during the busy season was \$14.75; by 1886, this had been cut by \$3.00 or 20%. In 1886, the weekly average for women in the trade was about \$6.00; by 1892, this had declined to an average of \$5.00 and ranged downward to as low as \$2.74.<sup>21</sup> As the sweatshop system developed, even these wages became high by comparison. In 1897, for example, the United States Commissioner of Labor reported the case of an Italian girl cloak finisher who averaged \$1.50 a week or \$78 a year from 52 weeks of work.<sup>22</sup>

The life of the Chicago cloakmaker, accordingly, was one of grinding poverty. Practically every cloakmaker was a perennial debtor to his butcher, grocer and usually to the pawnbroker as well, who victimized him by charging him as much as 416% interest on small loans. Single men could somehow manage, but men with families to support could never squeeze their expenses into their income, remaining short, on the average, \$114 annually. This discrepancy had to be made up by appeals to charitable organizations or by other recourses left to the poverty-stricken. They walked to work to save carfare; they took in boarders and crowded themselves still more in their two or three room flats; or they suffered malnutrition from cheap and insufficient food.<sup>23</sup>

Such conditions in shop and home transformed the workers into physical wrecks. Exhausted by the continuous driving of foot-power at the highest speed, deprived of even a minimum of fresh air and wholesome food, with his flesh subjected to the dampness of basements, his skin the prey of poisonous dyes from cheap clothes, and his nostrils assailed by foul odors, the cloakmaker became the ready victim of a host of diseases. He was ravaged by consumption—the characteristic malady of the sweated victim—by rheumatism, pneumonia, catarrh, and skin diseases of all types. The “pest-breeding closets, walls covered with filth, infected with vermin,” facilitated the rapid spread of disease among the swarming children and teeming workers of the sweatshop apartments.<sup>24</sup> Diphtheria, scarlet fever, smallpox, and typhoid raged through the buildings in which garments of excellent quality were produced for the leading firms.\*<sup>25</sup> No wonder that the trade life of the garment worker was pronounced the shortest of any occupation. Boys were found “whose backs have been crooked for life by continuous work at heavy

\* In 1894, the Chicago sweatshop district was ravaged by a smallpox epidemic so severe that the Illinois factory inspectors confiscated and burned all garments they suspected of being infected. They reported cases of cloaks being made in apartments which housed five children ill with smallpox, none of them segregated in any way from the workers.

machines." In 1894, a cloakmaker of thirty-four, who had been at the trade for twenty years, was found by physicians to be bed-ridden and suffering "from old age."<sup>26</sup>

Shocked investigators naturally attempted to explain away these conditions. Some, in their patriotism and ignorance of American industrial history, attributed the causes of the sweatshop to peculiar traits of the new immigrants, to their lower standards of life, and to their apparent willingness to be exploited. More discerning observers found the causes in an analysis of the industry itself. Manufacturers in search of larger profits found in the contracting system a way to lower costs of production. A Chicago millionaire philanthropist, who headed one of the largest clothing houses in the world, explained that he was only too glad to shift the burden of the industry upon the sweater and the leg-power of his victims. The manufacturer counted himself absolved from all responsibility for the fate of the workers, for the sweatshop was not his shop and the sweated immigrant was not his employee. The sweater, in turn, defended himself by railing against the grasping manufacturer who was continually cutting prices and protested that his own livelihood was often precarious. Meanwhile, the workers were forced to labor endlessly at miserable wages, to buy or rent their own machines, to supply their own thread and needles, to pay for getting and retaining their jobs, to suffer disease and starvation. And no one was "responsible."<sup>27</sup>

Although the workers of the inside shops always fared better than their sweated brethren, they too could not escape the effects of the sweatshop. The ever-standing threat of transferring more bundles to the outside shops was a club forcing them into docile acceptance of stringent factory discipline, lowered wages, and ever poorer conditions. Coincident with the development of the sweatshop came the rapid development of the fining system in the inside shops. Fines were soon levied so frequently, oppressively, and arbitrarily, that they were gall and

wormwood to the girls. They were levied for apparently any or no reason, for tardiness, for damage to goods, for broken or lost buttons, and for "insubordination" and "inattention." They varied in size for the same offense from worker to worker, and sometimes amounted to a third of the total earnings of those out of favor. Wages were beaten down both directly and indirectly. Many employers forced their workers into buying or renting their own machines and charged them for needles and thread. Many girls remained apprentices, at maximum wages of fifty cents a day, for interminable periods of time. A well organized blacklist system, enforced by the association of the manufacturers, worked so efficiently that many girls refused to talk to the state investigator for fear that he was party to "a trick gotten up by the bosses." Those who did talk, however, did not mince words. The fining system was "hateful"; the boss was often "a brute"; it was impossible to earn a living wage. One factory, its employees affirmed, was "a hell through which to run young girls to prepare them for street walkers."<sup>28</sup>



were apt to be lulled by high hopes of future compensation for present misery. The girls looked upon their jobs as mere stop-gaps until their wedding day; the men, as stepping stones to more prosperous vocations. The Jewish worker in the contracting shop was particularly likely to dream of becoming independent, of rising to the position of a boss contractor or even a manufacturer, or of saving enough to enter the real estate or other "coming" types of business. The fact that some did actually realize these ambitions encouraged the fond hopes of the others. Therefore, instead of fighting for collective bargaining, they labored mightily to work faster than their neighbors and to secure individual privileges in their shops. Those who obtained such special privileges, who secured helpers to work under them, who received easier work or more bundles than others, could not be expected to make important sacrifices for a trade union which might be levelling in its tendencies.

Furthermore, the Chicago cloakmaker was for a long time dominated by fears, restrictions, and implicit or overt threats of all sorts. The large manufacturers were adept in the art of intimidation. Inside and outside shop workers were played off against each other with threats of supplying one group with more work at the expense of the other. Inside shop girls were kept in line under a system of rigid factory discipline, featured by the extensive use of blacklists and fines. Outside shop workers were threatened with loss of aid from "the charities," of which the wealthy manufacturer was usually a director. The manufacturer's threats were complemented by the contractor's wheedling. In intimate tones he complained to his workers that he himself received a raw deal from the manufacturers, who gave him the bitter choice of either lower prices or no bundles at all. He begged them to cooperate with him and to enable him to remain in business by working for lower wages. He warned them that unless they accepted wage cuts, they would have no jobs at all. Besides, wasn't he their friend, in many cases

an actual *landsgman*? Didn't he work side by side with them, as hard as they did, and for as little return? He understood, of course, that they were dissatisfied, and he not only did not blame them, but fully sympathized with this discontent. But their protests should have been directed, not to him, but to the greedy manufacturers—neglecting to mention, of course, that the latter were completely inaccessible to them.

To the efforts of the employers were added the taboos imposed by the other agencies of social control. The civil authority, represented by the club of the policeman, was an overt enemy. Church and synagogue frowned on strikes and similar sinful activities which diverted men's minds from spiritual reflections to material considerations. Public opinion labeled women belonging to unions as "bold and common"; and Mrs. Grundy gave forth the edict that "no nice girl would belong to one." Stern fathers and loving mothers were aghast at the thought that their girls should congregate in the halls of saloons (the only places available for union meetings). To attempt to organize meant, not only to battle on the economic front, but also to struggle against social and family ostracism.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, by the mid 1880's, Chicago cloakmakers had already gained some experience in trade unionism and allied movements. Some of the older women workers still remembered the union of the seamstresses of bygone days, the Sewing Women's Protective Union of 1865 and the Women's Sewing Union of 1870. The Chicago Working Women's Union, existing between 1876 and 1882, and the Women's Assembly, a heterogeneous branch of the Knights of Labor between 1882 and 1886, had made some attempts to organize the girls in the cloak industry.<sup>2</sup> In 1882, Mrs. Lizzie Holmes, an official of the Women's Assembly, organized the first known stoppage in a Chicago cloak shop. One of the workers herself, she induced the hundred and fifty girls to sign a paper pledging themselves to stand by each other, and all stopped working as a unit while

a brave volunteer, document in hand, tackled the boss. The forelady, coming to investigate the silence, was so frightened at the unusual scene that she hurried back to her table without uttering a word. But soon the boss came storming up the stairs, three steps at a time. He glared, and the girls turned pale. He called them "silly hussies" who acted in a very unlady-like manner, and they hung their heads in shame. Having thus delivered his lecture on factory etiquette, the boss fired the four leaders of the mutiny, including Mrs. Holmes, while the rest of the girls, frightened and shamefaced, were only too glad to resume working under the previous "satisfactory" conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Among the men in the contracting shops, too, there had already been considerable ferment. Many of them had been disappointed by their lot in America. Those who had been well-to-do in the old country, in particular, felt their degradation all the more galling. Many of the contractors themselves, Austro-Hungarian Jews who read the Chicago *Arbeiter Zeitung*, considered themselves radicals and felt it their duty to do battle against oppression. In fact, the first effort at organization in the outside shops, late in 1885, was made, not by the cloakmakers, but by these contractors, their bosses. One of their meetings, held at the West Side Turner Hall, was addressed by August Spies, later one of the Haymarket victims. Naturally, this confused effort to organize a cloakmakers' union without cloakmakers did not advance very far, though it may have had some influence upon the later efforts of the cloakmakers themselves.<sup>4</sup>

The first real attempt at organization among the cloakmakers came in 1886. For the Chicago labor movement that year was historic. One hundred and ten thousand Chicago workers, almost a third of all participants throughout the country, walked out in the national movement for the eight-hour day. Over 47,000 more received concessions without striking. In the clothing trades alone, over 2,000 workers joined the movement, most of them succeeding in gaining a nine-hour day. Until the Hay-

market Square explosion in the bitter McCormick Reaper Works strike, the movement was sweeping everything before it. The trade union membership in the state doubled within eight months, reaching a total of almost 90,000 by the fall of that year. By September, the Knights of Labor counted Chicago, with its 164 local assemblies, one of their most important strongholds.<sup>5</sup> The next spring, when Chicago citizens turned out to elect a mayor, a third of the votes, or over 23,000, were cast for the labor ticket.<sup>6</sup> Though the cloakmakers may have known little of events outside their shops, the very atmosphere in the city emboldened them to their first efforts in trade unionism.

In May, 1886, simultaneous movements, though apparently entirely separate, involved both the women in the inside factories and the cloakmakers in the contractor shops. The ferment among the women was probably an outgrowth of the long agitation carried on by the Chicago Women's Assembly of the Knights of Labor, in which Mrs. Elizabeth Rogers and Mrs. Lizzie Holmes were the most active spirits. Sometime during the month of May, some thirty-four women in the cloak trade banded together into Assembly No. 7170 of the Knights of Labor and launched a campaign for the organization of the inside shops. The local grew rapidly and at one time numbered a membership of 458 women, representing all crafts from the cutters to the finishers. This organization, however, soon disappeared, leaving behind it nothing more than a mere record of its existence.<sup>7</sup>

The second movement, among the Jewish cloakmakers, was more directly connected with the origin of the cloakmakers' union. During the last week in April, 1886, vague rumors were being heard in the Chicago ghetto that a "big meeting" of all the cloakmakers would be held on the afternoon of Saturday, May 1, in the DeKoven Street Hall. Who was calling it and why it was being called no one seemed to know. Once started, the news was excitedly passed along from mouth to mouth by cloak-

makers, peddlers, storekeepers, and housewives, until the cloak-makers had worked themselves into a fever of expectation. At the appointed time, practically all the Jewish cloakmakers, some five or six hundred in number, were gathered in front of the saloon hall. For a few minutes high hopes bid fair to turn into pathetic disappointment. The Bohemian saloonkeeper, owner of the hall, refused to unlock the door, insisting that no one had hired a hall or called a meeting. Finally, however, some resourceful person began a collection of nickels and the meeting was held.

The saloonkeeper must have repented of the bargain shortly, for never before was a meeting such as this held in his hall. Chairmen, secretaries, parliamentary law, or turns in speaking were unknown. All shouted, yelled and gesticulated at the same time, for each had his tale of woe—kept pent up for so long—to proclaim to all the others. Eventually Wolf, the button-hole maker, who shouted the loudest, forced the others to listen to him, but not for long. In the middle of his diatribe against the inhuman contractors, Grossman, one of those abused, yelled back that he was himself victimized by the greedy manufacturers, who were always paying less for bundles. The meeting again became a clamoring mob of angry debaters, arguing and gesticulating until one o'clock at night. At that point, an operator called Solomon ended the meeting by shouting that no one should work the next day upon the penalty of a broken head. There were loud protests, but a greater volume of approval. No vote was taken and no resolutions were passed, but the homely language of Solomon was understood by all. The first strike of the Chicago cloakmakers was on.

The conduct of the strike was as unplanned and spontaneous as its inauguration. Meetings were held daily in much the same fashion as the first one. No formal demands were made upon the manufacturers, who knew of the strike only because no work was being done in the ghetto. Scabbing was at first an unknown

vice, and the committee who went from shop to shop announcing the order to stop working encountered little opposition. Eventually, the striking cloakmakers and the general Chicago labor movement discovered each other. The Anarchist, August Spies, told them that "the rich have all they want to eat and the poor often suffer starvation"; and Paul Grottkau linked up their strike with the struggle for socialism. In time, the cloakmakers even formed a union affiliated with the Knights of Labor.

It was on the fifth day of this strike that the march of the cloakmakers into the Loop, described previously,\* took place. They were completely ignorant of a bomb thrown the day before by unknown hands and of the policemen killed by it. They knew nothing of the screams for blood, of the mad frenzy for revenge, or of the reign of terror inaugurated by the police against the labor movement of Chicago. How could they know? English was an unknown tongue and Yiddish newspapers did not yet exist in Chicago. How foolhardy they had been they discovered later, after their encounter with the police.

The violent dispersion of their demonstration left them bruised in body and sickened at heart. Indeed the strike was not given up at once, but with their own spirits continually drooping, their need ever increasing, and help from the Chicago labor movement cut off, the solidarity in their ranks was gradually broken. And, after dragging on for several weeks more, their strike eventually ended with the reacceptance of their previous lot.<sup>8</sup>

\* See Foreword.

THE  
*Chicago Cloak Makers' Union*

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ALTHOUGH their trade union was shattered by the failure of the 1886 strike, many of the cloakmakers continued to feel the need for some organization which would, in one way or another, serve as the expression of their common interests. By the summer of 1888, they once again began to hold meetings. The nature of these fumbling efforts may be judged from the description of one of these meetings by Peter Sissman, then a young newcomer in the trade. Some thirty or forty operators, notified by leaflets, assembled at the hall, giving their names to one of the workers who displayed a tin badge of authority. Then the chairman opened the floor for a lively discussion. Some wanted to form a social club, which would arrange picnics and dances. Others demanded the organization of a fraternal society. Precedence and respect in this informal debate was given to the speakers on the basis of their speed as operators. Abraham Bisno, who spoke in favor of a trade union, was interrupted in the midst of his talk, not because his words were unwise, but because "faster" men wanted the floor.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the confusion, this meeting resulted in a new approach toward trade unionism among the Chicago cloakmakers. Several of those present felt that the strike of 1886 had been lost, not so much because of the inefficacy of the

union as a type of organization, but because of the unpreparedness of the immigrant workers for intelligent participation in the labor struggle. Before this meeting was adjourned, Bisno and young Sissman struck up an acquaintanceship, discovered that they agreed on the necessity for orientation to their new homeland, and decided to read together for self-improvement. The two friends, accordingly, began to read everything obtainable. They read the novels of Sholem Aleichem and of lesser Yiddish writers, works in the natural and social sciences, and, soon, the Socialist *Folks Zeitung* of New York. They also made desperate efforts to master the language "of the Americaner," beginning discouragingly enough with Shakespeare's *Tempest*. In a few weeks, their reading circle became enlarged with the addition of three or four others. In the fall, this little group formally organized the first Jewish educational club in Chicago, called the Workingman's Educational Society. The membership of this club was at no time very large, never exceeding forty in number. Nevertheless, its open meetings, featured by Socialist and Anarchist speakers of the caliber of Paul Grottkau and Mrs. Parsons, influenced a large proportion of the Jewish workers of Chicago.<sup>2</sup>

When the membership of the Workingman's Educational Society included some twelve cloak operators, Bisno and Sissman began to talk more directly in terms of trade unionism. In contrast with the attempt of 1886, this new effort at a cloak-makers' union was preceded by theoretical discussions and concrete plans. Feeling that the presence of contractors in a trade union was contrary to the spirit of proletarian struggle, the sponsors of the new venture decided to limit its membership solely to cloakmakers. Further reversing the process of 1886, they decided to build the nucleus of an organization before engaging in any struggle. So careful were they, moreover, of possible missteps that they approached a young attorney, Israel Cowen, for advice, and accepted his suggestion that they incor-

porate their projected organization. Accordingly, on March 5, 1890, the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union was formally chartered by the State of Illinois for the purpose of organizing "all cloak-makers of Chicago into a trades union and a social and fraternal organization as well as for mutual aid." The receivers of the charter were Abraham Bisno, Isaac Levin, and Abraham Rosenfeld. The management of the union was invested in a board of trustees, on which Peter Sissman, Isaac Levin, Herman Nahinsky, and Aaron Reichmann were named for the first year. Bisno was elected president, Sissman secretary, and Levin treasurer of the new organization.<sup>3</sup>

When, after these preparations, a mass meeting of the cloak-makers was called, the response virtually overwhelmed the sponsors of the union. The meeting place, the club room of the educational society at 449 old Canal Street, was too small for the crowd of a hundred or more who turned out. Fifty of these at once paid initiation fees of twenty-five cents and received printed cards of membership. An even larger number came to the next meeting, at which fifty more joined the Union. At this second meeting, held in late March, new elections were held. Bisno declined to run for reelection in favor of one of the newer members, and his place as president was taken by Ben Zaslowsky, reputedly the fastest operator in the outside shops.

Within two weeks, the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union found itself thrust into the lead of an important strike. The plush tailors of the large inside firm of Fred Siegel and Bros., who were not members of the union, were locked out in a dispute over prices. They answered with a strike and, joined by the other workers in the shop, tied up the entire plant. Upon the request of a number of them, the union at once assumed leadership of the strike and sent a committee to see the employer. To the joy and somewhat to the surprise of the representatives of the union, Siegel politely agreed to see them and to consider their demands in writing. The committee accordingly hurried





back to the union headquarters and drew up a formidable list of claims, the first of which was the revolutionary demand of "recognition of the union."

Their enthusiasm and confidence soon waned, however. Nothing more was heard from Siegel. The strikers became frightened at their temerity and embittered against both the boss and the union. They packed the union hall on Canal and Taylor, in the old Jewish Labor Lyceum, and daily increased their muttering, yelling, and cursing. Fortunately for them the employer, disturbed at this novel phenomenon, decided on a policy of conciliation. After a week, Rosenthal, the manager of the firm, came to the union to offer terms at a special mass meeting. An oral agreement was soon reached. The plush tailors received a small raise. Furthermore, the management "recognized" the union. Although this "recognition" bound the employer to nothing more than to listen to a committee representing the workers, the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union hailed the agreement, and rightfully, as its first victory.

Successful in its first venture, the prestige of the union was at once tremendously enhanced. With heavy gains from the workers of Siegel's inside shop and other firms, its enrolled membership doubled in a week, reaching well over two hundred. The union was now divided into two branches. The original members of the union, all workers in outside shops, constituted themselves as Branch Number 1, and the newer recruits from the inside shops met as Branch Number 2. Both outside and inside branches, however, though meeting separately and having different officers, managed their business centrally and planned together to organize the whole trade.

Flushed with victory and rapid growth, the union embarked in the same month upon a larger struggle with Beifeld and Company. The strike began with the inside plush tailors, spread to the outside shops, and soon became a city-wide struggle of some 1,300 workers fighting for raises and union recognition.

This struggle was more bitter than the Siegel strike. Beifeld, determined not to yield, met the challenge of the fledgling union with all the resources at his disposal. Scabs appeared for the first time in the Chicago cloak industry. Threats reached the strikers that Beifeld would cut them off from the relief rolls of the Jewish charities during the next winter. The union fought back vigorously. It secured financial aid from several labor organizations. It attempted to win over the apathetic public by advertising the strike as a battle to end the dependence of the workers upon charity. The cloakmakers, however, were unprepared for the six-week struggle that followed. Funds were eventually exhausted; meetings thinned out; scabbing increased. On June 9, the union terminated the unequal struggle by acknowledging defeat.<sup>4</sup>

The prestige and membership of the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union, which had been climbing so rapidly before this strike, now declined even more quickly. Like the cloakmakers in other cities, the Chicago workers, for the next twenty-five years, repeated this process over and over again. Until the creation of the Chicago Joint Board in 1914 and the winning of the 1915 collective agreement, the Chicago union was not so much a permanent organization as a seasonal union. During the period of price settlements, the union, especially after some victory, experienced an extraordinary boom in membership. After prices were settled, the bulk of the membership immediately disappeared. If the union was unfortunate enough to lose a strike, almost everyone deserted it, leaving only a faithful few to guard the charter and maintain a formal organization. Consequently, for much of this period, the union was far from always being the formidable fighting organ of the cloakmakers. Financial resources were so meager that important strikes were often lost before they were begun. Officers served without pay and performed, not only the duties of their office, but also the clerical and janitorial services of the union. The winning of a strike had

no permanent effect upon labor conditions, for the organization which had won the victory could never consolidate its gains.

The failure of the Beifeld strike meant not only desertion of the union by much of its membership, but also immediate reprisals from the manufacturers. Troublesome male workers were replaced with more tractable girls and women. Many of the Jewish cloakmakers, losing their jobs, went into ladies' tailoring. Some of the leading spirits of the union, deciding that they could act independently of the employers only if they were not afraid of their jobs, opened a cooperative shop. Bisno, Levin, Nahinsky, Sissman, and Reichmann were the partners; the latter also served as manager; and so successful was the venture at first that the shop was enlarged for the second season from eight machines to fifteen and from eighteen workers to thirty-five. After two years, however, the experiment ended as a pure and simple contractor shop.

The union itself was, for a time, without influence in the trade. Meetings were probably livelier than ever, but much of the agenda was the ever-standing debate between the protagonists of Socialism and Anarchism, which, interesting though it must have been, attracted only a small number of participants and auditors. To those uninterested in theories of social reform, the popularity of the union lay chiefly in its facilities as a center for recreational activities. Nevertheless, the organization did not degenerate into a social club. In November, 1890, the union substituted the position of managership for the presidency, electing Isaac Levin to the new post. In June, 1891, it organized two new branches, one for its North Side members and the other for the pressers in its ranks. A few months later it assessed its members 10% of their earnings in preparation for a general strike which seemed unavoidable. The crisis passed however with only seventy-five workers becoming involved, and interest in the union again fell off.<sup>5</sup>

In 1892, two factors generated new life in the Cloak Makers'

Union. One of these was the LaSalle Political and Educational Club, organized to educate the Jewish masses in socialism. It conducted lectures, debates, and classes in its Labor Lyceum, introduced Abraham Cahan to the Jewish workers of Chicago, and in general made socialism an appealing and colorful rank-and-file affair. Sissman, Bisno, Morris Seskind, and other leading figures among the garment workers were among its most active members. Its deep and genuine interest in the Cloak Makers' Union as a union rather than as a political forum aided the organization to attain a new measure of stability and to play a more intelligent role in the Chicago labor movement.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, Hull House, established by Jane Addams three years before in the heart of the sweatshop district as the first American social settlement, entered actively into the industrial struggle "on the side of the unions." Firmly believing that collective bargaining was a necessary measure for the self-protection of the workers, its residents encouraged awkward attempts at organization, provided meeting halls for young locals, and cast, from time to time, distracted maternal glances in their direction. It was here, in 1892, that the Cloak Makers' Union gained its first important membership among the women of the inside shops. Some of them ardently desired the benefits of trade union organization but feared to undertake this tremendous project alone. Jane Addams undertook to bring them together with the organized male cloakmakers.

The first joint meeting, held in Hull House, was a study in contrasts. On one side of the room were about forty Russian-Jewish men, ill-dressed and grimy, unable to speak even broken English, sitting silently in embarrassment and in suspicious fears of strange faces and surroundings. On the other side, well-dressed and at ease, sat the Irish-American girls, talking freely among themselves and with the residents. Between the two groups stood an interpreter, privately thinking that here was a deeper gulf than between the workers and the employers, and

feeling oddly helpless in her efforts to interpret not only words, but also nationalities, religions, and modes of life. And yet the economic necessity of combination triumphed. These girls became the Woman's Cloak Makers' Union, the ladies' branch of the Chicago union.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, by the middle of 1892, the Cloak Makers' Union was back on its feet. It again had about 200 members divided, apart from the parent local, into the North Side, the pressers', the ladies', and for a time, the Polish branches. In a new constitution and a series of resolutions at local meetings, the union evolved a new code of discipline: all members over three months in arrears of dues were to be suspended; no operator could employ more than one helper; members were expected to report to the union the prices they received so that others might benefit from the knowledge. Several important strikes enabled the union to regulate conditions of employment without so many seasonal stoppages. Most of its members received increases of twenty-five percent and began to average \$20 a week during the busy season, and the majority of them also gained the ten-hour day.<sup>8</sup>

During that summer the union began an intensive agitation for a general strike against the sweatshops. This general strike never took place, but the conditions in the sweatshops were given new publicity. The alliance between the Cloak Makers' Union and Hull House now reached its most intimate stage. Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, Henry D. Lloyd and others connected with that institution spoke at public meetings arranged by the union. Other unions and public-spirited citizens entered the lists, and soon the problem became a public issue. The agitators for the abolition of the sweatshop evil, armed with the facts gathered by various investigations, indicted it as a grave menace to the health, not only of workers, but also of the women who wore the cloaks made amidst vermin and contagious disease. The manufacturers, to counteract this popular appeal, suddenly became pleaders for poor widows and orphans, who,

they said, would be deprived of a means of livelihood by the abolition of the sweatshop. The upshot was an investigating committee of the state legislature, which, led by Mrs. Kelley and Bisno through all sorts of shops, reported in favor of curbing the worst evils of the system.<sup>9</sup>

The Illinois Workshop and Factories Act of 1893, the result of this agitation, was a fairly advanced measure by standards of the time. It prohibited the manufacture of garments in homes except by members of the immediate family; provided for keeping all shops clean and free from vermin and contagion; totally prohibited child labor for those under fourteen years of age and allowed the employment of children between fourteen and sixteen only with the written approval of their parents or guardians; and limited the hours of women to eight hours a day and forty-eight hours a week. Governor John Peter Altgeld assured vigorous enforcement of the act by appointing Florence Kelley as the chief inspector and Bisno, at that time manager of the union, as one of her deputies. As long as this administration was in office, the inspectors were energetic in performance of their duties, regularly inspecting the premises where sweatshop work was being done, prosecuting violators of the law, and in general enforcing the various provisions of the Workshop and Factories Act.<sup>10</sup>

By the time the cloakmakers began to benefit from this act, however, the depression of 1893 was on in full force. The cloak industry was hit severely. The chaotic conditions in the trade were accentuated. The number of contracting shops increased from 61 in 1892 to 172 in 1896, while, at the same time, the number of workers per shop shrank to an average of ten. Many of the smaller shops were fly-by-night affairs, who often moved without notice in order to escape paying rent or back wages, and agreements with them were absolutely worthless.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the factory inspectors began experiencing greater obstacles in the performance of their duties. Despite their energy and

vigor, the provisions of the law were violated on all sides. When, during the smallpox epidemic in the sweatshop area in 1894, they confiscated and burned the infected garments, the hue and cry against them redoubled. Bisno, as a Jew, a Socialist, and a trade unionist, was the particular target of the manufacturers' attack. In one case, a Jewish employer, whom he prosecuted, charged him with the double-barreled accusation of treason to his Jewish brethren and of susceptibility to bribery.<sup>12</sup> In 1895, the Illinois Supreme Court further weakened the act by declaring its eight-hour provision unconstitutional on the ground that it interfered with the woman's sacred right to work as long as she had to. And shortly thereafter, when the Democratic administration was defeated, Mrs. Kelley and Bisno were displaced by persons less energetic and, therefore, more amenable to the Illinois Manufacturers' Protective Association.<sup>13</sup>

The cumulative effect of all these factors, plus the loss of many active members like Bisno and Sissman who left the trade for other activities, virtually broke the back of the union. Despite vigorous defensive strikes, in which some 260 workers took part during 1893, the wages of cloakmakers were beaten down to half of their former scales. Cloaks for which \$1.25 had been paid in 1892 brought the workers only 65 cents after the panic began. Even at the height of the season, a fast operator could barely earn \$10 a week. The union, as usual, suffered from its inability to defend its members, and by the end of 1893 was reduced to a mere formal existence. It did indeed experience a short boom during the busy season of 1894, but in July of that year, it called its members out in sympathy with the American Railway Union, then conducting its bitter Pullman strike. The loss of this strike meant the temporary end of the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union.<sup>14</sup> The cutters alone apparently weathered the storm. Under the leadership of their business agent Ehrenpreis, their local retained control of practically all the cutting tables in the Chicago cloak trade and maintained, under the

"eight hours pay for eight hours work" agreements, a \$17 scale for a forty-seven hour week. The cutters, however, had as yet no connection with the cloakmakers' organization.<sup>15</sup>

In May, 1895, the Cloak Makers' Union was again reorganized, and, as the depression was weathered, gained strength slowly during the next two years. Two important victories in 1897 won it the respect of the workers in the trade. The first one was an enthusiastic strike at F. Siegel and Bros., caused by the discharge of five men by a new and unpopular manager. All the workers walked out and joined the union. After three weeks, the victorious strikers marched back into the shop like conquering heroes, and the scabs either walked home or came to the union office to do penance. The second strike was directed against the house of Griswold and Palmer, which, having had difficulty in settling prices with its inside workers, financed some of its operators to open up two "corporation shops" to work for the firm.\* The remaining workers, confronted suddenly with unusually few bundles, voiced their suspicions to their employers, who denied everything, and then to the union, which undertook an investigation. So well hidden were these shops that union officials offered bonuses for their discovery and enlisted the aid of a number of rag peddlers as industrial detectives. Finally the shops were located, one "amidst the corpses of Rose Hill Cemetery" and the other next to a police station on Madison Street. Palmer thereupon ended this partnership innovation and settled prices with the union.<sup>16</sup>

The successful termination of these and of smaller shop strikes rapidly revived the union. By the fall of 1898, its secretary claimed a membership of 900. The union was then divided into two branches, the West Side one meeting in Parges' Hall, on Maxwell and Jefferson, and the North Side branch at Schoenhofen's Hall, on Ashland and Milwaukee. The general affairs

\* A sub-contracting arrangement, not to be confused with the corporation or social shop of later days.

of the local were conducted by an executive board of thirteen members and of four officers, a financial secretary, a recording secretary, a treasurer, and a sergeant at arms. In August, 1897, dues were doubled to ten cents a week, and the union began to accumulate funds for virtually the first time in its history.<sup>17</sup>

Discipline and cohesion now reached new heights among the cloakmakers. In 1896 the union introduced a working card for its members—obligatory for permission to work or to attend meetings—and limited the number of apprentices in each shop. The union book of that year further informed all members that overtime was not permissible without the consent of the union; that members four weeks in arrears with dues were subject to suspension; that attendance at shop meetings was compulsory; and that “no member is permitted to tell about the transactions of the union, to persons whose interests are hostile to the interest of the union.” To bring home its objectives to the membership, the union even had a jingled motto:

*Whether you work by the piece  
Or work by the day,  
Decreasing the hours,  
Increases the pay.*<sup>18</sup>

This promising development of the union, however, was arrested by a struggle with Beifeld and Company in September, 1898. The strike, fought for union recognition, involved most of the five hundred workers in both the inside and outside shops of the firm, and was marked by unusual bitterness. Scabs and thugs appeared in great numbers. Fights broke out on the picket line. The Illinois State Board of Arbitration intervened but accomplished nothing. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, was enlisted by the union to interview Beifeld, but the manufacturer, though willing to make concessions, declined to negotiate with the committee representing the workers. In the end, the workers were defeated

and the union was virtually broken again. For the next three years a small loyal group, rallying around Benjamin Schlesinger, S. Hoffman, and Abraham Bisno, was all that remained of the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union.<sup>19</sup>

The fluctuating career of the Chicago union before 1900 was typical of the cloakmakers' organizations throughout the country. As elsewhere, the cloakmakers of Chicago were still searching for organizational forms and trade union techniques and were experimenting, often ludicrously, in all directions. Nevertheless, the spirit of the Chicago cloakmakers was the spirit of militant trade unionism. The union went out in full force in sympathy with the Pullman strikers of 1894 and stood by until Eugene V. Debs officially declared the strike at an end. Its help was offered freely to other labor groups of Chicago—to the Jewish bakers fighting for the union label on their bread, to the West Side department store clerks struggling for shorter hours. On May Day, whether the union was strong or weak, all cloakmakers turned out in full force to march valiantly (many of them on horseback) in solidarity with the rest of Labor. In 1896, the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union took a leading role in the organization of the first central body for the Jewish trade unions of the city, the *Vereinigte Yiddische Gewerkschaften*, Schlesinger serving as secretary.<sup>20</sup>

The Chicago Cloak Makers' Union also, from the very beginning of its existence, realized the need and labored for the creation of a national organization of the workers in the industry. In the first convention to organize a national body, held in New York in 1892, Chicago was represented by five delegates, one of which, Benjamin Schlesinger, was elected treasurer of the short-lived International Cloak Makers' Union of America.\* When this organization disintegrated amidst factional struggles,

\* The other delegates, according to Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, page 65, were Peter Sissman, Belovski, Nickelberg, and Rosenblum. Peter Sissman, however, in an interview with the writer on February 17, 1939, recollected that he was the only delegate sent by Chicago.

the Chicago union announced its intention of joining the United Garment Workers, and advised all other locals to do the same, but, for some reason, it never carried out this decision. In 1895 and again in 1896, the Chicago local took the lead in suggesting the need for a national organization. The movement for national unity in 1898, however, was opposed by Chicago, on the ground that as yet "there were no strong local organizations."<sup>21</sup> By that time, the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union had found a home in the Socialist Trade and Labor alliance, and had been for almost a year an honored and militant member of the District Alliance Number 11.<sup>22</sup>

## *Chicago and the International*

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THE CHICAGO cloakmakers were not participants in the formation of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, created by delegates from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Brownsville, and Newark in June, 1900. Before the International celebrated its first birthday, however, the Chicago union had been reorganized as one of its affiliated members, the Chicago Cloakmakers' Union, Local 5. In the next two years this local advanced with rapid strides, and was soon playing a leading role in the affairs of the national body.

The revival of the Chicago Cloakmakers' Union proceeded rather slowly at first. By June, 1902, however, the Chicago cutters were also organized and affiliated with the International as Local 21. That month, both locals sent delegates to the convention in New York, at which the Chicago cloakmakers were honored by the election of Benjamin Schlesinger, the organizer and business manager of Local 5, as a member of the General Executive Board and as the delegate of the International to the convention of the American Federation of Labor.<sup>1</sup>

During the next year, the progress of the Chicago cloakmakers was so rapid that, by the time the International met in its 1903 convention, their organization had become completely transformed. Chicago now had a total of five locals. Besides Locals

5 and 21, there were now the Cloak Pressers' Local 24, the Skirt Makers' Local 28, and the Ladies' Cloak and Skirt Makers' Local 39. Each of these had boomed in membership during the year. Local 5, for example, had augmented its numbers from 136 to 560; Local 24, from 10 to 165. The total Chicago membership, well over 1,200, constituted almost a seventh of the strength of the whole International. A Joint Executive Board united all these into a single organization and a formidable fighting machine.

The strength of the Chicago locals had already been proven on the field of industrial struggle. Some 750 people had engaged in successful strikes during the course of the year, and the Joint Executive Board was already in the enviable position of being respected enough to secure concessions without battle. All locals, with the exception of the Ladies' Cloak and Skirt Makers' Union, had been able to reduce the hours of work for their members. All had gained increases in wages ranging from ten to twenty percent. Recognition of the union was general and almost every cloak shop in the city was under its control.

The internal development of the union matched these victories on the economic front. The Joint Executive Board "worked harmoniously" in inter-local affairs, presented common demands to employers, and maintained a joint manager and business agent for all the five locals. Each local had inaugurated benefit systems of various kinds. The Cutters' Union, for example, paid \$6 weekly strike benefit and a \$100 death benefit. This record of accomplishment was the more significant by contrast with the disorganized condition of the New York locals at the time.

At the International convention of 1903, accordingly, the eleven delegates of Chicago, representing a fifth of the participating locals, formed an enthusiastic and aggressive group which played a leading role in its proceedings. They were found on virtually every committee. They introduced resolutions on all sorts of subjects—for the eight-hour day, for a permanent and

salaried International president, for doubling the per capita payments to the International to ten cents a month, for inaugurating a system of uniform union books, for enlarging the General Executive Board—and the convention adopted them all. And in fitting climax, Benjamin Schlesinger, the manager of the successful Chicago Joint Executive Board, was elected the new president of the International. Another Chicagoan, Max Goldfinger of the Cutters' Union, was elected as his colleague on the General Executive Board.<sup>2</sup>

Two months after this convention, the Chicago cloakmakers won an agreement with the large inside firm of Beifeld, Hirsh, and Kline which was, for that day, a remarkable victory. Week workers won minimum weekly wage scales of \$21 for cutters, \$15 for trimmers, \$17 for "main pressers," and \$12 for "seam pressers." Scales of piece workers were to be similarly raised, the adjustment to be made by shop committees. Contracting was limited in several ways: the firm agreed to engage no new non-union contractors unless its whole labor force was supplied with work for ten full days in advance; to pay to the union men in such open shops, if garments were sent there, the same prices as paid in its regular union shops; and to send no garments to any shop where more than one partner was actually working at the trade. The firm further obligated itself to employ, in its inside shop and its outside union shops, only members of the union; to allow business agents to visit the shops, the inside one "during the lunch hour only," and the outside union and open shops "at any time during the day"; to pay time and a half for overtime; to consult the union on layoffs during the slack season; and to limit its power of discharge. In disputes "as to discharges, prices and other causes" which could not be adjusted by the regular machinery of the union and the management, a Board of Arbitration, consisting of two representatives selected by each party to the agreement and a fifth impartial person, was to render final judgment.



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ABRAHAM BAROFF, MORRIS SIGMAN, AND BENJAMIN SCHLESINGER



Noteworthy though this agreement was in many respects, as in its provision for a Board of Arbitration and its limitations on contracting, its most significant feature was probably the section on discharges. Reading that the employer "shall have the right to dismiss any employee at any time for a reasonable cause subject to arbitration," this clause, though not specifying whether arbitration was to be invoked before or after the discharge of the worker, nevertheless constituted a milestone in the history of the Chicago union.<sup>3</sup> In later years, Peter Sissman, then a famous attorney, confessed his astonishment at the time that employers actually granted any such demand of workers. "It seemed incredible to me," he wrote, "that manufacturers would ever sign such a curbing of their individual liberties! . . . but there it was!"<sup>4</sup> The workers were no longer fighting for the simple right to maintain a union; they were demanding, and securing, a voice in industrial management.

The Chicago locals continued their advance during the next year. They won agreements, with similar features, from other firms. They aided the waist and wrapper makers to organize as Local 38 of the International. In routine business as well as in important struggles, the Chicago union demonstrated its idealism and militancy. Contractor Perlstein, for one, learned this when, upon offering a cigar to the union's business agent, he was astonished to be rebuffed with the admonition that the union preferred "another nickel for the finishers instead."<sup>5</sup>

Then, on July 1, 1904, when the agreements of the preceding year expired, the Chicago cloak manufacturers, now united into a "Manufacturing Association," acted in concert to refuse renewals or extensions of any kind and threatened a lockout of all workers in the Chicago trade. The cutters' local accepted the challenge by calling out its members at Beifeld and Company. The other crafts at the firm soon joined the cutters. In rapid sequence shop after shop became involved, as workers struck or were locked out, until the struggle had become a gen-

eral strike in the whole industry. For the workers, this decisive test of strength came at a most inopportune time. The industry still felt the effects of the industrial depression of the past year. The employers throughout the United States were organizing into associations for the purpose of combating trade unionism. The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, like the rest of American labor, was being attacked on every front and was weakened in almost every cloak center of the country.

Once the issue was forced, however, the Chicago workers fought stubbornly for six weeks. Employers resorted to vicious tactics hitherto unusual in industrial conflicts in the local industry. The police hounded the strikers and virtually prevented picketing. Eventually, the struggle ended in the complete disintegration of the Chicago union. "The men decided to give up their locals." Those who were particularly active in the strike were blacklisted out of the industry. The others went back to work without retaining any trace of the strong organization of which they had boasted just a few weeks before.<sup>6</sup>

## *Seasonal Unionism*

THE FAILURE of the 1904 general strike so demoralized the Chicago cloakmakers that many observers pronounced them incapable of ever maintaining a stable organization. For the next six years, numerous obstacles, in addition to those previously cited, militated powerfully against their unity. Until the "Great Revolt" of 1910, New York, controlling almost 70% of the industry, remained an open market which Chicago employers could utilize whenever threatened by local labor disturbances. In Chicago itself the trade was readily accessible to workers of every nationality, creed, and sex. Men who became stubborn could always be replaced by more tractable women; older workers who insisted on collective bargaining, by new recruits. In fact so adequate was the reserve labor supply that manufacturers, as noted above, could afford mass blacklistings and lockouts at frequent intervals.

Immigrants, as ever, continued to pour into the industry. In their eagerness to learn the trade, the unskilled among them placed their services at the disposal of employers for almost nothing during a long period of apprenticeship. One such immigrant, for example, entered the industry by paying a contractor \$10 to be taught the operating trade, worked a full month without pay, and then served as a helper at wages of \$6 a week.<sup>1</sup>

Many of these "greenhorns" were completely innocent of understanding the purposes or interests of trade unionism. One new worker, approached to join the union on the ground that it was fighting for an eight-hour day, promptly approved this objective and suggested that the organization would do even better to demand sixteen hours.<sup>2</sup> In another case, when an organizer was extolling the benefits of unionism, among them the shortening of hours, an old Jewish cloakmaker astonished him by demanding to know what the workers would do in their spare time. Momentarily taken aback, the speaker began to stammer out an explanation, "*Du kennst verbraingen mit dein yiddene und kinder . . .*"\* Swift and devastating came the retort: "*Verbraing du mit mein yiddene!*"†<sup>3</sup>

During this period, too, sub-contracting inside the shop reached new heights. Most of the pressing, operating, and finishing was soon done on such a basis. The employer, under this system, usually hired only one or two workers in each craft, with whom he contracted for all operating or pressing in his shop. The sub-contractors in turn hired assistants and helpers, who received their wages from them instead of from the employers. Quite naturally, the sub-contractors paid their helpers as little as they could. In one shop the two sub-contractors for the pressing earned \$70 or \$80 a week while they paid their eight helpers as low as \$5. In other cases the sub-contractors made even more, averaging \$100 or even \$150 a week.<sup>4</sup> While this system condemned the majority of the workers to starvation wages, it did not, however, always result in the enrichment of the sub-contractor. One operator, for example, who was continually being offered helpers instead of a raise, found the institution extremely unprofitable; his net income sank from \$15 a week when he worked alone to \$11.50 when he "was fixed up" by the employer with two helpers.<sup>5</sup> Dividing worker against

\*"You can spend the time with your wife and children."

†"You can spend *your* spare time with my wife."

worker, creating a chain of bigger and smaller bosses through the shop, this system presented one of the most formidable obstacles to the unionization of the industry.

In addition, the cloakmakers suffered, for a long time, from undue pride of craft which was often disastrous in its consequences. The cutters, who themselves barely managed on their wages, considered themselves the aristocrats of the industry and looked down upon all the others. The cloak operators, who deemed the sewing of skirts below their dignity, had a hearty contempt for the skirtmakers. Moreover, both the cutters and the operators regarded the pressers as their social and intellectual inferiors and labelled them as ignoramuses whose only gifts were physical strength and endurance. And all alike united in treating the finishers—mostly women—as a breed scarcely human. They were the scapegoats of the trade, the pariahs whom all, from the employer to the meanest helper in the other crafts, ridiculed, insulted, and abused. Their prices were the last to be settled and the first to be cut. If the operators insisted on another five or ten cents per garment, the usual solution was to “take it off from the finishers.” The only time the finishers were remembered was during a strike. Then cutters, operators, and pressers suddenly bethought themselves that the finishers, too, should not work.<sup>6</sup>

Under these circumstances, the efforts of the Chicago cloakmakers toward unionization resulted, for the next five years, in a series of abortive organizations, short in duration, small in number of members, and utterly ineffective in regulating shop conditions. Between 1905 and 1908 they created at least six different unions, none of them enduring longer than the season of its founding. Nevertheless, with endless patience, they persisted in their efforts, each time hoping that they had finally found the stable organization they were seeking.

Having failed to reach this goal under the International, some of the Chicago cloakmakers in 1905 turned to the Industrial

Workers of the World, just organized in Chicago as a national rival to the American Federation of Labor. Representing the brave "new unionism" of the day, the aggressive I.W.W. made a strong appeal to the workers in the ladies' garment industry throughout the country. In Chicago, their national secretary, Trautman, offered a helping hand to the discouraged cloakmakers. With his aid a number of them began meeting together once more. In February, 1906, they definitely affiliated themselves with the I.W.W. as the Chicago Cloak Makers' Industrial Union. This organization prospered, however, only for a few months. By May it was a union only on paper.<sup>7</sup>

The I.W.W. having also failed to organize the Chicago cloakmakers, the International again stepped into the picture. In August, 1906, John A. Dyche, its general secretary-treasurer, came to Chicago "to try to form an organization." To his gratification, he found that the cloakmakers had already held a meeting a few days before and had formed the nucleus of a union. His hopes, however, swiftly declined when he attended the second meeting of this group. The whole evening was spent, not in constructive planning, but in "wrangling with the Industrialists [I.W.W.], who claimed that a local of cloakmakers of Industrialists exists already, and that no one has a right to form an opposition to it." Upon the advice of local leaders, Dyche thereupon called a meeting of his own on August 9. The attendance was fair, the speeches of Schlesinger and Bisno were well received, and before the meeting was over, another cloakmakers' union had been founded. The local did not affiliate with the International. Because the "Industrialists" protested vigorously against such a step, it decided, in the interests of harmony, to "remain independent for a time."<sup>8</sup> This diplomacy, however, availed it little. By New Year's Day, 1907, this organization, like its many predecessors, was no longer in existence.

Meanwhile, in December, 1906, the existing Jewish unions of Chicago, including this "independent" Cloakmakers' Union, had

founded the second *Vereinigte Yiddische Gewerkschaften*. This new central body immediately laid plans to organize the workers in the ladies' garment trade. In a few weeks, Benjamin Mazur, head of its organization committee, reported the organization of a skirt operators' union consisting of eight charter members. The local progressed very slowly. The *Gewerkschaften* was unable to contribute more than three or five dollars at a time and Mazur counted himself fortunate to gain three members at a "mass meeting." However, by the end of March, 1907, the local was strong enough to conduct a successful shop strike, securing not only the reinstatement of a discharged member but also a written agreement for a closed shop. In June, it was chartered by the International as Local 28, the Chicago Skirt Makers' Union. The local was never large. In its first year, its total dues to the International, including the charter fee, amounted to but \$24.97. It was nevertheless able, for a time, to hire the part-time services of Mazur for organizational activity and to conduct a rather ambitious educational program.<sup>9</sup>

Having been successful with the skirtmakers, the *Gewerkschaften* turned its attention to the cloakmakers. Upon the request of a number of them, Mazur called a mass meeting on June 17, 1907. Although few answered the call, a union was formed, and an organization campaign was mapped out. On August 12, this union reported an extraordinarily successful meeting at which sixty cloakmakers paid initiation fees. A few weeks later, however, the union membership began to decline. In November, the few cloakmakers who still paid dues decided to disband their local and to join the Skirt Makers' Union.<sup>10</sup>

In the spring of 1908 the cloakmakers began to organize again. By April 1, the new union claimed as members a "majority of the cloakmakers" and was winning the respect of the employers. Even the *Jewish Courier*, while deploring the five or six mushroom cloakmakers' unions during the past few years, optimistically expressed the judgment that this organization

"was different." The cloakmakers, it said, had finally learned the lesson of patience. They no longer expected miracles immediately; they knew, finally, that a union had to be strong in numbers, in the loyalty of its members, and in financial reserves, before it could conduct strikes or gain victories.<sup>11</sup> But the *Courier* was wrong. The cloakmakers had not yet learned their lesson.

A few months later, in July, the cloakmakers made the last of these attempts to establish an organization. Resorting to high strategy, the few sponsors of the venture announced Joseph Barondess, idol of the New York Jewish workers, as the speaker at their mass meeting. The hall was packed—until the audience heard that Barondess would not be present. The cloakmakers present, however, remained in their seats. The meeting continued, and others were held. An organization was finally effected. In September, it appointed Mazur as its organizer and launched an energetic campaign in the trade. It was aided by the *Yiddische Arbeiter Welt* (Jewish Labor World), founded a few months before as a socialist weekly, as well as by the employers who "cut prices to the bone" during the next season. Abraham Rosenberg, president of the International, stopped in Chicago to address several of its meetings. By June, 1909, the Cloakmakers' Union had over six hundred members and boasted agreements with several shops.<sup>12</sup>

This union, however, like the previous one, insisted on remaining "independent." Though lively fights occurred at every meeting on the question of affiliation with the International, the majority of the members stubbornly refused to take this step. Once before they had belonged to the International, they said, and had gotten nothing out of it. They even refused to join the *Gewerkschaften*, yielding only, when pressed, to appoint a committee to investigate that body. The cloakmakers were satisfied with the progress of their union. During the summer the membership rose to 800. Why, therefore, pay dues to any other organization?

Then, in the early fall of 1909, the "independent" Cloak-makers' Union lost a minor strike. Almost overnight the membership, convinced that the organization was a failure, virtually disappeared. Even the members of the executive board joined the general tide of desertion. Some forty or fifty cloakmakers remained loyal and fewer still continued to be active. Apparently, this union was but another mushroom organization, doomed to vanish even more suddenly than it appeared.<sup>13</sup>



standing of the workers with whom he dealt, he proved himself a competent builder of the union. As his first task, he undertook to sell the International to the Chicago cloakmakers. At first he met with almost uniform opposition. But he persisted. He kept up his agitation in a member-to-member campaign, buttonholing individuals whenever he could. In about six weeks, on December 20, 1909, the Chicago Cloakmakers' Union became affiliated with the International as Local 44.<sup>1</sup>

The Union now acquired an air of stability. Its membership began to increase rapidly. Although it was still a seasonal union, it maintained an average of 300 members throughout the year. As it grew in numbers it began to make its influence felt in shop conditions. Its policy, of necessity, was very moderate. It fought only on questions of wages, and even in such cases refused to become involved in long and costly struggles. Other conditions in the shop, even reinstatement of members who were discharged in disputes over price settlements, were not made issues for conflict. As Elstein stated, the union was just being built and prudence was the order of the day, for, in contrast to its 350 members at the time, over 1,500 Chicago cloakmakers were still unorganized.

By the time of the International convention of June, 1910, however, the union was ready for more aggressive tactics. Local 44 already had four active sub-locals. The pressers' group, the first of these, was inaugurating successful guerrilla warfare against sub-contracting and piece work. The Polish and Lithuanian sub-local, attempting to reach the great number of Polish workers in the Chicago trade, was asking the International for leaflets printed in their language. The other two branches consisted of skirtmakers and finishers, the latter having "all rights just like the cloakmakers." All these sub-locals were growing and hoped shortly to become full locals of the International. At the same time, one Frank D. Avery, a Chicago cutter, offered to organize his whole craft at a commission of one dollar a

head, terms which the General Executive Board cannily accepted for the first fifty members.<sup>2</sup>

Encouraged by these developments, the executive committee of the local formulated a series of new demands for the following season, including the establishment of shop price committees, extra pay for overtime, payment of cash weekly wages and a half holiday on Saturday. Many of these demands were won. A typical union agreement, signed in August, 1910, provided for practically all these points, as well as for the closed shop, the abolition of sub-contracting among the pressers, and the right of the business agent to visit the shop. In festive mood, the local now celebrated its third year of existence, and, in October, sponsored a mass meeting in the West Side Auditorium to listen to glowing reports of the great victory of the New York cloakmakers\* and to prepare "for a general strike which will be called throughout the country simultaneously."<sup>3</sup>

By the summer of 1911, the Chicago union was rapidly approaching the golden days of 1903. The branches of Local 44 had now evolved into full-fledged locals of the International. The pressers were chartered on August 12, 1910, as Local 76; the cutters, on February 18, 1911, as Local 81; and the skirtmakers, on July 5, 1911, as Local 94. Local 44, furthermore, had two important sub-locals, one for its North Side members and the other for the Polish workers in the organization. Each of the locals was well governed. Local 44, for example, had a formidable list of officers, including an executive board of ten, a president, vice president, financial and recording secretaries, a treasurer, two trustees, an inside guard, and a business agent. Two of these were paid salaries, Barney Schaffer, the business agent, receiving \$24 a week, and Abraham Tinsley, financial secretary, \$18. A Joint Board united the four locals into a central administration which met alternately at the two union offices, at 1125 Blue Island Avenue and 1392 Milwaukee. All the locals also

\* The "Great Revolt" of 1910, in which 55,000 cloakmakers participated.

belonged to a District Council, which included in membership the Ladies' Tailors' Local 71 and others not affiliated with the Joint Board.

Although members frequently forgot to pay their dues and evidenced other signs of immaturity in trade unionism, the union was steadily gaining in cohesiveness and discipline. In June, 1911, Local 44 raised its dues from the proverbial nickel-a-week to forty cents a month and decided on a uniform initiation fee of \$99 for former scabs or contractors. In the same month, this local inaugurated, as a measure both conducive to internal discipline and to the welfare of its members, a sick benefit fund which paid as high as \$5 a week for six weeks each year. At the same time, the strike benefit, a feature of the local since the spring of 1910, was being improved by an assessment for a strike fund. As evidence of both its strength and solidarity with the labor movement, it contributed heavily to the striking New York cloakmakers in 1910, to the Cleveland strikers in 1911, and to the various other causes such as the *Yiddische Arbeiter Welt* and the McNamara Defense Fund.

In the local trade, the Chicago union had the reputation of being both strong and "business-like." It was now more firm in its demands upon both the employers and its members, taking a stand against indiscriminate discharges, against settling of prices without the presence of the business agent, against employment of helpers without union permission, and against work below the minimum scale. Because the majority of the cloakmakers were organized, the union was able to enforce these conditions in most of the cloak shops. The Skirtmakers' Local, soon having a membership of three hundred, was preparing to emulate this example.<sup>4</sup>

By the spring of 1911, the Chicago locals, which had hitherto confined their activities to the outside shops, ambitiously undertook to win control of the larger inside firms. At Siegel Brothers, the persuasive powers of Schaffer and a short strike in February

induced the firm to settle prices with shop committees and the business agent. At Palmer and Company, Schaffer succeeded in convincing the employer that the workers were underpaid and that a new settlement had to be made. So successful was this persuasion that, according to rumors, the employers were becoming alarmed and their association was planning a general lockout at an opportune moment.

Far from being frightened by these reports, the Joint Board became even more aggressive. In April and May it drew up a series of demands which included higher minimum wage scales for all crafts, a forty-eight hour week, six legal holidays a year, and the settlement of prices with the manufacturers for both their inside and outside shops. So militant were these demands that the General Executive Board of the International vetoed one of them, the forty-eight hour week, and referred the others back to the locals. The locals apparently backed up the Joint Board, which now undertook to enforce these conditions throughout the industry. The Palmer agreement was accordingly rejected on the ground that it did not provide for price settlements for the contracting shops. It was on this issue that the Palmer strike began.<sup>5</sup>

The conditions of work at Palmer and Company were not, according to standards of that day, particularly oppressive. Hours of work were about fifty-six a week; the workers were charged for needles at two cents apiece; the head-presser was a spy for the employer; the foreman accepted drinks, cigars, and cash rebates from those who wanted special privileges; and the examiners received boxes of candy for leniency in passing judgment on garments. But these conditions were more or less typical of the larger shops in the Chicago cloak trade. On the other hand, wages were relatively high and the management was not too harsh in bargaining with individuals. The decision of the Joint Board to call a strike against the firm was prompted by other considerations, by the hope that, with a victory against

this "bear of the trade," the door would be opened for the organization of the entire market. For two years the union had been planning and preparing for this end. It had finally judged the time ripe for inaugurating a new program. Palmer and Company, which opened its season earlier than the other firms, happened to be the first to come into conflict with this objective.

Accordingly, the Joint Board served notice on Palmer that it demanded a fifty-hour week, minimum wage scales for week workers ranging to \$24 for cutters, extra half time for overtime, recognition of the union, and, the crucial issue, the settling of prices for the contractor shops in the inside firms. Palmer, while agreeing to negotiate on most of these demands, definitely rejected the last one. The Joint Board met in stormy session to consider its course. Schaffer, the business agent, counseled acceptance of the firm's offer. Finkler, chairman of the Joint Board, demanded an immediate showdown. A compromise was finally effected by which the workers most affected would decide the issue. A shop meeting of the workers in all Palmer's shops was called, and, by a vote of 71 to 70, they endorsed a strike.

The struggle which thus began in the early days of July lasted for over eight weeks and left its mark on the Chicago cloak-makers for four years. From the beginning, everyone realized its tremendous importance. It was the decisive test of the power of the union to organize the Chicago cloak trade; with it, the whole existence of the organization was tied up. The leaders of the strike, however, were confident. The Cleveland cloakmakers were then apparently winning their general strike, even as the New York cloakmakers had won their "Great Revolt" the year before. In Chicago, the Ladies' Tailors, of their own District Council, had just won an important victory. Furthermore, all the inside and outside workers of Palmer and Company had gone out at the call of the union. In fact, so confident was the union that, when an offer for mediation came from Palmer's contractors, the emissary was sent back without a reply.

Although everyone joined the walkout, Morris Broudy, leader of the strike committee, immediately detected a lack of enthusiasm among the inside workers, who had very little to gain from it. They themselves did not scab, but they expressed pessimism concerning the outcome of the strike at every opportunity. Many of them shirked picket duty. Some even sent scabs into the shop. Palmer and Company took immediate advantage of the situation. It hired scabs from the United Garment Workers and the Ladies' Tailors. It gave out work to new contractor shops. Other employers seized the opportunity to defy the union, to discriminate against workers for union activity, to delay or refuse satisfactory settlements, forcing the already overburdened union into several smaller strikes. At the same time, picketers found the police hostile to them, in one case complaining bitterly of "outrageous treatments" at their hands. The union put up a noble fight. Realizing that the strike must be won lest the union be lost, the members contributed time and money with enthusiasm. One day, all union cloakmakers walked out from their shops to join the Palmer picket line. In August, all the non-striking union members taxed themselves ten per cent of their wages for the duration of the conflict. The International sent a thousand dollars to the strike fund. The Chicago Federation of Labor and the Women's Trade Union League extended moral support. A Relief Committee was organized by Chicago labor to aid both the Cleveland and the Chicago strikes. The *Arbeiter Ring*\* generously donated a part of the proceeds from its annual picnic to the cloakmakers.

By the end of the first month, however, the union began to sense defeat. Scabbing spread to Palmer's outside shops, notably in I. Kaplan's shop on Milwaukee and Wabansia. The locals began to wrangle among themselves. The operators accused the pressers of not calling out their men in all shops doing work for the strike-bound firm. The pressers complained that the whole

\* Workmen's Circle.

burden of the strike fell upon the shoulders of Locals 44 and 76. In every local and in the Joint Board bitter disputes raged between those who insisted on showing the might of the union to the "cockroach bosses," who were taking advantage of the Palmer conflict, and those who demanded that the union cease to accept all challenges at this time. In early August the strikers demanded that the union either call a general sympathy strike of the whole trade or call upon Palmer's contractors to mediate. But it was too late for either alternative. As the days went on the union was ready to settle on almost any terms. Toward the end of the month, when all hope of concessions was gone, the union acknowledged itself defeated and formally ended the strike without securing any agreement of any kind.<sup>6</sup>

## *The Struggle for Survival*

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THE FAILURE of the Palmer strike resulted in immediate disaster for the union. The cloakmakers, some in contempt and some in bitter hostility, deserted it *en masse*. In October, 1911, the enrolled membership of Local 44 was down to less than 200 and the other three locals retained only 140 more among them. Discipline in the ranks virtually disappeared. Union meetings were attended by a fraction of those who were still retained on the books. Control over shops was being lost rapidly and soon there were only three or four union shops. Employers carried on reprisals against the union with impunity. Samuel Glassman, who attempted to secure a job as an operator in Chicago, was dismissed from two positions within three days and decided that he could not fare worse in his own open shop city of St. Louis. Another operator was fired after being seen descending the stairs at 1125 Blue Island Avenue, presumably leaving the union office. One firm replaced all its workers, formerly members in the union, with an entirely new staff, while the Joint Board looked on helplessly. Internal quarrels further weakened the morale of the organization. Complaints, charges, and counter-charges flew back and forth at meetings and on street corners. Cliques fought each other. The members attributed the loss of the strike to rotten leadership; the officials blamed the lack of discipline among

the membership. Financially, the union went rapidly from bad to worse. The Joint Board was burdened with debt. Local treasuries were empty. At one time, when the landlord became insistent, the business agent was forced to pawn his gold watch for twenty-five dollars in order to meet his demands.<sup>1</sup>

The surprising feature was, not this wholesale exodus of membership, but rather the survival of the union. The active members soon united on a program of retrenchment. In January, 1912, the four locals decided to reduce expenses by amalgamating into one Chicago Cloak and Skirt Makers' Union with a common treasury and one set of officers. The Northwest Side headquarters were given up. The business agent was dispensed with and the total expense for salaries was reduced to eight dollars for the financial and recording secretaries. Dues were lowered; initiation fees were cut to one dollar; the sick fund was given up; and the treasury was closed for all purposes except disbursements for strike expenses. Even with all this the union was forced to call for aid upon the International, which contributed sums of twenty-five dollars from time to time, and upon its active members, many of whom volunteered loans to the office. Despite this critical situation, the cloakmakers' union maintained its existence uninterrupted—for the first time in its history after the loss of an important strike.<sup>2</sup>

By January, 1913, the union had sufficiently regained its losses to prepare for a new organization campaign. Mass meetings, addressed by men like Meyer London and John Fitzpatrick, brought in new members. On January 7, Philip Holtzberg was elected financial secretary and general manager of the union at a salary of twenty dollars a week. As the position of the union improved and office work increased, Holtzberg became business agent, relinquishing the post of financial secretary to Hyman Schoolman. The union now began to reestablish its control over shops. Successful stoppages enabled it to obtain union recognition, more favorable settlements, prohibition of

work on Sunday and on Saturday afternoon, and payment of time and a half for overtime. A major part of this organizational work came at the instigation of workers in individual shops, most of them non-members of the union at the time, who came to the office to complain that the boss was acting "like a Russian hooligan" or that he had locked them out for daring to insist on better conditions. The union, in such cases, instructed the business agent to "do business for them," and if negotiations failed, to do "the same which is done with all bosses in such a case." Often, after such a stoppage ended favorably, the agreement was soon broken and another stoppage was found necessary before the end of the week. In Harry Bernstein's shop on the Northwest Side, for example, stoppages were almost a weekly feature. Sometimes, too, police and detectives hampered the course of a strike by blocking picketing. In late July and August the dominating clique in the manufacturers' association began a campaign to destroy the union altogether, enforcing a rule which prohibited its open shop member firms from dealing with the union, and involving it at one time in three simultaneous strikes. The Chicago Cloakmakers' Union, however, faced this attack unflinchingly, and not only weathered it but achieved a series of victories. Eventually, therefore, most of the smaller Chicago shops were forced to accept the fact that the union was recovering from the Palmer debacle and was again a force in the market.

In this manner the union gradually built up its membership to 1,300 by the end of 1913. The cutters, able finally to maintain a functioning local by themselves, withdrew from the amalgamation. Local 44 met in three branches, the main West Side branch, the Northwest Side Branch, and a small Polish branch designed to attract the "Christian workers in the trade." With the objective of facilitating organizational activity, the old District Council was revived, including as members Locals 44, 81, the Ladies' Tailors' Local 71, and the two new locals of the International, the Raincoat Workers' Local 54 and the

Waist, Dress, and White Goods Workers' Local 59. The finances of the union improved rapidly. By July, Local 44 alone had accumulated some \$1,200 in its treasury, was able to pay strike benefits of \$4 a week, and had revived the sick benefit for practically all ailments except "immoral diseases." At the same time, the active members of the union were meeting in special conferences to outline a comprehensive campaign of activity. In May, 1913, Abraham Rosenberg, president of the International, came to Chicago to suggest that the time was ripe for a general strike, especially if it came in conjunction with the planned walkout of the men's clothing workers. Later in the summer, Vice President Isadore S. Feit, coming to prepare the ground for this undertaking, reported satisfactory progress.<sup>3</sup>

At this juncture an internal crisis known as the Holtzberg affair\* developed to nullify all these gains. Disputes and quarrels were of course no novelty; many a meeting ended at four or five in the morning because of them. In the spring of 1914, factional strife became so serious that the union was almost shattered and the services of two International officers and an outside committee were required to restore a semblance of order in the organization.

In origin, the Holtzberg crisis resulted from a personal quarrel between the business agent and ex-business agent Schaffer. Each of them had his followers, who were soon as bitter as the principals. Vice President Feit urged Local 44 to suspend Schaffer from membership. The latter, however, demanded and secured the appointment of an impartial outside committee to investigate the charges against him. Sissman, Bisno, and Morris Seskind, comprising this committee, decided that the cause of peace, if not of abstract justice, would be best served by the suspension of Schaffer from active membership for six months.

\* This case bore some resemblance to the somewhat similar Hourwich affair in New York at the same time. Although dissimilar in nature—the Hourwich dispute being based primarily on union policies—both resulted in weakening and almost disrupting their respective organizations. For further details, see Levine, *op. cit.*, 260-273.

By the time this recommendation was submitted to the local, however, the situation had abruptly changed. Harry Bernstein, a contractor with whom the union had had frequent altercations, had locked out his workers and had secured an injunction prohibiting the union from picketing his shop. The ground for the injunction was Bernstein's charges that the union was conducting a shake-down racket; his alleged evidence, that business agent Holtzberg had settled a strike for seventy-five dollars, of which he had already been paid twenty-five dollars. The opponents of the business agent were quick to take advantage of the opportunity. The executive board of Local 44 declared his office vacant and suspended him from all duties and membership until he was proven innocent. Although the source of the charges diminished their effectiveness, Holtzberg's actions led even his best friends to suspect that something irregular might have taken place and to urge him to resign in the interests of harmony in the union.

When Holtzberg refused to resign, the internal conflict began in earnest. The union was now split about evenly into pro-Holtzberg and anti-Holtzberg factions, both of which ignored rules and discipline in the struggle for power. When the local elected Holtzberg a delegate to the International convention, the executive board refused to underwrite his credentials and appropriate expenses, with the result that the local was unrepresented that year. In June, the executive committee offered Holtzberg fifty dollars in return for his resignation. Holtzberg answered by demanding complete vindication and advertised in the press that he would appear at the next union meeting to be tried in open court by the membership. His appearance at this meeting, however, created so great a tumult that the chairman immediately adjourned it. The executive board thereupon requested the General Executive Board to take charge of the case. Vice president Samuel Glassman came with full power to render a final decision. He held a hearing which lasted from eight in the

evening to five in the morning, received the impression that Holtzberg believed that he had "a mortgage on the union," and decided that the business agent should receive seventy-five dollars in lieu of compensation and notice and should be ineligible for office for two years. But the case was not yet over. Holtzberg, objecting to the trial on the ground that strangers had no right to mix in local affairs, continued the fight. Finally, on August 8, according to a private agreement with Sam Morris, president of Local 44, the executive board heard the case once more, and upheld the decision of Glassman. Holtzberg, convinced that his fight was lost, acknowledged defeat by accepting the verdict.

The Holtzberg case, like the Hourwich affair in New York, cost the union all its gains of the past two years. From 1,300 its membership declined to less than 400. Legal expenses involved in fighting the injunction and a diminished income emptied its treasury. Personal bickering increased, most of it so petty in nature that it astonished all observers. Shop conditions deteriorated. The shop chairman became "only a figure-head." The various crafts were ready to work as soon as they had made their own settlements, whether the others did or not. Strikes were being lost simply because the union was too busy with other activities.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, in all probability, even without this affair, the union would have declined. Men like Glassman and Schoolman diagnosed Chicago cloakmakers as still addicted to seasonal unionism and believed that most of those who went out with Holtzberg had been merely awaiting a suitable opportunity. An anonymous "quiet member of the Chicago Cloakmakers' Union," writing in the *Jewish Labor World*, charged that many union members really wanted no strong organization. They wanted only a small union which they could use as a whip over their particular employers and foremen so that they could obtain preferred treatment in the shop. A large and strong organization would interfere with their prerogatives, would divide bundles equally,

would discipline members for making special bargains with the boss, would demand solidarity with underpaid "greenhorns" and with abused girl finishers. They wanted only a little union, "with a hump on its back, its breast flat, and with at least three or four rotten teeth."<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the seasons were exceptionally dull. The employers' association was ever vigilant in its efforts to break the organization and was continually devising new methods for that purpose. The courts were beginning to issue injunctions against the union. The B'nai B'rith Employment Bureau was being utilized as a source of scabs. The combination of workers uneducated in the spirit of genuine trade unionism, of a union torn in internal strife, and of an aggressive and opportunistic employers' group proved too much for the Chicago Cloakmakers' Union, as indeed it proved too much for practically every other center of the International at the time.<sup>6</sup>

*Part II*

The Period of Expansion

1914-1920



## *The Chicago Joint Board*

**E**VEN WHILE the Holtzberg case was still dividing the union in factional strife, the Chicago locals were laying plans and mapping out campaigns. Local 44 selected Morris Katzman, formerly connected with the Ladies' Tailors, as its new business agent. Samuel Glassman, general organizer for the midwest, managed to devote a good portion of his time to the Chicago cloakmakers. The membership of Locals 44 and 81 began to rise again. A few new shops were organized. The pressers revived their organization, which was chartered on August 12 as Local 18. In anticipation of this event, the committee which had been working for some weeks to effect a junction of the locals redoubled its activity and organized a new Chicago joint board.

On August 10, 1914, in the new headquarters of the union at 1815 West Division, fourteen cloakmakers met in solemn session. Samuel Glassman, vice president and general organizer of the International, served as chairman. The other thirteen represented Locals 44 and 81 and the still embryonic Local 18. In an atmosphere of dedication these delegates took the oath of office, pledging loyalty and energetic support to the new organization. Officers were elected: Morris Broudy as chairman; Samuel Goldflies, vice-chairman; Hyman Schoolman, secretary-treasurer; Louis Gold, recording and corresponding secretary;

and M. Bernstein, sergeant at arms.\* Several committees were appointed, one to transact the financial arrangements between Local 44 and the projected pressers' local, and another to draft the by-laws of the new body. A board of directors and an executive board were established. Then the meeting adjourned. The "Joint Board of the Ladies' Garment Workers' Union" was now a functioning organization.

Two weeks later the Joint Board adopted its by-laws. It was to conduct the general business of the locals, control the union shops, organize new shops, and make all needed reforms in the trade and the union. It was to control and supervise business agents, declare—subject to the approval of the locals—all strikes, and conduct all such strikes involving the membership of several locals. Its rights included the expenditure of money for organization purposes, the auditing and inspection of the books of its component locals, and the administration of the sick fund. All its decisions, including its rulings as a board of appeals, were to be binding on all its affiliated bodies. The locals were to be informed of its activity by receiving minutes of all meetings, quarterly financial statements, and yearly audits. Equality of crafts was assured by equality of locals in representation and in per capita payments to the Joint Board.

The new Joint Board did not establish itself without some difficulty. The delegates of the cutters, dissatisfied with per capita arrangements, marched out in a body on October 6 and remained out for almost two months. Local 18 saw fit to reject a Joint Board decision and refused to acknowledge its supremacy for several weeks. The delegates of both locals were irregular in attendance for some time. Resignations of officers and delegates were a common occurrence. Financial difficulties troubled it; at one time its income was insufficient even to meet the salaries of its officers, the highest of which was five dollars a

\* The other delegates were: J. Weinberg, J. Morris, I. Davidson, R. Hendzlick, J. Hoffman, B. Maloff, B. Hyman, and H. Gold.

week. At the same time it became the forum for disputes among the various crafts, and became involved in a jurisdictional dispute with the Dress and Skirt Makers' Local 59, some of whose members worked on cloaks.

Nevertheless, the Joint Board gradually established its authority and decided upon a comprehensive organization campaign. Its approach to the problem was, for Chicago, novel and unprecedented. The method was not to be the traditional type of shop-by-shop organization. That process had accomplished little during the past years. Gains, even in shops where workers had won repeated victories, had been but momentary. Conditions had tended to improve but slightly. Even in the union shops, in addition to continual troubles in settling prices, sub-contracting, discrimination against workers active in the union, unequal distribution of work, and work on Saturday afternoon and Sunday were common. For all practical purposes, Chicago was still an open shop market. Naturally the union could not grow under such circumstances. In December, 1914, the Joint Board had to give up its business agent as a financial luxury and had to borrow money from Local 44—which in turn borrowed it from several of its members—in order to maintain its office. The absence of a business agent led to a lessening of control over the few union shops and to a slackening of the bonds of discipline among the membership.

Accordingly, the Joint Board decided to adopt the new method of mass agitation. The several thousand Chicago cloakmakers were to be swept into a mass movement in an intensive large-scale campaign. The objective of the drive, and its unifying focus, was to be a general strike in the entire trade. In the course of this campaign the majority of the cloakmakers would be unionized and the remainder would join at the time of the walkout. If successful, this strategy would result in the final organization of the great bulk of Chicago cloakmakers.

Such a revolutionary step could not be attempted, of course,

without the active help of the International. The national body was somewhat slow in committing itself, but its announcement that it was contemplating a drive in Chicago and Cleveland in the near future sufficed as ground for beginning the campaign. A West Side meeting hall was hired. The finishers were organized into a separate branch. A special committee consisting of Bisno, Finkler, and Schaffer, mapped out concrete plans. The International was requested to take charge of the campaign and to win for Chicago cloakmakers a "Protocol" arrangement as in New York.\*<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, the Joint Board instituted an intensive educational and press agitation among the workers in the trade. A series of Saturday morning lectures on trade unionism was begun with a talk by Bisno on "Why We Need A Union In Bad Times." An informal Cloakmakers' Educational Circle, supported only partly by the union, conducted similar discussions in homes and private meeting places. Leaflets, circulars, and post-card cartoons preaching the message of unionism were distributed throughout the market. On December 14, the first publication of the union, the semi-monthly *Chicago Cloakmaker*, made its appearance. Agitational articles were also printed in the Yiddish press; a typical one, by Hyman Schoolman in the *Jewish Labor World*, called upon the "needle heroes" to revolt against their enslavement and to better their own condition and the opportunities of their children by enrolling in the ranks of those who were building a real union.<sup>2</sup>

As the campaign progressed, the Chicago Joint Board literally bombarded the International office with requests for immediate action. The International, busy with the critical Board of Arbitration cases in New York and in financial straits because of the unemployment epidemic in the industry, was rather equivocal in its replies. In December, general secretary-treasurer Morris

\* The "Protocol of Peace," as the collective agreement was called, in the New York cloak and suit trade, signed in September, 1910.



EXECUTIVE BOARD OF LOCAL No. 44 (1915)

Seated, *left to right*: Hyman Schoolman, then Vice President, I.L.G.W.U.; B. Fogel, Sam Morris, B. Maloff and Abraham Gold. Standing, *left to right*: M. Brody, S. Resnick, Chinsky, Boliner, L. Rufer, Louis Gold, Max Kasper, Barney Schaffer, Finkler and Max Raymond.



ABRAHAM BISNO



PETER SISSMAN



Sigman assured the Joint Board that the International would begin the Chicago drive immediately after its General Executive Board meeting in January. In February, however, he wrote that the International was unable "to spend hundreds of dollars in Chicago for organizing purposes." The Joint Board then asked for the appointment of Glassman, who had resigned as vice president of the International, as temporary organizer for Chicago. When, for various reasons, this request was refused, the Chicago organization, notwithstanding its financial difficulties, decided to hire Glassman at its own expense. The International, however, was not entirely inactive in behalf of Chicago. President Benjamin Schlesinger was continually sending huge batches of union literature. On March 15, 1915, he informed Schoolman that an organizer would be sent as soon as possible and begged the Chicago cloakmakers to be patient until his arrival.

In early April, the Joint Board was informed that the next quarterly meeting of the General Executive Board might be held in Chicago. It immediately appointed a committee to publicize this meeting in the Yiddish and English press. It urged all its members to pay their back dues so that the union might be prepared for a general strike. It reserved a suite at the Morrison Hotel for the General Executive Board session and hired a hall for a mass meeting. And, finally, it appointed a committee to present the case for the immediate organization of Chicago to the International.<sup>3</sup>

The three men\* who appeared before the General Executive Board made a telling appeal. Workers, they told, were being fired indiscriminately. The foreman or the boss was often the price committee of the shop. Conditions could be improved only by a mass drive, for which the ground had already been prepared. The General Executive Board was impressed. With an unanimous vote it decided that the International would

\* Finkler, Abraham Gold, and Schaffer.

take care of the campaign. Philip Finkler, a member of the delegation, was appointed International organizer for Chicago.

The drive now went on with new impetus. Even the most passive members became enthusiastic union agitators. The organization committee grew from day to day as volunteers joined to lend a hand. Shop meetings were called every evening. The small union office became a veritable beehive from which zealous workers poured out in all directions. Some of them were beaten by thugs; others were targets of buckets of cold water thrown at them from upper stories; but all returned with undampened ardor to undertake new tasks. President Schlesinger personally wrote a series of circulars and addressed many organization meetings. By the end of August the majority of the Chicago cloakmakers were members of the union.

On August 23, 1915, fifteen hundred cloakmakers met in a mass meeting at the West Side Auditorium and formally voted for a general strike in the event the manufacturers refused concessions. Within the next two weeks a committee of the Joint Board, meeting with Schlesinger and International organizer Weinberg, formulated the demands of the union. As presented in a letter sent to the manufacturers on September 4, these included: a fifty hour week, eight legal holidays with pay, the preferential union shop, arbitration and adjustment machinery, equal division of work in slack season, and minimum wage scales for both week and piece workers. The same evening the union staged a great mobilization meeting at the Empire Theater. Two thousand cloakmakers filled the hall to capacity. They heard Schlesinger, whom they gave a long and loud ovation, Weinberg, Bisno, Sissman, Finkler, and John Fitzpatrick. They approved unanimously the demands of the Joint Board. And they set the date for the general strike, in the event the manufacturers refused to negotiate, for Monday, September 13.<sup>4</sup>

For some days there was grave doubt which course the employers would choose. Many feared that the Chicago market

would be plunged into the bitter experience of New York in 1910. The manufacturers, however, decided on the more sober policy of concession. The mobilization of the cloakmakers convinced them that they were facing a powerful and determined force. Many of the workers, they knew, hoped for a real shake-up of the industry in order to sweep out the abuses and evils accumulated during the years. The season about to open, in contrast with the bad seasons during the first year of the World War, gave promise of being an extraordinarily busy one. Moreover, many of the employers felt that the terms presented were fair, though they feared individual settlements lest competitors gain advantage by successfully holding out against the union. Samuel Yastrow, for example, told a *Daily News* reporter that the manufacturers should grant the demands of the workers in a collective agreement. Public opinion seconded this attitude. Leading citizens like Judge Harry Fisher worked mightily to bring the two sides together. The *Tribune* and the *Daily News* urged the local industry to adopt the New York arbitration system. As a result, the manufacturers organized into two associations, which embraced in membership almost all the firms in the Chicago cloak trade, and agreed to negotiate with the union.

At the conference, held in the offices of Clarence Darrow and Peter Sissman on September 11, the employers offered to submit all items of dispute to arbitration, an offer quickly accepted by Schlesinger on condition that the employers arbitrate as a body. The general strike was postponed. A board of arbitration was created with Judge Julian W. Mack as chairman, Samuel J. Kline selected by the employers, and William O. Thompson by the union. At the hearings, begun on September 14, A. J. Pflaum argued the case of the employers, while Sissman and Bisno presented the side of the workers. Ten days later, on September 24, the Board of Arbitration rendered its decision, which met almost all the demands of the workers and which,

because of its completeness, became the collective agreement between the Chicago cloak manufacturers and the Chicago union.<sup>5</sup>

The Chicago Joint Board had thus justified its existence and its policy. Within a year after its formation it had united the cloakmakers of Chicago under its leadership and had become their voice in the industry. Backed by the determination and enthusiasm of its members, it had been able to insist on higher standards in the shop and had won, without the loss of a single hour of work, a blanket agreement covering almost the entire industry. The International hailed its advance as the most significant in the whole organization that year and pronounced its agreement as "the clearest and most lucid agreement so far achieved by our International."<sup>6</sup> The long period of seasonal unionism, defeats, and backwardness was now definitely over. A new era of collective bargaining, industrial peace, and expansion had begun.



preferred in hiring and during the slack season; although the employer's right to discharge was specifically recognized as absolute, the worker was protected from discharge for union membership or activity at any time and from arbitrary discharge for incompetency or misconduct after a trial period of two weeks, and was guaranteed, in all such cases, the "right to a review." The employers further agreed to distribute work equally during the slack season; to refrain from exacting deposits from employees; to cease charging for power, oil, needles, or belts; to desist from forcing workers to scab by doing work for strike-bound firms; to sell no goods to such firms; and to give no work to contractors whose shop conditions were below standard. They retained, however, the rights of *bona fide* reorganizations of their shops, of assigning work requiring special competency to employees especially skilled in the task, and of working personally in their own shops in any capacity. Although "helping" was still allowed, the exploitive features of the subcontracting system were eliminated by provisions that the wages of each helper or partner be fixed in advance and be paid directly by the employer.

To enforce and interpret these provisions of the agreement, the award provided for the establishment of permanent machinery of conciliation and arbitration. An Adjustment Committee of three members, one representing the union, a second the employers, and the third serving as impartial umpire, was to render decisions in disputes over price settlements. A Board of Arbitration of three members similarly constituted, was to be the highest authority on the agreement, functioning to interpret its construction, to review decisions of the Adjustment Committee, and to deal with matters reserved for future investigation. The findings of the Board of Arbitration, as well as of the Adjustment Committee, unless appealed within five days, were to be binding on all parties. For the duration of the agreement, to July 1, 1917, and for any periods of its renewal thereafter,

strikes and lockouts were prohibited, for the machinery of industrial peace rendered them obsolete and unnecessary.<sup>1</sup>

The greatest gain of the Chicago cloakmakers by this agreement was not its specific provisions but its general nature. The Chicago union, for the first time since 1904, could no longer be called backward. The agreement covered virtually the whole market, applying to sixty-two of the seventy-one cloak manufacturers, and benefiting over three thousand cloakmakers. The industry was now well launched on the smooth road of peaceful and harmonious relationship between employer and worker. The union underwent a complete metamorphosis. It became a stable and responsible organization, counting its membership in the thousands, and able in a short time to complete the unionization of the industry and to utilize its past victories as foundation for greater gains in the future.

The machinery for the enforcement of the collective agreement was immediately set up. Even before the award was issued the Joint Board had decided to hire a "chief clerk" to deal with the officers of the employers' group. Upon Schlesinger's recommendation this post was offered to Abraham Bisno—experienced in this work for several years in New York—upon the condition that he "be in his office each day not later than nine in the morning."<sup>2</sup> The employers, similarly, had organized themselves into two associations, the larger downtown firms belonging to the Chicago Cloak Manufacturers' Association and the smaller ones united in the Northwest Side Cloak Manufacturers' Association. Each of these soon followed the example of the union and appointed chief clerks to deal with Bisno. The permanent Board of Arbitration and the Adjustment Committee were soon established, Judge Julian W. Mack acting as chairman of the former and James E. Mullenbach of the latter.

Those who hoped, however, for miraculous inauguration of a regime of sweetness and love were soon disappointed. The workers had been keyed up to high pitch of battle. They had

been preparing "to give vent to outraged feelings which had been accumulating for years."<sup>3</sup> A victory won bloodlessly, no matter how favorable its terms, could under no circumstances be as sweet as gains won after struggle. Furthermore, many of the workers were dissatisfied with the terms obtained. The cutters, for example, gained very little. In time, other workers found that some of their new advantages were still largely on paper. Several large shops were not a party to the agreement, having neither joined an association nor become unionized; Palmer and Company, in particular, against whom the union had waged its bitter struggle of 1911, remained for several years a source of intense irritation to the workers.

Most important, many workers felt outraged at the provision which outlawed strikes and stoppages. The substitution of arbitration for their own time-honored methods flaunted their sense of militancy, led them to accuse the union of having shorn them of their power in a mistaken faith in untried and complicated machinery, and generated a feeling that they were facing their employers weaponless and impotent. Indeed, so strong did this feeling become that in early March, 1916, several hundred cloakmakers gathered in private meeting to protest against the injustice done them, creating a situation which might easily have led to a serious rift in the organization.<sup>4</sup>

Among the employers, too, there was great need for adjustment to the new era in the industry. The anticipated busy season, one of their important considerations in early September, did not materialize. Opposition toward carrying the collective agreement into effect mounted steadily. Each of the two associations adopted the policy of ignoring individual planks until the union became exasperated. Under these circumstances the inevitable friction expected in the initial days of the new industrial machinery mounted rather than diminished. In December the downtown association proposed re-studying the agreement with the object of modification. At the same time the Northwest Side

Association and the Joint Board became involved in a bitter fight on the question of security of tenure for shop chairmen, and for a time it seemed that the whole agreement was about to be scrapped.<sup>5</sup>

Ironically, the adjusting system, designed to minimize irritations over price settlements, was itself among the main items of continuous friction between the associations and the union. In October, by mutual consent, the adjustment procedure outlined by the agreement was revised by the appointment of an individual price adjuster. As a professional who was paid jointly by the union and the two associations, this adjuster had no prejudicial interest in either side of disputed cases. He interfered only upon request, when settlements could not be made by the usual negotiations between the management and the union. He arrived at his decisions independently, utilizing a definite schedule based on standard hourly rates and the quality of work in the particular shop, and usually performed his duties scientifically and conscientiously.

Nevertheless, the adjuster proved to be the whipping boy of the whole machinery under the agreement. In rapid succession five different adjusters were tried and found wanting. Late in 1916 Joseph Cohen, who had served in turn as cutter, operator, designer, and manufacturer, was appointed to this difficult post and managed to survive until 1919, although he was often out of favor with one side or the other. He was accused of everything under the sun. His decisions were appealed to the Board of Arbitration until Judge Mack curtly informed the rival litigants that the adjuster knew more about adjusting prices, which was his business, than the Board did, and that if he was unsatisfactory they could hire another man. So much was the adjuster badgered that he offered his resignation several times, and each time it was rejected. Sometimes the manufacturers complained that they had been given a "beating." More often the workers accused him of "dancing to the tune of the manufacturers." In early

1916 the meetings of Locals 44 and 18 became stormy whenever mention of the adjuster was made. In February, Local 44 demanded that he be forced to attend meetings of price committees. In March, 1917, the union became so dissatisfied with his decisions that it appointed a committee to review his settlements. After due investigation, the committee recommended that the Joint Board and the associations hire separate adjusters who, in case of disagreement, were to hire a third one to decide on the case in question.<sup>6</sup>

A second source of continual conflict was the standing charge of the union that the manufacturers were violating the clause in the agreement dealing with contractors. This section, prohibiting manufacturers from sending out work to contractors operating sub-standard shops, neither defined the term "sub-standard" nor specified the means by which this clause would be enforced. As the weakness of this point in the agreement became evident, the union began to demand clarifying interpretations. Bisno demanded that Judge Mack rule that the union be given by the manufacturers the names, addresses, and other information about their contractors. In February, 1916, the Joint Board undertook to improve the conditions in these contractor shops by a series of stoppages. The downtown association thereupon immediately served notice that even though their contractors were not members of the association nor a party to the contract, it regarded this move as a gross violation of the agreement.

In November, 1916, the whole issue came up before Judge Mack in a case involving Schuman Brothers, who had for some time been increasing the proportion of garments sent to outside shops. The employers argued that they were not subject to any limitations in sending out work. The union rested its case on the consequences of such developments. If the Board of Arbitration allowed the contracting system to spread, Bisno argued, the agreement would be rendered virtually useless. The workers in

the outside shops, fearing the power of the manufacturer to give or withhold work, were already working below the scale and were misrepresenting the facts to the union. Wage standards in the inside shops were being increasingly threatened. The problem could be solved only by forcing the manufacturer to assume complete responsibility for his outside workers; the union's suggestion was an arrangement whereby a contractor was to be employed by only one manufacturer, whom he would serve as a "vice-principal" for the workers in his charge. Judge Mack, however, ruling that this point was not covered by the agreement, refused to consider the whole problem.

In addition, the union had a host of other complaints. Discharge cases taxed the energy of the business agents and of the chief clerk. Directed usually against active union members—against shop chairmen and members of price committees—these discharges played havoc with the union machinery in the shop and led the union to demand that the Board of Arbitration define the powers of union shop functionaries and guarantee them some immunity in the performance of their duties. Settlements were often delayed in "gut-pulling" fashion. Unequal distribution of work and wages below the minimum scale continued despite the agreement. The collection of back pay and the prevention of week workers, foremen, and employers from doing all the piece work during the slack season troubled the union officers. One grievance particularly galling to those with a sense of militant justice was the lack of provision for adequate penalties on employers who violated the agreement. Workers guilty of such offenses faced the loss of their jobs, the most severe penalty of industrial life. Employers, in contrast, could be disciplined in no more stringent fashion than by being ousted from their association. For a time, the Joint Board considered demanding some provision enabling the Board of Arbitration to impose fines upon refractory employers, but upon the advice of Schlesinger did not press the matter.<sup>7</sup>

From the point of view of the employers, the outstanding obstacle to the achievement of industrial peace and harmony was the prevalence of stoppages in the shops. In spite of all the efforts of union leaders to convince them of the trustworthiness of the new industrial machinery, workers continued, naturally enough, to depend on stoppages as a customary technique of collective bargaining. The union did its utmost to maintain discipline among its members. Even before the agreement was signed Schlesinger warned the Joint Board that under the new regime "a worker who takes the law into his own hands is more dangerous to the union than a scab." In October, 1915, the union launched an extensive educational campaign among its members and officers. In at least one case that fall, it punished the participants in an unauthorized stoppage with five-dollar fines.

The downtown association was not satisfied with these measures. Refusing to negotiate with the union on any issue pending the settlement of the stoppage question, the association demanded that the union expel all members found guilty of this practice, offering in return to oust from its ranks all firms guilty of instituting lockouts. The union answered by pointing out that stoppages were usually caused by genuine grievances, that they were preceded by violations of the agreement on the part of the employer involved, and that expulsion from membership in the union was a far more severe penalty on the worker than expulsion from the association on the manufacturer. Eventually, a compromise was worked out. The firms in the association were authorized by the union to withhold from workers engaged in unauthorized stoppages five per cent of their wages for a period of twenty-six weeks, the money to be deposited in the joint fund utilized for the enforcement of the agreement. Since there is no evidence this authority was invoked, it may be presumed that the threat was a sufficient deterrent to such activities.<sup>8</sup>

The climax of the friction engendered in the initial days of the collective agreement came in a bitter struggle between the

Joint Board and the Northwest Side Cloak Manufacturers' Association in the fall and winter of 1915. Composed of smaller and less responsible manufacturers than the downtown group, this association regarded the agreement more lightly and their obligations under it less seriously than the more important downtown body. In late October the chief clerk of the union found it necessary to place before its officers a long list of formal charges against a number of its member firms. Instead of investigating the cases cited, Paul Wachtel, its secretary, snapped back by return mail that "we found none of your charges were just." The Joint Board thereupon decided to give up negotiations with the association and took the case to the Board of Arbitration. Judge Mack, a few days later, restored a temporary peace.

A week after this decision, however, the truce was over. Harry Bernstein, a member of the Northwest Side Association, demanded the consent of the union for reorganizing his shop by discharging his ten most active union members. The union offered to arbitrate the issue. Bernstein countered with the threat of discontinuing inside production entirely unless the union yielded. On November 5, Bernstein dismissed all his hundred workers with the notice that he was closing his shop and entering the jobbing business. The union labeled this action another of his tricks, declared it a lockout, and countered by calling the shop on strike. A day or so later, the union also called out the workers of S. H. Albin & Company, another member of the association which, it was discovered, was doing work for Bernstein.

For once the association acted promptly. Claiming that Albin was not doing work for Bernstein and that therefore there was no cause for a strike against him, it notified the union that unless the strike ended within twenty-four hours the agreement would be deemed null and void. The Joint Board answered with evidence that Albin was doing work for the strike-bound Bernstein and was therefore "directly violating the agreement." On

December 3, the association sent a formal ultimatum to Bisno that, unless the strike ended within twenty-four hours, all its member firms would immediately scrap their agreement with the union and operate as open shops. In justification for this step the association now claimed that Bernstein was a *bona fide* jobber rather than a strike-bound firm and that Albin & Company had therefore not violated the agreement. Signatory to the letter were all the officers and the twenty-seven member firms of the association, including Harry Bernstein.

The Joint Board, meeting in special session with Schlesinger to discuss the case, accepted the challenge. It informed the association that it was amazed at both the tone and contents of its ultimatum, pointed out that Bernstein was one of its signatories, and served notice that it intended to hold the association and all its members to the letter of the agreement. Privately, however, the union was not nearly so confident. Schlesinger, worried lest the situation develop into a general lockout which might mean the disruption of the whole organization, lashed Bisno, whom he held responsible, with fiery scorn. "We have the highest regard," he wrote, "for your sense of justice, but we think very little of your business ideals." The approach to the whole problem had been "absolutely wrong." Arbitration was the machinery for justice to the worker and there was no excuse for any strike, even against employers who violated the agreement. Hereafter Bisno was to do nothing without consulting either the General Executive Board or the Joint Board's attorney, Peter Sissman. Fortunately, the Northwest Side Association decided that it was unprepared for open warfare. In a few days, it invited the union to confer on the case and the whole matter was given over to the Board of Arbitration.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, despite all these disputes, grievances, and irritations, the collective agreement soon began to function smoothly, and, according to authorities, with much less friction than its model, the New York "Protocol of Peace." The union had secured its

objectives—recognition and machinery for collective bargaining; the employers, the end of anarchy in the industry. When the heat of conflict cooled off, manufacturers characterized the new procedure as the best possible method of dealing with employees and as “the only method to standardize labor costs in the industry.”<sup>10</sup> Both employers and workers came to recognize the conscientiousness of the adjuster and professed themselves reasonably satisfied with his work. As the new procedures became more widely understood, the manufacturers resorted less to threats of lockouts and the workers gradually discarded the stoppage habit. In an industry which was both highly seasonal and extremely competitive, in which industrial conflict during the busy season often meant loss of customers to the manufacturers and diminished bundles to the workers, the substitution of methods of conciliation and arbitration for strikes and lockouts was an enormous boon to both parties.

As the period of adjustment went on, a spirit of informal give-and-take developed between the officers of the union and the associations which aided the promotion of harmony and good-will. Stanley Kabreener, chief clerk of the Northwest Side association, for example, once invited Bisno to accompany him to an investigation with the remark that “It may be that you may want to fire the Boss, whereas I am here to fire the men.”<sup>11</sup> The union and the associations both worked to keep their membership in line according to the spirit of the agreement. The union, for instance, disciplined its members for unofficial stoppages. The associations, in return, ousted from membership firms violating the contract, leaving the union free to deal with them in any way it chose, and ordered its members to place no obstacles in the way of the unionization of their shops. Both cooperated to check the spread of the new evils which were springing up in the industry, and which were affecting adversely both the profits of the manufacturers and the welfare of the workers.

With the Board of Arbitration neither the union nor the associations found much fault. The troublesome Bernstein case, for example, was finally settled by Judge Mack with a decision that all but one of the workers be reinstated and that they be paid two hundred and fifty dollars in damages. In 1916, Judge Fisher upheld the union position in several important cases. In one, he ruled that in a strike against a contractor working for a jobbing house, the latter was to be deemed a strike-bound firm until such time as it discontinued the services of the offending contractor. In another decision he prohibited a foreman from cutting while cutters were not employed full time. On the other hand, in February, 1916, Judge Mack rendered a decision favorable to the manufacturers, ruling that workers who had been in their employ for six months before the 1915 award could be retained even if they did not join the union. Functioning with substantial justice to both sides, substituting reasoned discussion for heated conflict, this engine for conciliation and arbitration, more than any other factor, both carried the burden of the agreement and was responsible for its successful operation.<sup>12</sup>

In theory, no one embodied better the spirit of the collective agreement than Abraham Bisno, chief clerk of the Chicago Joint Board. Undiscouraged by his none too successful experiences in both New York and Chicago and undismayed by its grave shortcomings which he saw so well, he hailed the new machinery for collective bargaining as "the most formidable revolutionary and democratic instrument that this age has produced." Industrial relations had reached, at long last, the stage of maturity. The "period of guerrilla warfare," that long interval when employers fought it out with sporadic unions in bitter struggle and petty strife, was finally over. And, in its stead, had come a new era of lasting peace and harmony.

In the new regime, according to Bisno, workers and management, in mutual respect born of understanding and tolerance,

sought cooperation and order in industry. Together they established "an industrial law" and organized "an industrial government." The agreement was the "industrial constitution." The associations and the union, meeting in joint session at the conference board, were the branches of the "legislature." The Board of Arbitration was the "judicial organ," which interpreted the law and substituted civil action for armed conflict. The chief clerks, executive boards, and other officials of the associations and the union constituted the executive and administrative branches. And, completing the picture, the whole framework of this government rested upon the active will and consent of the governed—the workers in the industry.

Thus firmly grounded upon law and democracy, the new industrial machinery fulfilled the highest functions of government by promoting the welfare of all its citizens. Workers could be better protected "through the authority of the Board of Trade" than "through the ability of the union to call a strike." Prices were settled fairly and impartially "by any fair man" working intelligently and scientifically. The Board of Arbitration dispensed equal justice to all. The conference table was the scene, not of strife as of yore, but of cooperative efforts in the solution of common problems. Security, justice, and good will were the slogans of the new day.

And thus, according to Bisno, "the hopes of our Sages and Prophets," were being at last realized. The men engaged in this task, whether in the union, the associations, or the impartial machinery, could well pride themselves that they were doing the "most progressive and real social work now being done by men in this age and generation." They were in the van of the march of America "toward industrial peace and industrial democracy." Those in the union, in particular, "were engaged in the most formidable revolutionary work in the interests of the labor movement" of the day. They were the pioneers of a new life for the workers and of a new epoch upon the earth.<sup>13</sup>



raised by employers to counteract the campaign of the union, a Citizens' Committee reported weekly earnings of operators as low as \$5.69.<sup>2</sup> Three years earlier, when union organization efforts had just begun, girls exhibited pay envelopes of \$2 or \$3; in one case a girl received \$2.25 for fifty hours of work.<sup>3</sup> Although sanitary facilities were on a comparatively higher level, some 1,300 women strikers in 1915 found it necessary to demand "that the washrooms shall be open to closing time."<sup>4</sup> Discontent, though not prevented, was held in leash by an iron-clad factory discipline, a galling fining system, tyrannical exactions of foremen and managers, and practices of discrimination and favoritism. Those who objected to ill-treatment or insisted upon higher settlements were answered with the typical "If you don't like the prices, you can quit," or "You'll look better outside of the shop than inside it."<sup>5</sup>

Although abortive efforts toward unionization of these trades were made as far back as 1903, the first real step in organization was taken in the fall of 1912, when the International chartered the Ladies' Waist, Dress, and White Goods Workers' Local 59.<sup>6</sup> As noted previously, this local became one of the affiliated members of the Chicago District Council and received the aid of Locals 44 and 81. Its growth, however, like that of the cloak-makers' locals, was slow and halting. In January, 1913, it had a hundred members. By the end of the year it was virtually non-existent.<sup>7</sup>

By the spring of 1914 the organization of the Chicago dress and white goods workers had become a major undertaking of the International. Apprehensive lest Local 59 disappear altogether, it sent Rose Schneiderman to assume charge of the campaign. Samuel Glassman, in Chicago as head of the western office of the International, devoted a portion of his efforts toward this task. The time, however, was inopportune. The season was very slow. The employers fought the advent of the union ruthlessly. Meetings proved impossible "as those who would be

present . . . would be discharged the next day.”<sup>8</sup> Many of the cloakmakers, moreover, deemed the workers in the dress and white goods trades as scarcely an “organizable” element. They were of all nationalities—Bohemian, Polish, Jewish, and a score of others. They were divided by different tongues and creeds, and meetings had to be addressed by speakers in several languages. Eighty-five percent of them were women and girls who were considered either largely antipathetic to trade unionism or, because they constituted a rapidly shifting labor force, an unstable base upon which to build an organization. As a result, the efforts of the union proved rather discouraging. After almost a year of campaigning Local 59 numbered only one hundred and fifty members.

With this group as a nucleus, however, the character of the drive changed during the next year. Fannia Cohn, experienced as chairlady of the Wrapper, Kimono and House Dress Workers’ Local 41 of New York, became president and organizer of Local 59. Finding the workers aroused by the previous agitation among them, she intensified the campaign. Mary Anderson and other members of the Women’s Trade Union League aided in the work. A rather new and unexpected ally appeared in the Chicago press, which gave the campaign remarkable publicity. Newspapers in search of human interest stories featured the “sad stories of the little workers” in white goods factories. Margery Currey’s column in the *Daily News* carried pathetic little tales of woe—of a fifteen-year old child who found it impossible to manage with \$3.67 a week, of girls who fainted at their work from exhaustion. Sometimes the newspapers even quoted Fannia Cohn’s arguments for collective bargaining, among them that employers would find workers, under a regime of shorter hours and higher wages, far more efficient than the overworked, underpaid, and undernourished girls in their shops.<sup>9</sup>

In August, 1915, while the cloakmakers were preparing for a general strike, the Waist and Dress Makers’ Local won a spectac-

ular victory. On August 16, the Herzog Garment Company, a large firm engaged in the production of all sorts of women's wear "from negligees to gloves," discharged several workers for attendance at an organization meeting of the Glove Workers' Union Local 18. The two hundred and fifty glove workers thereupon walked out on strike. A committee presented their grievances to Herzog, who promised to investigate their claims provided they returned to work immediately.

So far only the glove workers had been involved in the strike; some seven hundred more remained at their tables. At half past seven the next morning, however, when the workers were coming to their jobs, police in two patrol wagons bore down upon them. In their haste and confusion the police arrested not only some pickets but also several non-strikers, among them Fannia Cohn. Although most of them were released on bail the same day, the incident produced a lasting impression throughout the shop. On the fifth day of the strike all the other workers joined the glove workers. The strike had ceased to be a craft stoppage; it had become a shop revolt.

The public, usually apathetic, was aroused to an amazing degree. The general labor movement rushed to the support of the strikers. Representatives of Local 59, the Chicago Joint Board, the International Glove Workers' Union, the Chicago Federation of Labor, and the Women's Trade Union League united to form a general strike committee which effectively marshalled the strength of the workers. The Joint Board immediately donated \$500 and promised more later. Other unions, civic bodies, and individuals sent in funds from all directions until the strike committee announced that it could not possibly use any more. The press gave the workers' cause a tremendous amount of publicity. Newspapers vied with each other in reporting and picturing the incidents of the strike. They related how the employers callously locked up the lavatories an hour or more before the factory closed for the day. They told the story

of the little fifteen-year old picket, Nellie Alitto, who escaped arrest by diving between the boots of a bowlegged policeman. They graphically reported the explosive arrival of "Mother" Jones, who told the workers that "It's an honor to go to jail when your cause is just." As the conflict went on, they multiplied the number of strikers to 5,000 and 8,000 and soon printed rumors of a projected sympathy strike of 80,000 clothing workers. As a result of the spectacular support given the strikers, the firm soon agreed to meet with the conference committee. On Sunday, August 22, after a session of several hours, Nathan Herzog accepted the demands of the workers.<sup>10</sup>

The agreement won after this short strike was the first victory of the dress and white goods workers of Chicago. The union was recognized. A price committee was established. The hours of work were cut to fifty a week, with a half holiday on Saturday. All who earned under \$8.50 a week were granted a ten per cent raise. All fines and charges were outlawed. And, finally, both parties agreed to set up and abide by the decisions of a board of arbitration. The terms of the contract had to be explained to the workers in three languages—in English, Polish, and Yiddish—but they were ratified by an overwhelming vote. The jubilant strikers then marched from the meeting hall to the factory in triumphal procession—with American flags and a ten-piece union band. Finding upon their arrival that the factory was also decorated with flags and streamers, they staged a celebration on the sidewalk until the management decided to send them all home for a half holiday.<sup>11</sup>

The Herzog victory generated a new enthusiasm for unionism throughout the trade. During the next month the local staged another important strike at the firm of Steinberg & Sopkin Brothers. The occasion was the discharge of three union men. All the one hundred and fifty workers immediately walked out. In five days they were back under an agreement similar to that of the Herzog workers. The "clothing making barons," it was

rumored, "are growing uneasy. They are cussing Nathan Herzog for giving in . . ." Fannia Cohn was acclaimed as "one of labor's shrewdest diplomats" and was reported to have gigantic plans for organization of the entire industry.<sup>12</sup>

As a consequence of these two victories, Local 59 grew rapidly and soon numbered over a thousand members. The organization was now divided into two, Local 59 retaining jurisdiction over the workers in waists and dresses and a new Local 60 being formed for the white goods and kimono workers. In January, 1916, the union won \$500 in back pay for Herzog's workers.<sup>13</sup> In February, Local 60 waged a successful defensive strike against the firm of Steinberg and Sopkin, which posted open shop signs on the walls and discharged several active union members. In May, Local 59, after a short strike, won an agreement for the three hundred workers of the National Dress Company, by which they received the preferential union shop, a ten percent increase, and the establishment of a price committee and a shop steward.<sup>14</sup>

Thereafter, however, Locals 59 and 60 made little headway. Their membership was concentrated in three large shops. In the others, the workers remained unorganized and the manufacturers unimpressed. When, later in the year, the Herzog factory was taken over by Sears and Roebuck, which refused to continue relations with the union, both locals suffered a body blow. Their prestige and their membership declined rapidly. By the summer they were in such difficulties that they could not continue functioning without financial and organizational aid from the Joint Board.<sup>15</sup>

By that time it was quite clear, as Chicago union leaders had repeatedly pointed out to the International, that the tactics hitherto employed by the two locals were unsuited for the effective organization of the Chicago dress industry. Shop revolts, however dramatic, meant only limited and temporary victories. Only a general strike campaign, they insisted, similar in scope

to the drive of 1915 in the cloak trade, could accomplish this larger objective. The International could do nothing, of course, while it was plunged in the bitter fourteen-week lockout in the New York cloak trade. However, when this struggle was over, the convention of 1916 went on record in favor of an immediate organization drive in the Chicago dress industry.<sup>16</sup>

In November, Solomon Seidman, general organizer of the International, came to Chicago to assume charge of the campaign. The Joint Board placed an organization committee at his disposal. Locals 59 and 60 were merged into the newly chartered Local 100. The drive was conducted with vigor and enthusiasm. The workers were shown the benefits of organization by a comparison of their wages with those of the organized dressmakers in the East. They were informed that the most favorable time to win collective bargaining was while the war boom was still on and seasons were busy. They were warned that the cessation of the World War would mean a huge tide of immigrant labor and the beating down of wages. At the same time, the union continually pointed out to the employers that collective bargaining, far from damaging their firms, stabilized the industry both by standardizing the price of labor and by promoting industrial peace.

In January, 1917, the campaign had advanced to a stage where the union felt justified in staging a dress rehearsal for the projected general strike. When the firm of Ribback and Company discharged six girls for joining the union, Local 100 called a shop strike. All the hundred and fifty workers marched out in a body. In a few days they marched back victoriously, with parade, music, and a ten percent raise, to a union shop.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, the General Executive Board authorized Schlesinger to set the date for the general strike at his discretion. In the opinion of many, including organizer Seidman, this action was largely of a precautionary nature. Generally, union leaders were hopeful, and in some cases even certain, that the general

strike would never be called. The employers were not unduly alarmed by the prospects of the organization of the industry. The seasons, due to the war boom, were extraordinarily busy. Some manufacturers were even venturing the opinion that wages ought to be raised to offset the rapidly climbing cost of living.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, and with expectations of inaugurating collective bargaining in the Chicago dress industry without serious strife, the union judged the time ripe for forcing the issue.

On February 1, an enthusiastic mass meeting was held at the Empire Theater. Benjamin Schlesinger, John Fitzpatrick, Agnes Nestor, Peter Sissman, and speakers in Polish and German addressed the workers. By unanimous vote the assembled dress-makers approved the program of the union and authorized their leaders to proceed at full speed with the negotiations. The next day, the union approached the hundred and seventy manufacturers with letters stating the union position and expressing the hope "that you will meet us generously in our efforts to bring about a lasting understanding between employers and employees in the industry, which will guarantee to both sides a long and uninterrupted period of prosperity and industrial peace."<sup>19</sup>

The demands of the union were rather mild. The major one was recognition of the union. Wage demands included minimum scales ranging from thirteen to twenty dollars for cutters, increases of fifteen percent for the other crafts, and overtime rates of time and a half. The work was to be standardized at forty-nine hours, with a half holiday on Saturday. The union further asked that its members be given preference in employment, that they enjoy equal division of work in the slack seasons, and that they be protected from arbitrary discharge after a two-week trial period. The tone of the letters was conciliatory and employers were requested to signify their willingness to enter into negotiations on or before February 13.<sup>20</sup>

The union, of course, had no serious hope that all its demands

would be met, but it did expect counter proposals from the manufacturers. It was therefore disappointed by the response to its offer. Of the hundred and seventy firms addressed, only forty-three expressed a willingness to negotiate. About sixty of the larger manufacturers, united in the Dress and Waist Manufacturers' Association, decided to ignore the letters. A considerable number of independent shops followed their example. Prospects for a peaceful settlement faded still more when these firms instituted a program of reprisals against their union workers.

With the projected general strike becoming more of a certainty, the union hastened its preparations for it. On February 10, the Joint Board undertook the leadership of the strike, ordered its officers and active members to devote all their energies to it for the duration of the conflict, and decided to raise a special strike fund by an assessment upon its membership. Everything was in readiness for a general walkout on February 13. Just before the strike call was issued, two judges, Henry Horner and Harry M. Fisher, offered their services as mediators. The union, hoping that this eleventh-hour attempt at peace might succeed, accordingly postponed the general strike for two days.

At ten o'clock on the morning of Monday, February 15, after all attempts to induce the manufacturers' association to negotiate had failed, the general strike of the Chicago dressmakers was officially inaugurated. Immediately Market Street, filled with thousands of strikers, policemen, employers, and observers, became "a chaotic . . . maelstrom" of humanity.<sup>21</sup> By nightfall about half the workers in the dress, waist, and white goods industry were out. The next day more joined the strike, and the shops were practically emptied. Enthusiasm among the strikers was high, for this was their first great struggle for better working conditions. The union, announcing that eighty per cent of the workers were out, proclaimed its determination to continue

the strike until collective bargaining was won. The employers in turn asserted that less than ten percent had deserted their jobs, charged the union with fomenting unrest and violence, and called upon the police and the courts to break the strike.

The struggle thus begun soon developed into one of the major industrial wars in Chicago labor history. It was accompanied by all the familiar phenomena of such disputes, by wholesale arrests, by injunctions and contempt cases, by citizens' committees, and by arbitration efforts. To the public, it was a colorful battle of 2,000 workers for collective bargaining. To the Chicago dressmakers, it was the first of their three dramatic revolts for recognition of their union. To the International it was "as living an illustration of the class struggle as was ever encountered in any fight for a better living by workers in our women's garment trades."<sup>22</sup>

From the beginning, the employers' battle was fought, not so much by themselves, as by the allegedly impartial agencies of the law—the police and the courts. The International, in its bitterness, accused the police of a "series of cold-blooded violations of elementary human rights," of operating "with brutality in open daylight and in utter disregard of public opinion," of serving the employers as a strike breaking agency without even "the usual hackneyed excuse of prevention of disorders or destruction of property."<sup>23</sup> Years later, a careful student of policing methods in Chicago labor disputes, writing with academic impartiality, seconded this condemnation. The police department was then, according to contemporary investigations, "in an advanced stage of demoralization and corruption," rotten to the core, wretchedly inefficient in performance of its most simple duties, allowing "criminals of all kinds to prey on the public with little fear of police interference."<sup>24</sup> But, in this strike of the dressmakers, the zeal of the police was remarkable. Two hundred and fifty of them—or one for approximately every eight strikers—were assigned to the strike detail. On the very first day they arrested

sixteen men and women on charges of disorderly conduct. On the second day they inaugurated an arbitrary rule allowing only eight pickets to a block—a fantastically small number to have any effect in the compact dress shop areas. When, on the third day of the strike, the Circuit Court began to prohibit all picketing, the police constituted themselves the enforcers of the injunctions and literally ran wild in their enthusiasm. Thus, in a strike involving but 2,000 workers and in spite of the fact that there was relatively little violence or disturbance, the police made some 1,200 arrests. Of all these, only three convictions were ever secured; all the other cases were dismissed by the courts either during or after the strike.<sup>25</sup>

Even more damaging to the success of the workers was the weapon of the injunction, used as rarely before in Illinois labor disputes. Three groups of manufacturers obtained injunctions which prohibited the workers from carrying on any strike activities against the fifty-eight complainant firms. They were directed against the International, the locals involved, the organizers, officers, and members of the union, the American Federation of Labor, the Chicago Federation of Labor, the Women's Trade Union League, and almost every other organization or person in any way connected with the conduct of the strike. All these "and the unknown members" of the organizations listed, were ordered to desist and refrain from:

1. In any way interfering with, hindering, obstructing, or stopping the business of the complainants.
2. Picketing or maintaining any picket or pickets at or near the premises of the complainants, respectively, or along the routes followed by the employees of the complainants.
3. Watching or spying upon the complainants' place of business.
4. Interfering with employers in carrying on business as usual.
5. Assaulting or intimidating employees.
6. Attempting to induce employees of complainants to refuse to do their work.

7. Instituting any boycott against complainants, or sending circulars to their customers.
8. Doing anything which subjects any of the complainants' employees to hatred, criticism, censure, scorn, disgrace or annoyance.<sup>26</sup>

Injunctions of such sweeping nature obviously aimed primarily, not at maintenance of peace and order, but rather at breaking the backbone of the strike by intimidating the workers and by crippling the machinery of the union. The sole basis for their issuance was some "voluntary statements," presented to the court by the manufacturers. These affidavits, "suspiciously similar in wording," alleged alike that the signatories were satisfied with their high wages and excellent conditions of employment, that they refused to join the union, and that, in consequence, their lives were endangered by the strikers and pickets. The nature of this danger was usually specified as assault with the deadly word "scab" or a threat of "getting them." The court, however, deemed these "voluntary statements" sufficient ground for issuing injunctions which practically forbade the dressmakers to conduct the strike at all.<sup>27</sup> Employers immediately "busied themselves in collecting evidence against the strikers."<sup>28</sup> On February 22, their attorneys presented petitions asking citations for contempt against two hundred people, including Seidman, Glassman, and other leaders of the strike. Hearings began on March 5, and ten days later, on March 15, six people were given sentences ranging from ten to seventy-five days imprisonment. Three of these sentences—Seidman's for seventy-five days, Steve Sumner's for seventy, and Lizzie Wexler's for thirty—were on charges of inciting others to picket; two others were punished for direct picketing; and one, for "assaulting" a non-union worker by "calling her insulting names." Subsequently, the court punished seven others for similar offenses, one of the sentences being imprisonment for six months and a fine of one hundred dollars. So pronounced was the partiality of the court, so great its severity toward the union leaders, and so drastic the

sentences, that the Appellate Court of Illinois later reversed nine of the cases.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, the injunctions served their purpose. Some two hundred and twenty-five other workers, including President Schlesinger, were cited for contempt, although they were never tried. The threat of summary judgment hung over the heads of all the strikers. Their leaders were being severely punished; their strike machinery disrupted. The open alliance between the employers, the courts, and the police confused and terrified them. In the end, their strike was broken, not by the employers, but by the judges and the police, who rigorously and savagely enforced their own arbitrary court-law and police-law which they concocted for the occasion.

A third somewhat more informal "agency of the people," the metropolitan press, also entered the lists on the side of the employers. In the Herzog strike, these newspapers had been actively promoting public sympathy for the "little workers" in the dress and white goods industry. In the much more important general strike, although the stories of the girls were just as pathetic and their struggle far more colorful, the Chicago press was their snarling enemy. It stressed the arrests and the contempt citations; editorialized and reported on lawlessness and viciousness of strikers; and headlined the sensational aspects of the struggle. On February 16, for example, Chicago headlines read "Strikers with Knives Make Attack," "Blood Flows as Garment Strike Warms," or "Man Knifed in Strike Fight." The incident that followed described a fight inside a shop. No coherent story of what happened was ever told, nor were any formal charges ever placed against any person. The headlines, however, both by inference and by association, saddled the violence which occurred upon the shoulders of the strikers.<sup>30</sup>

A more objective approach was made by various Chicago citizens and organizations who labored to investigate the causes of the struggle and to terminate it by arbitration. The union

had been suggesting a peaceful settlement from the beginning. On February 13, the date of the scheduled walkout, the union had postponed the strike in order to enable Judges Fisher and Horner to urge the employers to negotiate or arbitrate. Twice during the hearings at the Superior Court, Peter Sissman, counsel for the union, offered to submit the whole controversy to arbitration before Judge Baldwin. The judge, however, decided that the strikers had no grievances against the employers because "There is no longer any relation of employer and employee existing,"<sup>31</sup> and that he was interested only in contempt cases, and not in extraneous matters like wages and hours. In the meantime, employers continued to claim publicly that the conditions in their shops were satisfactory and that their books were open for inspection by impartial investigators.

On February 22, the public entered the picture to take advantage of these opportunities for investigation. On that date, the Committee on Labor of the Chicago Church Federation, representing six hundred Protestant churches of the city, met in joint session with the Women's Church Federation and invited each side to present its case. The workers, with Schlesinger, Seidman, Bisno, and Agnes Nestor stating their position, were fully represented. Only one attorney for a group of firms, however, came to present the case for the employers. Some time later, when members of the Church Federation sent letters to all employers asking for a joint meeting, two employers, who were unaffected by the strike were the only ones who responded.

On February 26, a Citizens' Committee was organized. Composed of such eminent Chicagoans as Professor H. A. Millis, Edith Abbot, Amy Walker Field, and F. S. Deibler, it offered each side impartial investigation and arbitration. Finding that the claims and position of the union and the manufacturers involved not only differences of principle but also "irreconcilable statements of fact," it began a survey of a number of typical shops. The results were published in its pamphlet, *The Issues*

*in the Present Garment Workers' Strike*, which substantially upheld the position of the strikers. It found operators whose average wages through the year were no more than \$5.69 a week; confirmed "the contention of the employees that wages vary for the same class of workers" from shop to shop; described the demands of the union as reasonable; and approved the willingness of the union to submit the dispute to conciliation or arbitration. It decided moreover that "the chief issue in the present strike is whether there shall be collective bargaining" and bluntly warned the employers that "until a settlement is reached mutually satisfactory to employers and employees, strikes with loss and disturbance may be expected to recur."<sup>32</sup> Apart from clarifying the issue, however, the committee accomplished nothing. Another attempt at arbitration by Rowland B. Mahany of the United States Department of Labor also failed.

The failure of these efforts at arbitration and conciliation, added to the intensification of the drive against the workers through the courts and the police, daily made their cause more hopeless. The workers did not lose courage. When citations for contempt and arrests decimated the ranks of the dressmakers on the picket line, the cloakmakers hastened to take their places. One day, for example, Glassman called upon all cloakmakers in the Northwest Side shops to meet him at four in the morning for picket duty, and not a man failed to be present. The Chicago Federation of Labor, the Women's Trade Union League, and the rest of the Chicago labor movement warmly supported the strikers to the end.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, as the days and weeks went by, it was becoming increasingly evident that the general strike was being lost. Only twelve more firms had been added to the original forty-three who had signed union agreements. Picketing became virtually impossible and eventually almost ceased altogether. Scabs came in increasing numbers to take the places of many of the strikers. Moreover, with the season almost over, a continuation of the fight was practically useless.

On April 22, therefore, the union officially declared the strike at an end.

The first great revolt of the Chicago dress and white goods workers thus terminated in defeat. Many of the strikers were disappointed and shocked when the union announced its decision. Some of the girls shed bitter tears, and others fainted. But the union had decided that the cost of the strike in human suffering had been enough. It had been a bitter struggle of ten weeks which had resulted in 1,200 arrests, 240 contempt citations, and sixteen sentences. Its financial cost to the union had been over sixty thousand dollars. Its cost was great also in the enormous amount of time and energy it consumed, in the blacklisting of the most active union members and, most of all, in the destruction of the splendid organization built up by the workers at the beginning of 1917. The manufacturers, though they had lost a full season, consoled themselves with the boast that the dress industry could never be organized. The union, however, announced its determination to strike again, and to be better prepared the next time.<sup>34</sup>

## *The Winning of Week Work*

WHILE THE DRESSMAKERS were still preparing for their great revolt, the Chicago cloakmakers, despite their collective agreement, were facing formidable problems of their own. The cost of living mounted rapidly, particularly with America's entrance into the World War, and steadily cut into their wage gains of 1915. Several large firms still remained open shops. New problems, not covered by the agreement, developed in the industry. In addition, the Chicago Joint Board still faced a major test of strength at the date of the expiration of the 1915 award. Until the collective agreement was renewed, with modifications necessitated by the developments of the past two years, industrial relations in the Chicago cloak industry could not be said to have reached the stage of permanent cooperation and peace.

Among the primary items of concern to the union was the whole problem of reorganizations, on which the agreement of 1915 was found entirely unsatisfactory. In 1916, the reorganizations multiplied until they reached the proportions of an epidemic. The manufacturers' associations, like the union, clearly saw their menace to the stabilization of the cloak trade; nevertheless, in several cases during the year, they stood by their member firms and fought the union tooth and nail on this issue. In a typical case, the firm of Schiff, Weinstock and Levy reor-

ganized under the name of Schiff, Weinstock and Kaufman, discharged all its employees with the exception of a few workers on samples and specials, and sent out all its work to contractors. The union naturally remonstrated against this wholesale dismissal of workers. The downtown association, taking the position that reorganizations were not prohibited by the agreement, insisted that the firm was a new and different concern which could not be bound by the obligations of the old one. The Joint Board was alarmed at this interpretation. President Schlesinger hastened to Chicago to confer with local leaders on methods of preventing evasion of the agreement in this fashion. No settlement could be reached, however, and the union was forced to wait until the negotiations for the renewal of the agreement in 1917.<sup>1</sup>

Another major plague of the cloak industry during this period was the "corporation" or social shop. Operated as cooperatives in which the partners were both owners and workers, these corporation shops constituted a disorganizing factor in the industry from the point of view of both the manufacturers and the union. Stanley Kabreener, chief clerk of the Northwest Side Association, complained to Bisno that "they are springing up like mushrooms and are competitors to the members of this association."<sup>2</sup> The burden of combatting their further spread fell largely upon the shoulders of the union. Manufacturers continued to send garments into corporation shops; and the efforts of the Joint Board to outlaw them, notably in prohibiting union members from working in them, were almost nullified.

In addition to the settlement of these two troublesome problems the Joint Board demanded agreement on others necessitated by new conditions. It asked for a forty-eight hour week and for wage increases sufficient to offset the increasing cost of living. It demanded improvements in sanitary conditions, among them the introduction of electric irons for the pressers. It also suggested various changes in the machinery of arbitration and

adjustment, particularly the addition of a penalty clause applicable to transgressing employers,

For almost three months the manufacturers postponed negotiations. Expressing themselves as averse to reopening the discussion on the entire scope of industrial relations, they declared themselves unwilling to modify the agreement except by the addition of a penalty clause applicable to both parties. However, on July 1, 1917, the date of the expiration of the agreement, they again agreed to submit the demands of the union to arbitration. Once again, as in 1915, the Board of Arbitration held hearings. On August 21, 1917, it again rendered a decision which served for a year as the collective agreement for the Chicago cloak industry.

The supplemental award of the Board of Arbitration was essentially a compromise. Hours of work were reduced to forty-nine a week. Wages were increased by an average of ten per cent, with the provision that they be retroactive to July 1. The employers were ordered to furnish business agents with the names and addresses of all contractors, sub-contractors, and subsidiary shops and persons with whom they dealt in any way, so that the union could serve notice upon a manufacturer to withdraw his work from any shop below the standard. If the manufacturer failed to comply, he was liable to the union for all work done there after notice was given and the charge filed. Reorganizations were allowed only upon thirty days' notice. The questions of penalizing employers and of sanitary improvements were reserved for further investigation.<sup>3</sup>

The terms of this contract were further clarified by several later decisions of the Board of Arbitration. In September, 1917, Judge Mack settled the controversy over back pay by ordering resettlement of all prices in accordance with the new minimum scales. In June, 1918, Judge Fisher ruled that firms at odds with the union, though having the right to join one of the associations at any time, could not escape their liability in any way by

such action. A more lengthy dispute arose in connection with the problem of electric irons. In April, 1918, after a lengthy investigation of the subject, Judge Mack ruled that electric irons be installed by July 1 in all shops where four or more irons were used. In November, Judge Mack, to whom the case was again brought, ordered immediate compliance with his decision. In May, 1919, the downtown association finally advised its members to install such irons for the next season. Eventually the larger shops, particularly those in which the pressers were interested, adopted the innovation. In many of the smaller shops, however, particularly where older pressers feared the change for various reasons, the time-honored gas irons were retained.<sup>4</sup>

During the period from 1917 to 1918, in contrast to the bickering of previous years, the associations and the union became involved in only one major dispute. That was the case of the troublesome Harry Bernstein, who in April, 1918, informed his finishers that he would settle prices with them only upon an individual basis. The union thereupon filed charges against him with the Northwest Side Association, which ordered the adjuster to cooperate with the business agent in the settlement of prices at this shop. Bernstein ordered both out of his premises. As the dispute continued, Bernstein became daily more abusive. The union charged that he profanely insulted his female employees, that he threatened his pressers "with a black-jack," and that he violated every "ordinary degree of courtesy prevailing among civilized men in business and social intercourse." The association, finally of the opinion that "harmony and discipline cannot be maintained [in that shop] so long as he personally shall transact business with his employees," ordered Bernstein to leave all such transactions in the hands of his manager, and when he refused, ousted him from membership. Bernstein thereupon expressed his willingness to reform. In October he deposited five hundred dollars with the union in guarantee of his

good conduct in the future. The next month he paid a thousand more for reinstatement into the association.<sup>5</sup>

With this exception, the machinery for collective bargaining now worked with smoothness and led to the harmonious relationship for which both sides had hoped during the past years.<sup>6</sup> On July 1, 1918, the agreement was again renewed for a year, this time by negotiation. Cutters gained an increase of \$4 a week; other week workers, \$2.50; operators, an addition of ten cents per basic hourly scale; and practically all other workers, five cents more. Edge basters and fur sewers, unprovided for in previous agreements, won a minimum scale of \$17 in August, 1918, and received increases in February, 1919.

Meanwhile, the Joint Board had been steadily battering away at the few large firms which still remained in operation as open shops. At first, in the hope that union conditions could be retained in these shops even without agreements, the union had allowed things to drift. But it soon realized its error. In the spring of 1916 it began a drive against the open shops. Seigel and Bros. was brought into line that summer and most of the others within the next year.

Among the most troublesome of these shops to the union was the Armac Cloak and Suit Company, owned by Sears Roebuck and Company. Bisno, beguiled perhaps by the reputation of Julius Rosenwald as a philanthropist, attempted a unique personal approach. Aided by Judge Mack, a personal friend of Rosenwald, Bisno approached the millionaire on the basis of his "known interest in the welfare of working people," offered to demonstrate that the firm could have its garments produced just as cheaply under union standards as in open shops, and expressed the willingness of the union to establish a factory, if necessary, for his contracting work. In a few months, however, Bisno sadly concluded that employers, whether philanthropic or otherwise, were equally hostile to unions.<sup>7</sup>

Organization work at the Armac Company then proceeded

according to more normal methods. By July, 1918, all the workers had signed up as members of the union. For some time, many of them were rather unamenable to union discipline, insisting, for example, that the Joint Board desist from negotiations with the management concerning a contract. In a few months, however, they learned the real meaning of collective bargaining. The cutters in the shop, upon demanding an increase of fifteen per cent, were answered by the dismissal of all the members of their price committee. All the week workers thereupon went out in a stoppage. Manager McDonald and the business agent, Glassman, agreed to submit the dispute to arbitration before Judge Fisher, who ruled that the cutters receive an increase of ten percent and that minimum scales be established for all crafts.

This decision intensified rather than diminished the conflict. The management soon broke off negotiations on the proposed minimum scales and laid off half of the employees. The workers, now thoroughly aroused, loudly demanded that the union declare the shop on strike. Eventually, the whole dispute was terminated peacefully. On December 19, 1918, the Armac Company signed a two-year contract and became a union shop.<sup>8</sup>

The last of the large firms in the cloak trade, Palmer and Company, was not organized until the general strike of 1919. The Joint Board, as noted previously, was particularly anxious to end its open shop career, but was unable to make any appreciable headway for years. So certain was the management that its workers could not be organized that Palmer himself once humored Glassman by displaying a notice for a union meeting inside the factory. To the surprise of the firm and the gratification of the Joint Board, all the workers came to the meeting, and, a few days later, Palmer and Company signed a union agreement.<sup>9</sup>

In the spring of 1919, when the expiration of the 1918 agreement was approaching, the Chicago Joint Board submitted to the manufacturers another list of demands. Prominent among

them were the forty-four hour week, various limitations on overtime, the establishment of a joint sanitary commission, raises for all crafts, and limitation of the trial work period to one week. More important than any of these, however, was the demand for inauguration of week work for all workers in the cloak industry. To the Chicago union, as well as to the rest of the International, this plank was nothing less than revolutionary. Since the beginning of the cloak industry, the operators, pressers, and finishers had been paid according to the number of garments they produced. Accordingly, when week work was suggested as part of a comprehensive program for the stabilization of the industry, not only the employers, but many workers rose in arms against an innovation so subversive of traditional customs. It was only after long and bitter debate that the union decided upon the change as one of its demands in 1919.

Week work versus piece work was no new issue among the Chicago cloakmakers. As far back as 1910 this question had been the subject of heated arguments, with the pressers ranged on the side of week work and the operators apprehensive lest this demand incur the displeasure of the employers toward all cloakmakers. Subsequently, at various times, individual voices were raised in favor of week work. President Schlesinger, when in Chicago, urged it upon occasion. In 1917, when the question became an important issue in the International, Local 18 espoused the cause for its membership. The other locals remained unresponsive. In May, 1918, the proposal was voted down at a mass meeting of all cloak workers by a vote of three to one.

During the next year, however, the agitation for week work increased. Cloakmakers were again becoming exasperated with the adjuster, and many were beginning to think that the whole system of settling prices was unsatisfactory. The arguments of the proponents of week work now seemed more imposing. The abolition of piece work, they claimed, would mean the end of continual haggling over prices and of all the troubles resulting

therefrom. The hurrying and scurrying of workers, their poor health resulting from labor to the point of exhaustion, and their rivalries and jealousies in the shop would alike disappear. Prices in all shops would be equalized, or at least the range of differences would be greatly reduced. The season would be prolonged and workers would earn a better livelihood. The union, spared many difficulties connected with piece work, would be able to devote more time to organization problems. To this aggregation of economic and humanitarian appeals the opponents of week work could only reply with negative arguments. Week work, said they, would solve none of the basic problems of the industry, but would rather create new and more formidable ones. Many of them, moreover, were earning good wages, far better wages than they could possibly obtain under the more levelling new system. Irrespective of the merits of the case, the proponents of week work made the stronger appeal, particularly since the International exerted its full power in favor of the change.<sup>10</sup>

When the New York cloakmakers won their agreement of 1919, with week work as its chief feature, the pressure on Chicago from the International redoubled. Schlesinger immediately informed the Joint Board that the International was determined to establish the new system throughout the country. The Chicago cloakmakers, having to decide quickly one way or the other, were plunged into bitter debate. Many in Local 5, in particular, opposed it tooth and nail and remained irreconcilable enemies of the innovation. The special Joint Board session of June 5, called to meet with President Schlesinger on this issue, threshed out the question from every angle and could agree on nothing more than holding a referendum. On June 14, the cloakmakers met to hear the final arguments of each side. And by a vote of 852 to 308 they decided to demand week work as one of the terms of the new agreement.<sup>11</sup>

The decision having once been made, the union refused to budge from its position. The manufacturers strenuously opposed

the change and broke off all negotiations. On July 2, 1919, accordingly, the cloakmakers staged a general strike. At the zero hour, ten o'clock in the morning, every shop in the local cloak industry was emptied and every worker on his way to the picket line or the strike halls. So successful was the shutdown of the industry that the manufacturers yielded almost immediately. Within twenty-four hours the general strike was over, and the cloakmakers had won a complete victory.

The new two-year agreement provided that "all workers shall work by the week," which was henceforth to consist of forty-four hours. Minimum wage scales of all crafts were raised: cutters to \$40; operators to \$44; pressers to \$40; and finishers to \$32. The adjustment from piece work to week work scales was to be made at once, with the efficiency of the worker and his earnings during the previous season as the basis for his new scale. All workers in the industry were to be paid for six and a half legal holidays during the year. The arbitration and conciliation machinery was retained, but a new procedure was established. Cases on which the association and the union failed to agree were to be referred to an umpire whose decision was final and binding. Discharge cases were to be given precedence and decided within forty-eight hours. The union was granted a twenty-four hour period in which to terminate stoppages. Indeed, so great was the victory that Schlesinger, according to the staid minutes of the Joint Board, when thanked for his role in its achievement, was unable to speak because of tears.<sup>12</sup>

Symbolic of all the gains of the workers by this agreement, to them and to the employers, was the change from piece to week work. The leaders of the union pronounced it a revolutionary innovation, the greatest step yet taken by workers toward securing a voice in the management of industry. Rigorous and energetic enforcement naturally followed this attitude. Every member who could be drafted into service was placed on one of the numerous committees which went from shop to shop to

aid in readjusting prices. Employers were educated to their new responsibilities. They now had to pay their employees for time lost when machinery broke down and to pay all crafts for legal holidays. Nor did the union neglect to invoke its discipline among its own members. In one shop, for example, where workers were inclined to penalize those among them who were thought too fast, the shop chairman was immediately hailed before the Joint Board and instructed in the duties of an intelligent trade unionist. The union had announced itself in the agreement as believing in "a fair day's labor for a fair day's pay." It intended to hold both the employers and its own members to this principle.

On the other hand, individual employers, never friendly to the change, began almost at once the practice of laying all the ills and evils of the industry at the door of the new system. This attack, never ceasing for the entire duration of week work, led at times to indirect and even to open industrial war. Heralding this attitude was a vicious article by Stanley Kabreener, manager of the Northwest Side Cloak Manufacturers' Association. The cloakmakers, Kabreener, charged, "are soldiering on the job. Production is being stifled by the producers. Manufacturers are being defrauded . . ." The workers in the industry, stigmatized as immigrants "from the slums of Russia," "emanating from countries steeped in bolshevism," were radicals forcing the employers "to endure the tyranny of a trade union that is openly opposed to our established order of government." Their leaders and agitators were "openly preaching bolshevism," were fomenting industrial unrest, were defying all law and governments, and were forcing the manufacturers to "submit to the vilest tyranny."

Descending to more detailed charges, Kabreener accused the workers of many practices which demonstrated "their complete abandon." They attempted "to force a closed shop upon us." They refused work at "boycotted shops." They were enter-

ing into a "secret compact" and into "clandestine agreements" to curtail production. They were penalizing anyone who produced more than "the bell-wether in the shop," whom Kabreener specified as "usually the lamest duck in the place." "So severe has the menace of soldiering on the job become that the further existence of the industry is in great peril."

In concluding this savage attack upon the workers and the union, Kabreener called for a program of immediate action: a standard of production had to be imposed at once either by the employers or by legislative organs of the government. "Decent educated American citizens" had to be attracted to the trade and substituted for the "unappreciative, ignorant foreigner." The associations of manufacturers had to establish trade schools or agitate for the public schools to "educate the youth of the nation for employment in the trades." The barriers to immigration had to be raised at once so that the distress of the manufacturers would be alleviated. "As loyal and patriotic American citizens we should not suffer this economic rebellion to sully and stain the glory of the Stars and Stripes."<sup>13</sup>

Only momentarily embarrassed by such attacks, which it recognized as part of the employers' offensive beginning with the Red Scare of 1919, the union pressed on to new victories. In December, 1919, the Joint Board, using as its argument the increasing cost of living, which had mounted almost fifteen per cent since June, confronted the manufacturers with demands for a general increase. When in January, 1920, the report of the Governor's Commission on the New York cloak industry was made public,\* the union demanded identical scales for Chicago. A series of conferences, featured by skirmishes on several points, were held later in the month. The employers' committee agreed to retroactive increases ranging from twelve to fifteen per cent and to the establishment of a Joint Sanitary Commission. Ques-

\*Governor Alfred E. Smith's arbitration commission, which awarded the New York cloakmakers a 15 per cent increase.

tions of soldiering on the job, of limitations on contracting, and of the classification of edge basters as finishers were postponed for later consideration. While the Joint Board immediately approved the agreement reached in these conferences, the manufacturers' associations saw fit to repudiate the action of their committee. They informed the Joint Board that its demands could be granted only upon the conditions that it grant immediate concessions on a "standard of production," that it relax its limitations on apprentices, and that it forego all claims to back pay. The union, however, labelling this ultimatum as an attempt to provoke strife in the industry with the hope of reestablishing piece work, bluntly informed the employers that it was prepared for a general strike at a moment's notice. The following day the associations withdrew their demands and approved the terms reached by their first conference committee.<sup>14</sup>

The agreement of February, 1920, was the high tide in the period of expansion inaugurated by the creation of the Joint Board and the winning of the first collective agreement. In the six years since 1914, the cloakmakers had accomplished much. Hours had been cut to forty-four a week. Wages had been raised by every successive agreement. Minimum scales were now \$50 a week for operators and \$45.50 for cutters and pressers; and the earnings of most workers were of course above these wage rates. In addition, the traditional system of piece work had given way to the more humane week work. Prosperity reigned throughout the industry; in January, 1920, the business agents reported labor shortages in various crafts. The cloakmakers could well be proud of their achievements, and, with industrial conditions so favorable, could look forward to greater advances in the future.

By this time the dressmakers too, following in the wake of the cloak locals, had succeeded in organizing most of their trade. Their defeat in the bitter struggle of 1917 had all but shattered their union. At that time however about one hundred and fifty members, some of them unemployed, were rallied by Seidman;

a new modest organization campaign was begun; and application was made for affiliation with the Joint Board. While the cloakmakers refused to take into their midst a local composed of mixed trades, they undertook to aid the dressmakers financially and administratively. The International, too, watched the Chicago dressmakers with interest and awaited a suitable opportunity for entering the field again upon a large scale.

At first the progress of the local was exceedingly slow. Julius Hochman, coming to Chicago in December, 1918, reported that it had a total membership of but two hundred and ten workers. It was far too weak to command the respect of employers. Even union shops were being lost, the number having dwindled from thirty-one in February, 1918, to eighteen in December. So demoralized was the local that the extensively advertised mass meeting called to inaugurate the new campaign attracted only "the large number of eighteen people."<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, with the full resources of both the International and of the Joint Board thrown behind it and with the energetic Hochman in charge, the new drive gained momentum rapidly. Local 100 opened its own office at 1579 Milwaukee Avenue. A bulletin, *The Message*, and countless circulars urging the dressmakers to join the union were spread through the market. Dress cutters and pressers soon had branches of their own. Since there was no employers' association at the time, the shop-by-shop method of organization was utilized, and agreements were secured with individual manufacturers.

By the summer of 1919 the campaign had made such progress that President Schlesinger came to assume personal charge. His first move was to invite the manufacturers to conferences. The employers in the trade, emulating the cloak manufacturers, organized into two associations and agreed to negotiate with the union. Conferences began on July 28. Three days later a collective agreement was signed between the union and the employers' groups, the Chicago Dress and Skirt Manufacturers' Asso-

ciation and the United Ladies' Garments Manufacturers' Association. Immediately afterward some twenty-six independent firms either signed or expressed themselves in favor of similar agreements. This victory, hailed by the Chicago labor movement and the International as proof of the maxim that the workers, though defeated in individual battle, never lose a war, gave Local 100 control of the bulk of the local dress market. Featured by union recognition, increased wages, the forty-four hour week, seven legal holidays, and conciliation and adjustment machinery, these agreements met practically all the demands of the union. The triumph was all the greater in that it was accomplished, in glaring contrast to the bloody struggle of 1917, without a strike and without the loss of even a single day's work to any dressmaker.<sup>16</sup>

The exultant union immediately took steps to consolidate its victory. It concentrated upon the nine or ten remaining anti-union shops and soon organized several of them. It held employers who violated the agreement to strict accountability. It forced the two associations to contribute their share toward the establishment of the adjustment machinery. By the end of 1919, Local 100, with some 2,000 members, two union offices, and a smoothly functioning staff, was well on its way toward achieving for the Chicago dress workers the same fruits of trade unionism which the Joint Board had already won for the longer organized and better disciplined cloakmakers.<sup>17</sup>

## *The Spirit of the Union*

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BY THE YEAR 1920 the Chicago union of the ladies' garment workers had come of age. The Chicago Joint Board was now no longer the organ of the cloakmakers alone; it was the central body of almost all the workers in three different branches of the Chicago industry. In the course of that year it secured the affiliation of three new locals: the Dressmakers' Local 100, the Raincoat Workers' Local 54, and the newly created Finishers' Local 59. Together the six locals boasted a membership of over 6,000 in the cloak and suit, silk dress, and raincoat trades of the city. Local 5 alone had 2,873 members before the finishers seceded into a separate local. Local 100 already had 2,000 members and was rapidly organizing the rest of the Chicago dressmakers.

In conformity with its increasing membership and growing influence in the industry, the union had been expanding its machinery until it had become an important business organization. The Joint Board, which began its career in 1914 with but one paid officer, continually added to its staff. In 1915 it established the post of chief clerk, a position occupied by Bisno for the two years that it existed. During 1916 it added two more business agents. By 1920 the Joint Board employed four business agents, one of them for the dressmakers' local, besides paying salaries to its financial and recording secretaries. In 1918,

this staff was rendered more stable by decisions to increase the salaries of paid officials and to elect them for a full year instead of the customary six-month terms.

In addition to increasing its paid staff, the Joint Board was also reforming its other machinery for the service of its membership. In 1917, for example, the Board of Directors was reorganized to serve as an agency for the improvement of shop conditions and for the investigation of complaints against the office. Two years later it was reconstituted by Schoolman to consist of the chairmen of each local and the chairman and secretary of the Joint Board, and began to function as a virtual executive committee of the central body. In 1919 the union, in search of a substitute for the traditional haphazard method of job hunting by its members, began to plan an orderly system of assigning workers to vacancies. Local 81 undertook to conduct such a Labor Bureau while the other locals and the Joint Board benevolently watched the results of the experiment. A minor but significant attempted reform at the same time was the introduction of the English language into Joint Board minutes. With the growth of the union, active members had become concerned about the use of Yiddish at meetings. Abraham Gold, for example, offered to resign as chairman of the Joint Board because of the fear that some delegates could not understand him. In 1920, the recording secretary began to write the minutes in English, but the result led him to abandon his attempt. A compromise was finally effected. The minutes were still taken in Yiddish, but the "English-speaking" locals (54, 81, and 100) received copies in English.

Coincident with the growth of the union in membership and administrative machinery came a development of internal discipline which elicited the public admiration of the International. The membership which in 1915 had been so raw that it had to be taught to bring its complaints to the union office rather than to the street corner was converted by 1920 into an

"organization in a class by itself."<sup>1</sup> Shop chairmen and members were educated in their duties and rights under the agreement and were held accountable to rules drawn up for their guidance. To those who violated the regulations of the union, the Grievance Board, established in 1917 to maintain morale in the shop and in union meeting, administered swift and certain justice. Members who worked under the scale, who hired helpers, who scabbed, who brawled in shop or in meeting, or who otherwise transgressed against the common good, found the penalties in proportion to their offenses. Locals as well as individuals were held responsible for the observance of Joint Board rulings. Locals 18 and 81, for example, were warned in 1919 that if they engaged in craft stoppages the Joint Board would send new workers into the shops affected. In turn, locals in difficulties received the help of supervisory and advisory committees of various types to conduct their elections, to inspect their books, or to aid them temporarily in the conduct of their meetings.

A feature of the disciplinary system on which great stress was laid during this period was the button system inaugurated in August, 1916. Every union member, upon payment of his monthly dues, received a button which he undertook to wear regularly in his shop. Of a different color each month, these buttons enabled the shop chairmen to differentiate at a glance between those who were in good standing and those who were not. So unique and promising was this system believed to be that Chicago leaders lauded it at every opportunity. Bisno laid down the edict that he who wore no current monthly button was not a union man. Schoolman pronounced the system "one of the best institutions of the union." Shop chairmen demanded and received the special privilege of wearing gold buttons after six months of meritorious service. At the convention of 1918 the Chicago delegates, firmly convinced of the benefits of the system, introduced a resolution that the International adopt a uniform button for its whole membership.

Further indication of the maturity of the Chicago union was its new financial strength. In 1919 the income of the Joint Board was more than \$71,000, its expenses amounted to \$43,000, and its balance for the year was over \$28,000. The locals with accounts of their own duplicated this performance. Local 5, for example, which in 1914 had shown a total income of \$6,675, now boasted one of \$82,000.<sup>2</sup> The books of the Joint Board and of the various locals were audited bi-yearly by a professional accountant. In 1920, the Joint Board further improved its financial organization by ordering Schoolman to conduct all monetary transactions of the locals and by recommending to the locals that they pool all their funds into a common treasury. Dues in the several locals were raised at various times until in 1920 the operators of Local 5, paying forty cents a week, boasted the highest dues in the International. With its income thus augmented, the union continually developed its system of benefits and ever widened the scope of services to its membership.

Of primary concern to the union almost since its creation, the sick benefit system, which had been functioning spasmodically since last inaugurated in 1913, was reinvigorated in December, 1916 by the adoption of a new set of by-laws for its regulation. As worked out by the Sick Fund Committee in cooperation with Doctor M. P. Gethner, these provided for the establishment of a special fund for the purpose, maintained by three cents from every dues stamp. Benefits were to be paid to eligible members at the rate of five dollars a week for a maximum of eight weeks a year. In 1917 the Sick Fund Committee worked out a detailed and rather complicated scale of benefits for all types of ailments. An appendix operation entitled the suffering operator or finisher to benefits for three weeks; the cutter or presser, for four weeks. Victims of diphtheria, scarlet fever and similar contagious diseases were entitled to benefits so long as they were quarantined. Rupture operations brought benefits for four weeks to operators and finishers and for five weeks to cutters

and pressers. Similar provision was made for almost every other type of disease and infirmity, with the exception of "pregnancy and immoral diseases."<sup>3</sup>

Despite this involved scale of benefits, the sick fund rendered great service to the membership of the union. By January 1, 1918, some three hundred and twenty-five workers had received more than \$6,000 in benefits. Dr. Gethner, the physician in charge, not only treated the patients sent him by the union, but also took a deep interest in the prevention of disease among its members. In one of his constructive reports to the Joint Board, submitted during the summer of 1919, he analyzed the diseases most typical among his union clients and attributed the prevalence of hernia, nervousness, and heart and tubercular diseases to the long hours, severe strain, and pell-mell speed of the piece work system. To halt the spread of these diseases, he advocated, in addition to the new system of week work, the establishment of a union medical office, the formation of a board of sanitary control, the creation of a tuberculosis sanitarium, and the inauguration of an educational department for the purpose of instructing the membership in health information as well as in other types of knowledge.

Much of this program was soon carried out. On December 2, 1920, the Joint Board formally opened its own medical department with Dr. Gethner having daily office hours and a nurse on full-time duty. Besides treating patients in the union office and in their homes, the new medical department began a program of instruction in health and hygiene. In a series of bulletins entitled "Advice on Cleanliness and Health," union members were urged to avoid patent medicines, to refrain from spitting on the floor, and to take a "hot bath at least once a week." So attached were the Chicago members to their sick fund system that their delegates to the 1920 convention urged upon the International the combination of all such funds throughout the country into one general fund to be administered by the central office.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to these various benefit systems, the Chicago union had also by this time made important strides in the promotion of educational and recreational activities among its membership. At first the curriculum of the union was confined to direct trade problems and formed an integral part of its disciplinary system. In the winter of 1916, for example, the Joint Board conducted a series of Wednesday evening lectures which included expositions by Bisno, Finkler, and Metrick on such subjects as "The Arbitration Agreement" and "How Our Members Should Conduct Themselves In The Shop." Gradually, however, this program became both wider in scope and richer in content. In the fall of 1918, the educational committee submitted a comprehensive report recommending classes for illiterates, concerts, literary evenings, and a circulating library. Concerts began within a few weeks after this plan was adopted. The library was established in December of that year. The formal school of the Joint Board opened in January, 1919. Classes were held four evenings a week and met in several sections of the city.

Apart from the work of the educational committee, other committees of the Joint Board and of the locals actively advanced such activities. The press committee of the Joint Board began in July, 1917, the publication of the *Chicago Cloak Maker*, a four-page Yiddish monthly which contained news of the locals, editorials on union policies, short stories, and expressions of rank and file opinion. The various locals featured "educationals" and musicales at their meetings. Local 100, for example, held its own series of concerts and sponsored a series of lectures on the labor and cooperative movements. In addition volunteers frequently formed study circles or athletic teams. One such group, in 1917, even formed a Cloak Makers' Brass Band, which utilized the Joint Board offices as its headquarters.

In membership and administrative machinery, in its contractual relations with employers in three trades, and in the wide scope of its activities, the Chicago union was now a large-

scale organization, far different from the struggling little locals before 1915. Yet the spirit of the union was still the spirit of a small group bound together by the intimate ties of common obstacles and of formidable enemies on every side. The bonds of unity among its members were never stronger; their loyalty to the organization never more deep-seated. On its strength they placed their reliance for the economic welfare of their families and their fellow workers. Its benefits and services touched their lives at many points—in adjustment to their social environment, in education and recreation, in illness and in catastrophe. All, therefore, from the newest arrival to the oldest active member, considered themselves participants in the building of the union. They came to meetings in full force and enlivened the evenings with discussions and debates. A host of them served as an army of unpaid officials—as members of the Joint Board and of the executive boards of the locals, as members of committees of all types, as shop chairmen or other functionaries—and they performed their duties with the conscientious pride of those who labor for an ideal. Many of them hastened to the union offices directly from the shop. Others came there on Saturday afternoons or Sunday mornings. For the union was not only the headquarters of a business organization; to many of them it was the home of the workers who were its members, its builders, and its power.<sup>5</sup>

Symbolic of this spirit was the plan evolved in 1918 for the erection of a great "Chicago Ladies' Garments' Workers' Lyceum" to serve as the home of the cloakmakers and as the "center of every Progressive Union of Chicago." By assessments, local donations, and other devices, the cloakmakers speedily gathered a sum of about \$15,000. By January, 1919, building lots had been purchased and an architect's estimates secured. By the beginning of 1920 the building committee of the Chicago Joint Board had its plans completed and was promising its members a finished building in a year or two.

The "Chicago Ladies' Garments' Workers' Lyceum" was to be an imposing structure—costing some \$100,000—which would offer its membership a remarkable series of services. All the business activities of the union, including a projected employment bureau, would of course be centered in it. An educational department, a large library and reading room, and an open forum were to promote the intellectual improvement of the members. A gymnasium, a roof garden, moving picture facilities, lounges, a billiard hall, and a general recreation room were to afford them opportunities for entertainment and relaxation. Other conveniences of all types would be there—medical and dental departments, a legal bureau, safety vaults, and even a cooperative store. It was to be, in short, both the home of the workers and the embodiment of the spirit of the union.<sup>6</sup>

The energetic campaign necessary for the success of this undertaking was soon under way. The committee in charge evolved a plan for "Building Fund Bonds" of thirty dollars each, bearing interest at three per cent annually, and maturing in five years. In leaflets and attractive circulars, in speeches and in press advertisements, and in enthusiastic eulogies in labor publications, the members of the union were given numerous reasons for buying these bonds. They provided opportunities for safe investment. They could be bought in five dollar installments. And above all, buying a bond meant a tangible contribution toward the building of the union. So certain of success did this experiment seem that the General Executive Board, proclaiming it "rich in possibilities of far-reaching significance," itself set the pace for the drive by investing \$2,000 in the project on behalf of the International.<sup>7</sup>

In the spring of 1920, the Chicago union formally took stock of its achievements and found them good. It was now thirty-five years since the first march of the cloakmakers in 1886. The intervening period had been full of struggles, set-backs, and defeats. But the march of the cloakmakers had continued. They

had secured collective bargaining. They had won the battle against the sweatshop. They had established a stable and respected organization which counted as members all the workers in the trade. And finally, they had succeeded in substituting for piece work a new system from which they expected great benefits in the near future.

Accordingly, the Cloak and Suit Operators' Local, now again called Local 5 by permission of the International, celebrated the occasion in fitting style. On March 13 the members of the local gathered in a mass meeting at the Ashland Auditorium and heard their achievements praised by Hyman Schoolman, Peter Sissman, and Morris Seskind. Two weeks later, leaders of the International and of the Chicago labor movement joined the local in a banquet commemorating its anniversary. A series of reminiscences by Sissman, Fogel, Schoolman, Glassman, and other old timers, published by the local a few weeks later, still further emphasized the progress of the cloakmakers from the period of the sweatshop to the day of the forty-four hour week and of a reasonable return for their labor.

In May of the same year the International held its convention—for the first time—in Chicago. It was a jubilee gathering for all the ladies' garment workers throughout the country. The International was now a vast organization of 130,000 members. During the past year it had won, for almost all its members, the forty-four hour week and the new system of week work. But to the Chicago workers it almost seemed as if the celebration were especially designed for their benefit. Several thousand of them paraded from the headquarters of the Joint Board to the Ashland Auditorium, the convention hall, and filled it to overflowing. Their beloved President Schlesinger, long connected with the Chicago union, was chairman of the convention. Three of the ten vice presidents had played important roles in Chicago—their own Hyman Schoolman, Fannia Cohn who had conducted the Herzog strike, and Solomon Seidman who had led

the revolt of 1917. The General Executive Board report characterized their union as "one of our genuine 100 per cent organizations" and praised its achievements in detail.<sup>8</sup> Men and women who had been in close touch with them for years—Peter Sissman, Jane Addams, Clarence Darrow, Agnes Nestor, Oscar Nelson—addressed them and paused to pay them tribute. It was almost as if the whole International had gathered, not only to transact business affecting the workers in the whole industry, but also to do them especial honor.

Intensely proud of its past record and confident in its future, the Chicago Joint Board was already discussing plans and formulating programs for further improvements in the working conditions of its members. Unemployment insurance began to be advanced as a slogan for the next agreement. Interest in the cooperative movement gained new momentum with the International's decision to open union-owned cloak shops; and some members were already insisting that the Chicago Joint Board should be the first to carry through this new program.<sup>9</sup> With the rest of the International, the Chicago ladies' garment workers believed that the first lap of their march was over. They were ready for new horizons. Their views were being widened; their program was being broadened. They were approaching—in the words of Peter Sissman—that day "when the share of each worker in the industry will be equal to the share that he is socially entitled to receive."<sup>10</sup>



*Part III*

On the Defensive

1921-1932



## *“A Sick Industry”*

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**E**VEN WHILE THE Chicago Joint Board was congratulating itself upon its achievements and was anticipating new triumphs, the industrial situation was changing with a rapidity which soon shattered all its illusions. In contrast to the booming days of the World War, the decade of the 1920's was a period of depression in the industry and of increasing hardship for the workers. A host of new and baffling problems arose. The cloak and suit trade was entering upon a period of steady decline in production and employment. The jobber began to dominate the industry. The employers, profiting by the economic and political reaction of the time, launched a systematic offensive upon the union. Both the cloak and dress trades of Chicago became involved in bitter struggles. In addition the union was convulsed during this period by acute internal strife which, in origin at least, was attributable to the depression of the industry.

Throughout the 1920's the women's clothing industry of Chicago did not again reach its peak of 1919. In that year it manufactured an annual product valued at \$64,000,000 and was ninth in rank among the industries of the city. Its 374 establishments gave employment to over 9,000 workers whose annual wages amounted to nearly \$11,000,000. Two years later, the

number of establishments had decreased to 315, the number of workers to 6,970, the wage bill to \$8,670,000, and the value of the product to \$58,671,000. Even when production revived, the number of workers in the industry continued to shrink. In 1925, for example, the value of the product was over \$51,000,000—or about \$8,500,000 more than in 1921—but the number of workers was 6,530 or some 430 less than four years before.<sup>1</sup> Not all branches of the industry were equally affected by this decline. It was the cloak and suit trade which suffered most. International President Sigman, analyzing this trade at the beginning of 1925, estimated that it employed only about half the labor force of 1919.<sup>2</sup>

The decline of the cloak and suit trade was of course not limited to Chicago. It was a national trend affecting every city in the country. The industry, long expanding in the process of displacing home production, had now reached a state of equilibrium. The women's suit trade virtually disappeared when the tastes of consumers shifted to the lighter and often cheaper products of the dress factory. In the cloak trade, garments furnished an ever lessening amount of labor per unit. Styles became simpler, taking the form of straight lines and plainer, looser garments. Piping, tucking, braid ornaments, and other novelty and embroidery work formerly done on the premises by the operator or finisher began to be made in special outside shops. Labor-saving machinery began to be introduced for the pressing and finishing processes. The phenomenal development of the women's fur coat industry during this period played further havoc with the cloak market. The workers of Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia suffered in addition from, on the one hand, the growing concentration of the industry in New York, and on the other, from its flight to many smaller cities and towns in their localities.

Coincidentally with these trends came the development of the jobbing system, a change in the structural organization of the

industry comparable in scope and effect to the rise of the contractor in the 1880's. As in all other industries, the jobber in women's clothing was a middleman who served the retailer. In addition, however, the jobber in women's wear arranged directly for the production of most of the garments which he carried in stock. He bought the raw materials, selected the styles, and ordered the manufacture of the finished articles. The function of actual production he relegated to a "sub-manufacturer," with whom he developed an unique relationship. The sub-manufacturer worked on order but theoretically "purchased" the raw materials from the jobber. He rented premises for a shop, secured the necessary machinery and labor force, supervised the manufacture of the garments from the cutting to the examining, and then "re-sold" the finished products to the jobber at a differential sufficient to compensate him for his services. In time this relationship tended to become ever more complicated, resulting in various types of jobbers, in satellites known as "sub-jobbers" or "cutters-up," and even in "sub-contractors" for sub-manufacturers.

The significance of the jobber to the workers in the industry arose largely from this method of operation. Prosperity came to him in proportion to the volume of his business. Hoping for larger total profits on smaller margins per unit, he carried in stock as large quantities of garments of various styles and prices as he could. To secure the cheapest production, he stimulated competitive bidding among the sub-manufacturers. He played them off ruthlessly against each other and against sub-manufacturers in other cities. He promised each of them large orders providing the prices quoted were the lowest. Since most of the sub-manufacturers operated their small shops on a shoestring, they pitted bids against each other desperately. They came to the jobber's "buyer" or "production manager" via the back door; they waited for hours in the "sub's pen"; and they swallowed the insults and the scorn incidental to the bargaining tech-

nique of their position.\* Those who were fortunate in securing orders in this "auction system" were forced to reduce costs in every conceivable way—by evading union standards of work, by decreasing the size of their shops, by moving to less desirable districts or even out of the city. The advent of the jobbing system therefore multiplied in numerous ways the difficulties of the union. Not only was the jobber himself, with no inside shop of his own, uncontrollable by the union, but by his terrific pressure upon the sub-manufacturers he also forced the breakdown of labor standards in these units of the industry.

This jobbing-sub-manufacturing system, although originating some years before, developed rapidly during the 1920's. Manufacturers, watching enviously the growth and prosperity of the jobbing houses, were tempted to close their own shops and to enter the new field. With the decline of the industry an increasing number of unemployed workers joined the ranks of the sub-manufacturers. The technical conditions of the industry still allowed the operation of a shop with very little capital. With a few dollars in cash and little more in credit, a designer, cutter, or operator could become a sub-manufacturer or contractor, or he could band together with a few others to open a social or corporation shop. In time these conditions made the jobbers the dominant figures in the industry. In New York, where they developed most rapidly, they controlled by 1924 over seventy per cent of the cloaks, suits, and dresses sold in the city.<sup>3</sup>

Not only did jobbing and sub-manufacturing and all their accompaniments develop locally in Chicago, but what was far more important, the New York jobbing houses invaded Market Street in increasing numbers. By 1927, the number of their Chicago branch offices and salesrooms almost equalled the number of local manufacturers. The Chicago lofts of these jobbers were packed with thousands of garments made by Eastern sub-manu-

\* The vocabulary of the "buyer" included such expressions as the following: "You do not know what you are talking about"; "You are crazy"; "Get busy, or do not come here."

facturers. Local manufacturers were unable to compete with them, were forced to give up entirely the production of the cheaper and the more expensive styles of garments, and resorted to desperate measures to retain their business in medium-grade ones. Some of them even entered the jobbing field themselves and secured their garments from outside the city.<sup>4</sup>

Those who remained as manufacturers in the Chicago industry, accordingly, steadily increased their wails against the New York jobbers. They could not duplicate, they claimed, the low-priced garments displayed by the latter. Their expenditures, they stated, were increasing. They were forced to move their factories or at least their showrooms to South Market Street, where the jobbers had established themselves. They insisted therefore on drastic reductions in the costs of labor. They demanded that the workers accept lower prices and that the union permit them to send out more work to contractors and to out-of-town shops. Since the Joint Board naturally fought against any such lowering of standards, the manufacturers saw themselves as the proverbial victims between the upper and nether millstones.

The union, on the other hand, complained that these same jobbers were ruining the livelihood of its members. The industrial output of Chicago declined year by year. The amount of work in the shops fell in even greater ratio. Seasons became shorter. Unemployment became chronic. The Chicago manufacturers, utilizing the argument of jobber competition in and out of season, increased the pressure for lowering of labor standards. Sub-manufacturers and contractors, competing desperately to keep their heads above water "by every means available, fair or unfair," created competition among workers in the various shops and debased the conditions in all of them. Already existing evils in the industry were given a new opportunity for full development. In the end, the industry became completely demoralized and the union almost impotent.<sup>5</sup>

Among the gravest of the ills of the industry at this time

were the "fugitive" out-of-town shops. The sub-manufacturers and contractors who operated them were usually transplanted Chicagoans. The labor supply, either brought from the city or hired in the locality, was always non-union. Although most of these fugitive shops were small in size and evanescent in nature, they constituted an ever standing threat to the Chicago cloak-makers. Not only did they draw off production from the city, but because of wage differentials, they also tended to depress the conditions of work in Chicago.

The fugitive shop first became important to the Joint Board in June, 1917. A Chicago sub-manufacturer, working for the jobber, Morris Hirsh, then obtained workers from the city and established himself in Anderson, Indiana. That experiment did not last long. Samuel Glassman, although harried by the local police, succeeded in convincing the workers involved that they were playing the role of scabs and in bringing them back to Chicago. During the 1920's, however, these shops multiplied so rapidly that the union was at its wit's end on how to combat their development. In rapid succession open shops were found operating in Milwaukee, Kenosha, Gary, Coloma, and other cities and towns in the four or five neighboring states. Such towns offered the manufacturers not only proximity to the Chicago market but also many other attractions. Factory facilities were cheap. Labor supplies were ample and readily exploitable. Often local businessmen's associations, grateful to the benevolent employer who boosted local industry, assumed a good share of his costs. They paid in part or in whole the bills for moving the machinery into their town, for renting premises, for recruiting and training workers, and sometimes even for the raw materials, the power, and the wages of the new enterprise. The efforts of the union to check the spread of these shops were always costly and sometimes ineffective. The employer was supported by the local powers who formed a solid wall of opposition to labor "agitators." The police blocked the work of the organizer and some-

times even arbitrarily ordered him out of town. Local help to the union usually amounted to little. Most of the workers had no knowledge at all concerning trade unionism. Others were hardened scabs. The local central labor body was generally weak. Furthermore, when the union succeeded in organizing such a shop, the employer was often likely to pack up and establish himself overnight in another small town, leaving the union to face the angry charges of many workers that it had been responsible for the loss of their jobs.<sup>6</sup>

Within Chicago, social or corporation shops developed during this period to the proportions of an epidemic. They sprang up like mushrooms, usually disappeared as soon as they were discovered by the union, and re-emerged just as quickly in another remote section of the city. In August, 1919, ten such shops were discovered a few months after the union congratulated itself on having stamped out the evil. Because of their structural aspects, moreover, the position of the union on corporation shops was not always understood. In 1920, for example, the Joint Board was forced to explain to a branch of the Workmen's Circle how the corporation shop was inimical to the interests of the working class. One of the members of that branch, it seems, had accused the union of hounding him for participating in such a partnership. To his mind this action merited not condemnation, but high praise, since, by refusing to work any longer for "capitalistic employers," he was contributing his share toward the development of a socialist society.<sup>7</sup>

An even more formidable problem for the union was the increasing number of small contractor shops. A new crop of these appeared almost every season. Because of their smallness and transiency, they were usually guilty of infractions of all types of union regulations. Many of them were "scab nests." Some operated under the outlawed piece-work system. A few were mere adjuncts to cleaning and dyeing stores. Most of the scab nests either disappeared or became union shops as soon as

they were located by the Joint Board. A few, however, enjoying the full support of jobbers or manufacturers, defied the union for months and even years.<sup>8</sup>

Concomitant with these developments in the structural aspects of the industry, the fluctuations of style, always pronounced in the cloak trade, were highly accentuated. Not only did styles become much simpler than in the past, but they also multiplied and changed with bewildering rapidity. The contracting volume of business led competitors into the practice of altering and modifying their styles several times during the season. Piracy in this field greatly increased. As a result, manufacturers, jobbers, and even contractors were always discarding styles copied by others, adopting new ones, or copying the successful styles of their competitors.

Because of this and the other factors discussed above, the seasonality which always plagued the industry was now intensified. The jobber prided himself upon "immediate delivery." Retail buyers were encouraged to postpone buying until the last moment. As a result, orders had to be filled very quickly. The pressure on the workers during the height of the busy season became greater than ever. One Chicago cloak factory in 1925, for example, reached a productivity of 195 per cent of average during its peak week. But the season, at the same time, became ever shorter. Busy seasons of twenty weeks, eighteen weeks, or even of fifteen weeks were no longer known. The cloakmakers indeed "hoped for them but no miracles were happening."<sup>9</sup> Working in the cloak trade came to mean a few weeks of strenuous activity in the fall and in the spring, and idleness the rest of the year.

The cumulative effect of these developments drove the union into a defense of its very existence. The industry became demoralized. Chronic unemployment, shorter seasons, and the high mortality rate among the smaller shops forced the workers into a competition with each other which enabled the employers

to beat down still more the standards in the shops. Cloakmakers, confronted with the alternatives of less or no work or of disobeying union regulations, yielded to temptation. They developed a psychological attitude that they had to "help" their own employers—their sub-manufacturers or contractors—against the field. They therefore submitted to wages below the minimum scale or to straight time for overtime. Some of them worked by the piece or some system analogous to it. Their earnings, contrary to their hopes, were not increased by these methods. Their conditions of work, however, deteriorated rapidly. Unequal division of work, discrimination against active union members, and a host of other evils long before eradicated sprang up again. In 1929, the International characterized this situation as a virtual return to the days of the sweatshop. The cloak trade was rapidly heading back to the "chaos" of the 1890's.<sup>10</sup>

## *On the Defensive*

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IN 1920 the United States entered upon its period of "Normalcy." For American labor the year marked the beginning of a long period of reaction which almost succeeded in shattering the entire trade union movement. Throughout the country, in almost every industry, employers organized a great crusade to beat down the wages of their workers. With pious patriotism they cloaked their formidable open-shop movement under the euphemism of the "American Plan." All the organs of government, more than ever at their disposal, aided their anti-union drive. Attorney-generals labelled organized labor as "red" and obtained injunctions against workers. The Supreme Court twisted the Clayton Act, originally designed for the protection of trade unions, into an instrument which threatened their very existence. At the same time the United States was hit by the severe post-war industrial depression. As a result of these political and economic factors, organized labor was forced into a headlong retreat. The International, like the rest of the American Federation of Labor, placed itself upon the defensive and decided to concentrate on the protection of standards already gained rather than to seek new victories.

In the Chicago cloak industry the employers launched their first offensive upon the union in the fall of 1920. Claiming that manufacturing costs were rising and that they were increasingly

unable to compete with the cheaper products of New York, they demanded that the workers immediately submit to wage reductions and to other "readjustments." When the union flatly rejected the lowering of scales, the manufacturers demanded the abolition of week work. When this was refused, they insisted upon a "standard of production." Other disputes developed at the same time. Reorganizations again became common. The manufacturers evidenced a general impatience with the whole machinery of collective bargaining. In November, 1920, relations between the associations and the union were almost ruptured, and peace was reestablished only after many conferences and postponements on the problems at issue.<sup>1</sup>

In April, 1921, the Chicago cloak manufacturers, acting in concert with the associations of New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and other cities, launched a second attack upon the union. The collective agreement was expiring at the end of May. As conditions for its renewal, the employers demanded an increase in the hours of work, a reduction of minimum scales, the abolition of the two week trial period, and a standard of production. So alarmed was the Joint Board at the tone of the ultimatum that it decided to raise a \$75,000 strike fund and to call upon the International for aid. President Schlesinger, coming to Chicago in late May, succeeded in postponing negotiations pending the settlement of the even more critical situation in the New York cloak trade. When the International succeeded in defending its standards in New York, the Chicago manufacturers, after much haggling, also withdrew their demands. On June 30, they agreed to continue the *status quo* until December. Again the employers' attack had been stalemated, and the union had held its ground.<sup>2</sup>

This pact, however, constituted nothing more than a temporary truce. Both parties prepared for a showdown during the winter. In the fall, the Chicago associations sent delegates to the Atlantic City conference of the cloak manufacturers of the entire country, which formulated a program of concerted attack

upon the International. The Joint Board, at the same time, unanimously decided by referendum to call a general strike in the event that their standards were further threatened.

On November 14, 1921, the fifty-five thousand cloakmakers of New York, who had again received an ultimatum from the employers' association demanding the abolition of week work, went out in a general strike. The manufacturers in other cities seized the opportunity to attack the International from coast to coast. In Chicago they steadily became more belligerent. They refused to extend the agreement even for a short period. They insisted that Schlesinger had verbally agreed to a standard of production, a claim which he heatedly denied. They declined to conduct any negotiations with the Joint Board on the ground that "the Union leaders in Chicago apparently had no power to act." Eventually, they refused to deal even with the representatives of the International except upon the condition that the union first agree to the reintroduction of piece work. Finally, they set December 1 as the date on which the system of work would be changed—with or without the consent of the union.<sup>3</sup>

The Chicago Joint Board answered this threat of a lockout with preparations for a general strike. "Never in the history of our organization," declared its manifesto, "were we confronted with a situation like the present one. . . . Nothing to confer! Nothing to arbitrate! This is the slogan of the cloak manufacturers all over the country." Banding themselves into "a Federation of Associations," the employers were determined to snatch away "from our people the rights for which our Union has fought since it has been in existence." All members were therefore called upon to maintain their discipline and to be prepared for any eventuality.<sup>4</sup>

The climax of the crisis came on Thursday, December 1. On that day the workers, upon arrival at their shops, found notices on the time clocks that henceforth they were to work again by the piece and for forty-eight hours a week. The union immedi-

ately called out all Chicago cloakmakers in general strike. Inside of one hour all shops were emptied and the five thousand workers in the Chicago trade were marching to their places on the picket line or to the union halls. For a month the industry was at a standstill. It was the "first real strike" of the cloakmakers since the organization of the Joint Board and the winning of the collective agreement of 1915.<sup>5</sup>

The general strike of 1921 demonstrated both the solidarity of the Chicago cloakmakers and their effectiveness in action. The strike machinery had already been well prepared. A committee of thirteen, led by Morris Sigman and Hyman Schoolman, directed it. The Joint Board bore its whole financial burden. The foremen, who had shortly before been organized into their own Local 55, went out with the strikers. Out-of-town committees immediately began enlisting the assistance of central labor bodies in combatting scab work in the various neighboring towns. The morale of the workers was high from beginning to end. Had there not been a slack in the trade during this month, the manufacturers would probably have soon yielded. Even so, Palmer and Company and Sears, Roebuck & Co. settled with the union on the first day of the strike.<sup>6</sup>

The associations, however, could well afford to hold out, and a conference was arranged only after almost three weeks had passed. The first negotiations ended abruptly. Schlesinger expressed willingness to negotiate or arbitrate on the question of a standard of production providing that the manufacturers drop their demand for piece work. The employers at first rejected this formula as unsatisfactory. A few days later, however, they changed their attitude. They now publicly claimed that they had always been willing to arbitrate the issue of production, that they had never demanded wage cuts, that they did not lock out the workers, and that in general the union was being unreasonable.<sup>7</sup>

With the manufacturers thus indirectly indicating a more

conciliatory spirit, negotiations began once more, and eventually, on December 30, the strike was settled on the basis of the *status quo*. The agreement, with a few supplementary clauses, was extended until June 1, 1922. The employers withdrew all their demands. Week work, the forty-four hour week, and wage scales had again been successfully defended. Even the troublesome production issue was temporarily settled. Both sides agreed to the creation of a Board of Arbitration for the purpose of investigating complaints of inefficiency and of penalizing workers found guilty of this charge.<sup>8</sup>

The raincoat workers, like the cloakmakers, also succeeded in defending their standards of labor. Their trade, too, was declining; their seasons were becoming shorter; they were plagued by fugitive shops and subjected to an open-shop offensive. Their severest struggle during this period was with the million-dollar firm of Kling Brothers, which attempted to beat down wages in April, 1921. The Joint Board immediately called this shop out on strike. After five weeks, the workers won a new agreement by which they gained a preferential union shop, reduced their work week by four hours, and obtained the dismissal of all who had scabbed for the firm. Encouraged by this victory Local 54 began an organization campaign against the other open shops in the Chicago trade.<sup>9</sup>

Less disciplined and experienced in trade unionism, the Chicago dress workers seemed for a time likely to succumb to the onslaught of the manufacturers. Despite their great victory in 1919, they had never been able to consolidate their gains. Some of the large firms remained open shops, fighting viciously and successfully against all efforts of the union. One firm, for example, insured itself against organization by periodically replacing its entire labor staff. Others were partly organized or were only nominally union shops. As the depression began to affect the trade, the woes of Local 100 accumulated. Petty shop struggles multiplied. Workers were forced to resort to stoppages

for the protection of most elementary rights. In one shop the girls struck for ten days before the employer promised to refrain from the use of profane and vulgar language. The local was further weakened by internal strife and by jurisdictional quarrels with the cloak locals.<sup>10</sup>

By the spring of 1921, Local 100 had so declined in membership and in influence that the Joint Board became alarmed at the gravity of the situation. It accordingly inaugurated a new unionization campaign. An organization department, headed by Julius Ginsburg, was established. Union members were called to frequent shop and special meetings and unorganized workers to open mass meetings. Circulars in English and Polish were spread throughout the market. In a few weeks the new campaign bore its first fruits. Philip Klafter, one of the employers most hostile to organized labor, signed an agreement for a forty-four hour week and the union scale.

By this time the two-year agreement of 1919 was on the verge of expiration. The dress employers had been demanding, as conditions for its renewal, a wage reduction of twenty-five per cent and the introduction of an "efficiency standard." Confronted, however, with the growing strength of the union, the employers chose to negotiate rather than precipitate a conflict. Toward the end of July, after two weeks of conferences, the employers withdrew their demands and agreed to extend the old agreement for five months. In January, 1922, they renewed it for another year. The dressmakers, like the cloak and raincoat workers, had also succeeded in defending the standards of labor won in the booming days of 1919.<sup>11</sup>

Despite its success in fending off these counter-attacks, the Chicago Joint Board never recovered from the crisis of 1921. The industry continued to decline. The unemployment problem steadily became more acute. The union, with its membership already rapidly falling, was further weakened by bitter fraternal strife. Between 1920 and 1924, it experienced three major in-

ternal conflicts, each of which left deep scars upon the organization.

The first of these was a jurisdictional dispute between Local 100 and the Joint Board. This controversy, beginning almost with the organization of this local, centered about its unique position in Chicago. In contrast to the craft organization of the cloakmakers, Local 100 was chartered as an industrial unit for all the dressmakers in the city. To the cloak locals, this situation smacked of outright dual unionism. The Pressers' Union Local 18 at once laid claim to the dress pressers; the Cutters' Union Local 81, to the dress cutters. The Joint Board also complained that many cloakmakers were members of Local 100 simply because of its lower dues, that dressmakers who drifted into cloakmaking did not obtain corresponding transfers to the appropriate locals, and that members of the cloak locals were frequently embarrassed by stoppages and strikes of the dressmakers in "mixed shops."

The first stage of the dispute reached its climax during the dress organization drive of 1919. The Joint Board accused Julius Hochman, the International organizer in charge of the campaign, of conducting raids upon its membership. Hochman, in turn, charged that the cloakmakers were interfering with his work. The case finally came before the General Executive Board, which arranged a compromise. All dress cutters and pressers were to join the cloak locals, the dress and skirt workers of Local 5 were to be transferred to the dressmakers, and Local 100 was to affiliate with the Joint Board. To many in Local 100 this decision seemed grossly unjust. The cutters and pressers, they claimed, constituted the bulk of the male workers in their midst and were the bulwark of their union. Eventually, however, the local accepted these proposals in principle and became affiliated with the Joint Board.<sup>12</sup>

The dispute between Local 100 and the cloak locals now entered upon a second stage, marked by arguments about the

management of the local, the transferring of members, and the general interpretation of the ruling of the International. In May, 1920, the General Executive Board ordered immediate compliance with its previous decision. Two months later another "final" settlement was arranged by Schlesinger. The local was to pay ten cents per capita to the Joint Board; the central body, in return, undertook to provide the local with a manager and appointed to this post its business agent for the trade, Julius Ginsburg.<sup>13</sup>

The net result of this settlement was that the controversy, hitherto largely a diplomatic affair, became a stormy issue within the Joint Board itself. One difficulty arose in connection with transferring skirtmakers from Local 5 to Local 100. Some of these had never worked on dresses; one old skirtmaker, who claimed membership in Local 5 since 1907, complained that the transfer order was "the greatest shock of my life."<sup>14</sup> Other disputes arose in connection with the transfer of the Local's treasury to the Joint Board, jurisdiction over the dress finishers, and the lower dues of the dressmakers. By the spring of 1921, the situation had developed into a formidable internal crisis. Joint Board meetings were so tumultuous that no business could be transacted. At one time, in fact, the four cloak locals decided to substitute joint meetings of their own executive boards for Joint Board sessions.<sup>15</sup>

At this point, President Schlesinger, several other International officers, and many active members from various locals intervened to prevent the disruption of the whole Chicago organization. A semblance of harmony was restored. But to the Joint Board and the International the problem was still an unsettled one. Local 100 remained in their eyes a factious element of the Chicago union. In fact, until the spring of 1923, the International usually cited the uncooperative attitude of the executive board of Local 100 as one of its reasons for postponement of its projected drive in the Chicago dress industry.<sup>16</sup>

The second manifestation of internal friction was even more serious. Having its roots in the decline of the cloak industry, this crisis threatened the very existence of the Joint Board. The expenses of the Joint Board, which in the palmy days of 1919 seemed perfectly normal, were now considered inordinately heavy. On all sides demands arose that they be cut drastically—in half or more. Some charged that the finances of the union were mismanaged, that dues were not properly collected, and that financial reports were irregular. Several locals expressed their dissatisfaction by withdrawing their funds from the Joint Board treasury. The business staff was accused of inefficiency and lack of interest in the needs of the workers. Local 18, claiming that it could obtain no justice for its members unless one of the business agents was a presser by trade, withdrew its delegates from the Joint Board. Within the various locals, too, disputes were continually raging, and most of the time of executive committee meetings was consumed with grievances and trials.

As usual in such cases in any organization, many members tended to place the responsibility for all their ills upon the administration of the union, and in particular upon the man most identified with it—Secretary-treasurer Hyman Schoolman. Upon him was concentrated an attack which seemed to him and to many of his colleagues both personal and unwarranted. As a result, the union was soon divided into hostile camps. Partisanship developed to a high pitch. Local meetings became turbulent. The Joint Board itself was almost disrupted and held no meetings for six weeks.<sup>17</sup>

In November, 1922, President Schlesinger intervened again to restore harmony. He advanced a series of recommendations for this purpose, which the Joint Board accepted after an all-night session. Meyer Bernstein was appointed temporary chairman of the body. The locals once more consented to a joint treasury. An economy program was instituted by which the

union expenses were cut in half, mainly by the concentration of all the secretarial work of the locals in one office. Local 18, which had been unrepresented on the Joint Board for some time, patched up its quarrel with it. In May, 1923, the union also reestablished the Grievance Board, which had been inoperative for some time, and adopted other measures for the restoration of discipline. The morale of the union was thus slowly reconstructed, although the scars of the battle remained for a long time.<sup>18</sup>

The third crisis of the union, which eventually became the gravest, resulted from the great war between the "Rights" and the "Lefts," the opening battle of which was fought in 1923 and 1924. The Lefts at this time were usually members of the Trade Union Educational League.\* In Chicago they began to achieve prominence on the local executive boards and on the Joint Board by 1922. In 1923, two of the paid officers of the Joint Board—Israel Davidson, the recording secretary, and Alex M. Kanevsky, the secretary-treasurer—were members of this group.

In the course of that year, Morris Sigman, the new president of the International, initiated an active campaign against the Lefts. In Chicago, Vice-president Meyer Perlstein, in charge of the organization drive among the dressmakers, inaugurated a zealous crusade against members of the Trade Union Educational League. In July, he demanded the expulsion of Davidson and Kanevsky from the union. This action precipitated the Left and Right struggle in Chicago which lasted for several years and of which this was but the opening episode.

The hearings, trials, statements, and appeals that followed centered about the role of the Trade Union Educational League

\* This League was organized in 1920 by William Z. Foster, who led the strike of the steel workers in 1919 and later became secretary of the Workers' Party (the predecessor of the present Communist Party). According to its members, the League aimed to furnish leadership and cohesion to insurgent movements in American Labor. According to its opponents, its purpose was to capture control of the trade unions of the country and to ally them with the Workers' Party, to which many of its members belonged.

in the labor movement of the day. Perlstein charged that the League was a dual union. It was organized, he asserted, "almost on the same model as our International." In Chicago, its Ladies' Garment Workers' Branch met in regular monthly session and transacted the same kind of business as the Joint Board. Its educational features were "only a fraud"; its true purpose was to carry out a series of trade union policies for the benefit of the Communist Party and of the Third International. It aimed to force upon the union a full economic and political program—including a shop delegate system, standards of production in the shops, amalgamation of all needle trade unions, election of "progressive" or Communist officers, and a Labor Party "upon the principles laid down by the Workers' Party." Therefore, Perlstein concluded, the League was "a pure and simple opposition union pledged to replace this Union gradually and to take it in and make it a department of the Trade Union Educational League." It paraded "under the camouflage of education" only to deceive the workers while it was "calmly and quietly eating up, poisoning, destroying the very heart of the organization."<sup>19</sup>

In reply to this indictment, Davidson and Kanevsky vigorously denied Perlstein's premises. The League, they said, was not a dual union in any sense of the word. Its only purpose was "to educate its constituency in progressive measures in the labor movement." The League, they claimed, had no dues-paying membership; it conducted no transactions with employers; it invoked no disciplinary measures; and its members abided by the decisions of the unions to which they respectively belonged. They contended, therefore, that membership in the League by itself did not constitute activity in dual unionism and that they were not guilty of any act of insubordination under the rules of the Joint Board or the International.<sup>20</sup>

In accordance with its usual procedure in cases affecting its officers, the Joint Board appointed a special committee, which investigated the charges against Davidson and Kanevsky and

reported disagreement on the question of the League. The trial committee, after a lengthy hearing, ruled by a vote of five to one that "The T.U.E.L. is not an opposition union."<sup>21</sup> The Joint Board, however, adopted the minority report. A few days later President Sigman called upon all locals in the International to discipline any members who refused to give up participation in the Trade Union Educational League.

The drive against the Lefts in Chicago now began in earnest. Five more members of various locals were charged with membership in the League and ordered to cease their participation in it. On August 17, all these and the previously accused Davidson and Kanevsky, upon their refusal to resign from the League, were expelled from the union. On September 7, four more were expelled for the same reason. Others were deprived of the right to speak or to run for office for periods ranging from six months to two years. The Ladies' Tailors' Local 104 was suspended from the Joint Board and threatened with the revocation of its charter until it conformed to the stand of the General Executive Board on this question.<sup>22</sup>

These disciplinary measures did not, however, end the controversy; they merely changed its character. The eleven expelled members launched an active fight for reinstatement. They secured the aid of many members, particularly from Locals 5 and 100, who formed committees on their behalf. Seven of them appealed to the International and the case was hotly debated during the 1924 convention. Hostilities were suspended during the Chicago general strike of 1924, when all internal disputes were alike forgotten. But the truce soon ended, and the struggle began afresh with an intensity which proved disastrous to the union and ruinous to all of its members.

Apart from this conflict between the Lefts and Rights, the gravity of which was not realized until later, the union had been recovering during 1922 and 1923. The cloakmakers, in fact, profiting by the favorable turn in industrial conditions, won

some important gains in their new agreement of September, 1922. Employers were prohibited from working in the shop at any trade. Workers were to be paid for legal holidays even if they fell on Sundays. Wages were left at the "prevailing minimum scale," which included the increases awarded to the New York cloakmakers by the Award of February, 1920. Reorganizations were not to be allowed without the consent of the union as to the number and the method of selection of workers who were to remain in the shop. Supplementary clauses provided for the reduction of the trial period to one week and for the proportional division of work among contractor shops.<sup>23</sup>

By means of this agreement and the energetic enforcement of its provisions, the union was able to reestablish complete control over the cloak trade. During 1923 the impartial machinery, which had been more or less in abeyance during the past three years, was again utilized with increasing frequency. In a series of cases before Judges Fisher and Horner, the union secured decisions which prohibited home work, fined employers for sending garments to non-union contractors, and ordered back pay to workers who had received wages under the scale. In fact the impartial machinery once more became so important that the union urged upon the associations the desirability of a permanent paid arbitrator who could devote his full energies to the maintenance of peace in the industry.<sup>24</sup>

As a means of adjustment to the new industrial situation, the union had in the meantime begun a program of internal reform. With the affiliation of the Ladies' Tailors' Local 104, the Joint Board became the central body for all the members of the International in Chicago. Two offices, at 328 West Van Buren and at 1214 North Ashland, served as the new headquarters for its seven locals. The Board of Directors was reestablished; the monthly shop chairmen meeting was revived. The Labor Bureau, previously conducted by Locals 81 and 18, was expanded into a Joint Board institution, serving all its four thousand members.

The most important innovation during this period was that of a labor manager. Before 1922, Hyman Schoolman, who as secretary-treasurer of the Joint Board and International vice president was the dominating figure in the Chicago union, coordinated the work of the business agents. When Schoolman's position in the Chicago organization was impaired, the Joint Board decided to designate one of the business agents as the supervisor of the office. In the fall of 1922, it accordingly elected Barnett Fogel, the ranking paid officer, to the newly created post of labor manager. When, in the election of December, 1922, Fogel was defeated for business agent, the Joint Board elected Morris Bialis as his successor. In the fall of 1923 the business office was further expanded by the creation of a complaint department. The administration of this office was entrusted to Morris Rappaport, who served at the same time as recording secretary of the Joint Board and as supervisor of the Northwest Side office of the union.

The reorganization of the financial department was a somewhat more difficult task. Alex M. Kanevsky, who succeeded Schoolman, was one of the first to be expelled in the drive against the Trade Union Educational League. Perlstein, allegedly fearing a repetition of the Holtzberg case, thereupon recommended that the post of secretary-treasurer be made non-political and that it be occupied by a trained accountant. The Joint Board adopted his proposal and hired Hymen H. Hanock for the post, but for various reasons soon found him unsatisfactory. In a few months it decided to scrap the innovation. On February 8, 1924, it again elected a secretary-treasurer from its own ranks, selecting for this position M. A. Goldstein, who had up to that time served as recording secretary of Local 5 and as a member of the Joint Board finance committee.

Among the services of the union the most significant development during this period was in the field of education. In the summer of 1923 the Joint Board decided to take advantage of

the International appropriation for this purpose. An educational committee and a director were immediately selected. In October, Fannia Cohn came from New York to inaugurate the new department. Men like Paul H. Douglas, Jacob Viner, H. A. Millis, and Arthur Kornhauser of the University of Chicago were secured on the faculty. The Board of Education cooperated by furnishing an instructor in English. Classes in economics, public speaking, parliamentary law, and labor problems, as well as an open forum and a program of physical education, were soon functioning.<sup>25</sup> The experiment attracted considerable public attention. One metropolitan newspaper, describing it as a "campus on a noisy loop street," hailed it as a type of the "flexible university" of the future.<sup>26</sup>

The leadership of the Joint Board, however, was far more interested in another project, a union-owned cooperative cloak and dress factory. The idea was, of course, not new. It had been recommended by two International conventions and had been advanced by Schoolman and others who promoted the "Chicago Ladies' Garment Workers' Building" in 1920.\* The first concrete plan, however, originated with Meyer Perlstein. With his usual energy, he advocated the idea time and again to the Joint Board, finally overcoming its reluctance and skepticism by sheer persistence. On November 16, 1923, after a joint Executive Board meeting drew up a detailed plan, the Joint Board unanimously approved a drive for the creation of an "International Union Owned Garment Corporation." On November 23, a plan was approved at a meeting of 1,400 union members and sent to the locals for final ratification.

In high enthusiasm, the union now pushed the cooperative factory project in the same manner as it had worked for its building three years before. According to the prospectus, it was to be a large modern factory, erected and equipped at the cost of

\*This project was given up toward the end of 1920 because of insufficient funds. All bonds were redeemed by the union at face value. The union retained, however, the two lots which it had purchased.

\$100,000. With each Chicago member buying at least one twenty-five dollar share and with the International and its numerous locals lending a helping hand, the union could erect a model shop "in which ideal conditions would prevail in all respects." A Board of Directors selected by the union was to manage it in the interests of the members who were its stockholders. A shop committee, elected by the workers and responsible to the Board of Directors, was to supervise the labor staff. Owned by the workers and administered democratically, the factory would demonstrate that "good stylish garments" could be produced under "ideal sanitary conditions at a reasonable price." The public, apprised of this fact by a "White Sanitary Union label and a trade mark" and by an extensive advertising campaign, would hasten to buy the products and assure the success of the undertaking.

The first result of this venture, according to its promoters, was to be a solution of the unemployment problem of the union. As the factory expanded, it would not only absorb the unemployed among its membership, but, by creating a labor shortage in the local market, it would also enable the union to win improved conditions of work in other shops. Its ideal sanitary conditions would make it "a strong weapon against the sweatshop." Profits would be reinvested in expansion of production. Eventually branches and even retail stores would be established. The dream of workers throughout the ages—that they would eventually "take over industry as a whole"—would thus be brought a step nearer realization.<sup>27</sup>

Undeniably the project was a worthy one. The International hailed it with admiration as "an example of that constructive effort to which our union should devote itself."<sup>28</sup> Even as late as May, 1924, the General Executive Board pronounced the plan "quite practicable and feasible."<sup>29</sup> But by that time even the most enthusiastic of its Chicago sponsors was no longer hopeful. The dress strike was sapping the strength of the union; and in

the troubled days that followed, the undertaking, still in its project stage, was quietly buried and forgotten.\*

With industrial conditions becoming more favorable and the internal crises apparently being resolved, the Joint Board began in 1923 to plan again for the more effective organization and control of the Chicago industry. During the summer and fall of that year, it discussed in detail the "New Program" of the International for the cloak trade. It planned to demand provisions making jobbers responsible for their sub-manufacturers, the establishment of a yearly income through some guarantee of a definite period of work and the establishment of an unemployment insurance fund, increases to the lowest paid workers, and a forty-hour week. At the same time it inaugurated an out-of-town organization drive by the appointment of David Feitelson as organizer for Kenosha, Wisconsin. Most important, however, was the great drive in the dress trade, on which the Joint Board and the International concentrated their forces at this time with the hope that it would result in the final unionization of the entire Chicago market.

\*It had some effect, however, in stimulating the union in cooperative activity. Most of the locals joined the Farmer-Labor Exchange, which acted as a middle-man agency between the organized farmers and organized labor. In 1930, Local 54 established the United Raincoat Company, equipped to produce between 1,500 and 2,000 garments a week.

## *The War of 1924*

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BY THE EARLY 1920's the dress trade, in Chicago as elsewhere in the country, was the leading branch of the women's clothing industry. Holding its own and even expanding during this period, it soon overshadowed the older cloak and suit trade both in number of workers and in value of products. In 1924, it gave employment in Chicago to some 4,000 people, more than twice the number in the cloak trade. Furthermore, as previously noted, the dress trade played an important role in the decline of the cloak and suit trade. Unemployed cloakmakers seeking work in dress factories found that the employers, thriving on the exploitation of unorganized women, discouraged the entry of union-conscious men into their shops. By 1923, therefore, it was evident to the leaders of the union that the survival of the Chicago cloak organization itself was dependent upon the unionization of the dress market.

To the union, this field was a standing challenge. After twelve years of struggle, beginning in the days of 1912 and including the bitter strike of 1917, the Chicago dress industry still remained unorganized. At the height of its 1919 crest, Local 100 included in its ranks but half of the workers in its jurisdiction. The agreements then secured had indeed been successfully defended in later years. Even in the union shops, however, no further gains could be made. In them, as in the others, wages and other conditions of work remained far below the standards in the

cloak trade. Furthermore, because some firms had gone out of business, the actual number of workers affected by union contracts had been steadily declining. The campaigns in 1921 and 1922, hampered by the strong-arm methods of the employers, were successful, not in extending, but only in checking the decline of union control over the trade.<sup>1</sup>

In 1922, the International convention resolved upon a new and extensive campaign for the purpose of organizing this field once for all. In accordance with this mandate, Meyer Perlstein, vice president and head of the newly-created Western Organization Department, came to Chicago in May, 1923, to assume charge of a carefully planned and energetic drive. The Joint Board assigned a large organization committee to this task. Local 100 was reorganized by a Joint Board supervisory committee. The Chicago Federation of Labor offered the aid of its organization committee. The workers in the trade were systematically canvassed. Shop and open meetings were called with increasing frequency. Literature was distributed on a vast scale. Everywhere throughout the market the dress workers were apprised of the intention of the union to conduct a general strike, if necessary, in order to win collective bargaining in every Chicago shop. The union publication, the weekly *Chicago Women's Garment Worker*, announced that the International had appropriated a quarter of a million dollars and that the Chicago locals were "ready to spend every cent they have in their treasury." Simultaneously, the union attempted to convince the manufacturers that industrial war harmed both sides, that the trade would be torn by strife until the employers agreed to peaceful negotiations, and that collective bargaining would stabilize the industry and benefit them as much as their workers.

Almost with the beginning of the drive, however, the union realized that it was entering upon a grave struggle. The open shop manufacturers, adept in the art of fighting the union, at once banded together into an informal alliance to halt the or-

ganization of the trade. They began to force their employees to sign "Yellow Dog" contracts.\* They hired spies, company guards, detectives, and ordinary thugs to intimidate the workers. They preemptorily discharged and blacklisted those who were guilty of casting glances in the direction of the union. They divided worker against worker by practicing favoritism in the shop and by fanning racial and religious antagonisms. They organized "shop societies" which allegedly represented the employees. They even began to secure injunctions—one as early as February, 1923—which prohibited any organization or individual from inducing employees to break their "individual" or Yellow Dog contracts.<sup>2</sup>

The effectiveness of the union in mobilizing its strength was also seriously retarded by other important obstacles. The workers in the trade, of many nationalities, languages, and creeds, were a difficult group to organize. They were suspicious of each other and fearful of their employers. Many of them, remembering the defeat of the 1917 strike, hesitated to intrust their welfare to the union. Furthermore, the dress season was poor; the employers were less willing to negotiate than in more prosperous periods; and the union itself, as noted before, was torn by the internal conflict which raged within its ranks and especially within Local 100.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of these difficulties, the organization campaign was pushed energetically and met with a measure of success. By the beginning of 1924 the number of dressmakers enrolled in the union constituted a majority of the workers in the trade. About one hundred shops, most of them rather small, had already signed agreements.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the union increasingly realized that the trade would never be organized except by a general strike. All its efforts to secure conferences with the open-shop

\* By signing such a Yellow Dog contract, the worker bound himself, as a condition of employment, to refrain from joining in membership or from having any "dealings, communications, or interviews with the officers, agents, or members of any Labor Union."

employers resulted in failure. In September, it enlisted the assistance of Mayor Dever for this purpose, but he was equally unsuccessful.<sup>5</sup> In October, the workers of Roth-Worshky were forced into a strike. Meanwhile, the already existing agreements were on the verge of expiration and the organization campaign was approaching its climax. The time for the showdown had arrived.

In January, 1924, the General Executive Board authorized a general strike in the Chicago dress industry in the event that a peaceable settlement could not be achieved. The union thereupon formulated its demands, among them the closed shop, a forty-hour week, unemployment insurance, a trial period of one week, arbitration machinery, and higher minimum scales for all crafts. It sent letters to the employers, offering to enter into negotiations with them either individually or collectively. The union manufacturers were requested to continue the friendly relations of the past. The non-union firms were asked to cooperate with the union in inaugurating "more civilized and intelligent" methods of industrial relations and better conditions of employment. All manufacturers were requested to reply before February 15.<sup>6</sup>

The answer of the employers made a general strike inevitable. The non-union firms completely ignored the plea for negotiations. Knowing that these would fight, the Chicago Dress and Skirt Manufacturers' Association, representing the union shops, also declined to meet the terms of their workers. Accordingly, the union organized a joint strike committee and ordered it to draft plans for a walkout. The time for the general strike was set at 10:30 Wednesday morning, February 27.

Promptly at the zero hour, the great majority of the workers—from 2,500 to 3,000 in number—left their shops. Joined by the 2,000 cloakmakers, they formed a surging mass which marched in a body to the union halls. Some two hundred firms, comprising the great bulk of the dress houses of the city, were

either completely tied up or seriously crippled. On March 4 the strike spread to Evanston. Enthusiasm among the workers ran high. The leaders of the strike were hopeful of an immediate and great victory. *Justice*, the International organ, boasted that the dress trade of Chicago had at last been organized. The smaller firms immediately hastened to make peace; by March 7, fifty of them had already settled upon the terms of the union. In two or three more weeks the strike had been won on the whole Northwest Side.<sup>7</sup>

The downtown manufacturers, however, soon gave evidence that they would spare no efforts to defeat the union. Two more associations were formed at once. On March 15, the three groups merged as the Chicago Association of Dress Manufacturers, which avowed the purpose of defending the open shop and of placing all its resources at the disposal of firms wishing to break previously-made agreements with the union. The employers hired scabs in increasing numbers. They held their workers to the letter of the Yellow Dog contracts. They augmented the numbers of their private guards and detectives and obtained the aid of the State's Attorney's detectives. Most important, they secured a series of sweeping injunctions which, together with the factors mentioned above, metamorphosized the struggle from a mere strike into a veritable war—a war in which the workers, prevented by arbitrary decree from utilizing their only weapon of picketing, faced unarmed the employers and all the forces of "law and order" at their disposal.

The injunctions secured by the manufacturers were, according to the International, "more severe than any . . . known in the history of the struggles of organized labor."<sup>8</sup> Considering them as their most formidable weapons, the employers immediately upon the outbreak of the strike hastened to "Injunction Judge" Dennis Sullivan, who granted them injunctions of so sweeping a nature that they made "just peacefully walking by a crime."<sup>9</sup> The injunction granted to the Francine Frock

Company and fourteen other firms, for example, ordered the International, the Chicago locals, and all "officers, agents, managers, representatives and members" to desist and refrain from:

Picketing or maintaining any picket or pickets at or near any of these firms, or along the routes used by their employees, or at or near the home of any of the employees.

Watching, following, stopping, assaulting, beating, threatening, menacing, intimidating, harassing, molesting, or interfering with anyone employed by any of the complainants or anyone seeking employment or doing business with them.

Calling upon or talking to any employe of any of the complainants, and calling upon or talking to any member of the family of such employe against the manifest will of such member.

Calling, addressing or applying to any employe of the complainants, respectively, any profane, insulting, humiliating or obscene epithet, name, term or language.

Soliciting or inducing any person . . . to quit such employment.

Threatening, attempting, recommending, encouraging, causing, maintaining, participating, or assisting in the doing of any of the things which are herein forbidden.<sup>10</sup>

Even talking to non-union workers over the telephone, watching them pass by in the streets, or "humiliating" them by calling them scabs thus became crimes by the ukase of the chancery court.

The effectiveness of these injunctions in crippling the strike was soon apparent. At first the employers were content to hold them as a threat over the heads of the workers. As picketing continued, strikers were hailed into court with increasing frequency, cases were handled with greater speed, convictions became more certain and penalties more severe. Before the end of the strike 258 persons were cited for contempt of court. Only three of them were declared not guilty. Of the remaining 255 strikers, 202 were fined, 10 were sentenced to imprisonment, and 43 suffered both penalties. Fines ranged to \$450 and totalled \$20,950. Jail sentences ranged to six months, averaged 32.4 days per worker, and added up to a total of 1,715 days for

the 53 persons involved. The huge number of convictions and the harshness of the sentences played havoc with the machinery of the union and eventually, as the employers had hoped, broke the backbone of the strike.\*

\*CONTEMPT CITATIONS AND SENTENCES IN 1924 STRIKE<sup>11</sup>

Number of Workers	Fines	Prison Sentences	Others
3			Not Guilty
1	\$ 10.00		
21	15.00		
107	25.00		
24	35.00		
9	50.00		
13	100.00		
12	125.00		
7	150.00		
5	175.00		
3	200.00		
3		10 days	
1		20 days	
1		30 days	
1		50 days	
4		6 months	
1	150.00	5 days	
4	125.00	10 days	
1	200.00	10 days	
18	350.00	10 days	
1	200.00	15 days	
1	350.00	15 days	
1	35.00	20 days	
1	150.00	20 days	
2	200.00	20 days	
1	350.00	20 days	
1	450.00	20 days	
2	200.00	25 days	
2	150.00	30 days	
1	200.00	30 days	
3	200.00	50 days	
3	250.00	60 days	
<u>258</u>	<u>20,950.00</u>	<u>1,715 days</u>	

The penalties in these contempt cases were the more severe in that the great bulk of the sentenced workers violated no law or ordinance of any kind. Ninety-four per cent of them were punished for peaceful picketing.\* For this, one person was sentenced to imprisonment for 20 days and a fine of \$450; another, to 50 days and \$200; a third, to 60 days and \$250. One of the strike leaders, Meyer Barkan, received a 50 day sentence for merely advising strikers to picket.† The few charges of "assault" were usually ridiculous. Florence Corn, for example, was charged with "crippling for life" one of the policemen and was sentenced to thirty days and \$100. Since Miss Corn was a slightly built girl of but 120 pounds and the officer of the law a burly individual, Mary McDowell, then Chicago Commissioner of Public Welfare, undertook an investigation. She found the patrolman still on the police force and sound

\* CHARGES AND SENTENCES IN CONTEMPT CASES, 1924 STRIKE<sup>12</sup>

Calendar Offense	Number Sentenced	Per Cent of Cases	Range of Sentences
Peaceful picketing only	205	80.0	From \$10 to 50 days and \$200.
Picketing and threatening violence, no assault	12	4.7	From \$100 to 10 days and \$200.
Picketing and calling workers "scab," no assault	15	5.9	From 10 days and \$100 to 20 days and \$150.
Persistent picketing, no assault	3	1.0	From 5 days and \$150 to 50 days and \$200.
Advising strikers to picket	1	0.4	50 days.
Picketing, calling workers "scab," and assault	7	2.7	From 10 days and \$150 to 20 days and \$350.
Persistent picketing and assault.	5	1.9	From 30 days to 30 days and \$200.

†Among other union leaders imprisoned during the course of this strike were Philip Davids, chairman of Local 18, for 90 days, and Max Novack, business agent, to 20 days. Manager Bialis was arrested twice by the State's Attorney's men and kept in jail once for 24 hours and the second time for 28 hours, without any charges of any kind, until he was released on writs of *habeas corpus*.

in body and limb. His story was that he had been pushed against a door by five strikers, that his face was scratched and that the elbow cap of his left arm was broken. He thought, but he was not positive, that Florence Corn was one of the group which was responsible for his being "crippled."<sup>13</sup>

Next in importance to the injunctions in breaking the strike were the law enforcement agencies. The police were the least guilty of maltreating the workers. About fifty patrolmen were assigned to the strike detail. Mayor Dever and Captain Keliher ordered them to ignore peaceful picketing, never to "start anything," to enforce the law rigidly in cases of threats or violence, and to form protecting lanes for the strikebreakers. Generally, the patrolmen obeyed these instructions and fulfilled their duties efficiently. A small group of them, however, threatened pickets and committed acts of violence. A more serious blot on the record of the police force was the laxness of attitude toward the private detectives and guards of the employers. About a hundred of these professional strikebreakers, generally recruited from the petty gunman type, were allowed to act illegally as public law enforcement agents. The majority of them, although having no legal standing of any sort, carried arms, made arrests, insulted and treated roughly the women pickets, and in general acted with the brutality characteristic of their calling while the police stood by and watched.<sup>14</sup>

Of more concern to the strikers than the police or even the private guards—whom the girls despised more than they feared—were the detectives sent out by Robert S. Crowe, the State's Attorney. Crowe had apparently decided to interfere in the strike even before it was called and had warned Perlstein accordingly. By the end of March thirty-five of his detectives were patrolling the strike area. Their presence was contrary to the wishes of the Superintendent of Police. Their conduct was "almost incredibly bad," their language to the girls "abusive and obscene." They were more "insolent, biased, and brutal" than

even the thugs hired by the employers.<sup>15</sup> Their numerous acts of unjustified and unlawful brutality shocked all observers. On March 5, some of them assaulted a woman who was walking by peacefully and had no connection whatsoever with the strike. On March 6, a detective seized a peaceful spectator, pushed him violently, and then arrested him. On March 14, a girl was pushed into a hallway and beaten so severely that she was in the hospital for several days. Such "serious assaults," according to an impartial student of this strike, "were by no means unusual, while threats of violence were common."<sup>16</sup> Although constituting less than a third of the policing force, these men were publicly charged by Mayor Dever with responsibility for most of the turbulence of the strike and for ninety per cent of its 1,200 arrests.<sup>17</sup>

The Citizen's Committee which investigated the strike charged, not only that Crowe himself was rabidly anti-union, but also that his men and some of the police were in the direct pay of the manufacturers. Bribery of the Chicago policing forces in industrial disputes, particularly in the clothing trades, was of course not uncommon. In this dress strike of 1924, however, it reached new heights. Manufacturers hired their services with money, clothes, and whiskey. One man was heard to say that "This strike detail is the potatoes: two bucks a day and a lot of drinks." Others were heard to ask employers to "Just show us who you want, and we'll get them." Crowe appeared particularly interested in the manufacturer Arthur Weiss, who was called "the boss" by detectives, whose orders were obeyed with alacrity, and whose factory became "a temporary police station." Overwhelming evidence of this nature led the Citizen's Committee to the considered conclusion that the State's Attorney's men were assigned to this task with the deliberate purpose of "aiding the employers in breaking this strike." "Those men," as Father Frederic Seidenberg said, "were out for trouble and being paid for it."<sup>18</sup>

Together, the State's Attorney's detectives, the private guards, and the police made some 1,200 arrests during the course of the strike. Most of these were for peaceful picketing, which, not being a statutory offense, was no concern of any of the above.\* Only about a dozen persons were arrested for alleged assault, and even these charges consisted more of defamation of character than of physical violence. Many were arrested without any cause whatever—persons who stopped to read the injunctions, settlement workers who came to observe the strike, peaceful passers-by who happened to be in the neighborhood when "the 'wagon' needed to be filled." Of those so indiscriminately arrested only a hundred were ever tried, and only two were convicted.<sup>19</sup>

Obviously, the purpose of the arrests, as that of the injunctions, was to discourage and to intimidate the strikers. So unwarranted were they that the court severely criticized the police forces for cluttering up its docket. They resulted in but two minor convictions. But they accomplished their main objective of hampering the conduct of the strike. They were naturally directed against the most active workers, many of whom were held illegally for hours without being booked. One young woman was taken to four different police stations before she was released on a writ of *habeas corpus*. They diverted much of the energy of the union in tracing, bailing, and defending its members in court. They constituted in attorney's fees, bonding charges, court costs, and fines, a financial drain which the union could ill afford. The bonds alone for the nine hundred workers released on bail amounted to some \$36,000.<sup>20</sup>

Organized labor of Chicago could not of course be indifferent to such a situation. The Chicago Federation of Labor at once organized a special committee of fifteen to aid in the conduct of the strike. Led by Anton Johanssen, this committee

\* Neither the police nor the State's Attorney's office had anything to do with the enforcement of the injunctions against picketing, which were solely a matter for the equity courts.

solicited funds for the dressmakers, exposed the strikebreaking activities of Crowe, and protested vigorously to Mayor Dever against the attitude of the police forces. The rest of the Chicago labor movement was similarly generous in its aid. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, came to Chicago to address a mass meeting on the strike at the Ashland Auditorium. Other groups, too, became actively interested in ending this bitter industrial struggle. Even before the strike began a delegation of citizens requested Mayor Dever to call a conference. The employers ignored his appeal. The United States Department of Labor twice sent mediators to Chicago, but their services were declined by the manufacturers. On March 13, Mary McDowell made another attempt at conciliation. Two hundred workers appeared for the scheduled conference but only two employers.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, a larger section of the usually lethargic public had become aroused by the violent methods employed against the strikers. The Chicago Church Federation, in receipt of numerous complaints against the detectives and private guards, called together fifty leading citizens of the city to discuss the situation. The result of this meeting was the formation, on March 6, of a Citizen's Committee for the purpose of investigating and of seeking means to terminate the struggle. Headed by Father Seidenberg of Loyola University, and including among its members prominent educators, clergymen, labor experts, and social workers, this committee commanded great influence in the community and constituted an agency which was eager to serve both sides with impartiality and justice.

A sub-committee immediately undertook an investigation of the strike. Its report, issued on March 11, labelled the conduct of the policing forces as outrageous, described the injunctions as a gross violation of constitutional rights, and flatly asserted that the manufacturers were opposed to all conciliation efforts. The Citizen's Committee then called upon Mayor Dever, who

requested Mary McDowell to call the conference mentioned previously. When this effort failed, the committee directly approached the manufacturers with an offer of arbitration. The Chicago Association of Dress Manufacturers replied that it could not confer "with any person or persons whose *sole objective* is to bring us into agreement with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union."<sup>22</sup>

Somewhat alarmed at being shouldered with responsibility for the struggle, the association then attempted to present a better case for its members by means of an advertisement in the *Chicago Tribune* of March 20. The employers denied that they were unfair, oppressive, or unreasonable, or that there was even a strike against them. The wages of their employees, they said, were higher than ever before in the history of the trade; their hours were only forty-four a week; the shops in which they worked were clean, airy, and healthful; and industrial relations were "harmonious and tranquil." This idyllic state was now being threatened by persons "whose business it is to foment discord." If the manufacturers yielded to their outrageous demands, the shops would be thrown into a "state of constant agitation resulting in strikes," wages would be continually raised and hours reduced, the consumers would suffer from rising prices, and the industry would be ruined and driven out of Chicago. The association therefore deemed it its solemn duty to protect its workers, its member firms, and the consumers by refusing to enter into any negotiations with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. The public, in conclusion, was extended "a cordial invitation to investigate for itself the wages, working conditions and treatment accorded the people employed in our establishments."

The union replied with a similar advertisement four days later. The employers, it said, were denying the workers the elemental right of collective bargaining. A strike was on—despite the pious denials of the manufacturers, despite their Yellow Dog

contracts and all other efforts to prevent it. Wages and conditions of work were far from ideal and the union offered to submit facts and figures. The union had repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to accept arbitration and mediation from any impartial source; the manufacturers had rejected every such offer. The main issue, however, was the establishment of collective bargaining in the trade. Only on this basis could industrial relations ever be put upon the plane of permanent harmony and peace.<sup>23</sup>

The Citizen's Committee took a similar view of the situation. The issues in the strike, it declared, were union recognition and collective bargaining. Realizing that the manufacturers would not budge on these questions, the committee ceased its efforts at mediation. It issued another report on the role of the policing forces in the strike. It outlined to Mayor Dever a new strike policing plan, which stressed the creation of a special strike detail of uniformed policemen especially trained for such work. On March 18, expressing the hope "that sooner or later a better day will dawn," it disbanded altogether.<sup>24</sup>

Up to this time, the tactics of the employers had only increased the determination of the dressmakers to win their struggle for union recognition. Picturesque "Mother" Jones epitomized their enthusiasm by urging the girls to fight until "all the bosses and their hired lawyers and other lackeys" would be forced to yield to their collective strength. Local 100, the Joint Board, and the General Executive Board were determined to continue the fight as long as necessary. The working dressmakers contributed ten per cent of their earnings to the strike fund. The cloakmakers, considering the strike as their own, contributed handsomely to its financing, furnished much of its leadership, and took their places on the picket line. The International and the New York locals sent in over \$200,000 to the strike fund. Many Chicago unions made similarly generous donations; the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, alone, contributed \$10,000.

As a result of this financial aid, the workers could be paid sizable strike benefits—eventually consisting of \$12 a week for men and \$9 for women.

On March 12, President Sigman, reviewing the strike, pronounced it "in wonderful condition." The employers, he telegraphed to New York, "are beginning to feel uneasy. Injunctions have no effect on strikers. Pickets are on the picket line as usual." Indeed, the first reaction to the injunctions was an increase of picketing. Not only the cloakmakers, but also members of other unions joined the dressmakers on the picket line as a protest against the sweeping nature of Judge Sullivan's decrees. At the beginning of May, the ranks of the union were still unbroken. By that time, the dressmakers had won the strike in the Northwest Side shops. One hundred agreements had been secured. A thousand workers were back on the job under union conditions. According to the General Executive Board, even the bitterly anti-union shops, which claimed to be unaffected by the strike, were only pretending to operate with the aid of thugs and strike-breakers. The International, meeting in convention at this time, reviewed the situation with optimism. Hyman Bros., one of the largest shops, had just settled with the union. The backbone of the anti-union front, it said, had at last been broken. The Chicago dressmakers had proven their strength and their endurance. It accordingly resolved that "the strike in Chicago must be continued" until it ended in a great victory for the workers.<sup>25</sup>

Eventually, however, the employers succeeded in breaking the strike. The courts and the policing forces continued their relentless campaign. Arrests mounted in number; contempt citations multiplied; court sentences became more severe. In time picketing became so hazardous that the union was forced to discontinue it altogether. The ranks of the workers began to break. Some dressmakers began to work at night while still formally engaging in the strike during the daytime. The union succeeded indeed in renewing contractual relations with a few other former

union shops. But the struggle became daily more one-sided and more hopeless. One season was already over, and a continuation of the strike implied its extension indefinitely into the future. The costs were assuming huge proportions. Because of lack of funds, strike benefits began to be paid every other week and eventually ceased altogether. The International, which had been repeatedly warning Perlstein of its inability to finance a protracted strike, applied increasing pressure on him to terminate the struggle. On June 28, it preemptorily ordered the strike called off. Perlstein held on for a few days more but on July 3 officially declared the strike at an end.<sup>26</sup>

The long conflict thus ended in a decisive defeat for the union. According to the International it had been not a mere strike but a veritable "war." It had lasted eighteen weeks—for the Roth-Worshky workers, thirty-four weeks. It had cost the union over \$300,000. It had resulted in 1,500 casualties in arrests and contempt cases. Its failure left the union weakened in numbers and morale, burdened with a host of court cases, and facing a legacy of tremendous set-backs. It left the workers, who had already suffered so much, at the mercy of employers determined more than ever to maintain the open shop. Some nine hundred of them were entirely blacklisted by the anti-union firms. Others obtained jobs only upon signing Yellow Dog contracts and resigning from the union. Even the gains won during the course of the strike in some 104 shops were largely lost. The union firms, arguing that they could not compete with the open shops, secured revisions of their agreements by which the workers gave up the forty-hour week in return for a \$1.00 weekly increase.

Almost two years later, when the general strike of the dress-makers was a matter of history, its issues were fought again in a stirring battle over the contempt sentences imposed by Judge Dennis Sullivan. The union had promptly appealed ninety-four of the cases, including practically all the jail sentences. On December 29, 1925, the Appellate Court affirmed the decisions

of Judge Sullivan. The union then appealed to the Supreme Court of the state. On May 1, 1926, this court, without any review of the evidence, also decided against the strikers. The affirming of such severe sentences for peaceful picketing, particularly since the state of Illinois had meanwhile prohibited the use of injunctions in such cases, aroused the indignation of the whole American labor movement and of many prominent citizens throughout the country. Appeals poured in to Judge Sullivan to remit the fifty-three jail sentences. Jane Addams, Mary McDowell, Agnes Nestor, Mrs. Harold L. Ickes, Amelia Sears, and other leading Chicago women pleaded especially for the forty-two women and girls. The Injunction Judge, however, was not to be dissuaded from his rabid anti-unionism by humanitarian considerations. These women, he said, "were Amazons, fighters. One threw a policeman down a ten-foot areaway, crippling him for life. Do you want me to take the sword out of the hands of the goddess of justice and give her a powder puff?"<sup>27</sup>

All efforts in the courts having failed, the union paid all the fines, and the former strikers prepared to serve their terms. As the drama unfolded, public opinion became more and more outraged. The victims of the injunctions were guilty of no crime. They had been convicted, not by a jury, but by the same judge who had issued the original writs. All of them were respected members of their communities. Some of them were terror-stricken at the thought of imprisonment. Several of the girls had married and were no longer in the trade. Two of them were forced to leave bed-ridden mothers unattended. Many of them had young children. Mrs. Wanda Kolita left an infant of seven months behind her. Frieda Reicher travelled a thousand miles, from Colorado Springs where she was being treated for tuberculosis, to serve her thirty days. Lillian Gruenberg gave up a scholarship which she had just won to Bryn Mawr College. Only three women, for whom even the employers interceded,

were spared the ordeal—one of them critically ill and the other two in an advanced stage of pregnancy. The others received no mercy. In fact, Judge Sullivan was so determined that the strikers suffer to the full the penalties he had imposed upon them that he personally instructed the sheriff not to release strikers who entered the jail during the afternoon until the afternoon of the last day of their sentences.

The unusual scenes that followed made the former strikers national figures for a time. On June 12, the first group, preparatory to surrendering themselves to the sheriff, assembled at union headquarters. They listened to speeches. They elected committees to represent them while in prison. Then, dressed in their holiday attire, surrounded by mothers, sisters, husbands, sweethearts, children, union officials and members, reporters and cameramen, carrying bouquets of flowers presented by admirers, and singing, laughing, and jesting, they marched in a body to the county building. In the lobby of the courthouse they spied a scale, and someone suggested that they weigh themselves. Some of these "Amazons"—according to Judge Sullivan—tipped the scale at only eighty-eight or ninety pounds. Then, with the sheriff's deputies added to the crowd, they marched to the county jail. At the gates the whole mass halted. As their names were called, the girls stepped out of the crowd one by one, took a bow, and went inside the prison grounds.<sup>28</sup> Just before departing for their cells, they heard that the New York fur workers had successfully ended their four-month strike. They thereupon unanimously adopted a congratulatory resolution: "On the eve of being cast in jail for demanding the same 40-hour week, we greet your victory."<sup>\*29</sup>

Meanwhile, Mary McDowell's investigation was uncovering startling facts, notably the case of the policeman whom these "Amazons" had "crippled for life." Organized labor and decent

\* The union expended some \$6,000 on behalf of the imprisoned strikers. It paid them for their loss of time from work, arranged for the boarding of their children, and had them served with one meal daily from a nearby restaurant.

citizens throughout the state accordingly carried the fight to Governor Len Small. Leaders of trade unions, civic organizations, and churches throughout Illinois signed a huge petition which requested an executive pardon for all the strikers. A committee headed by John H. Walker and Victor Olander, president and secretary respectively of the Illinois Federation of Labor, attended the hearings on June 16. The governor listened politely, committed himself to nothing, and agreed to take the case under advisement. Nothing more was heard from Springfield for almost two months. Finally, pressed by telegrams, both Governor Len Small and Attorney-General Carlstrom wired their decision: they had been unable "to establish legal authority for [the] Governor's intervention."<sup>30</sup>

The victims in the contempt cases of 1924 thus served in full the sentences imposed upon them for engaging in peaceful picketing. The American Federation of Labor pronounced the whole episode a disgraceful "travesty upon justice" which dishonored "the whole American people, and the citizens of Illinois in particular."<sup>31</sup> The ex-strikers, however, considered their prison terms as a contribution to the solidarity of the dress-makers. The last of the women strikers was released on August 13. Like the others, she was met with a veritable garden of flowers and became the leader of a parade for fifteen blocks from the county jail to the headquarters of the union. "I'm glad," she said, "to get out and get some fresh air. But anytime this union calls on me to help in another strike to fight another injunction, I'll be ready to answer the union's call."<sup>32</sup>



and Charles Cohen, the two associations; and Judge Henry Horner served as impartial chairman. Premiums began to be collected on April 28, 1924. The date for the beginning of benefits was set for June, 1926. Palmer and Company, which was not a member of their association, made its own arrangement with the union.<sup>1</sup>

Simultaneously, the Joint Board inaugurated another campaign for the organization of out-of-town cloak shops. In the spring of 1925, it appropriated \$5,000 and assigned Benjamin Dolnick to this task. Later in the year, the International instructed Mollie Friedman and Alexia Smith, assigned to organization work in the Chicago dress trade, to help in the campaign. Unionizing activities were accordingly begun in Coloma, Kenosha, and other nearby towns. Although the drive was ineffective in its immediate objective, it was instrumental in checking the further flight of shops from the Chicago area.

The dressmakers, too, despite their bitter defeat, immediately renewed their struggle for organization. In addition to Local 100, the Polish workers now had their own Polish Dressmakers' Unity Local 60. The members of both these locals taxed themselves a dollar per week to aid those of their number unable to secure employment. Within a month of the termination of the general strike, a new campaign was under way. The market was flooded with leaflets which loudly proclaimed that "revenge will not drive unionism out of the dress industry." According to Perlstein, the employers "got the surprise of their life, and were running around like wild ones. They imagined that the Union would keep quiet for a few years, and all of a sudden the Union is here again."<sup>2</sup>

In January, 1925, Mollie Friedman succeeded Perlstein as International organizer for the Chicago dress trade. Under her guidance the dressmakers won renewals of their agreements of 1924 and even organized a few new firms. Local 100 gained much in morale, if not in numbers. On May 1, it staged a colorful

festival and pageant which caused somewhat of a stir in Chicago labor circles. In December the International convention, considering the progress made by the dressmakers satisfactory, decided to inaugurate another great drive in the immediate future.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the position of the union, instead of improving, was becoming more critical. The cloak trade was approaching its nadir of decline during the decade. New York jobbers were opening more and more branch offices in Chicago. Small shops which disregarded union regulations were multiplying. Contractors and sub-manufacturers were moving into small towns beyond the reach of the Chicago organization. The products of dress and fur shops were replacing cloaks and suits. Styles were becoming simpler, and the time of labor per garment was being reduced. Seasons were shrinking, earnings declining, and unemployment becoming chronic. Cloakmakers, driven into dress factories by the hopeless situation of their trade, were finding themselves either working under lower standards or were being refused employment altogether.

In the dress trade, organization work was making little headway. The Chicago Dress Manufacturers' Association not only fought the workers successfully in its own open shops but also attacked them vigorously in those already organized. It canvassed all employers and urged them to break relations with the International. It promised them "all 'physical' and financial protection in case of a strike." It printed Yellow Dog contracts in bulk and urged all employers to "let other things go and see that they are signed today."<sup>4</sup> It stationed private guards and State's Attorney's detectives (with their badges out of sight) around the shops. The union fought back. It called numerous shop meetings, distributed circulars in vast numbers, and urged the United States Department of Labor to investigate the individual contracts and the drastic injunctions of the manufacturers. It was unable, however, to make any perceptible dents in the ranks of the association.<sup>5</sup>

Under these circumstances, the difficulties of the union multiplied. The cloak manufacturers, emboldened by the failure of the dressmakers, utilized all opportunities to embarrass and demoralize it. They increased their agitation for the re-introduction of piece work. In August, 1925, they formally threatened to reorganize their factories by reducing their labor force unless the Joint Board acceded to this demand. Local 5 became so alarmed that it was deterred from conducting a referendum on changing the system of work only by President Sigman's promise to discuss the whole question at the next convention.<sup>6</sup>

Due to the pressure of the employers, conditions of work steadily grew worse. Non-union shops continued to spring up. Even in some union shops, cloakmakers, compelled by necessity, connived with employers to violate the rules of the union in various ways, particularly by working on piece rates. This collusion was difficult to discover and to punish. The Joint Board, more sympathetic to the plight of the offenders than severe in its justice, reversed so many decisions of the Grievance Board that the latter body formally protested against its leniency.

The finances of the union constituted another grave problem. The Joint Board had exhausted its funds in the dressmakers' strike. Because of a falling membership and unemployment in the trade, its income was being cut, and its current deficit was being increased every week. In August, 1924, the finance committee recommended a drastic economy program. Most of the measures suggested were adopted. The complaint and medical departments were abolished. The secretarial staff was reduced. The donation fund was curtailed. The other item on its program—the reduction of the number of business agents—brought about a long controversy. When the Joint Board accepted this proposal, the business agents protested that such a step would ruin the union and collectively resigned. The Joint Board then decided to retain all four temporarily, though at reduced salaries. The economy program thus adopted did not, however, solve the

problem. In November, 1925, the Joint Board was again suffering a weekly deficit of \$150.

The internal crisis which now developed in the union was largely a result of these factors. Even more than in 1922, some of the cloakmakers tended to place the responsibility for all their woes upon the administration in office. The union, always basically evaluated in terms of bread and butter, seemed to them to be mismanaged. They were paying dues, they claimed, as ever, but were deriving very little tangible benefits. The victory on unemployment insurance meant very little to them because benefits were not yet being paid. Those who hoped to derive personal advantages from a wholesale change of officers and those who were personally embittered against a business agent or a Joint Board delegate fanned these resentments. In addition, the discontented in the Chicago union, as in practically the whole American labor movement of the day, found a well-organized opposition to which they could rally. The members and sympathizers of the Trade Union Educational League\* constituted a cohesive group which had for years been presenting a detailed alternative program. Naming themselves "Progressives" and proud of their militancy, they characterized the leadership of the union as "Rights," charged them with a bureaucratic attitude toward the workers and collaboration with the employers, and called for a change of administration. The Joint Board, in turn, dubbed the "Lefts" visionary nuisances, radicals, and disrupters of the union, charged them with utilizing the hard times in the industry for the purpose of reducing the union to subserviency to the Communist Party, and subjected them to various measures of discipline.<sup>7</sup>

As noted previously, the Rights and Lefts of the Chicago union had first come into headlong collision in 1923. The eleven members then expelled immediately became a storm center in

\* For the role of the Trade Union Educational League in the union, see *supra*, pages 147-149.

the organization. Seven of them appealed for reinstatement to the International, which considered the question at its 1924 convention. The committee on appeals upheld their expulsion but the Chicago delegates split on the issue. The Lefts led a fight from the floor against the report and charged that the expelled members had never been given a hearing. The Rights retorted that they had been guilty of besmirching the union at a time when solidarity was especially needed. The convention in the end approved the committee report by a vote of five to one. Early in 1925, however, the appeal committee of the General Executive Board decided to allow five of the appellants to rejoin the union as new members and as probationers for two years.<sup>8</sup>

The struggle between the Rights and the Lefts continued in 1925. In July of that year charges were brought against several workers that they were agitating against the unemployment insurance plan. The Joint Board appointed an investigating committee which held hearings for weeks. Several Lefts, this committee reported, had seized upon the unemployment in the trade as an opportunity to "incite the hungry worker"; some had even attacked the officers of the union as "gangsters and crooks." The Joint Board then selected seven old union members as a trial committee.<sup>9</sup> The special court, however, never met. When the Lefts and Rights temporarily settled their differences in the New York union, the Chicago Joint Board followed suit and dropped the whole case.

The International convention of December, 1925, called several months ahead of schedule to deal with this new factionalism, threshed out the question from every angle. The General Executive Board dwelt at length on the attempt of the Lefts to establish "Communist domination in our organization" and called upon the convention to eliminate the causes and "repair some of the deadly damage to our Union which this catastrophic conflict has caused."<sup>10</sup> The Left delegates countered with a declaration which bitterly assailed "the expulsion policy" of the Gen-

eral Executive Board, charged it with directing its militancy not against the employers but against the most active members of the union, and advocated an entirely new program for the International.<sup>11</sup> Seven separate resolutions urged the convention to grant complete amnesty to all who had been expelled or in any way penalized for membership in the Trade Union Educational League. The report of the appeals committee was a compromise. It upheld all the expulsions made by the International. But "for the sake of strengthening our organization which we all love so dearly," it recommended the full reinstatement of those who belonged to the Trade Union Educational League or similar organizations "but who have otherwise not committed any overt acts that in themselves would be regarded as disruptive."<sup>12</sup> This report, adopted by the convention, constituted a truce between the Lefts and the Rights in the whole International.

Neither in Chicago nor elsewhere did the action of this "harmony" convention diminish the internal conflict. The Chicago delegation had been divided into two hostile groups. Four of its locals, dominated by the Lefts, had introduced a majority of the amnesty resolutions. The Chicago delegates had furthermore carried their personal quarrels into the convention. The Left delegates had protested the seating of Benjamin Dolnick, who represented Local 60. In the ensuing fight on the floor eight Chicagoans had engaged in heated debate on both sides of the question. In the end Dolnick was seated. But the bitterness of the incident was not forgotten.<sup>13</sup>

In the elections of 1926, which followed immediately upon this convention, the Lefts swept into office in the various locals and on the Joint Board. The Rights, in accordance with their new policy, put up little opposition and virtually challenged the Lefts to assume control of the union and to demonstrate what they could do for the workers. When elections for paid officers were held in late February of that year, Manager Bialis

and Business Agents Harry Rufer and Max Novack declined to run again and went back to work in the shops. Thus, within a period of six weeks, practically the whole leadership of the union changed hands. Bernard Soll became the new chairman of the Joint Board; Earl Nadel, its recording secretary; Joseph Levin, its new manager; and Harry Zeff and Roy Glassman its other business agents. The only member of the former administration who retained his office was M. A. Goldstein, the secretary-treasurer of the Joint Board, whose term had not yet expired.

The new "Progressive Administration" gloried in its militancy. It promised an end to internal friction, expulsions, divisions between the leadership and the members, and extravagance in expenditures. It promised the Chicago workers a new democratic rank and file participation in all union activities and called upon them to direct their united efforts toward the improvement of their conditions of work and toward the attainment of longer and more regular seasons. In the cloak trade, it immediately outlined an ambitious program. The unemployment insurance plan was to be drastically changed; only the employers were to contribute to the fund, while the Joint Board would become its sole administrator. Jobbers were to be induced to enter into agreements with the union. The wages of workers whose yearly earnings had been declining were to be increased. In addition to these immediate demands, the union formulated a series of ultimate objectives, including a five-day forty-hour week, a guarantee of employment for thirty-six weeks during the year, and a guaranteed minimum wage of \$2,000 for all workers.

In the dress trade, the Progressive Administration promised a "real and final" organization campaign. To accomplish this goal, it appointed Israel Davidson as organizer and invited all members to join in the task. It announced the creation of a huge organization committee of five hundred workers, the formula-

tion of an elaborate publicity program, and the adoption of several other novel tactics. The International appropriated a weekly subsidy for the drive. The American Negro Labor Congress promised its aid among the Negro workers in the trade. Press releases, leaflets, and cartoons spread the union message. By the end of June, *The Ladies' Garment Worker*, organ of the committee, claimed that the campaign had already resulted, if not in the organization of the trade, at least in "a net increase of average weekly earnings of \$5.37."<sup>14</sup>

In February, 1927, Manager Levin reviewed in a printed report the record of the new administration for the past year and found it good. In December, 1926, it had obtained a new agreement in the cloak trade by which the employers had granted increased minimum scales to all workers and had agreed to inaugurate the forty-hour week within eighteen months. In January, 1927, it had renewed its dress agreements with increases for all workers. Union control over the shops, the report went on to state, had been greatly increased. Complaints had been settled speedily and favorably to the workers. Conditions in the cloak trade had been improved enormously, and the workers were enjoying their best season in years. The campaign in the dress industry, despite the small expenditures by the Chicago union, "without practically any support by the General Executive Board," and despite the violent opposition of the employers, had been successful in organizing about twenty-two shops. At the same time, the confidence of the members in the union had been restored by participation of the rank and file in its activities, by publicity given to all proceedings, and by frequent referendums.<sup>15</sup>

Although this report naturally gave but the credit side of the Left administration, it scarcely failed to hide the fact that the Chicago union had been, during the past year, a house divided against itself. The formal truce between the two camps, never in full effect, soon ended. Morris Bialis, elected vice chairman

of Local 5 early in 1926, was refused his post on the ground that he was still technically a paid officer, although his term had already expired and he was not a candidate to succeed himself.<sup>16</sup> In the summer of that year a determined effort was made to oust M. A. Goldstein from his post as secretary-treasurer. In July, the Joint Board recommended to the locals that this office be abolished "in the interests of economy" and that the manager assume the duties of the post. The Rights, by then organized into a formal opposition as the "Trade Union Group,"\* immediately raised a storm of protest. They labelled this action as an attempt of the administration to obtain complete control of the finances of the union, accused the Joint Board of illegal agitation for its own proposal, and challenged it to allow the membership to vote on the issue. Somewhat alarmed, the Joint Board decided to hold a referendum on this question, which, held in early August, decided against the proposition of the administration.<sup>17</sup> The administration then waited until the regular election in January, 1927, when it supported Earl Nadel as a candidate against Goldstein. Again the Rights rose in arms. A committee came to the Joint Board to protest against its hostility against the secretary-treasurer and to demand that the officer for this post be elected directly by the membership. The Joint Board again yielded, and again Goldstein won, in an election which was watched by the whole Chicago labor movement, by a majority of ninety votes.<sup>18</sup> For this the secretary-treasurer was never forgiven. Levin's report of the next month, discussed above, began with the sentence: "The present administration . . . with the exception of the Secretary-treasurer, can report of real benefits obtained for the membership."

In the summer of 1926 the Left Joint Board severed its re-

\* This opposition was led by former manager Morris Bialis and included among its most active members Max Novack, Harry Rufer, Sol Flack, Max Graffman, David Borowitz, Sam Lederman, Morris Rappaport, Mendy Feinberg, Abraham Rabinowitz, and Meyer Friedman. It carried on ceaseless agitation against the Left administration, charging it, among other indictments, with overlooking scab work being made in Chicago for strike-bound New York firms.

lations with the Chicago Federation of Labor. In July, its delegates to that body distributed circulars announcing a protest meeting against the Sullivan injunctions, at which William Z. Foster, secretary of the Workers' Party, was scheduled to speak. Several officers of the Federation, including its vice president Oscar Nelson and its secretary Edward J. Nockles, thereupon denounced these delegates as propagandists of Communism. The Left delegates countercharged that the Chicago Federation of Labor was not participating in the protest meetings. The result of the whole controversy was an announcement by President Fitzpatrick that the representatives of the Joint Board would henceforth be barred from speaking at the meetings of the central body.<sup>19</sup>

From the point of view of the International, the Chicago Joint Board soon came to be guilty of open treason. Matters came to a head when the General Executive Board took over the conduct of New York cloakmakers' Communist-led strike and called upon all locals to cease sending funds to the New York Joint Board which it had ousted from office. On December 9, 1926, the Chicago Joint Board called a mass meeting to protest the action of the International. The Rights, being a majority of those present, took over this meeting. Later in the month the Joint Board urged its various locals to condemn the policy of the General Executive Board. Some four hundred members of the various locals thereupon met at the call of the Trade Union Group and condemned the action of the Joint Board. The result of this dispute was a virtual state of war between the Chicago Joint Board and the International. Levin, in the report cited above, flatly asserted that there could be no peace "between the right wing and the membership." The right wingers were an "enemy within, watching to stab us in the back." President Sigman, he charged, had "opened another war upon the membership." The Chicago Progressive Administration, he declared, was committed to "struggle against the re-

actionaries and their destructive policies" in both Chicago and in the whole International.<sup>20</sup>

The Chicago union was now plunged into open conflict. Supporters of the Trade Union Group and of the International gathered their forces against the Joint Board. They charged that the business agents were discriminating against those not among their allies. They accused Organizer Davidson of incompetency and extravagance. M. A. Goldstein, the secretary-treasurer, in his financial statement to the Joint Board, demonstrated that Local 100 had actually declined in membership while the organization committee had spent \$5,000 in the dress campaign.<sup>21</sup> Several candidates for business agent withdrew from the election, charging that the Joint Board had decided, as a "political maneuver," to allow the participation of members in arrears with dues. At the same time, President Sigman and Mollie Friedman warned the Joint Board to cease "the selling of certain fake bonds" of the deposed New York officials, or face the consequences of its defiance of the International.<sup>22</sup>

To the Chicago membership, the most serious charge against the Progressive Administration was its conduct of the unemployment insurance fund. The operation of this fund was started on June 1, 1926. During the first year it paid out about \$22,000 in benefits. In May, 1927, the membership suddenly discovered that no money had been collected from employers for six months. The Joint Board manager defended himself with a statement that the Chicago manufacturers refused to pay unemployment insurance while the New York fund was in suspension. On May 27, he reported that he had succeeded in securing a new arrangement. The employers had agreed to pay their back premiums at the rate of 1½% of their payrolls until February 20, 1927, and of ¾% from that date forth. In compensation for these lower payments by the manufacturers, the workers were totally absolved from any contributions into the fund, and the union was to be in complete charge of its administration.<sup>23</sup>

A storm of protest immediately arose on all sides. Many of the cloakmakers saw the whole arrangement as a disguised cut in wages. Others accused the Joint Board of having virtually scrapped the unemployment insurance program by reducing the income of the fund to one-third of that agreed upon in the agreement of 1924 between the employers and the former administration. Most of them demanded the return of the money deducted from them since February 20. On June 8, the cloak locals held a joint meeting on the subject. The manager urged that the new plan be accepted and that the contributions of the workers since February 20 be allowed to remain in the fund. An angry debate followed. The Rights charged the chairman of the meeting with gross partiality. At times the meeting became so turbulent that no one could be heard. After a hundred members had stamped out of the hall, the chairman took the question to a vote and announced its acceptance by a vote of 87 to 86. The dispute then spread to the shops. The workers in the largest shops voted, often unanimously, for the immediate return of their contributions. In many shops, the workers elected committees who demanded and sometimes secured refunds from the employers. At the same time those entitled to unemployment benefits discovered that they received only half the amounts of the past season.<sup>24</sup>

Bitterness now reached the stage of physical violence. Fights broke out in local meetings and soon spread into the streets. On July 13, Lefts and Rights battled each other on Market Street. Several workers were seriously injured. The police made nine arrests. Various members of the union appealed for protection to the Chicago Federation of Labor and to the International. The General Executive Board, which had several weeks before appointed a committee for the investigation of the Chicago Joint Board, judged the time ripe for a showdown.<sup>25</sup>

The General Executive Board committee, consisting of vice presidents Ninfo, Dubinsky, and Kreindler, at once proceeded

to Chicago. On July 22, it appeared before the Joint Board and informed it of the plans for the investigation. Immediately afterwards it set up a joint committee—consisting of its own members, Fitzpatrick, Nockles, and Wills from the Chicago Federation of Labor, and Bender and Corel from the United Hebrew Trades—to hear the charges. For five days this committee conducted hearings in the headquarters of the Chicago Federation of Labor. On August 1, it presented its findings to the members of the Chicago union.

The report of the committee indicted the Progressive Administration of waging war against its own membership, against the International, and against the American Federation of Labor. To support this charge, it quoted at length from Levin's report of February, 1927, from the *Freiheit*,\* and from the correspondence of the Chicago Joint Board. Levin's report, for example, had labelled the General Executive Board and part of the Chicago membership as "reactionaries" who had betrayed the interests of the workers. From the *Freiheit* came evidence that members of the Joint Board had participated in the organization of a "Self-Defense Committee," which was raising funds for the deposed Communist leaders of New York. The Joint Board, therefore, was guilty of supporting this and other groups which were fighting the International and the American Federation of Labor. It also defied the International by withholding the funds collected in the assessment levied two years before to cover the deficit incurred in the dress strike, by refusing to consider charges against its officers, by discriminating against many workers, and by general maladministration of office. By both its acts and its attitude it had shown itself the enemy of true trade unionism, had violated the constitutions of the Chicago union, of the International, and of the American Federation of Labor, and had betrayed the workers who were its members.<sup>26</sup>

This severe indictment was not coupled with any disciplinary

\*Daily organ of the Workers' Party.

action against the officers involved. However, the committee immediately followed its investigation with a call for a new election of local officers. It accepted nominations, examined all candidates for office, and required all of them to sign a pledge of loyalty to the International and to the American Federation of Labor.<sup>27</sup> The Joint Board, in a special meeting on August 3, branded the election as "illegal" and called upon all the Chicago members to refrain from participating in it.

Despite the protest and boycott of the Joint Board, the elections were held on August 5. Some 700 members cast their ballots.<sup>28</sup> The complexion of the executive boards of the locals and of the Joint Board at once changed completely. David Borowitz became the new chairman of Local 5, Philip Davids of Local 18, Harry Rufer of Local 59, and Mollie Yanowitz of Local 100.\* On August 11, the members of the union met at the Labor Lyceum. John Fitzpatrick presided, Vice President Ninfo reported on the election, and President Sigman installed the new officers. Schaffer became the new chairman of the Joint Board, Philip Davids its vice chairman, and Nathan Mintz its recording secretary. The Rights were again in control of the Chicago union.

The struggle between the Lefts and Rights now entered its third and most bitter stage. When the new Joint Board met at union headquarters on Friday evening, August 12, to transact business, it found its position challenged by the old Joint Board which still claimed to be the legal representative body of the Chicago locals. Schaffer and Soll, the chairmen of the rival Joint Boards, faced each other at the rostrum. Both of them had their supporters. Both attempted to conduct a meeting, and both were equally unsuccessful. Policemen and detectives, who had been waiting in the corridor, invaded the meeting hall, but

\* The other four locals did not hold elections. Locals 54 and 81 were never controlled by the Lefts. Local 60 refused to conduct an election and was consequently suspended from the Joint Board. The election in Local 104 was postponed by the Joint Committee to September 15.

since there was no disorder, were somewhat confused about their duty in the situation. Eventually Schaffer solved the dilemma by offering to call the president of the International. Everyone—the members of the Joint Board, the women brought by Soll, and the police—now sat down to await the arrival of Sigman. When he came, he was greeted, according to the Joint Board minutes, “with a storm of applause which convinced the police officers that he is the man to decide in this controversy.” Sigman at once informed the police “that they are not the ones to decide as to who should be the Joint Board.” He ruled that the new officers were legally elected. Sol Flack and Harry Messer quietly pushed Soll away from the rostrum. Schaffer began to conduct the meeting. Soll made another appeal to the police. Sigman interrupted to inform him that he would have to leave the hall unless he sat quietly. Soll and his supporters thereupon left the hall and attempted to hold a rival meeting on the stairs of the building.

The business agents of the Left Administration similarly refused to recognize the new Joint Board. On Saturday, August 13, they were directed to submit their weekly reports to the Board of Directors at two o'clock in the afternoon. Instead of complying with this order, Levin, Glassman, and Zeff deserted the office, and later in the day Zeff was discovered picketing the union headquarters. The Board of Directors thereupon suspended them from office and ordered them to appear at a special meeting of the Joint Board on August 15. M. A. Goldstein in the meantime changed all locks and keys in the office and hired a night watchman. When the business agents were again absent from the Joint Board meeting, the Board declared their offices vacant and elected Schaffer and Abraham Rabinowitz in their places. Shop chairmen, members, and firms conducting business with the union were notified of the change in its official staff. All ex-officers of the Joint Board and the locals were ordered to turn over all union property to their successors.

M. A. Goldstein, Nathan Mintz, and the two business agents were instructed to attend to the business of the Joint Board until new elections were held.

In the meantime, Levin and others of the deposed officials had set up a dual union with headquarters at 28 South Wells. In letters, leaflets, and bulletins they urged the members to refuse recognition to the "Van Buren Street gang" or to pay dues to it. Calling themselves "the regularly elected officials of the locals and Joint Board," they charged President Sigman with having instituted, with the aid of the employers and "underworld" elements, a *pogrom* against them and the membership. During their administration, they claimed, the union had been a militant organization. It had won increases, carried through a campaign in the dress trade, and had "established democracy" in its internal administration. Sigman, Fitzpatrick, and the new "self-appointed right wing officers" were attempting, "in cooperation with the bosses," "to break our union." Therefore, they called upon all members of the union "to pay no attention to the orders and calls from the fake Joint Board" and to render their allegiance only to the true union.<sup>29</sup>

The Joint Board, equally embittered, answered in kind by a special leaflet and by articles in the *Gerechtigkeit* and the *Jewish Daily Forward*. It charged the former administration with being "a pure swindle and bluff." Conditions in the cloak trade had deteriorated to the point that union control was almost gone. The unemployment insurance fund, to which many of the employers were not even contributing the  $\frac{3}{4}\%$  agreed upon in May, was virtually dead. The dress organization drive was a "fake" which had resulted, not in any gains, but in an actual loss of thirty-one shops to the union. Added to their other crimes, the former officials had been guilty of maladministration of funds. The organizer, I. Davidson, was charged with having utilized most of his money, not in organizing the dress trade, but in support of the Workers' Party; another business

agent, with keeping in his own pocket the dues which he collected. Lastly "the defeated bunch" was guilty of "setting up a scab clique which they are calling Union." The Joint Board therefore called upon its members to rally around its banner and to reestablish the authority of the union in the industry.<sup>30</sup> On September 1, the Joint Board secured an injunction from the Superior Court of Cook County, Illinois, prohibiting the dual union from using any name or title whatsoever associated with the Chicago Joint Board and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.<sup>31</sup>

Among the cloakmakers, the Needle Trades Industrial Union, as the dual union soon called itself, accomplished very little. Its attempt to call a general strike in the cloak trade resulted in the walkout of but a single man. The Joint Board, supported by the International and the Chicago Federation of Labor, soon reestablished its authority in the whole trade, and despite the tendency of some employers to utilize the opportunity for their own advantage, succeeded in renewing all its former contractual relations. In the dress trade, however, the Needle Trades Industrial Union, claiming the support of many workers and manufacturers, engaged in a long struggle with the Joint Board. It called a series of shop strikes against firms having agreements with the Joint Board, the most important of which was that against Hyman Brothers, the largest union dress shop of the city. In that instance, its most successful one, only about a fifth of the workers walked out, and about half of these came back to work the next day. Having failed in these shop strikes, the dual union attempted to secure agreements by offering concessions to the employers.<sup>32</sup> The Joint Board fought back by warning the manufacturers to fulfill their contractual obligations to the Joint Board and by treating all who supported the dual union, or who were "covering themselves with the cloak of Leftism" in order to avoid payment of dues, as scabs and outlaws.<sup>33</sup> Although the climax of this struggle was over by the

end of 1927, dual unionism continued in the dress trade for several years.

Thus eventually ended the Left and Right conflict of the Chicago Joint Board. Its course had been marked by bitterness without parallel in the previous history of the union. It had divided workers into organized factions which fought each other in and out of office, in the shops, and even engaged in physical combat on the streets. It had lowered the morale of the union, loosened the bonds of discipline, and reduced its prestige among the employers. It left behind it not only deep wounds and scars of battle, but also a dual organization which fought the Joint Board by every means available, which tied up its funds by court proceedings, hindered its efforts to organize the dress trade, and in general hampered the process of recovery. The Chicago union had already suffered greatly from the decline of the cloak trade and from its defeat in the dress organization campaign. The internal conflict contributed further to its woes and left it, weakened in fibre and in finances, to face the gravest of all dangers—the Great Depression.

## *Facing the Depression*

BY THE END OF 1927 the Joint Board had reestablished its position both among the workers and among the employers in the Chicago market. All the locals, with the exception of the Ladies' Tailors' Local 104 (which then ceased to be a part of the International), reported gains in membership. On November 8, Morris Bialis, Abraham Rabinowitz, and Philip Davids, were elected as the new business agents, the former again becoming the manager of the union. Under their leadership, the Joint Board rapidly regained control of the cloak trade, and was soon assuming the offensive against the employers.

The revived militancy of the union shortly won the cloak-makers a forty-hour week. According to the existing agreement, the inauguration of the shorter work week was set for June 1, 1928. In May of that year, accordingly, the Joint Board demanded that this provision be put into effect on the scheduled time. The association, which by then represented all the local manufacturers, countered that the forty-hour week was "unfair, unjust, and impossible."<sup>1</sup> On May 29 the two parties met in a final conference on this issue. The association, knowing that the union copy of the agreement was in possession of the former officials, challenged the Joint Board to produce the clause in question. Bialis answered that the association had a copy of

the agreement and had demonstrated that fact by continual reference to it. The conference ended in a deadlock. The union served notice that it would inaugurate the forty-hour week on Monday, June 4. The employers threatened that, in that eventuality, they would pay for no more than forty hours of work. Nothing daunted, the Joint Board carried through its program. On June 4, all cloakmakers ceased to work at five in the afternoon instead of five-thirty. At this point the employers yielded and soon thereafter formally recognized the change.<sup>2</sup>

In the dress trade, too, the union made some progress. The organization campaign under Mollie Friedman encountered not only the usual injunctions, Yellow Dog contracts, and other terroristic methods of the employers, but also new obstacles. The Needle Trades Workers' Industrial Union, in the usual manner of dual organizations, conducted rival campaigns and sent its members into shops called on strike by the Joint Board. The contracting system was spreading in the dress trade and was producing the same results as in the cloak industry. In addition, the union dressmakers became divided in a jurisdictional dispute between Local 100 and Local 60. Despite these difficulties, the union continued its efforts. In February, 1928, it secured a new agreement with the Northwest Side Dress Manufacturers' Association.<sup>3</sup> In the summer of that year, the General Executive Board ordered the dissolution of Local 60 and the transfer of all its members to Local 100. With internal harmony thus re-established, the organization campaign was intensified and was approaching its climax by the fall of 1929.<sup>4</sup>

In the course of its recovery, the union was able to organize two entirely new groups. The first of these was the alteration workers of the Associated Mercantile Company. A committee representing these workers appeared before the new Joint Board in August, 1927, and complained that they were forced to work sixty-four hours a week. Morris Bialis and Barnett Schaffer immediately took up their case. After a few conferences, the

alteration workers won an agreement which provided for a forty-four hour week, a weekly minimum of \$42.50, and a week's vacation with pay.<sup>5</sup> This contractual relationship proceeded smoothly for over a year. In February, 1929, the firm refused to renew the agreement and precipitated a ten-week struggle. For over a month, the company, emboldened perhaps by the refusal of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union to call out its members at the firm, refused even to negotiate with the union. When the Joint Board was finally supported by the Amalgamated, as well as by the United Hebrew Trades and the Workmen's Circle, the firm was forced to agree to arbitration. Benjamin Squires, chosen by both parties to decide the issue, conducted hearings for a week. Since there was evidence that some of the employees were guilty of dishonesty in the shop and disloyalty to the union, he ruled that the Joint Board send a new set of workers and that the firm sign a new contract.<sup>6</sup>

The other group organized at this time consisted of the workers of the Nature's Rival Corset Company, one of the largest firms in the country. The campaign began with the cutters, all of whom soon joined the union. The company fought the union with all its resources. As soon as it discovered the drive, it discharged five of the cutters. After agreeing to arbitrate on these cases, it sought to induce the cutters to desert the union. Finally, on February 24, 1928, it locked out all its cutters. On the first day of the ensuing strike six gunmen forced two pickets into an automobile and threatened them with death. Mollie Friedman, in charge of the campaign, answered by calling upon the Chicago Federation of Labor for aid, by obtaining police protection for the pickets, and by securing warrants for the arrest of the gunmen and of the foreman of the plant. The company thereupon abruptly changed its policy. On February 29, it agreed not only to recognize the union for the cutters, but also to grant an agreement covering all the other seven hundred workers in the shop. By the end of March, such a contract was

in effect. The workers had secured increases and minimum union wage scales, a 46½ hour week, and arbitration machinery.<sup>7</sup>

The newly organized corset workers held their first meeting on April 5. The cutters among them joined Local 81. The others applied to the International for a charter. On July 7, President Sigman proudly installed the new Local 25 as the first of its kind in the middle west. While not directly affiliated with the Joint Board, this local enjoyed the use of its headquarters, the privilege of being represented in it by fraternal delegates, and the aid of its business and financial staff.<sup>8</sup>

Internally, too, the Joint Board was recovering. It inaugurated several innovations, among them the election of the manager and secretary-treasurer directly by the entire membership of the union, instead of by the Joint Board as formerly. With the exception of a dispute between Local 59 and the Joint Board over the United Hebrew Trades, factional strife ceased to trouble the organization. At the same time the International convention of 1928 elected Morris Bialis one of the International vice presidents, an honor not held by any Chicagoan since the days of Hyman Schoolman.

In the middle of 1929 the Joint Board also regained financial stability. For almost two years its funds had been tied up in the Amalgamated bank by the ousted officials on the ground that the election of August, 1927, had been illegal. The Joint Board, of course, immediately instructed its attorney, Peter Sissman, to bring suit to regain possession of its funds. In December, 1928, the chancery court had ruled that the ex-officials had no case because they had set up a dual union. The plaintiffs had then appealed to the Superior Court of Cook County. Finally, on June 15, 1929, Judge Fitch ordered all union funds transferred to the Joint Board.\*<sup>9</sup> Thus restored to solvency, the union was able both to intensify the dress organization campaign and to

\* Included in this fund was some \$7,000 left from the unemployment insurance fund. This money was used by the union during 1930 and 1931 for the relief of its unemployed members.

offer generous aid to the rest of the International. It vigorously supported the striking New York cloakmakers, pushed the sale of the International Reconstruction bonds, and loaned a substantial sum to the Cleveland Joint Board.

Then came the Depression.

The cloak and suit trade, already on the decline for years, almost disappeared entirely. All its ills were aggravated. Many manufacturers were forced into bankruptcy or into closing their shops. Others, seeking to cut production costs, swelled the exodus to the small towns. By August, 1930, only a few sizable shops were left in the city. Most of the others were "four-men affairs," in which employers attempted to derive livelihoods from the labor of four or five cloakmakers. The number of workers employed, even on a part time basis, dwindled in still greater proportion. David Feitelson, chairman of Local 5, estimated that if all the shops still in the city operated at full capacity, only half the members of the union would be employed.<sup>10</sup>

The other branches of the industry were equally affected. The raincoat workers, who had been suffering from a succession of poor seasons even before 1929, practically ceased to have any employment. In the summer of 1930, the Raincoat Makers' Local 54 and the Joint Board attempted to solve this problem by opening a union-owned cooperative raincoat factory.\*<sup>11</sup> This shop lasted only a short time, however, and the raincoat workers' local was forced out of existence.† The new Local 25 also disappeared when the Nature's Rival Corset Company moved out of the city. The dressmakers fared almost as badly. Manufacturers began to cut wages drastically and to increase the hours of work. By the spring of 1930 only fifteen firms still maintained even nominal contractual relations with the Joint Board.<sup>12</sup>

\* This shop, known as the United Raincoat Company, was equipped to produce between 1,500 and 2,000 garments a week and was managed by Mendy Feinberg of Local 54.

† The local was revived in 1933, but is not affiliated at present with the Joint Board.

In the cloak trade, always the bulwark of the union, the workers held their own during the first months of the depression. In December, 1929, they won an extension of their old agreement for another year. During the spring, however, the onslaught of the manufacturers began in earnest. In March, 1930, the firm of Schenker Michel and Weinstock, which employed two hundred workers, demanded a general review of all prices, the re-establishment of the absolute right of discharge, and union consent to the opening of a New York shop by the company. To exert further pressure upon the union, it immediately bought a shop in the latter city and threatened to close its Chicago factory altogether. At this point the workers of the firm staged a walkout, but they returned to work when the firm promised to submit the issue to negotiation. The controversy dragged on for three months. In June, a settlement was reached by which the firm was allowed a small show and sample room in New York on condition that, if the earnings of the Chicago workers declined, it was to be given up at the end of six months. Simultaneously or soon thereafter other manufacturers followed the example of this firm. Handmacher-Michel and several other shops demanded reorganizations. Max Feder moved to Aurora. Arbetman Brothers and Blair gave notice that it intended to transfer its activities to jobbing. Several long-established firms, as Schuman Brothers, went into bankruptcy. Most important, the manufacturers' association intensified its pressure for the abolition of week work as the only measure capable of saving the Chicago market from complete disintegration.

The cumulative effect of all these developments was the rebirth of a strong agitation for piece work among the members of the union. In January, 1930, an "industrial committee" representing all the Chicago locals reached the conclusion that the cloak trade could be saved only by a return "to piece work under a revised system of minimum earnings."<sup>13</sup> As the spring and summer rolled on, many members, particularly of Local 5, be-

came more and more insistent for the change. In September, the Joint Board considered this question in special session with the executive boards of all the locals. The majority of those present decided that, though week work was undeniably a better system for the worker, its continuation might leave Chicago without any industry at all. At the same time the manufacturers were advising the union that the renewal of the agreement was contingent upon the reintroduction of piece work.<sup>14</sup>

The International, however, objected strenuously to any alteration. President Schlesinger wrote that the manufacturers "always wanted piece work," even in 1919.<sup>15</sup> David Dubinsky, International secretary-treasurer, advised the postponement of negotiations until he or the president could come to Chicago.<sup>16</sup> In the October meeting of the General Executive Board, the whole problem was threshed out with inconclusive results. There Bialis, supported only by Vice President Heller, argued eloquently but vainly for International sanction to an agreement providing a two-year trial period for a modernized version of the piece work system. Schlesinger and others retorted that the Chicago workers needed, not a change in the system of work, but a good season.<sup>17</sup>

On November 5, representatives of the Joint Board and the Chicago Cloak Manufacturers' Association met to negotiate a new agreement. The employers demanded the reinauguration of piece work as the basis for all negotiations. Bialis, speaking for the union, answered that he could only discuss week work. The association then declared that it had nothing on which to confer. The union replied that it was prepared, if necessary, to call a general strike. Privately, however, the leaders of the Joint Board were alarmed. They were convinced that the manufacturers were determined and that the workers were unprepared for a strike on this issue. At the same time the firm of Schenker Michel and Weinstock announced that it would move to New York unless piece work was reintroduced.

Faced with these threats by the manufacturers, the Chicago union demanded that the International give its immediate attention to the gravity of the situation. On November 6, Bialis wrote to acting president Dubinsky, who replied that Schlesinger was ill and that his own time was fully occupied with the strike of the New York ladies' tailors. On November 12, Meyer Barkan, secretary of the Joint Board, wired Dubinsky that the Joint Board was considering yielding on week work. He received the answer that the "International will not participate in conferences or negotiations involving the question of piece work."<sup>18</sup> In the next few days Bialis telegraphed and wrote to the International office several times. He described the situation as becoming rapidly more desperate. The local trade was in headlong decline and was already practically at a standstill. The cloakmakers were becoming increasingly despondent and uncertain of the morrow. The employers were redoubling their pressure upon the union. The Joint Board could not wait much longer for advice and aid from the International.<sup>19</sup>

Disappointed at the attitude of the general office, the Chicago union mapped out its own course of action. On November 8, it decided to submit the issue to a referendum among its membership. The debate on this question now became more heated. On November 22, it reached a climax at a mass meeting in the Labor Lyceum. Morris Bialis, Sol Flack, Meyer Barkan, David Feitelson, and other leaders of the union argued for the change as the only way of saving the Chicago industry. Harry Rufer, Aaron Sher, and several others insisted for the continuation of week work. Three days later the membership voted on two questions: first, whether they would strike for the retention of week work; and secondly, whether they would assess themselves twenty-five dollars per person to finance such a strike. The results of the referendum were 514 to 216 against a strike and 392 to 200 against an assessment.<sup>20</sup>

While the Joint Board was preparing itself for a renewal of

negotiations with the association, it received a new blow from Schenker Michel and Weinstock. On the morning of December 2, the shop chairman of this firm, "pale as a ghost," rushed into the union office with the news that the company had locked out all its workers, had refused to pay them for the Thanksgiving holiday, and had informed them that it was moving to Gary, Indiana. The next day the *Gary Post-Tribune* boasted that henceforth Gary would be the home of the Rothmoor brand of women's cloaks. Captain H. S. Norton, president of the Gary Commercial Club and Chamber of Commerce, described in detail the campaign which had resulted in this addition to the city's industrial enterprises and announced that the firm had already signed a three-year lease for premises. These steps had been taken without the knowledge or consent of the union, with whom the firm still had a two-year contract.<sup>21</sup>

Since Schenker Michel and Weinstock was the largest shop in the Chicago cloak trade, and since it had already moved to Gary, the advantage in the dispute that developed was all on its side. The Joint Board of course immediately declared the shop on strike, secured the cooperation of the Gary labor movement, and requested the New York Cloak Joint Board to stop its New York sample room. These steps were sufficient to induce the firm to enter into negotiations, but not to be reasonable in its terms. In one of the numerous conferences which followed, the company demanded that the union consent to piece work for all workers except cutters and that it post a bond of \$10,000 as security for its observance of the agreement. When these questions were bridged over, the firm proposed that the union contribute half of the \$20,000 expended in moving to and from Gary and in rental of the premises there for three years. When Maurice L. Rothschild, for whom Schenker Michel and Weinstock worked, undertook to pay the rent in Gary, the firm made a new demand—that it be allowed a twenty per cent reorganization every year. An agreement was finally signed on December

16. The union accepted piece work for the crafts working under that system before 1919 and ten per cent reductions for almost all week workers. The company in return agreed to move back into Chicago and to guarantee its employees thirty-two weeks of employment during the year. In view of the circumstances, both the union and the workers of the shop were highly satisfied with the adjustment of the dispute.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile the union, still under the shadow of this episode, had renewed its negotiations with the association. The manufacturers pressed their strategic advantage and submitted demands which the union labelled "ridiculous." After the Schenker Michel and Weinstock settlement, the association demanded similar terms. A compromise was finally arranged. Piece work was reestablished for operators, pressers, and finishers. For week workers, the union accepted a reduction on a system graduated according to the weeks of employment in each shop. Workers guaranteed thirty-two weeks of employment accepted a ten per cent wage cut; from twenty to thirty-one weeks, five per cent; and less than twenty weeks, no reduction at all.<sup>23</sup>

Although the piece work system was thus reintroduced into the Chicago cloak trade, the controversy on the question was by no means over. The officers of the Joint Board justified the change on the ground that the workers had benefited thereby. The spring season of 1931 was the best Chicago had had in seven years. A cheaper grade of garments again began to be manufactured in Chicago. Several manufacturers either opened or planned to open new shops in the city. Price settlements were generally high. In addition, the worst features of the speed-up were being prevented by various devices. Many shops, for example, adopted systems of pooling all earnings above the former week-work scales and dividing the "kitty" equally among the members of the craft concerned.

On the other hand, several different groups bitterly attacked the Joint Board for its action. The Needle Trades Industrial

Union called upon the cloakmakers to "defeat the latest sellout to the bosses" and to repudiate "the Van Buren Street clique." The Federation of Jewish Trade Unions assailed the union for restoring "the old sweating system."<sup>24</sup> Within the Joint Board, Local 59 fought tooth and nail against piece work. Unlike the operators and pressers, the finishers saw little merit in the change. In the referendum they had cast 141 of the 216 votes against it. They argued that employers were interested only in lowering the price of labor and that the union would do better to accept a straight reduction instead of allowing the old system back into the shops. They protested against the phraseology of the referendum ballot, which posed piece work as the only alternative to a strike and a twenty-five dollar assessment. They charged that cutters and other week workers unaffected by the issue were allowed to cast a solid vote for the change. In December, 1931, Local 59 sent a resolution to the Joint Board which stated the "sweatshop is indirectly coming back into our trade."<sup>25</sup> In their bitterness, the delegates of the local even carried the fight to the convention of 1932.

The most serious of these attacks was that by the International. Its organ, *Justice*, condemned the Joint Board unsparingly. In February, 1931, the General Executive Board took Vice President Bialis to task for the reintroduction of piece work into the Chicago market. At its first session, on February 10, President Schlesinger formally charged him with violating the rules of the International and demanded his expulsion from the General Executive Board. Bialis refused to defend himself but reported in full on the history of the Chicago union during the past year and pointed out that the International had been too busy in New York to heed the Joint Board's appeals for aid. Several vice presidents justified Bialis. The Chicago membership and the board of directors rushed to his defense. Accordingly, Schlesinger dropped the charges against Bialis, and the General Executive Board voted to call the whole Joint Board to account.

The problem of disciplining the Chicago union was taken up by the convention of 1932. The General Executive Board charges were formidable. The Joint Board was accused of head-long retreat before the attack of the employers, of succumbing to their blandishments, of violating the orders of the International, of breaking its solid front on week work, and of accomplishing nothing, despite all this, for the Chicago workers. The convention committee reported in a more restrained tone.<sup>26</sup> It took note of the mitigating circumstances which induced the Joint Board to agree to the reintroduction of piece work, but labelled this action, nevertheless, as "a grave offense" which damaged the whole International. It recommended, therefore, "that this Convention severely criticize the Chicago Joint Board for its contravening the policy of our Union." This report was carried without a dissenting vote.\*

Meanwhile, the bottom was falling out of the Chicago, as of the national, cloak trade. In April, 1932, the jobber David Fink, who employed three contractors, demanded a reduction in wages, promising in return to furnish more work by the introduction of a cheaper grade of garments. With the hundred and fifty workers involved almost unanimous for accepting the cut, the Joint Board was in a dilemma. It finally agreed to it by a vote of seven to six, with the remaining members either absent or not casting ballots. Somewhat later, the Associated Mercantile Company, which had shortly before reduced the wages of its workers, demanded another ten per cent cut. Schenker Michel and Weinstock, the Marion Garment Company, and the Kirshbaum-Helbraun-Schenker firm threatened even greater reductions.

Practically all of these demands were accompanied with

\* It may be noted in passing that the General Executive Board later reversed its judgment. In its report to the 1934 convention, it stated that the change to piece work, "in the light of succeeding results in the Chicago cloak market, was justified." In its report to the 1937 convention, it similarly asserted that "the piece-work system turned out to be a distinct improvement for the cloakmakers."



MORRIS BIALIS



threats of either moving the shops out of the city or of closing them entirely. Fugitive shops had been multiplying since the depression began. Deutsch, Blumenfield and Strauss, for example, had moved to Terre Haute, Indiana; Grabiner to Kenosha, Wisconsin; Max Feder to Aurora, Illinois. In July, 1932, the Marion Garment Company, after haggling with the union for a month, secretly moved to Kenosha. The union declared the shop on strike and secured the aid of the Kenosha Labor Council. The company thereupon moved to Racine, forcing the union to follow it once more. At the same time the Kirschbaum-Helbraun-Schenker Company sent out part of its work to a contractor in Aurora. In August, Vogel and Brody moved to Elgin, and when the union extended its strike to that city, to Sycamore. By that time it was clear that the Joint Board could remove the danger of fugitive shops only by an intensive out-of-town organization campaign. Such a drive, however, was at this time beyond the power of the union.

The financial difficulties of the Joint Board had been steadily growing more acute. In the beginning of 1932, the Joint Board instituted a rigid economy program, including drastic slashes in the salaries of its officers and office staff and the temporary suspension of the sick fund. These measures helped but little. By July, the income was insufficient even for current expenses apart from salaries. In August, M. A. Goldstein reported that the staff had not been paid for two months. The union then tried various other expedients. It attempted to secure a loan on the mortgage which it still retained from the days when it was planning its own building. It tried to recall its own loans to other unions. It called upon the International for aid. It pared its staff to the bone, reduced the number of its business agents to one, and cut its office space in half. All these efforts still failed to restore the union to solvency. By September, 1932, the Joint Board had only a dues-paying membership of some seven hundred and a maximum potential income of two hundred and

thirty-one dollars a week. As Bialis stated, it seemed for a time that the union would "be forced to put a lock on the door."<sup>27</sup>

The fall and winter of 1932 was the blackest period in the history of the union since 1914. The season was the worst that the Chicago cloak trade had ever experienced. Unemployment reached its zenith. The manufacturers, apparently knowing that the union was without funds, took advantage of the opportunity to violate the contract. Some of them neither observed their guarantee of thirty-two weeks of work during the year nor maintained the adjustment fund agreed upon. In January, 1933, the association, practically non-existent for several months, formally disbanded. The Joint Board was thus forced to obtain shop agreements, and the workers again were compelled to accept wage cuts "in order to preserve the miserable jobs they still have."<sup>28</sup>

Internally, too, the situation was reminiscent of the period before the establishment of the Joint Board. Pessimism and despondency ran riot. Some of the cloakmakers held the officers of the union responsible, not only for yielding to the manufacturers, but also for the whole depression. The finishers, for example, were so resentful of their low prices and their suffering from special machinery\* that they abstained for a time from participation in the activities of the Joint Board. Quarrels, charges, and countercharges became numerous. Several crafts even organized clubs, which if not actual, were at least potential rivals to the various locals.

Somehow or other the Chicago Joint Board continued to function. Eventually it even succeeded in halting the downward trend. In September, 1932, it began to reestablish union condi-

\* Special machinery became an important problem to the union in the mid 1920's, when manufacturers began to install tacking, felling, basting, and pressing machines. The union consistently took the position that, although it was not against technological progress, its members were entitled "to share in the benefits of the new machinery instead of being thrown out of employment by them." It therefore sought to secure agreements with the manufacturers to limit the utilization of special machinery in various ways. The problem became more acute during the depression when union control over shops was generally weakened.

tions in the smaller shops. In October, it organized the hitherto open shop of the contractor Julius Tobias. In November, it finally obtained a settlement with Schenker Michel and Weinstock. In December, it brought the Marion Garment Company back to Chicago. By the beginning of 1933, the union had regained sufficient strength to tackle the jobber Morris Hirsh, who had never before consented to deal with it. When the shop of Tobias was organized, Hirsh withdrew his designer and patterns and shipped them to LaPorte, Indiana. The Joint Board at once declared a strike against all shops working for Hirsh. Within a month the jobber agreed to a settlement. He contracted to have all his work in Chicago done in union shops and to send no garments out of the city except to the LaPorte shop, in which the union already had a considerable foothold.

At the same time the members of the union saw another ray of hope in the shape of the Good Will sewing project. Late in 1932, the Red Cross received from the government of the United States a quantity of cotton material which it intended to transform into garments and bedding for relief clients. Agnes Nestor, a member of the local Work Relief Committee, won her colleagues over to the view that members of the various garment unions be allowed to participate in the work. Accordingly, the Joint Board, as well as the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union and other organizations in the needle trades, submitted a list of its unemployed members. Workers assigned by the Joint Board to this non-relief work program received employment for ten days a month. Cutters were paid six dollars a day. Others earned four dollars a day or forty dollars a month. Coming during the period from November, 1932, to April, 1933, this project greatly benefited the Joint Board. It furnished employment to nine hundred and twenty-two of its members—almost half of all union workers on the program—and aided the union to survive the depth of the depression.<sup>29</sup>





M. A. GOLDSTEIN



*Part IV*  
The New Advance  
1933-1939





Chicago dress trade. Manager Bialis, by appointment of President Dubinsky, became the general supervisor for all the activities of the International west of Ohio.<sup>3</sup> Within two months the Chicago Joint Board and the International won one of the greatest triumphs in their history by the complete organization of the Chicago silk dress trade—a field which had hitherto defied all their efforts.

Conditions of work in this trade had been declining rapidly since 1929. By the end of 1932, when the influence of the union was at its lowest, they were almost unbearable. Surveys of shop conditions uncovered startling facts. The earnings of operators seldom exceeded ten dollars a week. One finisher received sixty cents for ten hours of work. People employed full time could not manage without supplementary aid from other sources. Many secured tickets for twenty-cent lunches from the Women's Trade Union League. In one shop almost every worker was on relief. In fact, many of the employed dressmakers envied their unemployed brethren who secured positions on the Good Will sewing project, where, although operators worked only ten days a month, they at least earned forty dollars during that period.<sup>4</sup>

As indicated previously, the union had never abated its efforts to organize this trade. In 1930 and 1931, Rabinowitz had worked among the dress cutters and had succeeded in bringing some two hundred of them into the union. With the termination of his services, however, many of these withdrew from membership.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, no headway was being made among the other crafts. Local 100, suffering from a continual diminution of membership, became increasingly desperate. The Joint Board, fighting for its very life in the cloak trade, could offer but little help. The active members of the local therefore decided upon a brave step. Some seven or eight of them dug into their almost empty pockets, somehow managed to collect about a hundred dollars,\*

\* Among the members who contributed were Rebecca Eisenstat, Alice Hinton, Dina Weinger, Helen Mosicki, Sophie Bogrow, Anna Klibanoff, and Sol Luboff.



DAVID DUBINSKY



and sent Rebecca Eisenstat to the General Executive Board to plead for the immediate appointment of an International organizer.<sup>6</sup> The Joint Board and Vice President Bialis seconded this request. The International was interested. It promised to do all in its power to attempt again "to break down this fortress of non-unionism."<sup>7</sup> In the summer of 1931, it sent Vice President Ninfo to investigate the situation. A few weeks later President Schlesinger himself visited Chicago. In the fall, the General Executive Board sent Bernard Shane, formerly manager of the Toronto Joint Board, to assume charge of a new organization campaign.

To the active union dressmakers this drive represented their last hope for the organization of the trade. They found Shane both an energetic leader and a man not identified in any way with the disaster of 1924 or the internal strife of 1926 and 1927. They therefore threw themselves into the work with almost fanatic enthusiasm. In snow and in rain, despite private detectives, arrests, and blacklistings, they canvassed the market, passed out leaflets by the thousands, and conducted numerous shop and open meetings. Since many of the new union recruits were unemployed, the Joint Board served them daily lunches of sandwiches and coffee.<sup>8</sup>

At first the drive was very narrow in scope. Shane, under instructions to avoid all possible conflict, was content with the defensive policy of resisting further wage cuts and of combatting discharges of union members. With some success in this modest policy, the union became more aggressive. It demanded and won increases for the dress cutters in several firms. It extended the drive into the more hostile anti-union shops. By the end of 1932 most of the dress pressers, like the cutters, were organized.\* The

\* Previous to this date some one hundred dress pressers had formed an independent organization known as the Pressers' Club. Convinced, however, by their experience that this agency was powerless to aid them, and shown the necessity of trade unionism by Joint Board officers, these pressers joined the union as a group and later organized as the dress pressers' branch of Local 18.

operators and finishers, however, had so far shown little tangible response.<sup>9</sup>

In the spring of 1933, the Chicago dressmakers were stirring with signs of approaching revolt. The promise of the New Deal buoyed up their confidence. They consequently turned more eagerly to the union. The dress campaign became full of life. The union ventured to engage the employers in more skirmishes and even began to win concessions by mere threats of stoppages. In May, it was further encouraged by the victorious conclusion of the Philadelphia dress campaign. The agitation conducted steadily for the past year and a half was at last beginning to bear fruit.

In the middle of June the issue was precipitated by the firm of Lipson Brothers, reputed by the union to be the "oldest sweatshop" in the Chicago area. Enjoying the full support of the trade association, this company undertook to test the strength of the union by locking out all its cutters. Almost all of the ninety workers of the firm immediately replied with a strike. Lipson Brothers proceeded to hire scabs, to secure police protection for them, and to obtain an injunction prohibiting picketing within fifty feet of its premises. The workers, however, maintained their ranks. The union retained Barrett O'Hara to fight the injunction. The Woman's Trade Union League distributed food tickets to the strikers. One picket, stabbed by a scab, sued both her assailant and the employer and won a favorable settlement. Instead of being broken in short order, as the association had hoped, the strike was continued until September, when it was ended in conjunction with the general settlement in the whole trade.<sup>10</sup>

Elated by the solidarity shown by the dressmakers, the International recommended in early August that the Joint Board prepare to call a general strike within the month. At the same time Bernard Shane informed the union that the organization campaign had reached its climax. On August 8, the Joint Board,

although somewhat doubtful of its ability to conduct a general strike without a penny in its treasury, instructed the office staff and a special committee\* to arrange all the necessary preparations. Within a few days the union formulated its demands—among them union recognition, the thirty-five hour week, and minimum wage scales for all crafts—and sent them to every employer in the trade.

The manufacturers in the meantime had adopted a new policy in their efforts to halt the union. Their tactics of violence and intimidation, as embodied in the Lipson strike, having failed, they planned to disrupt the organization campaign by minor concessions and by procrastination in negotiations. Early in August, they adopted the blanket N.R.A. Code. A week later, the association answered the union's request for a conference with the suggestion to wait about ten days for its decision. The individual manufacturers then approached by the union answered similarly. Obviously, the purpose of the employers was to delay proceedings until after the dress code hearings,† scheduled for August 22.<sup>11</sup>

Thus rebuffed, the union immediately called upon its members to mobilize in mass meeting on the afternoon of Wednesday, August 16. Despite the intense heat, a throng of three thousand workers turned out. They overflowed the hall hired by the union, packed a larger one obtained immediately afterward, and unanimously authorized the officers of the union to call a general strike at its discretion. The general strike committee accordingly issued a general strike proclamation for Monday, August 21, the day before the N.R.A. hearings. At ten o'clock that morning—the zero hour—the members of the strike com-

\* Among the members of this committee were Meyer Bernstein, Leonard Axelrod, Harry Rufer, Nathan Wilinsky, and Rebecca Eisenstat.

† The reason for these maneuvers of the employers and the union was that the government allowed workers' representation at code hearings only when they were organized and could send a representative. Unless the union demonstrated, therefore, that it represented the workers in the Chicago dress trade, the local dress-makers would have been unrepresented.

mittee stood in the Market Street area and anxiously awaited the result of their call. For some twenty minutes nothing happened. Suddenly, according to one of the union leaders,<sup>12</sup> "the buildings literally began to erupt people. In less time than it takes to tell the story, the streets were black with the masses of strikers. The crowd rushed to the strike halls, pushing forward everything in its way." The response amazed even the most optimistic. Every one of the six thousand workers in the trade was out. The local market was "shut tighter than a drum." So great was the appeal of organization that in many shops embroidery workers and others not called out in the strike proclamation joined the walkout.\*

The conduct of the strike was as enthusiastic as its inauguration. Many of the workers, comparing this strike with the bitter struggles of 1917 and 1924, looked upon it as a gay picnic. They brought their lunches with them to the strike halls. They listened to lecturers and speakers of the caliber of David Dubinsky, Edward Nockles, and Patrick Gorman, and thoroughly enjoyed the concerts arranged for their benefit. At intervals they went out on the picket line, where the personnel was changed frequently during the day. On Monday, August 28, over five thousand of them marched in a colorful sidewalk parade around the downtown dress market. Advancing four abreast, they formed a continually moving cordon which dominated the area.<sup>13</sup>

The manufacturers fought back as in former days. On August 22, the members of the association formally decided to "close their shops" and dispatched one of their leaders to Washington to demand a separate Chicago dress code. In the next two days, the various independent manufacturers formed two other associations to combat the union. When the National Labor Board sent Max Meyer to mediate the dispute, the manufacturers

\* The chairman of the general strike committee was Morris Bialis; Meyer Bernstein, chairman of the Joint Board, was chairman of the picket committee; M. A. Goldstein, secretary-treasurer of the Joint Board, was chairman of the finance and relief committee.

hurriedly voted to sign the dress code in the hope of sidetracking conferences with the union.<sup>14</sup> On August 28, *Women's Wear*\* reported that one hundred and twenty-five firms had agreed to maintain the open shop under all circumstances. Some firms even revived the old methods of 1924. On August 29, one of them informed its employees by letter "that the union is run by the New York office" for the benefit of New York rather than of Chicago workers and that their refusal to work was "very unpatriotic."<sup>15</sup> On the same day the police maltreated the pickets in front of this shop, tearing the clothes from one of them and beating several others.<sup>16</sup>

By this time, however, the employers had become convinced that the strike would continue until they had settled with the union. Unwilling to lose the busy season in store for them, they signified their willingness to negotiate. At the invitation of Max Meyer, both sides thereupon participated in an open meeting in the United States Court House, which was conducted with much fanfare and ceremony, and attended by many newspaper reporters, photographers, workers, and private citizens. At its conclusion, after both sides had agreed on the desirability of a collective agreement for the purpose of insuring industrial peace and of stabilizing the industry by the elimination of cut-throat competition with respect to labor costs, conferences began in earnest. The sessions, which lasted a full week, were long and often stormy. Several times, particularly in connection with the troublesome reorganization question, negotiations were almost broken off. However, due to the moderating influence of Max Meyer and to the work of President Dubinsky, who participated in the latter stages of the conferences, the sessions continued. On September 5, they resulted in a collective agreement covering the entire Chicago silk dress industry.

By the terms of this contract, the manufacturers recognized the union and met every other essential demand of the work-

\* The national daily trade publication in the ladies' garment industry.

ers. The work week was fixed at thirty-five hours. Minimum wage scales were established at \$39 a week for cutters, and basic hourly rates of 85c for pressers, 76c for operators, and 53½c for finishers. Week workers were granted four legal holidays with pay. Overtime, at the rate of time and a half, was permitted only for five hours a week during twelve weeks in the year. The employers further undertook to divide work equally during slack seasons, to call no workers into the shop for less than a half day's work, to force no employee to work on garments for a strike-bound firm, to employ only union contractors, and to guarantee a two-week trial period. This agreement was to be in effect for two years, during which period lockouts and strikes were equally prohibited under stringent penalties,\* and grievances were to be adjusted by an arbitrator whose decisions were final.<sup>17</sup> The issue of reorganizations was referred to Max Meyer for later decision.†

In the opinion of the International, this victory ranked second only to the organization of the New York dressmakers among its achievements of 1933. For it had been won, not in a virgin field, but in a trade which had been torn by bitter industrial conflict for a score of years. It had been accomplished, despite the galling memory of 1917 and 1924, despite the tradition sedulously fostered by the manufacturers that the trade could never be organized, and despite the fact that the resources of the union consisted of little save enthusiasm. In contrast with the costly war of 1924, the total expenditure of the Joint Board in this

\*An employer guilty of a lockout was liable, after notice of 24 hours, to the full amount of back wages due to the workers. Workers who engaged in a strike or stoppage were to be regarded, after similar notice, as having abandoned their employment.

†Max Meyer made his award in November. He ruled that the employers were entitled to two kinds of reorganizations: 1. *bona fide* reorganizations necessitated by a curtailment of business or by a fundamental change in the character of the output of the plant, and 2. other reorganizations, by which the employers could displace a maximum of ten per cent of their labor force once a year, during the first week of January in 1934 and 1935. The second part of this decision, which in effect enabled the employers to use reorganizations as a whip over the heads of members of price committees, shop chairladies, and other union shop functionaries, was cordially hated by the dressmakers.

general strike amounted to less than four thousand dollars. The sequel to the agreement thus secured was the unionization of every worker in the trade. The goal of twenty years was won.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time the union reestablished its position in the cloak trade. In July, 1933, the Joint Board won a two-week strike against Morris Hirsh. Early that month it discovered that he was planning to discontinue furnishing work to his Chicago contractors and was completing arrangements to send all his garments out of the city. He was already supplying work to LaPorte and Crawfordsville, Indiana, and was contemplating the establishment of a contractor shop in Aurora. The union immediately called out all the workers employed by Hirsh's contractors. The workers picketed these shops with enthusiasm. On the first day three hundred of them vied for the honor of carrying the first poster. Both the union and the employer appealed to Mayor Edward J. Kelly, who advised a conference. Negotiations began toward the end of the month. The result was an agreement by which Hirsh bound himself to supply work for 135 operators and an equivalent number of other workers in Chicago, to send no garments out of town save to LaPorte and Crawfordsville, and to raise the prices on various styles.<sup>19</sup>

Having thus adjusted its relations with Hirsh, the Joint Board soon found it necessary to act as an intermediary between him and his contractors. In October, 1933, he became involved in a dispute over settlement of prices with one of his contractors, Julius Tobias. The other Chicago contractors, by then united into an association, supported Tobias by declaring a general stoppage for several hours. The union became a party to the controversy when the workers affected objected to bearing the burden of the stoppage. Manager Bialis at once explained the position of the Joint Board to each side. He requested Hirsh to divide his work equally among his contractors and threatened a general strike unless the situation was altered. He warned the contractors that the workers would have to be paid in cases of stoppages without

union consent and advised them to maintain a disciplined group in their dealings with the jobbers. As a result of this pressure, the jobber and the contractors' association settled the dispute on terms satisfactory to the union.<sup>20</sup>

By this time the agreements with the cloak manufacturers were on the verge of expiration. The employers delayed negotiations from November, 1933, to the end of the year. In January, 1934, the union threatened a general strike. The manufacturers thereupon reorganized their defunct association and signed a temporary collective contract with substantial increases to week workers.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of these victories the Chicago Joint Board rose to a new crest of prosperity. Its membership expanded even beyond its palmy days of 1919. By the beginning of 1934 Local 100, almost extinct in 1932, counted 4,400 dressmakers in its ranks. Despite their inexperience in trade unionism, most of these workers rapidly demonstrated their understanding and their enthusiasm. Three thousand of them gathered to celebrate their victory at the conclusion of the general strike. Two thousand participated in the elections of December, 1933. The other locals showed corresponding gains in membership, in particular Locals 18 and 81, whose dress branches expanded rapidly after the organization of the trade.

The rapid growth of the union rendered the existing business staff hopelessly inadequate. In September, 1933, accordingly, the Joint Board elected four additional temporary business agents. The regular elections were held in December. Morris Bialis was reelected manager of the union; M. A. Goldstein, its secretary-treasurer. The cloakmakers selected two new business agents—Meyer Barkan and Abraham Rabinowitz. The dressmakers elected five of them—N. Wilinsky, J. Zuckerman, J. Katz, Leo Lavender, and Bert Hall. At the same time the Joint Board created a complaint department for the dress trade and selected Rebecca Eisenstat to head the office.

With its membership thus augmented and its finances re-established on a secure foundation, the Joint Board again expanded its activities and services. In April, 1934, it reopened the sick benefit fund which had been inoperative for two years. In May, it moved into more spacious quarters at 222 West Monroe. In June, it decided to reestablish its former educational program. Before the end of the month a new educational department, headed by Esther Terry, was functioning at full speed. By the fall of that year, this department, with a large enrollment for its various classes, lectures, and other attractions, was one of the most active institutions of the Joint Board and the outstanding venture of its kind in the Chicago trade union movement.

In May and June, 1934, the twenty-second convention of the International met in Chicago. It was, in the phrase of the General Executive Board, "a truly holiday convention." The International had finally emerged from the depth of the Depression. It had won, within the past year, a series of great victories throughout the industry. It had gained 150,000 new members. It was now "stronger than ever organizationally, stronger in prestige and in solidarity."<sup>22</sup> No group participated in this jubilee with greater pride than the Chicago members of the International. Eight thousand of them marched in colorful parade down Jackson Boulevard to greet the delegates in Carmen's Hall.\* Morris Bialis delivered the opening address. The General Executive Board dwelt in detail on the recent accomplishments of the Chicago union. Within that year, it had won one of the greatest victories in its history by the organization of the dressmakers, a task accomplished after a struggle of twenty years. It had regained all its lost ground in the cloak trade. In cooperation with the International, it had already achieved important successes in the organization of out-of-town shops and of the cotton dress

\* The convention sessions were at first held, as per schedule, at the Medinah Athletic Club. However, in protest against the discrimination of the management against Negro delegates, the convention transferred its sessions to the Morrison Hotel.

and wash goods workers. In the words of the General Executive Board, the convention was "a fitting climax to the splendid achievements of the Chicago organization."<sup>23</sup>

In common with the rest of the International, the Chicago delegates to this convention looked upon it not as a culmination to their efforts but rather as a beginning for still greater advances. They introduced resolutions for a thirty-hour week, for the establishment of unemployment insurance funds in the industry, for the solution of the special machinery and other problems of the trade. They requested the International to establish a Western Out-of-Town Department, to complete the organization of the midwest raincoat and white goods workers, and to inaugurate a general sick fund for all members. They demanded that the workers unite into a Labor Party of their own and that the federal government revert to the traditional immigration policy which made America the asylum of the oppressed. Again as in 1920, the Chicago union was animated by a great hope for the future and was formulating a new economic and political program for the further improvement of the condition of its membership.

## *The Union and the Industry*

### *1933-1939*

IN THE YEARS following the flush days of 1933, the Chicago ladies' garment industry was faced with grave problems which necessitated a high order of industrial statesmanship on the part of both the union and the employers. For a time the federal government aided in the stabilization of the industry by means of the N.R.A. codes. At their best, however, the codes did not cope effectively with such problems as jobbers, reorganizations, or fugitive shops; and in May, 1935, the N.R.A. was altogether invalidated by the Supreme Court of the United States.\* Subsequently, particularly during the business recession of 1937, the industry again evidenced some of the ills which characterized it during the depth of the depression. The years between 1934 and 1939, accordingly, were for the Joint Board less a period of spectacular advance than one of consolidation of its position and of slow building upon the basis of its previous victories.

In the dress trade the problems of the union were analogous to those of the cloakmakers after the collective agreement of 1915. The contract of 1933 had to be transmuted from a paper

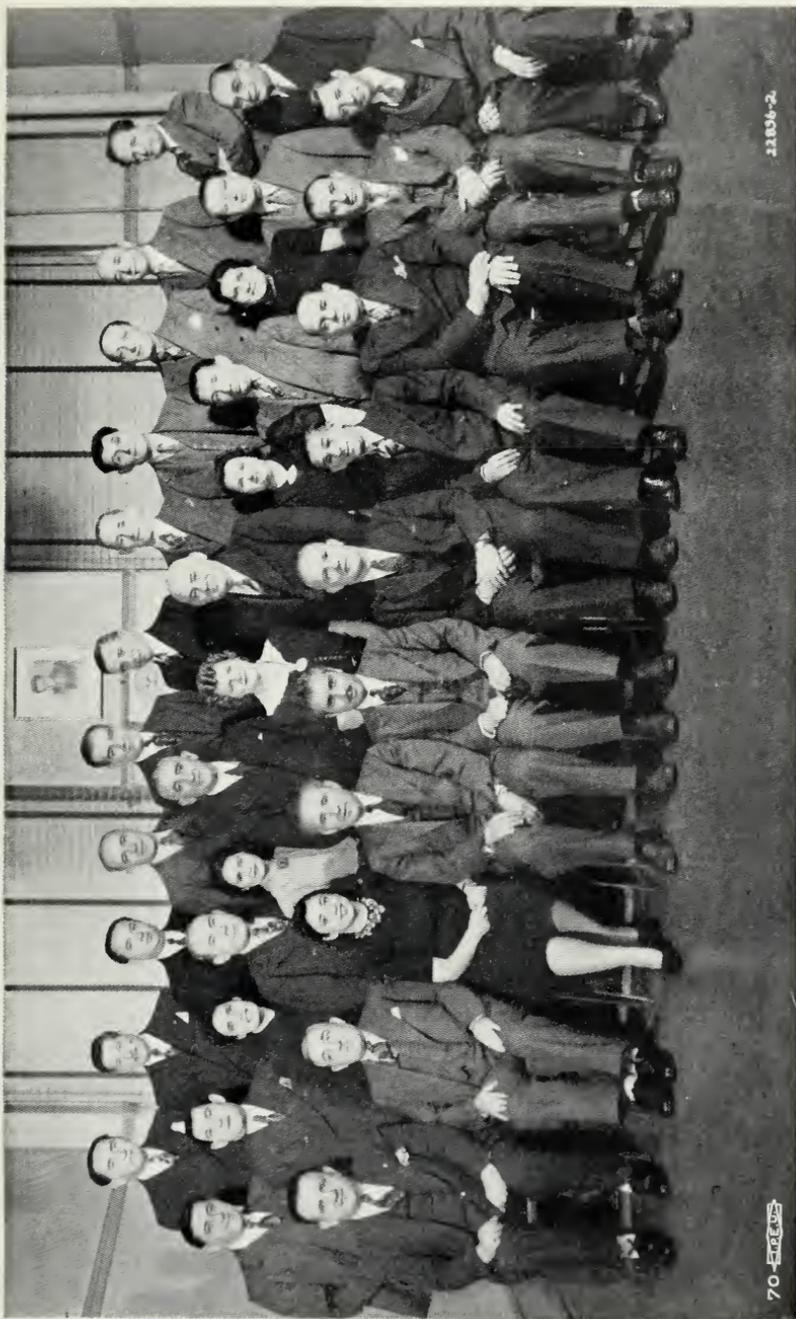
\* In the cloak and suit trade the International and the employers' associations voluntarily substituted for the N.R.A. the National Coat and Suit Industry Recovery Board, which maintained fair trade practices in the cloak trade throughout the country and required all member firms to use its consumers' protective labels. Dr. Arthur L. H. Rubin was appointed regional director for the area including Chicago.

document into the enforced law of the industry. Reorganizations, overtime, the jobber-contractor relationship, and numerous other problems remained to be solved. The workers still had to prove their solidarity in the face of counter-attack. In short, although the dressmakers had finally won their long struggle for collective bargaining, the fruits of their victory were still largely a matter for future determination.

The machinery for the enforcement of the agreement was soon in operation. The Joint Board, as noted previously, installed five business agents for the dress trade and established a complaint department. The manufacturers consolidated their two associations into one—the Chicago Association of Dress Manufacturers—and selected a staff of officers to transact its business; and the contractors similarly united into an association. At the same time, the National Recovery Administration established a local code enforcement bureau, with L. W. Beman as its chairman.

As in the cloak trade after the 1915 settlement, the "honeymoon period" between the associations and the union was soon over. Both parties began to charge each other with bad faith. A particular source of irritation was the frequency of stoppages and lockouts, both outlawed by the agreement. In February, 1934, for example, the employers cited a number of recent shop stoppages and threatened to declare the contract null and void. The union countercharged "that conditions in the above shops were and still are so deplorable that the remarkable thing about it is how the workers endured them until the stoppage."<sup>1</sup> Another cause of friction was the problem of sending work out to contractors. The union continually complained of violations of the agreement in this respect, particularly with regard to work being sent to non-union country shops.\*

\* In March, 1935, the Industrial Adjustment Agency of the dress code authority undertook to solve the problem by means of a "jobber-contractor" agreement. By the terms of this agreement, each jobber undertook to submit each season a list of the contractors he needed, subject to the ratification of the code authority, the manufacturers' and contractors' associations, and the union. The abolition of the N.R.A., however, ended this experiment.



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DELEGATES AND OFFICERS, CHICAGO JOINT BOARD, 1939



The most serious issue under the agreement was that of the reorganization granted by Max Meyer, which permitted the employers to discharge ten per cent of their labor force once a year. As noted previously, the Joint Board, though accepting this decision, labelled it as unfair and discriminatory against active union members and protested vigorously against its wholesale discharge character. In December, 1933, the union succeeded in persuading the association to defer the exercise of this right. In June, 1934, the manufacturers again dropped the subject when the union intimated that it would regard any reorganization as an "unfriendly" act. In January, 1935, the association could no longer be dissuaded from exercising its privilege. However, because the union let its displeasure be known, only twelve shops actually reorganized. Only seventy workers, therefore, instead of the expected six hundred, temporarily lost their jobs, and about half of these were soon reinstated to their former positions by the union.<sup>2</sup>

The real test of the dressmakers' union came in August, 1935, when the two-year agreement expired. The manufacturers, not particularly eager to renew the settlement, postponed negotiations for weeks. Eventually the union secured a six-month extension of the pact, with a provision which abolished the hated reorganization clause. Early in 1936 the union demanded a new contract. Again negotiations dragged on, and conferences were deadlocked. The employers yielded only after the union empowered its conference committee to call a general strike and seriously considered serving the association with a twenty-four hour ultimatum. In the three-year agreement which resulted, the workers gained wage increases, a reduction of the trial period to one week, clarification of the manufacturer-contractor relationship, greater union control on overtime, and new arbitration and adjustment machinery.<sup>3</sup>

Almost immediately after this settlement, the dress trade was again thrown into turmoil by a strike of the patternmakers.

These workers, organized since 1934 as Local 74 of the International, were persistently refused the right of collective bargaining by the association and, not being affiliated with the Joint Board, were not a party to the agreement just concluded. Their strike placed the Joint Board in a dilemma. As members of the International who had legitimate claims against the employers, their cause naturally had to be fully supported. At the same time, the Joint Board feared that the situation might lead to a general lockout. It accordingly aided the local in settling the dispute as speedily as possible. After a month the strike terminated in a compromise. The association, by its "Declaration of Policies," undertook to reinstate all the patternmakers and to establish an impartial commission to hear all grievances. The workers, in return, temporarily withdrew their demand for a written agreement.<sup>4</sup>

With this controversy adjusted, the union and the association directed their efforts toward the creation of the new impartial machinery under the agreement. The arbitration machinery, headed by Dr. Rubin of the University of Chicago, was soon in operation. The price adjustment question, unfortunately, was more difficult of solution. Three price arbitrators were tried and found unsatisfactory, and no successor acceptable to both parties could be found. In February, 1937, Dr. Rubin, finding his position untenable amidst the numerous charges and countercharges, resigned from his post. Alarmed by this development, the union and the association hastily composed their differences. They met the problem of price settlements by the temporary adoption of the "unit system," which, as worked out in the New York dress trade, was supposed to determine prices "scientifically" and equitably for both sides. In the fall, they reestablished the arbitration machinery, Dr. Rubin's place being taken by I. E. Rubovits.

At this point the recession struck the Chicago dress trade. Unemployment increased from week to week. Several shops

liquidated or underwent bankruptcy. In order to save several other firms, the union agreed to drastic reorganizations. It allowed one shop, for example, to reduce its number of workers from fifty-five to twenty-five; another, from sixty-five to forty. In accordance with its privilege under the agreement, the union prohibited all overtime for the duration of the crisis. Local 100, at the same time, instituted a fund for the relief of its unemployed members.<sup>5</sup>

By the time the recession had abated, the agreement with the manufacturers was on the verge of expiration. Negotiations for its renewal began on March 2, 1939. The union demanded increases for the various crafts, the employment of at least one cutter in every shop, recognition of the patternmakers' Local 74, and, in particular, speedier settlement of prices. The last issue, especially, precipitated a deadlock. The union insisted on settlement of all prices within a week after the beginning of production on the garments. The employers countered by offering settlements in advance of production. Although Manager Bialis and the office staff personally favored the proposal of the manufacturers, the Joint Board was forced to reject it because of the fear of Local 100 that its members could not judge the amount of labor involved in each garment prior to working on it. The impasse thus reached was not broken in six conferences. On March 23, negotiations were discontinued altogether. The situation now became extremely critical. Tension mounted daily. The Joint Board called upon all the dressmakers to demonstrate their solidarity in a mobilization meeting on the afternoon of April 4. At this point, however, Abraham Heller, manager of the association, abruptly changed his attitude. Aided by the mediating efforts of Dr. Rubin, manager Bialis and Abraham Heller speedily effected a compromise. When the mass meeting of the dressmakers took place, therefore, the manager was able to announce a settlement. The terms reached were accepted unanimously by the workers and became, on April 12, the new agreement.

The most important change in this new two-year contract was in the system of price settlements. The alternative methods advocated by the union and by the association were to be tried for periods of three months. In each case, provision was made for the invocation of the services of a price arbitrator, for the right of the dressmakers to stop working in case of disagreement, and for the maintenance of records of all settlements. At the end of six months, the results of both systems were to be compared, and the union and the association were to decide in conference which was to be retained. In addition, the workers gained several other advantages. Samplemakers, basters, cleaners, pinkers, and sorters received increased minimum scales. The sorters gained a closed shop. Local 18 benefited by a provision that all pressing and repressing was to be done by its members, and Local 81 by several clauses which increased the amount of work for cutters.\* The manufacturers further undertook to maintain sanitary dressing and wash rooms; to permit business agents to visit their shops weekly instead of monthly; to divide work equally among their contractors during slack periods; and to refrain from employing contractors on a temporary basis.<sup>6</sup>

The effectiveness of the new agreement, and particularly of its alternative system of price settlements, remains to be seen.† Meanwhile the employers and the workers are jointly facing other problems. According to an analysis in *Women's Wear*, the position of the Chicago dress trade is relatively good. It is sec-

\* Among the gains of the cutters were: that a shop operating over 14 machines must employ at least two cutters; one operating over 24 machines, at least three cutters; and that all work "under the category of cutting, such as duplicates, stock or specials, the making of duplicate carbon markers requiring the use of a pattern, and the blocking of tucking and pleating which has to be marked with or requires the use of a part of the regular pattern, shall be done by cutters." No employer was to engage in any cutting himself unless he complied with the above provisions.

† At the expiration of the first three-month period under the agreement the union demanded the immediate inauguration of settlements in advance of production. On July 17, 1939, in accordance with the clauses covering this point, it ordered all dressmakers whose prices had not yet been settled to stop working. Some 2,000 workers thereupon went out on a stoppage, which lasted in some cases as long as two days. According to last reports the dressmakers have found the new system extremely satisfactory.

ond only to New York in terms of output and value of products and has been gaining relative to other centers.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the trade has experienced a decline in recent years. From September, 1936, to the same month in 1938, the number of firms has decreased from 174 to 132. Although the shops were generally larger than in 1936, the number of workers employed in the trade diminished in these two years by 534—from 4,654 to 4,120. The local market was practically limited to the better grades of silk dresses, priced at \$10.75 and up. The cheaper grades had been largely lost to the cotton dress and to out-of-town shops.<sup>8</sup> The limiting of this competition and the rebuilding of the Chicago silk dress trade has therefore become one of the major problems of the union as well as of the manufacturers and was one of the factors accounting for the deep interest of the Joint Board in the organization of the cotton goods trade and of the various other branches of the ladies' wear industry in the whole midwest area.

The stabilization and rebuilding of the local market was an even greater problem in the cloak trade. In 1934, this branch of the industry was but a shadow of its former self. In 1920, Local 5 alone had boasted a membership of 2,873; in 1934, the total number of cloakmakers in the city was only 1,104. Despite the industrial upsurge, their condition was none too enviable. Their wages, averaging as much as \$1.41 an hour for operators, were comparatively high. Their hours of work, at thirty-five a week, were the lowest in any field of American industry. Nevertheless their average annual earnings met neither the minimum requirements for a decent livelihood nor the reasonable compensation for skilled workmen who had invested their lives in the trade. In 1934 the cutters—the only craft having employment for more than twenty-six weeks during the year—earned an average of but \$1,364. The pressers earned \$1,234; the operators, \$1,082; and the finishers, but \$787.<sup>9</sup>

The particular trouble point in the industrial relations of the

local trade between 1934 and 1939 has been the jobbing house of Hirsh and Sons. This firm, the members of which also owned the largest Chicago shop, occupied a dominant position in the local cloak market. Its efforts to capitalize upon this unique status locked it in chronic conflict with the Joint Board. Disputes between them arose every season. The firm continually demanded wage reductions and threatened, as an alternative, to send all its garments to country shops. The union countered with attempts to organize its out-of-town shops and to secure a guaranteed number of garments for the Chicago workers. In November, 1935, a compromise was reached by which Hirsh bound himself to produce sixty-five per cent of his work in Chicago. In the fall of 1936, he further agreed to a union contract for his contractor shop in LaPorte, Indiana, to use the consumers' protective label on all garments, and to maintain the standards of the former code for the trade. The firm, however, never faithfully maintained its obligations, and relations between it and the union were marked by incessant quarrels, hearings, threats, stoppages, and promises of reform and reparations.

The climax of this long controversy came in January, 1939. At that time, Hirsh was offering a six-month renewal of the agreement just expired, with the provision that he would guarantee his Chicago workers a certain amount of garments each season in return for reduced labor costs. In the midst of the negotiations, the union discovered that the firm had secretly bought its former contracting shop in Crawfordsville, Indiana, and that it was operating upon a non-union basis. Concluding that Hirsh intended to transfer all his work to this open shop, the Joint Board immediately demanded that he either give up the Crawfordsville shop or sign an agreement with its workers. When the firm refused to meet either alternative, the Joint Board called out on strike all the workers for Hirsh in Chicago and LaPorte.

This strike—the only one in the Chicago cloak and dress trade

since 1933—involving some five hundred workers in two states. The picket line, extending even to the New York show room of the firm, was literally “cast across half the continent.” The union hall was packed with enthusiastic workers awaiting their turn at picketing. The kitchen committee served them lunches. The Joint Board paid them strike benefits, as high as thirteen dollars a week for the married and eight dollars for the unmarried members. It secured the aid of the labor movement of Chicago and LaPorte. It cited the firm as a violator of the Wagner Act before the National Labor Relations Board. It appealed for cooperation to the buyers of ladies’ garments and to the public. It utilized, in short, every legal, orderly, and peaceful method of gaining its objective. The only instance of violence during the five weeks of the struggle occurred when a company truck in LaPorte, attempting to drive some partially finished garments through the picket line, injured five of the strikers.

For approximately three weeks the firm of Hirsh and Sons, overconfident of its ability to impose its own terms on the union, declined even to negotiate. Eventually, however, the firm agreed to discuss the situation. Several conferences resulted, at which Dr. Rubin and Abraham Heller acted as mediators. At the last of these, on February 13, 1939, a settlement was finally reached. By its terms, the agreement was extended for two years and the Crawfordsville shop was to be organized within four months. Subsequently, in June, 1939, the Crawfordsville workers joined the International as Local 358.<sup>10</sup>

Since the abatement of the economic recession, the situation of the Chicago cloakmakers has improved considerably. In July, 1939, there were 1,124 of them employed in the trade. The shops were rather small. Only two of them—Schenker Michel and Weinstock, and Schulder and Lieberman—furnished employment to more than two hundred persons and only one other to more than fifty. Of the other forty-two shops, twenty-one employed

less than ten workers and thirteen others less than twenty.<sup>11</sup> All of these, however, were fully organized. Although the union had no general agreement, the workers enjoyed the full fruits of years of experience in collective bargaining. Only union members of good standing were employed in the shops. The minimum scale for cutters was \$50 a week; for trimmers, \$47.50; for operators, \$52.50; for machine pressers, \$60; for under-pressers, \$50; and for finishers, \$38. Workers on duplicates generally received twenty-five per cent above the settled prices. Week workers were paid for four legal holidays. Hours of work were fixed at thirty-five, with overtime permitted only "in emergency cases." The trial period was one week. Grievances and complaints were infrequent and were usually rapidly adjusted by the business agents who had access to the shops "at all reasonable hours." In extraordinary cases, the union and the employers invoked the aid of Dr. Rubin, the impartial arbitrator for the cloak trade.

Since 1933 the Joint Board has expanded its interests and activities far beyond the Chicago cloak and dress workers who constituted the membership of its affiliated locals. Directly and indirectly it has participated in a series of drives launched by the International to organize every branch of the ladies' garment industry. It has advanced funds to such campaigns. It has helped in the organization of new locals and in supporting them during their critical periods. It has, moreover, furnished much of the personnel in charge of these drives in the region around Chicago. In short, although these campaigns have been the charge and the responsibility of the International, they have also become a part of the routine activity of the Chicago Joint Board. The result of this organizational work has been the formation of a vast network of locals throughout the midwest—in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan—which regard Chicago as the "capital of the Western part of the International"<sup>12</sup> and look to it for advice and aid.

The most significant of these drives has been in the cotton and white goods fields of Chicago and its environs.\* During recent years these trades have become the most important branches of the ladies' garment industry. According to estimates in 1934, they furnished employment to some 21,000 Chicago workers, of which 8,000 were engaged in the manufacture of cotton dresses and 13,000 in women's underwear. The organization of the cotton garment shops, in particular, became urgent when their products came into increasing competition with the cheaper grades of silk dresses. Before 1933, such competition had not existed. The dress houses, almost unorganized and enjoying exceedingly low labor costs, were able to prevent the cotton shops from encroaching upon their field. With the unionization of the dress trade, however, the cotton houses became the beneficiaries of an important wage differential. Their N.R.A. code, framed exclusively by their associations, established a forty-hour week and a minimum wage of \$13, in contrast to the thirty-five hour week and the \$26 minimum wage of the silk dressmakers. For a time the N.R.A. authorities maintained a line of demarcation between the two trades by prohibiting the cotton dress houses from producing any garments which sold for more than \$22 a dozen. When the N.R.A. was abolished, this prohibition was removed. The cotton garment shops, operating on the section work system and therefore able to employ unskilled labor, captured the field of cheaper rayon and silk dresses and threatened to make even deeper inroads into the territory of the silk dress firms. The Joint Board was accordingly vitally interested in the International's organization program, not only for the purpose of raising the standards of these grossly exploited girls and women, but also for the protection of the dressmakers in its ranks.<sup>13</sup>

The opening struggle in this campaign was the strike of the five hundred workers of the La Mode Garment Company in

\* For earlier campaigns in this field see Chapter ten.

the summer of 1933. The immediate cause was the discharge of three girls for union activity. In essence, however, it was a revolt against conditions of virtual peonage. The girls of this shop—many of them children under sixteen years of age—complained that they were paid three or five dollars for a sixty-hour week, that they were being “imprisoned behind locked doors” for night work, and that they were forced to labor five or six hours after punching the time clocks. Their struggle created a stir in Chicago. Judge Harry Fisher, to whom the firm applied for an injunction against the strikers, indignantly denied it on the ground that the company had come into court with unclean hands. He ordered it instead to abide by the provisions of the National Recovery Act and to institute a forty-hour week and a \$13 minimum wage. This award settled the strike, and the striking girls became the nucleus of Local 76, the Chicago White Goods and Wash Dress Workers.<sup>14</sup>

The campaign begun so auspiciously was pressed forward under the leadership of Abraham Plotkin and Samuel Glassman. In March, 1935, the International judged the time ripe for a general strike. The strike then initiated lasted almost to the end of the summer and was as bitter as the conflicts of former years in the dress trade. The Central Cotton Garment Manufacturers' Association and Carson Pirie Scott and Company secured drastic injunctions against the workers. Pickets were arrested almost daily. The employers repeatedly attempted to open shops in outlying areas. At the very height of the strike, the position of the union was greatly undermined by the annulment of the N.R.A. As a result, the union scored but a partial victory for the workers. In several large firms, such as Carson Pirie Scott, the strike was entirely defeated.

In the spring of 1937 the union again intensified its campaign and secured some notable gains. It obtained agreements with several large shops, among them the leading anti-union firm of Korach Brothers, and thus for the first time broke the solid

ranks of the manufacturers' association. In June of that year it won a sixteen-week strike against the Nellie Ann Dress Company, notable in the history of the International because almost all the three hundred strikers were Negro girls. Gains made since that time have raised the membership of Local 76 to some 3,000 workers. Six hundred more have become members of Local 261, chartered in 1936 with jurisdiction in the blouse, skirt, pajama, bathrobe, and other miscellaneous women's wear trades.\*<sup>15</sup>

As noted previously, the organizational campaign in the cotton and white goods fields was undertaken and financed directly by the International. Nevertheless, the Chicago Joint Board has not stood idly by. Its manager and business agents have often identified themselves with the activities of the cotton goods workers. Its secretary-treasurer, M. A. Goldstein, has served as the treasurer of their strike committees, notably in the general strike of 1935. The Joint Board has, moreover, advanced funds to these workers whenever necessary. In short, it has placed at the disposal of the cotton goods workers its whole machinery, experience, and prestige, and has aided the International both in diminishing the threat to the silk dress industry and in gaining the fruits of trade unionism for thousands of new members.

Fully as important to the Joint Board as the campaign in the cotton and white goods fields in Chicago was the drive for the

\* In addition to the white goods workers, several other Chicago crafts have been organized between 1933 and 1939 into locals of the International. The pleaters, stitchers, and embroidery workers are members of Local 212, which boasts a membership of five hundred and has completely organized the workers under its jurisdiction in the cloak and dress trades. The patternmakers, members of Local 74, have won several agreements with individual shops, although they are still not a party to the collective agreement with the dress manufacturers' association. The ladies' tailors, who left the Joint Board to join the Needle Trades' Industrial Workers' Union in 1927, rejoined the International in 1935 as Local 208 and enjoy by the terms of their agreements annually guaranteed incomes. The raincoat makers are members of Local 54, which reorganized simultaneously with the revival of the local trade in 1933. All these groups, as well as the cotton and white goods workers, are still in an "organizable" stage. Although receiving aid and cooperation from the Joint Board, they are not affiliated with it. They have common offices at 174 North Franklin Street. Locals 76 and 261 are managed by Samuel Glassman; Local 212, by Julius Young; and Locals 54, 74, and 208, by Abraham Plotkin.

organization of the various branches of the women's wear industry in the small towns and cities around the metropolis. Such out-of-town shops, as noted previously, were already a serious problem in the 1920's. During the depression the flight of the industry from the city was accentuated. As the competition among the small towns for the prizes of industrial enterprises mounted, local chambers of commerce increased their inducements to Chicago firms. They began to offer free power, free plant space or premises, and often even outright donations. All of them promised, in particular, "freedom from labor trouble" and an overabundant, readily exploitable labor market—unemployed workers and the womenfolk of farmers who were forced to work sixty or seventy hours a week for wages of two, five, or seven dollars. Accordingly, Chicago firms migrated from the city in increasing numbers. Some of them were fugitive shops who had deliberately broken their contracts with the union. Others, especially the cotton shops, moved to avoid the threat of unionization. All of them constituted a standing menace to the stability of the industry, to the standards of labor, and to the welfare of the workers in Chicago.

The objectives of the union naturally differed with circumstances. Stated generally, they consisted of organizing all out-of-town shops, raising the standards of their workers, and thus minimizing wage differentials between the country and the city; of maintaining the existing ratios of production between the Chicago and the out-of-town shops; and of bringing the fugitive shops back to the city. To effect these purposes the Chicago Joint Board is cooperating with the International, which has developed during the past six years a formidable midwestern organization program. Led by Morris Bialis, the general supervisor of this work, and by International organizers Abraham Plotkin and Harry Rufer, this department has conducted an extensive drive covering the five states of Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Iowa, and has achieved some notable results.

The difficulties of this work, as indicated previously,\* are enormous. The local authorities in the small towns are usually intimately connected with the employer and form a solid wall of opposition to the advent of the union. The organizer is harried by the sheriff and the local constabulary; in one case, in Gilman, Illinois, the employer himself was both sheriff and democratic committeeman, and his truck driver was the justice of the peace. The union is frequently barred from access to local broadcasting facilities and refused newspaper space. The workers who are being organized are subjected to all types of pressure. They are compelled to join suddenly-formed "Sunshine Clubs" or other types of company unions. They are often threatened with loss of their jobs, particularly by removal of the factory, and with vigilante measures of various types. If the situation leads to a strike, arrests, beatings, and tear gassings become common phenomena.

In meeting these obstacles, the union has relied extensively upon the aid of New Deal state and federal officials as well as upon its traditional techniques. It has frequently called upon the National Labor Relations Board to conduct elections. It has carried its fight for the right of utilizing local radio facilities to the Federal Bureau of Communications. It has urged its members to take the lead in reporting violations of the Wage and Hour Act. In the last analysis, however, the success of the union in organizing activity is based not so much upon governmental agencies as upon its own strength and determination.

Among the notable cases of the run-away shop during this period—and illustrative of the whole problem—was that of Lipson Brothers. This firm, one of the large dress houses in Chicago for the past fifteen years, was a party to the collective agreement signed in 1933. In June, 1935, when the contract was two months short of expiration, rumors began to circulate that the firm was contemplating removing its factory to Oglesby,

\* See Chapter thirteen, pages 134-135.

Illinois. Both the firm and the dress association denied these rumors. Shortly thereafter, the union investigating committee found machines being installed in an Oglesby plant and discovered, with the aid of the code authorities, that Lipson Brothers was delinquent some \$4,600 in wages to its workers. The union again protested to the association, which at first denied both charges and then replied that it could do nothing since the firm had just resigned from membership. At the same time, the firm notified its workers that it was discontinuing manufacturing on July 5. The Joint Board thereupon declared the shop on strike until the claims of the workers under the provisions of the contract were fully met.<sup>16</sup>

The full story of the flight of Lipson Brothers to Oglesby soon came to light. Oglesby businessmen had been searching for a new town industry ever since a watch factory in nearby LaSalle, which had employed 125 Oglesby girls, had been forced to close. In Chicago they found the firm of Lipson Brothers willing to listen to reasonable proposals. With the consent of the firm, they began a campaign to secure the solid backing of their town for the new enterprise. The City Council took the project under its wing. The Business and Professional Men's Association organized an Oglesby Factory Association which launched a drive for ten thousand dollars. To draw the community into support of their project, its sponsors lavishly promised employment to a large number of workers; ran dances and other affairs, the proceeds of which were to go into the fund; and opened a training school at which some two hundred hopeful girls registered. With public sentiment thus arrayed on the side of the new enterprise, the Lipsons arrived in Oglesby as public heroes, declared that they had always "preferred the small community" to the big city, and began to operate their shop.<sup>17</sup>

In the meantime the union was busying itself with pressing its claims against the firm. The Chicago workers filed suit for their back pay in the Superior Court of Cook County. Joseph

Zuckerman, the business agent sent by the Joint Board to Oglesby, found several expected and unexpected allies. The Trade and Labor Council of the town placed the firm on its unfair list until it settled with the Chicago union. The businessmen's association was unable to raise the ten thousand dollars which it had promised the Lipsons. The workers of Oglesby, failing to find the ideal conditions promised them in the new plant, began to organize. With the popularity of the firm already on the wane, Mayor Frank Moyle and the Oglesby Factory Association agreed to submit the controversy to mediation before Robert C. Cox, conciliator of the United States Department of Labor. In order to avoid strike-breaking and violence the sheriff ordered the plant closed pending adjustment of the dispute.<sup>18</sup>

The hearings which followed on August 16 brought out clearly the position of each group in the controversy. The Lipsons took the stand that the union had no claim against them because the firm had changed its name to "Lipson Dress, Incorporated," that other Chicago dress manufacturers had also violated their contracts with the union, and that they were out of funds anyway and could not pay anything. Morris Bialis, speaking for the union, answered that the firm was capable of meeting its full indebtedness, that it had been rated at \$20,000 before removal from Chicago, and that it had spent virtually nothing in the interval, since local businessmen had met the bills for moving and for training its new workers. The Factory Association spokesmen regretted that they could not be of greater financial service to the Lipsons, but hoped that the firm would be able to continue its operations in Oglesby. The Tri-City Labor Council representatives, speaking for Oglesby trade unionists, charged that the firm was interested primarily in exploiting young "down-and-out" girls, exhibited pay envelopes of \$3.50 for a month's work, and expressed themselves forcibly against scabbing on Chicago workers. And thus the arguments went back and forth during the entire hearing and during a second

one a week later. The greatest concession offered by the Lipsons was a promissory note covering the sum of their indebtedness. This the union rejected because no bank would accept it. The proposition of Morris Bialis, that the Lipsons open their books to inspection, was met with a point-blank refusal. The conciliator, after offering several formulae to solve the situation, departed from the scene.<sup>19</sup>

With the tide now strongly against them and the plant completely tied up, the Lipsons began to cast longing eyes on nearby Princeton, whose press had already adopted the motto "Welcome Lipson Brothers to Princeton." In September, 1935, the firm suddenly packed up and removed all its machinery to Princeton. There, as in Oglesby, it was followed by the union, was aided temporarily by local businessmen, and again suffered a wane in popularity as its objectives were exposed. In the end the firm, bankrupted and penitent, came back to Chicago to start its business career anew. The association forgave it and interceded on its behalf with the union. In accordance with its general policy of foregoing revenge, the Joint Board permitted the firm to operate again in Chicago, where it eventually reestablished itself as a small shop far less pretentious than the large firm which had broken its contract with the union a year and a half before.<sup>20</sup>

Although the out-of-town organization drive is by no means completed, the union has already achieved some notable results in meeting the problem of fugitive shops. Some of these, as the Debutante Dress Company, have been brought back to Chicago. Others have been organized in their new localities. Most important, the knowledge that the union will unrelentingly follow the shop has acted as a deterrent to removals from the city which are motivated by the desire to escape union standards. The dress agreement of 1939, moreover, explicitly bound the Chicago manufacturers to refrain from moving their factories "to any place to which the public carrier fare is more than 10c."

Important as were the gains of Chicago members of the union

from this program, they were overshadowed by the advantages derived from it by the workers in the ladies' garment industry in the region around the metropolis. Thousands of them employed in cloak, silk dress, and cotton goods shops in numerous small towns and cities in the midwest have succeeded in organizing themselves into locals of the International. Confident in their collective strength, they are dispelling the belief of employers that the workers in small communities are more exploitable than those of larger cities and are winning conditions of employment approximating those of their Chicago fellow members in the International.<sup>21</sup>

## *The Functioning of the Union*<sup>1</sup>

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**D**URING ITS fifty years of existence, the Chicago ladies' garment workers' union has developed a variety of structural forms and activities suited to its varying needs. It has had in its ranks not only cloakmakers, skirtmakers, and dressmakers, but also corset workers, ladies' tailors, and raincoat makers. Its locals and branches have been organized upon craft or industrial bases, upon national or sex divisions, or upon locality groupings. Its experiments in the functions of trade unionism have carried it into bold projects—notably the building undertaken in 1919 and the cooperative efforts of 1923 and 1930—and have resulted in the continual expansion of its program of services to the membership.

In 1939, the Chicago Joint Board embraces in its ranks all the cloak and silk dress workers of the city. The cloakmakers are divided by crafts into four locals: Local 5 for the operators, Local 18 for the pressers, Local 59 for the finishers, and Local 81 for the cutters. The dressmakers, save for the cutters and pressers among them who are members of Local 81 and 18 respectively, form the semi-industrial Local 100. Together these five locals affiliated with the Joint Board had a membership of 5,393. Of these, 1,603 are men and 3,790 are women. In national origins, 2,000 of them are Jewish; 830, Polish; 783, Italian; and 1,780, American.<sup>2</sup>

For the service of this heterogeneous membership, the union has evolved a complex and integrated business organization. Its structural base is the local, a unit having jurisdiction in a particular craft or field. Each of the five locals elects its own officers—a chairman, a vice-chairman, a recording secretary, a sergeant at arms, and an executive board.\* Regular membership meetings are held either monthly or bi-monthly. Between meetings, the power of transacting the business of the local is lodged in its executive board, which meets weekly and whose decisions are binding when approved by the majority at the next membership meeting.

The Joint Board is the highest body of the Chicago union. It supervises the work of all the paid officers of the union—the manager, the secretary-treasurer, the various business agents, and the complaint clerk—as well as that of such unpaid functionaries as the shop chairmen. Through its officers, committees, and as a body, it negotiates and signs agreements, supervises and controls union shops, conducts organization drives, handles all financial transactions of the union, and maintains harmony and discipline in the organization. Its decisions, when approved by a majority of the locals, are binding upon all members of the union. Between its bi-weekly meetings, one of its committees, the Board of Directors, functions as its executive board.

The basic function of the union has always been, of course, collective bargaining. Its members, according to the philosophy of the union, have invested their lives in the industry and have

\* The membership of the executive boards range from 15 to 24. In Local 81, the executive board serves as the unifying body between its cloak and dress branches. The officers of the various executive boards in 1939 were:

Local	Chairman	Vice-chairman	Recording secretary
5	M. Friedman	S. Flack	J. Lotterman
18	A. Suden	H. Festenstein	H. Neuhaus
59	A. Rosenthal	S. Gordon	A. Sher
81	{ Meyer Kranz Sam Williams		{ Jack Rubin (cloak branch) Meyer Goldstein (dress branch)
100	Ray Blottiaux	Fanny Wzykowski	Alice Hinton

a vested interest in it equal to or even superseding that of capital. In return for this investment of life and labor, the workers are entitled to wages commensurate with the American standard of living; to hours short enough to permit normal leisure and recreational activities; to proper standards of safety, sanitation, and courtesy of treatment in the shop; and to security against involuntary idleness. Responsibility for conditions in the industry thus being shared jointly by both management and workers, the union, as the business organization of its members, accordingly insists upon an equal share in the shaping of its policies.

To achieve this purpose the Chicago Joint Board, like the rest of the International, relies mainly upon the method of peaceful negotiation. Whenever possible, it has attempted to secure a collective agreement for the whole trade as the best means of attaining its ends. The manufacturers, in such a case, unite into one or more associations, which sign a collective contract for all member firms. The Chicago union has had such collective agreements in the cloak trade since 1915 and in the dress trade since 1919.\* The procedure for drawing up such agreements has become routinized through the years. Several months before the expiration of an agreement, the executive boards of the various locals appoint committees for the purpose of formulating new demands upon the manufacturers. These committees receive and work out various suggestions and present them to the executive boards. The demands so formulated are then brought to the membership of the respective locals for discussion, alteration, and ratification. Those accepted by the various locals are sent to the Joint Board, which turns over the task of consolidating the various demands into one coordinated document to an agreement committee, consisting of representatives of every local together with the manager and other officers. The completed product, when ratified by the Joint Board, becomes

\* Due to the disintegration of the cloak manufacturers' association in the early part of the decade, the Joint Board has had only shop agreements in the cloak trade for the past few years.



OFFICE STAFF, CHICAGO JOINT BOARD, 1939

Seated, *left to right*: N. Carlson, Business Agent; M. A. Goldstein, Secretary-Treasurer; M. Bialis, Manager; R. Rabinowitz, Business Agent; J. Katz, Business Agent. Standing, *left to right*: M. Barkan, Business Agent; R. Eisenstat, Complaint Clerk; L. Lavender, Business Agent; A. Ferlanto, Business Agent.



the position of the union in the negotiations for a new agreement.

The managers of the union and of the association then set a date for a conference. The union is represented by its conference committee, which very often consists of the same personnel as the agreement committee, and by its manager and other business officers. The association, similarly represented by its manager and by a committee of employers, usually presents counter-demands. The managers of the union and of the association, acting as spokesmen for the respective parties, state the case for each side. Both parties then consider the specific demands and proposals. The tone of the discussion may range from polite discourse to heated argument. If all goes well a new agreement is drafted after one or more conferences. This, if ratified by the governing bodies of both parties, becomes the new law of the industry for the period specified by the terms of the contract. In the case of the employers, the agreement is ratified by the association; of the union, by the Joint Board and by a mass meeting of the membership affected. The same procedure is followed in negotiating for individual shop agreements. The conference table is also resorted to during the term of an agreement for purposes of interpreting its various provisions, adding supplementary clauses, or settling disputes or problems arising under it.

If all peaceful methods of adjustment fail, the leadership of the union, after securing the approval of the members by a majority vote, may call upon them to express their solidarity by a strike. Such strikes range in scope from the comparatively trivial shop stoppage, which may be settled within an hour, to the important general strike, which may tie up the whole trade for weeks and even months. Strikes, of whatever nature, may not be inaugurated by any bodies other than the International and the Joint Board. Unauthorized stoppages and strikes are prohibited and make their perpetrators liable to severe penalties. No local, moreover, may call a craft stoppage or strike.

Even the Joint Board, the central body of the Chicago union, must consult the General Executive Board of the International before calling any important strike. In the case of a strike involving two-thirds of the workers in the local trade, it must secure the sanction of the General Executive Board in advance. Should the Joint Board fail to act in this manner, the International may not only censure or inflict other measures of discipline upon it, but may also withhold financial and other aid from it for the duration of the conflict.

However, once a strike is called by the Joint Board with the sanction of the International, the union becomes transformed from a staid business organization into a formidable fighting machine. All its members and officers are drafted into immediate service. Every worker involved takes his place of duty—on the picket line, or in any other task to which he may be assigned. A host of them serve on the various committees which, in cooperation with the manager and other business officers, furnish the leadership to the strikers.\* The International and its locals immediately offer the Joint Board moral support, help in picketing against firms having shops or showrooms elsewhere in the country, and, in emergencies, extend financial assistance. The local labor movement similarly cooperates with the strikers. In short, the employer or employers find themselves confronted by a disciplined group, well led and amply financed, and fully supported by the mass of organized labor both in the ladies' garment industry and in the locality of the strike.

Despite its strength as a fighting mechanism, the Chicago union has always been eager for industrial peace, even at the price of compromises and concessions. Its general policy has

\* The number and personnel of these committees vary with the scope and nature of the strike. In a large strike the general strike committee, which has complete charge of the strike, may have as many as ten or twelve sub-committees—on picketing, halls, relief, speakers, settlement, and other phases of strike activity. Not all the members of these sub-committees are necessarily members of the general strike committee, although the chairmen and secretaries usually are. The chairman of each sub-committee reports to the general strike committee.

been to avoid conflict, which not only engendered bitterness between employer and worker, but was also costly to its members by draining both their own resources and the treasury of the Joint Board. The Joint Board, therefore, has consistently championed peaceful negotiations, and, if these failed, mediation and arbitration. For the same reasons it has been eager to terminate strikes, when they occurred, as speedily as possible. Moreover, whether the strike was short or long in duration, the principle of the union has always been to refrain from violence and to limit its activities to peaceful picketing and boycotting.

Once an agreement is reached, whether by peaceful negotiations or as a result of a strike, the union faces the tremendous problem of enforcing the terms of the contract obtained. In the case of piece workers, who form the great bulk of its membership, the union faces each season the formidable task of settling prices. Basically, this is the task of the members of each craft—the operators, pressers, and finishers—who elect a price committee in each shop for this purpose. This committee, together with the shop chairman, usually succeeds in securing terms satisfactory to its constituents and in accordance with the union minimum scale. If necessary, it invokes the aid of the business agent who is assigned to the shop affected.\* Especially difficult cases are given over to the Joint Board manager, who adjusts the dispute in conference with the employer or with the manager of the association. The collective agreement for the dress trade further provides for a price arbitrator, who is selected and paid jointly by both parties to the contract. This functionary is required to intercede in disputes over prices when all other attempts at settlement have failed and to settle the prices objectively and speedily. His decisions are binding on both sides and are retroactive.

In addition to price settlements, the union is called upon by

\* In the cloak trade the business agent must be present at all price settlements. It should also be noted that price committees function throughout the season, not merely at its beginning.

its members to adjust various other complaints and grievances in the shops. A great number of such disputes—concerning unequal distribution of work, discharges, back pay, or wage rates below the minimum scale—are inevitable even under the best phrased contracts and with the most cooperative employers. Their settlement constitutes both in bulk and in importance the characteristic activity of the union as a business organization.

The first-line union officer in this field is the shop chairman. He is the representative both of the workers of the shop who elect him and of the Joint Board which installs him in office. His duties are many and formidable. He supervises the enforcement of all union rules and regulations, maintains harmony and discipline among the workers in his shop, and attempts to adjust all grievances. Since his success is to a great extent dependent upon the degree of cooperation which he secures from the management, he must ever avoid the enmity of the employer or the foreman. On the other hand, as the spokesman of the workers in the shop, he must always "go to bat" for them, produce results, and maintain their good will and confidence. Despite his many duties, the shop chairman is usually uncompensated; only in the larger shops does he receive voluntary contributions from the workers in payment for the time he loses in the performance of his duties.\* Consequently, the union has always honored the shop chairmen as among its most important officers. In an earlier period of its history, the Joint Board presented them with specially made gold union buttons. At the present time it conducts special classes for their benefit and consults with them at frequent shop chairman meetings.

Should the shop chairman be unsuccessful, the grievances of the worker are brought to the office of the union, usually to the complaint department. Headed at present by Rebecca Eisenstat, this agency is charged with receiving and recording complaints,

\* In the larger shops this officer is assisted by "section" or craft chairmen, who are elected by the members of each craft.

with turning over such complaints to the appropriate business agent, and with recording the adjustments or solutions of such cases. Since August, 1935, when Local 100 banned knocking on doors of shops in search for employment, the complaint department has also become the labor bureau of the dressmakers. In that capacity it receives all calls for vacancies, issues work permits—essential to any person who wishes to work in a union shop—and assigns workers to positions open at the time.\*

The final settlement of grievances, complaints, and disputes in the various shops is the burden and responsibility of the business agents. These officers, earlier known as "walking delegates," have been associated with the union since its beginning and have at times been its only administrative functionaries. At present there are six business agents—Meyer Barkan and Abraham Rabinowitz in the cloak, and Leo Lavender, Joseph Katz, Anton Ferlanto, and Norman Carlson in the dress department. Each of these is in charge of a specified number of shops. In addition to their work in settling prices and adjusting grievances between worker and employer and among the workers themselves, they perform a number of other duties. They investigate the conditions in the various shops, call shop meetings, enforce union standards and regulations, and in general serve as the watchdogs of the union. Their position is as difficult as it is pivotal. The workers demand of them aggressiveness and ability to "deliver the goods." The employers expect them to be amiable and reasonable under all circumstances. The Joint Board relies upon their tact and good judgment to smooth out the rough edges of every-day relations in the shops. They accordingly must not only understand the problems of the trade and of their particular shops, but must also possess an intimate knowledge of the workers and the employers with whom they deal, must be gifted with qualities of leadership and diplomacy,

\* This picture is more true of the dress than of the cloak trade. In the latter the workers customarily bring their complaints to the direct attention of the business agents. Similarly, the cloak business agents issue work permits themselves.

and must thoroughly understand the mechanism and the functioning of the union from the local to the International.

Head of the business department of the Chicago Joint Board is the manager, who is its chief executive and administrative officer. This position, although dating back to 1890, has had a checkered career.\* The present post was established in 1922 when Barnett Fogel became the "Labor Manager" of the Joint Board. Since January, 1923, save for the "Progressive Administration" interlude of 1926 and 1927, this office has been occupied by Morris Bialis.

For several years the manager was merely the first among the business agents. He was selected by the Joint Board from among those elected at the time and served mainly as the supervisor and coordinator of the work of his colleagues. In time, however, this office has changed in character and expanded in importance and influence. The manager negotiates agreements and settlements and supervises their enforcement. He guides, advises, and receives reports from the business agents and the complaint department; represents the union in arbitration cases, in trade conferences, and before government and other agencies; reports regularly to the Joint Board on the condition of the industry and of the union and recommends procedures and tactics for specific situations; and in general carries out the policies of the Joint Board and of the International.

In the dress trade the collective agreement is enforced not only by the union machinery described above but also by joint action of the union and the association. Like the Joint Board, the association has its own set of functionaries, including a labor manager and several business agents, which cooperate with the officers of the union in the investigation and settlement of cases

\* The first manager in the history of the union was Isaac Levin, who was elected to this post by the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union in 1890. In 1903 the Joint Executive Board elected Benjamin Schlesinger "business manager" of the five locals then in Chicago. In 1915 Abraham Bisno was selected "chief clerk" of the Joint Board, a position which he occupied until the office was abolished in 1917.

not settled by the previously described machinery. All decisions so reached are binding upon both parties. The association and the union also maintain a permanent "Joint Patrol Committee," which is charged with the duty of policing the market and of reporting all irregularities on hours of work.

In the event of failure of direct negotiation, the issue or issues involved are brought to arbitration. Machinery for this purpose has been a feature of the labor relations in the Chicago industry since 1915. At present only the dress trade has a permanent impartial arbitrator, an office filled since 1937 by I. E. Rubovits.\* His duties, by the terms of the agreement, are to hear all complaints, grievances, and controversies which are within the scope of the contract and which cannot be otherwise settled, and to render decisions on such cases. Upon the receipt of any written complaint, he is required to set a date for a hearing and to send due notice to each party. He has authority to call for any evidence, written or oral, to consider each case upon its merits, and to impose appropriate penalties. His decisions are binding and are not subject to appeal. So well established have the principles of arbitration and conciliation become in the industry that they are invoked, not only in cases within the scope of existing agreements, but also in reaching new settlements, in deciding new points not covered by the contracts, and in terminating industrial conflicts of all types from deadlocks in negotiations to general strikes.

Complementing the work of the business department of the union is that of the financial department. Headed by M. A. Goldstein, the secretary-treasurer of the Joint Board since 1924, this department is in virtual charge of the internal administration of the union. The secretary-treasurer collects all dues and assessments, maintains records and ledgers for each member, and checks up periodically on the standing of members in the organization. He has charge of all funds of the Joint Board and of

\* In cases necessitating arbitration in the cloak trade, the parties involved usually obtain the services of Dr. Rubin.

the locals, keeps all accounts, and makes all the necessary disbursements. The secretary-treasurer is further responsible for the custody of all the property of the union; for the submission of periodic financial reports and recommendations; for the supervision of the sick fund and the health service and the various other internal activities of the union; and for the arrangement of meetings, celebrations, and similar functions.

The income of the union is derived primarily from dues, initiation fees, and special assessments. Each member pays weekly dues of fifty cents. Of this amount, fifteen cents are sent as per capita to the International, thirty cents go to the local, two cents are deposited in the sick fund, and one cent is allotted to the organization fund, the strike fund, and the reserve and donation fund respectively. According to the International constitution, each member receives a dues book in which his weekly stamps are pasted. He is required to pay his dues in advance either directly to the financial office or to the shop chairman. Those three months in arrears may be suspended from all rights and privileges of membership, and, if delinquent for thirty-nine weeks, are automatically expelled from their locals. Exemptions are made by the various locals only in the event of illness, unemployment, and similar "extraordinary cases."

Of the other sources of income, initiation fees, which formerly brought in considerable sums into the union treasury, have been a relatively minor source of revenue since the dressmakers became fully organized. Assessments, on the other hand, are still an important source of income for special funds. The locals have the power to levy assessments on their whole membership for various purposes, such as local death benefits, sick benefits, or relief funds. In addition, the Joint Board may levy special assessments for strike and organization purposes. Any such steps, naturally, cannot be taken without the approval of the membership—in the case of the locals, of their members assembled at meeting; in the case of the Joint Board, of a majority of the locals.

All money collected by the financial department is deposited in one treasury, although each local has its own account. The Joint Board, as such, has no money of its own with the exception of the special funds. Its administrative expenses are prorated monthly among the locals according to their membership at the time. Disbursements are made by the secretary-treasurer contingent upon the approval of the appropriate officials—in the case of the locals, by the chairman and secretary; in the case of the Joint Board, by the members of its finance committee. The finances of the union are further checked by periodic financial reports of the secretary-treasurer and by the audits of the International auditor.

So far the Chicago Joint Board has been considered exclusively as the business organization of its membership. It is equally important, however, as an institution of self-government. From its earliest beginnings to the present the Chicago union has been the collective voice of its members. In 1939 as in 1890, all its members have an equal stake in its functioning, have equal rights in determining its policies according to the rules of democratic and representative government, and enjoy to the full the right of participating in all its manifold activities.

Membership in the union, according to the International constitution, is open to any worker regardless of race, creed, color, or political belief. He must of course be employed or employable in the trade, must have a clear labor record, and must agree to abide by the laws of the union. Having met these qualifications, he is admitted into the appropriate local upon terms of equality with the older members and immediately enjoys most of the rights and benefits of membership.\* He also assumes the duties

\* This statement must be qualified as follows: No one may participate in local elections until he has been a paid-up member for at least three months, or may run for office until he has been a member for a year in his local and for two years in the International. Similarly, no one is eligible for the International death benefit and for local and Joint Board benefits until he has been a member of the union for a stated period of time.

of citizenship in the union, such as abiding by its rules and decisions, maintaining a good financial standing, utilizing the normal union channels for registering complaints and grievances, and in general conducting himself as befits a union man.

X Together the members of the union determine its leadership and control its policy. Firstly, they constitute an electoral body in various capacities. The workers in the shop elect the price committee, the section chairmen, and the shop chairman. The members of the local elect all its officers, its executive board, and its delegates to the Joint Board, to the convention of the International, and to the other bodies with which the local is affiliated.\* The workers in each trade elect the business agents who are to serve them. And finally, all the members of the union elect the manager and the secretary-treasurer of the Joint Board. A few officers of the union are elected by the Joint Board. These are the Joint Board chairman, vice chairman, recording secretary, and sergeant at arms, and the complaint clerk. The degree of participation in the elections of the union may be judged from the returns of the last one, in which eighty per cent of the members cast their ballots.

The procedure in elections for local and Joint Board officers has been carefully outlined by the International constitution. All elections must be well publicized. Nominations must be made in open meeting at least two weeks before the date of the election, and members must receive additional notice by letter and through the press. With the exception of two groups, the new members mentioned above and the paid officers who are ineligible for service on the Joint Board or the local executive boards at the same time, all members of the union may be candidates for any position. All such aspirants are required to

\* Notably the Federation of Jewish Trade Unions, the Women's Trade Union League, and, before the spring of 1937, the Chicago and Illinois Federations of Labor. The locals and the Joint Board also send representatives to other organizations, conferences, or special events in which they may be interested. Such delegates are appointed by the chairman of the local or the Joint Board.

undergo an examination on eligibility and fitness before the election and objection committee of the local or before the Joint Board. The election must be held on the date set, must be supervised by the election and the objection committee, and must be conducted by secret ballot. Votes must be counted the day of the election and in the presence of any candidates who desire to watch the tallying. The successful candidates are then installed into office. Paid officers, however, must first sign resignations which become effective whenever accepted by a majority vote of the local executive board or of the Joint Board according to the office involved. Terms of office in the Chicago organization have varied with the years. Until 1918 they were for periods of only six months, a relic of the days when the union was reorganized every season. During the next few years the Joint Board and the locals began to elect their officers annually. Since 1934, by rule of the International, terms of office have been two years.

In addition to serving in an electoral capacity the membership is also a direct policy-making body. In the final analysis it decides, initiates, or ratifies all policies and acts of the union. The workers of each shop make various decisions in their shop meetings. The local decides by a majority vote on matters affecting its own members. The workers of the whole trade constitute a ratifying body for general agreements or, as in the case of the important issue of piece work versus week work in 1930, decide by referendum the future policy of their trade. Moreover, as noted above, the members of the local may accept or reject recommendations of their executive board, and the majority of the locals may approve or disapprove the proposals of the Joint Board.

Since the strength of the union is dependent exclusively upon its internal discipline, its decisions, rules, and agreements, once made, are binding upon all members. In ideal, each member is expected to be union-conscious at least to the degree of under-

standing that his individual welfare is synonymous with that of all the other workers in the trade and that he must, therefore, strictly observe the regulations instituted by the union for the common good. In practice, however, the union has found the task of maintaining the discipline and morale of its membership an ever present problem. This task, accordingly, is the standing responsibility of all its active members, and of all officers from the shop chairman to the Joint Board manager. In particular it is the province of the Joint Grievance Board, established for this purpose in 1917 and developed by a series of able chairmen—as O. A. Nudleman, Earl Nadel, Aaron Sher, and Roy Glassman—as the foremost judicial institution of the union.

The Joint Grievance Board is composed of five members, one from each local,\* and has original jurisdiction in all disputes between member and member and between members and the union. Its cases range from petty controversies to such crimes against trade unionism as working illegal hours, accepting wage rates below the union scale, entering into individual contracts, scabbing, or malfeasance in office. The procedure of the Grievance Board conforms to established judicial custom. All charges must be presented in written form. The defendant as well as the plaintiff has the right to receive formal notice of the charges, to get a fair and impartial hearing, to defend himself or to retain a brother union member as his attorney, to question witnesses against him, and to produce any evidence he may desire. If the defendant is exonerated, he may not be tried again by the same body on the same charge. If the plaintiff has been guilty of false or malicious charges, he may himself be called to judgment. Both the plaintiff and the defendant may appeal any decision of the Grievance Board to the Joint Board, and thereafter, to the

\* Local 81 has two representatives, one for each branch, but only one of them may vote at a time, depending on whether the trial involves workers in the cloak or the dress trade. The chairman and secretary of the Grievance Board must be delegates of the Joint Board.

General Executive Board committee on appeals or even to the International convention. In extraordinary cases, when the Joint Board appoints special investigating and trial committees to hear charges against its officers, a similar procedure is followed.

The penalties administered by the Joint Grievance Board vary with the offense. The extreme penalty is expulsion from the union. Lesser punishments range from partial temporary disbarment from specified union activities to monetary fines of varying amount. Since the usual misdeeds are minor ones, the penalties administered by the Grievance Board are rather mild in nature. First offenders are generally dismissed with a lecture on their duties to their fellow workers. Others may be asked to apologize to the plaintiff, may be placed on peace bonds of five or ten dollars, or may be fined small sums ranging from one to fifteen dollars. All decisions of the Grievance Board, unless reversed upon appeal, are binding upon the parties involved.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years the Chicago union has broadened its objectives and developed its program far beyond its major purposes as a business organization. Since 1933 it has expanded its various services and benefits to a degree unique among trade unions in this area. The most important of these are its health program, death benefits, relief funds, and educational department, all of which are deeply rooted in its history and compare favorably with similar programs conducted by the rest of the International.

The sick benefit of the union, always of primary concern to its membership, antedates the Joint Board itself. This institution existed among several Chicago locals in 1903 and was the pride of Local 44 in 1913. The present sick fund dates back to 1916 and was inoperative only during the depth of the depression. Revived in April, 1934, it has since then aided some 1,600 members, who have received benefits amounting to \$39,000.<sup>4</sup>

As indicated elsewhere, the sick benefit fund is administered by the secretary-treasurer and the finance committee of the Joint Board. Its income is derived from an allotment of the

regular weekly dues. Benefits are paid at the rate of five dollars a week for a period not exceeding eight weeks a year. To be eligible, a member must have been in the union for at least one year, must not be in arrears with dues for a period over six weeks, and must present a doctor's certificate specifying the nature and the duration of his illness. No benefits are paid for venereal diseases or confinement cases, and persons suffering from chronic ailments may not receive more than a total of forty dollars during the period of their membership in the union.<sup>5</sup>

An integral part of this program is an extensive health service which reaches the workers in the home and in the shop. The Joint Board maintains a medical department and employs a trained nurse who periodically visits all its ailing members. It has recently concluded arrangements with several general practitioners, surgeons, optometrists, and dentists for special services to its membership. This staff has been particularly active in publicizing health information by means of special bulletins and by articles in *Our Voice*, the publication of the Chicago Joint Board.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from this Joint Board program, the various locals have sick and death benefit funds of their own. Locals 81 and 18 have death benefits of \$200; Locals 5 and 59, of \$150. These sums are paid to the beneficiaries of deceased members in addition to the International death benefit of \$150. Local 18 also maintains a sick fund which pays five-dollar weekly benefits. The money for these purposes is raised by special one-dollar assessments as needed. In addition, the workers of some of the shops have various voluntary sick benefit arrangements, usually in the form of collections for particular persons.

Besides these various sick and death benefits, members of the union have access to distress, loan, unemployment, and strike funds. The regulations concerning such benefits vary with the locals. Members of Local 5 who are in need and in good stand-

ing may receive donations of \$15 three times a year; members of Local 81, \$10 at a time; of Locals 18, 59, and 100, various amounts according to the special circumstances. Local 5 also maintains a loan fund from which members may borrow sums not exceeding \$15 at a time. The strike fund of the union is maintained by the Joint Board, which usually pays benefits of \$6 a week to single persons and \$10 to married members.

No institution is a source of greater pride to the Chicago Joint Board than its educational department. Since the beginning of the union, educational activities have gone hand in hand with its business and benefit features. In fact, the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union of 1890, to which the Joint Board traces its descent, was itself an outgrowth of the Workingman's Educational Club of 1888. Since that time the various locals in Chicago have always sought to maintain educational activities of various kinds. The Joint Board established its first formal educational department in 1916. It resumed this program in 1923 and again in 1925. The modern department dates to 1934, when the Joint Board reorganized it for the purpose of educating its thousands of new members in intelligent participation in trade unionism.

At first the educational department of the union served primarily as one of its agitational arms, was confined to direct trade problems, and functioned as an integral part of its disciplinary system. In time, however, it has widened its scope, enriched its content, and diversified its objectives. It now aims not only to aid the members in the solution of their trade and union problems, but also to assist them in the achievement of a fuller, a richer, and a happier life. It emphasizes the development of a self-reliant and enlightened membership and the expansion of their interests to embrace the economic and political problems of their general social environment. In short, it is attempting to intensify the participation of the membership in the life and the activities of the union both in the organization itself and in the new fields to which the Joint Board has recently expanded its activities.<sup>7</sup>

Since its reorganization in 1934, the educational department has been supervised by the Joint Board's manager, secretary-treasurer, and educational committee, who together constitute an informal board of trustees. Direct charge is in the hands of a full-time educational director. The teaching staff, ranging from ten to fifteen persons, is recruited from the local universities, from the W.P.A. workers' education project, and, in the case of technical trade union subjects, from the leadership of the union itself. Classes are generally held in Joint Board headquarters, which have been enlarged primarily for this purpose. Formal classes are conducted for thirty weeks each year, grouped in ten-week terms, and informal activities are continued throughout the summer months. The direct cost of the program, amounting to some \$5,000 a year, is borne directly by the Joint Board. The International educational office, in addition, contributes advice and various aids, as posters, educational movies, and literature of various types.

The curriculum at present is rather imposing. Formal courses range from elementary English to current literature, various trade union and labor subjects, current events, history, economics, parliamentary law, and music appreciation. In the fall of 1938, on the recommendation of the last International convention, the department inaugurated a series of courses for candidates to union office. These classes—in the history of the International, the structure and functioning of the union, and the economics of the garment industry—attracted enrollments of from one to two hundred members. The most popular non-academic activities are the chorus, the dramatic group, and the mandolin club. For those athletically inclined, the department conducts classes in gymnastics and swimming and a program of inter-local sports. The Joint Board as a body is also affiliated with the Labor Sports League of Chicago, which was founded in 1937 for the purpose of promoting inter-union competition in softball, basketball, and bowling.



ENGLISH CLASS



JOINT BOARD MANDOLIN CLUB



In addition to the activities described hitherto, the educational department performs a number of other tasks. It arranges special lectures for local meetings and open forums for the entire membership. It conducts research on topics of special importance and interest to the members, distributes literature pertinent to those subjects, and offers advice and aid with regard to naturalization, unemployment compensation, and allied problems. It edits and issues the monthly publication of the Joint Board, *Our Voice*, which supplements the International organ, *Justice*. With the cooperation of the Chicago public library, the educational department also maintains a deposit station in the headquarters of the union and is able in this manner, or by direct purchase, to secure a select list of fiction and non-fiction titles particularly adapted to the needs of its members. It also guides the members in individual reading and in the general problems of adult education.<sup>8</sup>

Lastly, the educational department is intimately connected with the social life of the union. The opening and closing of each term and particularly of each school year become occasions for elaborate ceremonies, parties, and get-togethers. Its chorus and its dramatic group perform regularly at union functions and always present a gala show on May Day. It further sponsors very popular educational tours, sight-seeing trips, and excursions, and is generally active in promoting good will and friendliness among the members of the union. The same function is also fulfilled by the dances, theater parties, picnics, and celebrations of the various locals and the Joint Board.

The educational work of the union is probably its most significant development in recent years. The membership look upon it as a means of catching up with those more advantageously reared and of increasing their usefulness to their organization and to their community. The leadership of the union views it as an agency for the building of union consciousness, for stimulating the membership to a fuller participation in the

life of the union, and for promoting the *esprit de corps* of the organization. Other labor organizations are prone to regard it as the characteristic feature of the Joint Board. For its educational program is by far the most imposing among the trade unions of Chicago. The workers' education movement of this city, despite its long history, is still a struggling one. Directly and indirectly the Joint Board has been aiding in its development. It has proven that Chicago trade unions, as well as those of New York and of other cities, could conduct educational activities upon a formal and sustained level. It was active in founding and in maintaining the former Chicago Labor College, which attempted to make workers' education a vital aspect of the trade union movement of this city. Its officers, teachers, and members participate in the local Workers' Education Council, the Affiliated Summer Schools for Workers, and in various conferences on workers' education and allied subjects. In short, the Joint Board educational department, by its prestige and activities, serves the Chicago labor movement as the beacon in the field of workers' education even as the program of the International is an inspiration to the trade unions of the nation.

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## *Retrospect*

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**I**N THE TWO GENERATIONS of their history the Chicago ladies' garment workers have undergone a varied series of experiences. In essence, however, their story has been the history of a struggle of thousands of men and women for greater well-being—ever the basic drive of American democracy. Many of them came to the United States with high expectations; they encountered, instead of opportunity and equality, the long hours of back-breaking toil, the filth and the vermin, and the miserable wages of the sweatshop. They launched therefore a battle against oppression, a battle for decent conditions of work and for a standard of living due all workers in free and prosperous America.

Recognizing their helplessness in individual bargaining, the Chicago ladies' garment workers sought to band themselves together for mutual aid and protection. For many years this project was often more an ideal than an actuality. For almost thirty years—until the creation of the Chicago Joint Board in 1914—their union was usually a seasonal affair, small in numbers, ineffective in action, and doomed to disintegration with the first disappointment or defeat. In time, however, the Chicago ladies' garment workers solidified their ranks, evolved new organizational forms and techniques, and built a permanent and effective organization. Despite occasional defeat or internal strife, their

Joint Board developed in strength and discipline, organized the whole local industry and won collective agreements, and attained progressively greater improvements in the hours of labor, the wages, and the other conditions of work of its members.

As the union grew in size and in strength it widened the scope of its objectives and activities. It demanded and secured a greater voice in the management of the industry. It expanded its program of services and benefits until it affected the lives of the members at many points, not only in matters of wages and hours, but also in education and recreation, and in their relationship to the larger community in which they lived. In recent years particularly the Chicago Joint Board has become an active force in the communal and civic life of Chicago. It has contributed liberally to philanthropic causes—to the Community Fund, to the United Charities, to sanitariums and nurseries, and to immigrant and refugee aid societies. It has participated in programs of vocational education, in conferences on health and hospitalization, and has been represented on governmental advisory committees on relief and unemployment. With the rest of the International, it has aided in the organization of the unorganized, particularly in the mass production industries, has championed the cause of peace in the house of Labor, and has contributed funds for the aid and relief of the victims of fascism. In September, 1939, its members contributed the wages of a half day's labor for the relief of refugees from Nazi persecution.

Among the most significant of its recent activities has been its revived interest in politics. In 1936 the Chicago Joint Board affiliated with Labor's Non-Partisan League, which united progressive groups behind the candidacy of President Roosevelt. On October 14 of that year, it formed its own division of ten thousand workers who marched in the great parade of organized labor which greeted the president in Chicago. Since then the union has participated in other elections of interest to Chicago workers, particularly in the support of Mayor Kelly and of

Judge Harry M. Fisher in the spring of 1939. At the same time, it has thrown its weight behind various legislative measures of benefit to workers, as unemployment compensation, old age pensions, child labor regulations, federal health and maternity aid programs, and the national labor relations and the fair labor standards acts.

Like the rest of the International, the Chicago Joint Board still faces many formidable problems. It faces the task of securing higher wage scales for its members, particularly since the present war has already resulted in a climbing cost of living. It envisages the need for a higher annual income for its members and is advancing, as means toward that end, proposals for a thirty-hour week, for paid holidays to piece workers, for vacations with pay to all its members, and for similar measures which would result in longer and more regular seasons. It also faces various internal problems, notably those of securing a wider membership participation in the routine activities of the union and that of recruiting and training new leadership.

The degree to which the Chicago Joint Board will succeed in solving these problems will depend, as in the past, not only upon its own strength and determination, but also upon the condition of the industry and of the social and political environment. However, whatever the future has in store for it, its members face it confidently. They are proud of their militant past, of their progressive record of accomplishment, and of their solidarity and discipline which has stood the test of bitter defeat and of severe internal conflict. Convinced that they are still animated by the basic emotional drives which have built and maintained the organization and that they are, more than ever, united by common interests and by a common heritage, they are looking forward to still greater advances towards the goal of economic justice and security.



APPENDICES · NOTES  
GLOSSARY · BIBLIOGRAPHY  
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## APPENDIX I. OFFICERS

### A. OFFICERS OF THE CHICAGO JOINT BOARD, 1914-1939

Date of Election	Chairman	Recording Secretary	Secretary-Treasurer	Manager	Business Agents
Aug., 1914	Morris Broudy	Louis Gold	Hyman Schoolman		Morris Katzman
Jan., 1915	Israel Davidson	Barnett Fogel			
July, 1915	Samuel Glassman	Barnett Fogel	Hyman Schoolman	Abraham Bisno (Chief Clerk from Sept., 1915, to May, 1917)	Barnett Fogel
Jan., 1916	Samuel Goldflies	Max Casper			Barnett Fogel } Samuel Glassman }
July, 1916	Benjamin Maloff	Max Casper	Hyman Schoolman		Same Staff
Jan., 1917	Benjamin Maloff	Max Casper } J. Reynolds }			Barnett Fogel } Samuel Glassman } Harry Zeff }
July, 1917	Barnett Schaffer	Louis Gold	Hyman Schoolman		
Jan., 1918	Benjamin Maloff	Louis Gold			
July, 1918	J. Menkoff	I. Golub	Hyman Schoolman		Same Staff

Jan., 1919	Abraham Gold	Louis Gold			Barnett Fogel Samuel Glassman Sol Flack
July, 1919	Morris Broudy	Louis Gold } I. Golub }		Hyman Schoolman	
Jan., 1920	Israel Davidson	I. Golub } Louis Roodman }			Barnett Fogel Samuel Glassman Sol Flack Julius Ginsburg
July, 1920	O. A. Nudleman	Louis Gold } Israel Davidson }		Hyman Schoolman	
Jan., 1921	Barnett Schaffer	Meyer Barkan			Barnett Fogel Samuel Glassman Julius Ginsburg Meyer Barkan
July, 1921	Isadore Stark	Abraham Batchuk		Hyman Schoolman	
Jan., 1922	Isadore Stark	Abraham Batchuk			Barnett Fogel Morris Bialis Harry Rufer Julius Ginsburg
July, 1922	Barnett Schaffer	Israel Davidson		Alex. M. Kanevsky	Barnett Fogel (Labor Manager)

APPENDIX I. OFFICERS (Continued)  
A. OFFICERS OF THE CHICAGO JOINT BOARD, 1914-1939

Date of Election	Chairman	Recording Secretary	Secretary-Treasurer	Manager	Business Agents
Nov., 1922	Meyer Bernstein (appointed by President Schlesinger)	Israel Davidson			
Jan., 1923	Barnett Schaffer	Israel Davidson		Morris Bialis	Morris Bialis Harry Rufer Benjamin Dolnick Samuel Lederman
July, 1923	Max Novack	Morris Rappaport	Hymen H. Hanock		
Jan., 1924	Aaron Sher	Morris Rappaport	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Morris Bialis Max Novack Harry Rufer Benjamin Dolnick
July, 1924	Aaron Sher	Morris Rappaport	M. A. Goldstein		
Jan., 1925	Aaron Sher	Morris Rappaport		Morris Bialis	Morris Bialis Max Novack Harry Rufer

July, 1925	Aaron Sher	Morris Rappaport	M. A. Goldstein	Joseph Levin	Joseph Levin Harry Zeff Roy Glassman
Jan., 1926	B. Soll	Earl Nadel			
Jan., 1927	B. Soll	Earl Nadel	M. A. Goldstein	Joseph Levin	
Aug, 1927 (special election)	Barnett Schaffer	Nathan Mintz			Abraham Rabinowitz Barnett Schaffer (special appointments by the Joint Board)
Nov., 1927	David Borowitz	J. Hoffman	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Morris Bialis Abraham Rabinowitz Philip Davids
Jan., 1929	David Borowitz	J. Hoffman M. A. Goldstein (Sept, 1929 to Jan., 1930)	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Morris Bialis Abraham Rabinowitz Philip Davids
Jan., 1930	David Borowitz	Meyer Barkan	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Morris Bialis Abraham Rabinowitz Max Novack
Jan., 1931	D. Feitelson	Meyer Barkan	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Same staff

APPENDIX I. OFFICERS (Continued)  
A. OFFICERS OF THE CHICAGO JOINT BOARD, 1914-1939

Date of Election	Chairman	Recording Secretary	Secretary-Treasurer	Manager	Business Agents
Jan., 1932	David Borowitz	Meyer Barkan	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Morris Bialis } Max Novack } Harry Rufer }
Nov., 1932	David Borowitz	Meyer Barkan	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Morris Bialis } M. A. Goldstein }
Jan., 1933	David Borowitz	Meyer Barkan	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Morris Bialis } M. A. Goldstein }
July, 1933	Meyer Bernstein	Al Rose			Abraham Rabinowitz } Meyer Barkan } Bert Hall } (appointed by Joint Board)
Sept., 1933					Joseph Zuckerman } Nathan Wilinsky } Barnett Schaffer } (appointed by Joint Board)

Jan., 1934	Meyer Bernstein	Al Rose	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Meyer Barkan Abraham Rabinowitz Bert Hall Joe Katz Leo Lavender Nathan Wilinsky Joseph Zuckerman
Jan., 1935	Meyer Bernstein, died June, 1935 and succeeded by Leonard Axelrod	Al Rose	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Meyer Barkan Abraham Rabinowitz Leo Lavender Joseph Zuckerman Norman Carlson Joe Katz Nathan Wilinsky (died June, 1935)
April, 1937 (serving at date of writing)	Meyer Friedman	Jack Shargel	M. A. Goldstein	Morris Bialis	Meyer Barkan Abraham Rabinowitz Joe Katz Norman Carlson Anton Ferlanto Leo Lavender

B. OFFICERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LADIES'  
GARMENT WORKERS' UNION, 1900-1936

Years	President	General Secretary-Treasurer
1900-1903	Herman Grossman	Bernard Braff
1903-1904	Benjamin Schlesinger	Bernard Braff
1904-1905	James McCauley	John A. Dyche
1905-1907	Herman Grossman	John A. Dyche
1907-1908	Mortimer Julian, resigned; Charles Jacobson, acting	John A. Dyche
1908-1914	Abraham Rosenberg	John A. Dyche
1914-1916	Benjamin Schlesinger	Morris Sigman, resigned, Nov., 1915; Abraham Baroff, 1915-16
1916-1922	Benjamin Schlesinger	Abraham Baroff
1922-1923	Benjamin Schlesinger resigned Jan. 8, 1923; Salvatore Ninfo, acting Jan.-Feb., 1923	Abraham Baroff
1923-1924	Morris Sigman	-----
1924-1926	Morris Sigman	Abraham Baroff
1926-1928	Morris Sigman, resigned, Oct., 1928; Benjamin Schlesinger elected by General Executive Board	Abraham Baroff; Benjamin Schlesinger, Executive Sec'y
1929-1932	Benjamin Schlesinger, died, June, 1932; David Dubinsky, elected by General Executive Board	David Dubinsky
1932-1936	David Dubinsky	David Dubinsky

C. EXECUTIVE BOARDS OF THE LOCALS OF THE  
CHICAGO JOINT BOARD, 1939

*Local 5*

Meyer Friedman—*Chairman*  
Sol Flack—*Vice chairman*  
Jack Lotterman—*Secretary*  
Joe Altman  
Leonard Axelrod  
Hyman Berger  
Hyman Freedman  
Abraham Gold  
Max Graffman  
Isadore Green  
Louis Klein  
Barney Metrick  
Earl Nadel  
Morris Roth  
Joe Takman  
Harry Zeff

*Local 59*

Abraham Rosenthal—*Chairman*  
Kopel Gordon—*Vice Chairman*  
Aaron Sher—*Secretary*  
Anna Friedman  
Sarah Glazer  
Sophie Greenberg  
Ruth Jacobovitz  
Abraham Jacobson  
Anna Jaffe  
Phyliss Li Santi  
Simon Packer  
Isadore Rand  
Phillip Rifkind  
Charles Romeo  
Isreal Zachitsky

*Local 18*

Abish Suden—*Chairman*  
Harry Festenstein  
*Vice chairman*  
Harry Neuhaus—*Secretary*  
Roman Brzezicki  
Louis Goldman  
Sam Gordon  
David Kart  
James Kuszynski  
Jack Lipovetsky  
Isidore Miller  
Willie Neybow  
Felix Niewaroski  
Joe Piatt  
Joe Segall  
Morris Suden

*Local 81*

CLOAK CUTTERS

Meyer Kranz—*Chairman*  
Jack Rubin—*Secretary*  
Ben Alexander  
Jack Halperin  
Sam Lederman  
William Zuley

DRESS CUTTERS

Sam Williams—*Chairman*  
Meyer Goldstein—*Secretary*  
Al Ferguson  
Edward Kowal  
Charlie Ravin  
Morris Tucker

*Local 100*

Ray Blottiaux— <i>Chairman</i>	Anna Hubert
Fanny Wyzykowski	Solomon Kaufman
— <i>Vice chairman</i>	Jennie Leone
Alice Hinton— <i>Secretary</i>	Geneva Manago
Frieda Becker	Elsie Moore
Sophie Bogrow	Felicia Olek
Rose Casano	Lillian Phillips
Sylvia Factor	Sophie Silver
Mary Fisher	Max Silverman
Pearl Grace	Ethel Spink
Clara Greenberg	Irene Wright
Sam Greenblatt	Annette Zmudka

## D. JOINT BOARD OFFICERS AND DELEGATES, 1939

M. Bialis—*Manager*  
M. A. Goldstein—*Secretary-Treasurer*  
Meyer Friedman—*Chairman*  
Abish Suden—*Vice chairman*  
Joe Shargel—*Recording Secretary*  
Meyer Goldstein—*Sergeant at arms*

### BUSINESS AGENTS

Meyer Barkan	Anton Ferlanto	Leo Lavender
Norman Carlson	Joe Katz	Abraham Rabinowitz
Rebecca Eisenstat— <i>Complaint department</i>		

### DELEGATES

#### *Local 5*

Sol Flack  
Meyer Friedman  
Abraham Gold  
Max Graffman  
Jack Lotterman

#### *Local 59*

Sarah Glazer  
Abraham Jacobson  
Simon Packer  
Abraham Rosenthal  
Aaron Sher

#### *Local 18*

Jack Lipovetsky  
Harry Messer  
Alfred Rose  
Joe Segall  
Abish Suden

#### *Local 81*

Roy Glassman  
Meyer Goldstein  
Julius Lipshitz  
Isadore Shuckman  
Joe Shargel

#### *Local 100*

Ray Blottiaux	Alice Hinton
Mary Fisher	Jennie Leone
Annette Zmudka	

STANDING COMMITTEES

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Isadore Schuckman—*Chairman*  
Mary Fisher—*Secretary*  
Abraham Gold  
Abraham Jacobson  
Jack Lipovetsky

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ray Blottiaux  
Meyer Goldstein  
Max Graffman  
Simon Packer  
Joe Segall

GRIEVANCE BOARD

Roy Glassman—*Chairman*  
Joe Shargel—*Secretary*  
A. D. Ferguson  
Abraham Jacobson  
Solomon Kaufman  
Louis Klein  
Joseph Romain  
Alfred Rose

EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE

Ray Blottiaux  
Meyer Friedman  
Roy Glassman  
Abraham Rosenthal  
Abish Suden  
Quentin Ogren—*Director*

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE

Ray Blottiaux  
Abraham Gold  
Jack Lipovetsky

Isadore Schuckman  
Aaron Sher  
Byrdeen Shettle—*Nurse*

## APPENDIX II

### EVOLUTION OF THE CHICAGO JOINT BOARD AND ITS AFFILIATED LOCALS

<i>Title of union</i>	<i>Date of existence</i>	
	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>
<i>Cloakmakers' Union</i> (affiliated with the Knights of Labor)	May, 1886	June, 1886
<i>Woman's Cloakmakers' Assembly</i> No. 7170 (Knights of Labor)	May, 1886	July, 1886
<i>Chicago Cloakmakers' Union</i> evolves into	March, 1890	Fall, 1898
<i>Chicago Cloakmakers' Union Local</i> 5 (I.L.G.W.U.) from which develop	1901	July, 1904
<i>Chicago Cutters' Union Local</i> 21	1902	July, 1904
<i>Chicago Pressers' Union Local</i> 24	1902	July, 1904
<i>Skirt Makers' Local</i> 24	1902	July, 1904
<i>Ladies' Cloak and Skirt Makers'</i> <i>Local</i> 39	1902	July, 1904
<i>Waist and Wrapper Makers' Union</i> <i>Local</i> 38	1903	July, 1904
Seasonal Unions, 1906-1907:		
<i>I. W. W. Cloakmakers' Union</i>	Jan., 1906	March, 1906
<i>Cloakmakers' Union</i>	Fall, 1906	Dec., 1906
<i>Skirt Makers' Union Local</i> 28 (I.L.G.W.U.)	March, 1907	May, 1908
<i>Cloakmakers' Union</i>	June, 1907	Nov., 1907
<i>Cloakmakers' Union</i>	Spring, 1908	
<i>"Independent" Cloakmakers' Union</i> which evolves into	July, 1908	

<i>Chicago Cloakmakers' Union Local</i> <i>44 (I.L.G.W.U.)</i>	Dec., 1909	to present
from which develop <i>Pressers' Local 76</i>	Aug., 1910	Aug., 1912
<i>Cutters' Local 81</i>	Feb., 1911	to present
<i>Skirtmakers' Local 94</i>	July, 1911	Jan., 1912
<i>The Chicago Joint Board, I.L.G.W.U.</i>	Aug. 10, 1914	to present
The locals which affiliated with it were		
<i>Chicago Cloakmakers' Local 44</i> (Local 5 from 1919 on)	Aug. 10, 1914	to present
<i>Chicago Cutters' Local 81</i>	Feb., 1911	to present
<i>Chicago Pressers' Local 18</i>	Aug. 12, 1914	to present
<i>Chicago Finishers' Local 59</i>	Dec., 1920	to present
<i>Chicago Dress and Waist Makers'</i> <i>Local 100</i> (chartered in Novem- ber, 1916)	Jan., 1920	to present
<i>Chicago Raincoat Makers' Local 54</i>	1921	1931
<i>Chicago Ladies' Tailors Local 104</i>	Spring, 1923	Fall, 1927
<i>Chicago Polish Dressmakers Unity</i> <i>Local 60</i>	June, 1924	Fall, 1927

## APPENDIX III

### STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

*of the Chicago Joint Board and its Affiliated Locals for the  
Period January 1, 1938 to December 31, 1938\**

#### A. RECEIPTS

*From Dues to Joint Board*

Per Capita	\$41,899.35	
To Sick Fund	9,013.24	
Reserve Donation Fund	2,755.34	
Strike Fund	2,755.34	
Organization Fund	<u>2,755.34</u>	
		\$ 59,178.61
TO LOCALS FUND		<u>83,156.75</u>
		142,335.36

*From Local Assessments*

Death Benefit Fund	3,659.00	
Relief and Unemployment Fund	5,016.65	
Sick Fund (Local 18)	728.41	
Initiation Fee and Miscellaneous	<u>2,526.85</u>	
		11,930.91

*International Assessments*

Death Benefit	5,495.00	
Institutions and Labor Causes	5,494.50	
Initiation Tax	177.00	
Steel and Others	<u>82.50</u>	
		11,249.00

*Interest on Investments*

2,767.50

*Miscellaneous*

1,414.38

*To Reserve and Donations—(Miscellaneous)*

1,333.60

TOTAL \$171,030.75

## B. DISBURSEMENTS

### *To International*

Per cap. to International	\$42,000.00	
Death benefit assessment	5,500.00	
Institutions and labor causes assessment	4,125.00	
Steel, textile, etc., assessments	798.40	
Total to International		\$ 52,423.40

### *Administrative Expenses*

Salaries, clerical	9,566.92	
Office rent	6,954.88	
Printing, stationery, postage, etc.	1,907.77	
Telephone and telegraph	1,413.29	
Janitor, cleaning, light, etc.	2,822.99	
Dues to other organizations	399.00	
Federal old age, unemployment ins., annuities, etc.	2,299.50	
Miscellaneous	1,728.59	
Total		27,092.94

### *Organization Expenses*

Salaries to managers, bus. agents, price adjus.	29,072.40	
Organizing expense	5,098.86	
Strike benefit and relief		
Strike expense	333.00	
Legal fees and expenses	700.00	
Loss of time for collection of dues	3,584.10	
Committee expense	5,599.96	
Educational and recreational department	3,134.65	
Total		47,522.97

### *Donations and Relief*

Sick benefit and death benefit, etc. (includes \$3,200 for death benefit)	12,927.00	
Relief to members	7,906.60	
Charitable and labor organizations	5,370.03	
Total donations for relief		26,203.63
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS FOR THE YEAR 1938		\$153,242.94

\* (Compiled by M. A. Goldstein, Secretary-Treasurer, Chicago Joint Board.)

## APPENDIX IV

### DISBURSEMENTS OF THE CHICAGO JOINT BOARD, 1914-1939

(*Specific Items*) \*

*For General Organization Work*—From Sept. 1, 1914, to June 30, 1939

Organizing	\$ 76,913.71
Strike	106,892.72
Courts—Legal	18,283.74
Committees	49,252.98
Total	\$251,343.15

*General Donations*—From Sept. 1, 1914, to June 30, 1939

To Labor and Friendly Organizations and Charity	98,387.01
To New York Strike—1926	33,512.94
To New York Strike—1929	12,000.00
Total	\$143,899.95

*Sick Benefit*—From Sept. 1, 1914, to June 30, 1939

\$ 96,232.98

*Educational and Recreational*—

From June, 1934, to June 31, 1939

\$ 20,674.10

**TOTAL \$512,150.18**

\* (Compiled by M. A. Goldstein.)

## APPENDIX V

### DISBURSEMENTS FOR DONATIONS AND BENEFITS BY LOCALS, JANUARY 1, 1921 TO JULY 1, 1939\*

		<i>Donations to Members</i>	<i>Donations to Organizations</i>	<i>Death Benefit</i>	<i>Sick Benefit</i>
Local	5	\$ 9,216.18	\$1,269.72	\$ 2,800.00§	
Local	18	3,198.10	440.05	3,402.00†	\$995.00†
Local	59	14,827.90	1,217.00	497.10‡	
Local	81	2,041.30	352.50	3,355.00	
Local	100	10,107.95	1,946.35		
TOTALS		\$39,391.43	\$5,225.62	\$10,054.10	\$995.00

\* (compiled by M. A. Goldstein.)

§ Local 5 death benefit began to function January 15, 1936.

† Local 18 death benefit began to function on January 1, 1937.

Local 18 sick fund began to function on March 1, 1938.

‡ Local 59 death benefit began to function on July 1, 1937.

## APPENDIX VI. WAGES AND HOURS

### A. MINIMUM UNION WAGE SCALES OF CHICAGO CLOAKMAKERS, 1903-1909

CRAFT	1903 <sup>1</sup>	1915	1917	1918	1919	1925	1931	1937
Cutters	\$21.00	\$22.50	\$25.00	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$50.00	\$52.50	\$50.00
Trimmers	15.00	20.00	22.50		33.00	45.00	47.50	47.50
Samplemakers		23.00	25.00		32.00	42.00		40.00
Operators		35.00*	36.75†		44.00-50.00	50.00	52.00	52.50
Upper pressers	17.00	30.00	31.85		40.00	45.00	52.00	52.50
Under pressers	12.00	25.00			36.50	42.50	49.00	50.00
Finishers		25.00	26.95		32.00	36.00	38.00	38.00
Edge basters					28.00	35.00	38.00	38.00
Button sewers		8.00	9.50		18.00	24.00	27.00	25.00
Machine edge basters								31.00
Special machine operators								33.00
Fur sewers								38.00
Hand tackers								31.00
Machine pressers								60.00

<sup>1</sup> Shop agreement with Beifeld, Hirsh & Kline. All the other figures save those for 1937 are from collective agreements.

\* 1915 basic hourly rates: for operators 70c, upper pressers 60c, under pressers 50c, finishers 50c.

† 1917 basic hourly rates: for operators 75c, upper pressers 65c, finishers 55c.

B. MINIMUM UNION WAGE SCALES OF CHICAGO  
DRESSMAKERS, 1933-1939<sup>1</sup>

CRAFT	1933	1936	1939
Cutters	39.00	40.00	40.00
Samplemakers	25.50	25.50	26.85
Examiners	18.00	18.00	18.00
Skirt bottom basters			
Cleaners	14.00	14.50	15.00
Drapers	23.00	23.00	23.00
Operators	26.60*	26.60*	26.00*
Pressers	29.75 <sup>†</sup>	33.25 <sup>†</sup>	33.25 <sup>†</sup>
Finishers	19.34	19.34	19.34
Basters	15.00	15.00	16.00
Pinkers	14.00	14.50	15.50
Sorters		14.00	14.50
Special machine operators		18.00	18.00

<sup>1</sup>Table includes only the collective agreements for the whole trade.

\* Basic hourly scales in 1933 were for operators 76c, for pressers 85c, for finishers 53½c.

<sup>†</sup>Basic hourly scales in 1936 and 1939 were for operators 76c, for pressers 95c, for finishers 55¼c.

C. HOURS OF WORK ACCORDING TO UNION AGREEMENTS OF  
CHICAGO CLOAK AND DRESS MAKERS, 1915-1939

DATE	CLOAKMAKERS	DRESSMAKERS
1915	50	50
1917	49	49
1919	44	44
1926	42	44
1928	40	44
1933	35	35

## Reference Notes

### CHAPTER I. A SWEATED INDUSTRY

- <sup>1</sup>A. T. Andreas, *History of Chicago*, III, 326; Daily Democratic Press, *Annual Review of the Business of Chicago for the Year 1856*, 40-41.
- <sup>2</sup>U. S. Census, 1870, *Manufactures*, 649; 1880, *Manufactures*, 29, 109; 1890, *Manufactures*, 389; 1900, *Manufactures*, *passim*.
- <sup>3</sup>Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Biennial Reports*, 1882, 237; Florence Kelley, "The Sweating System," *Hull House Maps and Papers*, 29-30.
- <sup>4</sup>U. S. Industrial Commission, *Reports of the Industrial Commission 1900*, XV, 325, 317.
- <sup>5</sup>Seymour J. Pomrenze, "Chicago Russian-Jewish Life 1893-1915," (unpublished ms.), 5-9.
- <sup>6</sup>Kate Levy, "Health and Sanitation, Chicago," in Charles S. Bernheimer (ed.), *The Russian Jew in the United States*, 322-23; Robert Hunter (ed.), *Tenement Conditions in Chicago*, 108; S. P. Breckenridge, "Chicago Housing Conditions." *American Journal of Sociology*, XVII (1911), 4.
- <sup>7</sup>Edith Abbott, *Tenements of Chicago, 1908-1935*, 28.
- <sup>8</sup>Abraham Bisno, "Economic and Industrial Condition, Chicago," in Bernheimer, *op. cit.*, 136; Philip P. Bregstone, *Chicago and Its Jews*, 60; U. S. Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, XV, 323-325.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 320ff; Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers: A History of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union*, 14-16.
- <sup>10</sup>[Abraham Bisno], "Respected and Esteemed Jews of Chicago: Abraham Bisno, A Prominent Jewish Representative of Workingmen" (hereinafter to be referred to as *Autobiography*), 6.
- <sup>11</sup>U. S. Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, XV, 320-322.
- <sup>12</sup>Illinois, Office of Inspectors of Factories and Workshops, *Annual Reports*, 1893, 24-35; 1896, 52, 55, 56.
- <sup>13</sup>Charles E. Zarets, *The Amalgamated Clothing Workers*, 37-39; U. S. Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, XV, 322.
- <sup>14</sup>Florence Kelley, *loc. cit.*, 27-33; Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics, *op. cit.*, 1892, 433-434.
- <sup>15</sup>Florence Kelley, *loc. cit.*, 38.
- <sup>16</sup>Illinois, Office of Inspectors of Factories and Workshops, *Annual Reports*, 1893, 24.
- <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 1894, 46. Illinois, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *op. cit.*, 1892, 434; Florence Kelley, *loc. cit.*, 33-38.

- <sup>19</sup>U. S., 52 Congress, 1 Session, House of Representatives, Committee on Manufactures, *Investigation of the Sweating System* (January 20, 1893), 93-94.
- <sup>20</sup>See Isabel Eaton, "Receipts and Expenditures of Cloakmakers in Chicago," *Hull House Maps and Papers*, 84-85; Chicago Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, I.L.G.W.U., *Thirty-Fifth and Tenth Anniversary*, 80; Levine, *op. cit.*, 21.
- <sup>21</sup>Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics, *op. cit.*, 1884, 356, 502; 1892, 30.
- <sup>22</sup>U. S. Commissioner of Labor, *Annual Report, Ninth Special Report, Italians in Chicago*, 187.
- <sup>23</sup>Florence Kelley, *loc. cit.*, 37; Eaton, *loc. cit.*, 86-87; Chicago Cloakmakers Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 53, 75.
- <sup>24</sup>Illinois, Office of Inspectors of Factories and Workshops, *op. cit.*, 1896, 51.
- <sup>25</sup>Illinois Office of Inspectors of Factories and Workshops, *First Special Report of the Factory Inspectors of Illinois on Smallpox in the Tenement House Sweat Shops of Chicago July 1, 1894*, 24-25; Nellie Mason Auten, *Some Phases of the Sweating System in the Garment Trades of Chicago*, 606.
- <sup>26</sup>Florence Kelley, *loc. cit.*, 32, 37.
- <sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 31, 34, 40.
- <sup>28</sup>Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics, *op. cit.*, 1886, 514-519.

## CHAPTER II. RUMBLINGS OF DISCONTENT

- <sup>1</sup>U. S. Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, XV, 321-322, 327; Abraham Bisno, "Economic and Industrial Condition, Chicago," in Charles S. Bernheimer, *op. cit.*, 135-138; Jane Addams, "The Settlement as a Factor in the Labor Movement," *Hull House Maps and Papers*, 189; Lizzie M. Swank Holmes, "Women Workers of Chicago," *American Federationist*, XII (1905), 508.
- <sup>2</sup>John B. Andrews and W. D. P. Bliss, *History of Women in Trade Unions*, 99, 127-130.
- <sup>3</sup>Holmes, *loc. cit.*, 508-510.
- <sup>4</sup>Peter Sissman, "Reflections and Reminiscences on the Chicago Cloak Makers' Union," Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 3-4; also interview with Peter Sissman, February 17, 1939.
- <sup>5</sup>Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics, *op. cit.*, 1886, 213, 457, 479, 482.
- <sup>6</sup>Claudius O. Johnson, *Carter Henry Harrison I*, 283; Edward B. Mittleman, "Chicago Labor in Politics, 1887-1896," *Journal of Political Economy*, XVIII (1920), 419-420.
- <sup>7</sup>*Journal of United Labor*, June 10, 1886; Andrews and Bliss, *op. cit.*, 130.

<sup>8</sup>Abraham Bisno, *Autobiography*, 6-7; *Ladies' Garment Worker*, July, 1911. Cf. with Sissman, *loc. cit.*, 3, *Chicago Jewish Daily Forward*, December 6, 1929. Beatrice Bisno, *Tomorrow's Bread*, presents an excellent fictional account of this episode.

### CHAPTER III. THE CLOAK MAKERS' UNION

<sup>1</sup>Peter Sissman, *loc. cit.*, 4.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Peter Sissman, February 17, 1939. Also Philip P. Bregstone, *Chicago and Its Jews*, 13-14.

<sup>3</sup>A duplicate of the original charter is in the possession of the Chicago Joint Board, I.L.G.W.U., 222 West Monroe Street.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Sissman, *loc. cit.*, 7-12; Levine, *op. cit.*, 47.

<sup>5</sup>The most valuable source for the history of the Chicago union between 1890-1900 is the material assembled by Louis Levine in the course of his preparation of the history of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. These notes are filed in two boxes in the possession of the I.L.G.W.U. Research Department in New York City (This source will henceforth be cited as *Levine's Notes*). See also Sissman, *loc. cit.*, 7, 12; J. Hoffman, "Reminiscences of an Old 'Soldier,'" *Ibid.*, 11-12; U. S. Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, XV, 327, 330.

<sup>6</sup>Bregstone, *op. cit.*, 60-61. Interview with Peter Sissman, February 17, 1939; interview with Morris Seskind, February 15, 1939.

<sup>7</sup>Jane Addams, "The Settlement as a Factor in the Labor Movement," *Hull House Maps and Papers*, 189-191.

<sup>8</sup>Levine, *op. cit.*, 56; U. S. Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, XV, 329.

<sup>9</sup>Florence Kelley, *loc. cit.*, 43; Bisno, *Autobiography*, 10; Bernheimer, *op. cit.*, 141; J. Hoffman, *loc. cit.*, 12.

<sup>10</sup>Earl K. Beckner, *A History of Labor Legislation in Illinois*, 152-155; Florence Kelley, *loc. cit.*, 29, 33, 44; on the specific activities of the factory inspectors, see Illinois, Office of Inspectors of Factories and Workshops, *Annual Reports*, 1893-1900.

<sup>11</sup>U. S. Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, XV, 321, 329; Illinois, Office of Inspectors of Factories and Workshops, *op. cit.*, 1896, 45.

<sup>12</sup>Bisno, *Autobiography*, 10.

<sup>13</sup>Beckner, *op. cit.*, 155, 188-190.

<sup>14</sup>Isabel Eaton, *loc. cit.*, 82; Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 53; Levine, *op. cit.*, 92.

<sup>15</sup>Isabel Eaton, "Receipts and Expenditures of Certain Wage-Earners in the Garment Trades," *American Statistical Association Publications*. IV (1895) 173. Also personal interview with Mrs. Abraham Bisno, March 17, 1939.

- <sup>16</sup>Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 12-13; Mabel Agnes Magee, *The Women's Clothing Industry in Chicago*, 118-120; *Socialist Alliance*, July 1, 1898.
- <sup>17</sup>Levine, *op. cit.*, 92; *Socialist Alliance*, January, 1898; *Levine's Notes*.
- <sup>18</sup>Chicago Cloak Makers' Union, *Union Book* 1896.
- <sup>19</sup>Illinois, State Board of Arbitration, *Annual Reports*, 1899, 34; Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 47.
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 11-14, 75; Bregstone, *op. cit.*, 61; interview with Morris Seskind, February 15, 1939.
- <sup>21</sup>Levine, *op. cit.*, 64-66, 77, 100-102; *Levine's Notes*, quoting *Arbeiter Zeitung*, February 8, 1891; May 6, May 20, 1892; April 28, 1893; November 1, 1895; December 6, 1896; *Abendblatt*, July 24, October 17, 1898.
- <sup>22</sup>*Socialist Alliance*, January and July 1898; *Levine's Notes*, quoting from *The People*, November 28, 1897, and from *Abendblatt*, December 6, December 13, December 21, 1897.

#### CHAPTER IV. CHICAGO AND THE INTERNATIONAL

- <sup>1</sup>International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, *Reports and Proceedings of Conventions* (hereinafter referred to as I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*), 1903, 17; *Ladies' Garment Worker*, July, 1914.
- <sup>2</sup>I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1903, 5-11, 23-42; *Ladies' Garment Worker*, December, 1915.
- <sup>3</sup>*Agreement between the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, Locals 5, 21, 24, 28, and 39 and Beifield, Hirsch & Kline*, July 14, 1903.
- <sup>4</sup>Sissman in Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 8.
- <sup>5</sup>Interview with Morris Broudy, April 5, 1939.
- <sup>6</sup>International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, General Executive Board, *Minutes* (henceforth cited as G.E.B., *Minutes*), September 10, 1904; Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 56-59; Levine, *op. cit.*, 114.

#### CHAPTER V. SEASONAL UNIONISM

- <sup>1</sup>Interview with M. A. Goldstein, February 3, 1939.
- <sup>2</sup>Interview with Mrs. Abraham Bisno, March 17, 1939.
- <sup>3</sup>Interview with Morris Bialis, May 8, 1939.
- <sup>4</sup>Interview with Harry Rufer, July 18, 1939.
- <sup>5</sup>Harry Zeff, "A Helper Instead of a Raise," Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 44-46.
- <sup>6</sup>Hyman Schoolman, "Our Finishers' Branch," Cloakmakers' Union

Local 5, *op. cit.*, 41-43; Interviews with Morris Broudy, Morris Bialis, Harry Rufer, and Simon Packer, January 24, 1939.

<sup>7</sup>W. H. Westman, Secretary-Treasurer of the Industrial Workers of the World, in letter to author, July 20, 1939, citing from *Daily People*, January 10, January 20, February 14, 1906, and *Industrial Worker*, February 2, 1906. Also interview with Barnett Schaffer, January 31, 1939.

<sup>8</sup>G.E.B., *Minutes*, September 4, 1906.

<sup>9</sup>Vereingte Yiddishe Gewerkschaften, *Minutes*, January 12, 20, 27, February 15, March 8, 15, 24, May 17, June 17, July 19, 1907. I.L.G.-W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1908, 19. Women's Trade Union League of Chicago, *Biennial Reports*, 1907-1908, 16, 23.

<sup>10</sup>Vereingte Yiddishe Gewerkschaften, *Minutes*, June 14, 21, August 9, 16, 30, September 20, 28, October 4, 1907.

<sup>11</sup>*Chicago Daily Jewish Courier*, April 1, 1908.

<sup>12</sup>Barnett Fogel, "Greetings," Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 16-19; *Jewish Labor World*, May 7, June 11, June 25, 1909.

<sup>13</sup>Fogel, *loc. cit.*, 17-19.

#### CHAPTER VI. THE PALMER STRIKE

<sup>1</sup>Barney Maloff, "Greetings," Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 38-39; Hyman Schoolman to Abraham Baroff, September 27, 1918. The charter members were Philip Finkler, Charles Levy, William Adler, J. Levinson, I. Jordon, I. Ackerman, and B. Maloff.

<sup>2</sup>I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1910, 61-64; *Ladies' Garment Worker*, April, 1910, November, 1910, December, 1910; G.E.B., *Minutes*, May 8, 1910; *Courier*, April 5, June 7, 1910; interview with Abraham Gold, February 17, 1939; interview with B. Schaffer, January 31, 1939.

<sup>3</sup>Cloak and Suit Operators' Local 44, Leaflet calling for meeting October 27, 1910.

<sup>4</sup>G.E.B., *Minutes*, April 3, April 4, April 7, 1911; I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1912, 13.

<sup>5</sup>Cloak and Suit Operators' Local 44, *Minutes* (henceforth cited as Local 44, *Minutes*), May-July, 1911; *Ladies' Garment Worker*, March, 1911, June, 1911, July, 1911; interviews with Morris Broudy and Barnett Schaffer.

<sup>6</sup>Local 44, *Minutes*, July-August, 1911; Levine, *op. cit.*, 217; *Courier*, July 11, July 18, August 15, 1911; interviews with Morris Broudy, Barnett Schaffer, and Jack Lotterman, April 6, 1939; Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 18.

## CHAPTER VII. THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

- <sup>1</sup>Local 44, *Minutes*, September 19, October 23, November 13, 1911; Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 32, 35. Interview with Samuel Glassman, May 11, 1939.
- <sup>2</sup>Local 44, *Minutes*, 1912-1913, *passim.*; I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1912, 51-52.
- <sup>3</sup>*Jewish Labor World*, January 24, 1913, August 1, 1913; *Ladies' Garment Worker*, October, 1913.
- <sup>4</sup>Local 44, *Minutes*, 1913-1914, *passim.*; Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 22; *Ladies' Garment Worker*, May, 1914, August, 1914, October, 1914; *Jewish Labor World*, May 22, 1914; interview with Abraham Gold.
- <sup>5</sup>March 20, 1914.
- <sup>6</sup>*Jewish Labor World*, January 9, 1914; Samuel Glassman, "Report to the General Executive Board," October, 1914.

## CHAPTER VIII. THE CHICAGO JOINT BOARD

- <sup>1</sup>Chicago Joint Board, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, *Minutes* (henceforth referred to as Joint Board, *Minutes*), October 13, November 17, 1914; *Jewish Labor World*, November 27, 1914.
- <sup>2</sup>November 20, 1914.
- <sup>3</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, April 11, 1915, April 23, April 30, 1915.
- <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, September 3, 1915; *Jewish Labor World*, August 28, 1915; *New Post*, September 10, 1915; International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, General Executive Board, *Reports to the International Conventions* (hereinafter cited as G.E.B., *Reports to Convention*), 1916, 19.
- <sup>5</sup>Board of Arbitration in the Cloak, Suit and Skirt Industry of Chicago, *Abstract of Proceedings*, September 14, September 23, 1915; *Ladies' Garment Worker*, October, 1915; Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 24-26; Magee, *op. cit.*, 132-134.
- <sup>6</sup>G.E.B., *Reports to Convention*, 1916, 19.

## CHAPTER IX. THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

- <sup>1</sup>Board of Arbitration in the Cloak, Suit and Skirt Industry of Chicago, *Report*, September 24, 1915, 1-15.
- <sup>2</sup>Benjamin Schlesinger to Joint Board, September 16, 1915.
- <sup>3</sup>Schoolman, *loc. cit.*, 27.
- <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*; *Women's Wear*, March 7, 1916.

- <sup>5</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, October 1, December 1, 1915.
- <sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, January 22, February 19, 1916; March 24, 1917; Magee, *op. cit.*, 191ff.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 1916-1917, *passim*.
- <sup>8</sup>Abraham Bisno to Chicago Cloak and Suit Manufacturers' Association, March 6, 1916.
- <sup>9</sup>Joint Board *Minutes*, December 14, 1915; Stanley Kabreener to Joint Board, December 9, 1915.
- <sup>10</sup>National Industrial Conference Board, *Experience with Trade Union Agreements—Clothing Industries*, 87-88.
- <sup>11</sup>March 29, 1916.
- <sup>12</sup>Board of Arbitration in the Cloak, Suit and Skirt Industry of Chicago, *Arbitration Decisions*, February 3, June 22, September 2, 1916.
- <sup>13</sup>As expressed by Abraham Bisno in a typewritten article entitled "Industrial Democracy," in letter to Benjamin Schlesinger, March 11, 1916, in letter to Henry Horner, March 29, 1916, and in address to the International convention 1916, *Proceedings*, 228-230.

#### CHAPTER X. THE REVOLT OF THE DRESSMAKERS

- <sup>1</sup>Samuel Glassman to Abraham Baroff, May 15, 1916. Magee, *op. cit.*, 271.
- <sup>2</sup>Citizens' Committee, *Issues in the Present Strike*, March, 1917.
- <sup>3</sup>*Ladies' Garment Worker*, December, 1914, October, 1915; *Jewish Labor World*, March 6, 1914, December 18, 1914.
- <sup>4</sup>*Agreement Entered Into Between Steinberg and Sopkin Brothers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union*, (September, 1915).
- <sup>5</sup>Interview with Kate Koppa, May 18, 1939.
- <sup>6</sup>*Jewish Daily Courier*, October 12, 1912; *Jewish Labor World*, January 12, January 24, 1913.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ladies' Garment Worker*, October, December, 1914.
- <sup>8</sup>Interviews with Agnes Nestor, June 12, 1939, Sol Kaufman, June 14, 1939, Kate Koppa, and Samuel Glassman.
- <sup>9</sup>Fannia M. Cohn's *Scrapbook*, and interview with Fannia M. Cohn, May 25, 1939.
- <sup>10</sup>Magee, *op. cit.*, 272-277; Women's Trade Union League, *Biennial Reports (1915-1916)*, 15; *Jewish Labor World*, August 28, 1915; G.E.B., *Report to Conventions*, 1916, 19, 20; *The Chicago Day Book*, August 19, 1915; *Chicago Daily Journal*, August 24, 1915; *Chicago Daily News*, August 20, August 23, 1915; *Chicago Evening Post*, August 20, August 24; *Life and Labor*, V (1915), 138-139.
- <sup>11</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1916, 20.
- <sup>12</sup>*Chicago Day Book*, August 28, 1915.

- <sup>13</sup>*Chicago Day Book*, January 31, 1916; interview with Fannia M. Cohn.
- <sup>14</sup>Women's Trade Union League, *Biennial Reports*, 1915-1916, 16-17.
- <sup>15</sup>Magee, *op. cit.*, 278; Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 12, September 9, 1916.
- <sup>16</sup>Abraham Bisno to Abraham Baroff, February 25, May 15, 1916; Joint Board, *Minutes*, November 4, 1916; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1916, 20; I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1916, 121, 123.
- <sup>17</sup>*Jewish Labor World*, January 12, 1917.
- <sup>18</sup>*Women's Wear*, November 23, 1916, January 13, 1917; Magee, *op. cit.*, 279-280.
- <sup>19</sup>Letter to manufacturers, February 2, 1917, as printed in *Issues of the Present Strike*; Magee, *op. cit.*, 281-283.
- <sup>20</sup>*Jewish Labor World*, February 9, January 26, 1917. Also copy of union demands in unsigned agreement February, 1917.
- <sup>21</sup>*Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 16, 1917.
- <sup>22</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1918, 22-23.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.
- <sup>24</sup>Howard B. Myers, *The Policing of Labor Disputes in Chicago*, 864-865, quoting from Citizens' Association of Chicago, *Bulletin*, No. 35, "Police Investigation," 1917.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 866; Levine, *op. cit.*, 321.
- <sup>26</sup>James S. O'Brien et al vs. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union et al, Records of the Circuit Court of Cook County, General No. B29147, issued February 17, 1917. See also Myers, *op. cit.*, 869.
- <sup>27</sup>Magee, *op. cit.*, 293.
- <sup>28</sup>Myers, *op. cit.*, 870.
- <sup>29</sup>Magee, *op. cit.*, 296-297; Myers, *op. cit.*, 875-879.
- <sup>30</sup>*Chicago Evening American*, February 16, 1917; *Chicago Evening Post*, February 16, 1917.
- <sup>31</sup>Magee, *op. cit.*, 298.
- <sup>32</sup>*Issues in the Present Garment Workers' Strike*, Myers, *op. cit.*, 863; *Ladies' Garment Worker*, April, 1917.
- <sup>33</sup>Interviews with Samuel Glassman; Sol Kaufman; Sol Flack, June 21, 1939; Mollie Yanowitz, June 16, 1939.
- <sup>34</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1918, 23-24; *Ladies' Garment Worker*, May, 1917.

## CHAPTER XI. THE WINNING OF WEEK WORK

- <sup>1</sup>Abraham Bisno, *Office Report to Joint Board*, November 11, 1916; Joint Board, *Minutes*, November 18, December 16, 1916.
- <sup>2</sup>Stanley Kabreener to Abraham Bisno, March 29, 1916.

- <sup>3</sup>Chicago Cloak and Suit Industry, Board of Arbitration, *Report*, August 21, 1917.
- <sup>4</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, November 9, 16, 1918, May 10, 1919; interview with Harry Messer, April 25, 1939 and with Sam Gordon, July 6, 1939.
- <sup>5</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, May 11, June 1, September 8, October 5, November 2, 1918.
- <sup>6</sup>National Industrial Conference Board, *op. cit.*, 87-90.
- <sup>7</sup>Bisno to Abraham Baroff, December 1, 1916.
- <sup>8</sup>*Agreement between Joint Board, I.L.G.W.U. and the Armac Cloak and Suit Company, December 19, 1918.* Joint Board, *Minutes*, July 20, September 28, October 5, November 30, December 21, 1918.
- <sup>9</sup>*Agreement between Joint Board, I.L.G.W.U. and Palmer and Company, July 1, 1919.*
- <sup>10</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, December 21, 1918, May 26, 1919; Levine, *op. cit.*, 326-327.
- <sup>11</sup>Interview with Jack Lotterman, April 6, 1939; Leonard Axelrod, June 14, 1939; Aaron Sher, June 15, 1939; Max Graffman, June 16, 1939; and Abraham Gold, July 7, 1939; Joint Board, *Minutes*, May-June, 1919.
- <sup>12</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, July 12, 1919.
- <sup>13</sup>*Women's Apparel Review*, September 27, 1919.
- <sup>14</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, January 30, February 4, 1920.
- <sup>15</sup>Julius Hochman, *Letter to the Chicago Joint Board*, February 20, 1920.
- <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1920, 32-33; *Forward*, February 19, March 11, April 11, August 1, August 7, 1919; *Justice*, August 9, 1919.
- <sup>17</sup>Hochman, *op. cit.*, February 20, 1920; Joint Board, *Minutes*, February 23, 1920.

## CHAPTER XII. THE SPIRIT OF THE UNION

- <sup>1</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1920, 15.
- <sup>2</sup>Chicago Joint Board, Secretary-Treasurer, *Financial Statement*, March 26, 1920; Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 13.
- <sup>3</sup>Dr. M. P. Gethner, *Report to Joint Board*, December 5, 1917.
- <sup>4</sup>I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1920, 54.
- <sup>5</sup>Interview with Hyman Schoolman, May 23, 1939; Al Rose, June 6, 1939; Sol Kaufman, July 19, 1939; Leonard Axelrod, June 14, 1939.
- <sup>6</sup>Prospectus of building, entitled "Building Fund Bonds 1920," 4pp. leaflet, 1920.

- <sup>7</sup>*Justice*, January 23, 1920. Interview with Schoolman; *Forward*, May 14, 1930.
- <sup>8</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1920, 15-16.
- <sup>9</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, July 30, October 11, 1920.
- <sup>10</sup>Cloakmakers' Union Local 5, *op. cit.*, 9.

#### CHAPTER XIII. A SICK INDUSTRY

- <sup>1</sup>Mabel A. Magee, *Trends in the Location of the Women's Clothing Industry*, table on p.137.
- <sup>2</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, February 16, 1925.
- <sup>3</sup>Levine, *op. cit.*, 397-405.
- <sup>4</sup>G.E.B., 1925, 72. Magee, *Trends in the Location of the Women's Clothing Industry*, 91, 107. *Gerechtigkeit*, January 15, 1926. Joint Board, *Minutes*, July 7, 1923.
- <sup>5</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1925, 26.
- <sup>6</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, December 26, 1919, October 6, 1922, October 24, 1924; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1920, 54.
- <sup>7</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, January 30, 1920.
- <sup>8</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, February 6, 1925. G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1925, 72. *Forward*, August 16, 1922; interview with Benjamin Dolnick, May 2, 1939.
- <sup>9</sup>M. A. Goldstein in *Gerechtigkeit*, December 14, 1928; Magee, *Women's Clothing Industry in Chicago*, 51, Chart B; Joint Board, *Minutes*, July 7, 1923.
- <sup>10</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1929, 80; *Ibid.*, 1925, 25-29; Joint Board, *Minutes*, May 19, May 27, 1923.

#### CHAPTER XIV. ON THE DEFENSIVE

- <sup>1</sup>Chicago Joint Board, Board of Directors, *Minutes*, November 2, 1920; *Women's Wear*, November 20, November 26, 1920; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1922, 32.
- <sup>2</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 32-35; *Forward*, May 24, June 8, June 29, June 30, 1921; *Women's Wear*, July 1, 1921.
- <sup>3</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 35; Magee, *The Women's Clothing Industry in Chicago*, 204-205; *Justice*, November 25, 1921; *Forward*, November 25, 1921; *New Majority*, November 12, 1921.
- <sup>4</sup>Joint Board Circular [November 19, 1921].
- <sup>5</sup>*Women's Wear*, December 6, 1921.

- <sup>6</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1922, 35; *Forward*, December 1, December 2, December 6, 1921; *New Majority*, December 10, December 17, 1921; interview with Jack Lotterman, April 6, 1939; interview with Morris Bialis, June 22, 1939.
- <sup>7</sup>*Women's Wear*, December 23, 1921; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 20, 1921; *New Majority*, December 31, 1921.
- <sup>8</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1922, 36. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 30, 1921.
- <sup>9</sup>*Forward*, May 3, 1921.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, May 4, 1921; Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 6, 1920.
- <sup>11</sup>*Forward*, July 17, July 27, July 28, 1921; *Justice*, July 29, 1921; *Women's Wear*, July 29, 1921.
- <sup>12</sup>G.E.B., *Minutes*, June 5, 1920.
- <sup>13</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 13, 1920.
- <sup>14</sup>Sol Maser to G.E.B., May 7, 1921.
- <sup>15</sup>Hyman Schoolman to G.E.B., May 18, 1921.
- <sup>16</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1924, 50.
- <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 50-51; interviews with Hyman Schoolman, May 23, 1939; Meyer Barkan, May 11, 1939; Morris Bialis, June 22, 1939; Alfred Rose, June 6, 1939; Sol Flack, June 21, 1939.
- <sup>18</sup>*Forward*, November 21, 1922; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1924, 51; Joint Board, *Minutes*, November 20, 1922, May 19, 1923.
- <sup>19</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 10, 1923. Also G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1924, 129 ff.
- <sup>20</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 10, 1923.
- <sup>21</sup>Chicago Joint Board, Trial Committee, *Records*, August 5, 1923.
- <sup>22</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 17, September 7, November 2, 1923; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1924, 134ff.
- <sup>23</sup>*Forward*, September 17, September 22, 1922. G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1924, 50.
- <sup>24</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, October 12, 1923.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, December 14, 1923.
- <sup>26</sup>*Chicago Evening American*, October 29, 1923.
- <sup>27</sup>Joint Executive Conference of the Chicago Locals, I.L.G.W.U., "The Chicago Members of the International Organize the First Union-Owned Co-operative Cloak and Dress Factory," [November, 1923], 8 pp. leaflet. Joint Board, letter to members, November 15, 1923; Joint Board, *Minutes*, November 6, November 16, November 23, 1923.
- <sup>28</sup>*Justice*, November 16, 1923.
- <sup>29</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1924, 146-147.

## CHAPTER XV. THE WAR OF 1924

- <sup>1</sup>*Forward*, October 14, 18, 1922.
- <sup>2</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, July 6, 1923. *Justice*, June 8, 1923; Magee, *Women's Clothing Industry of Chicago*, 318.
- <sup>3</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1924, 78-79. Perlstein to Sigman, July 2, 1923; interviews with Mollie Yanowitz, June 16, 1939; Bessie Goldberg, August 24, 1939; Rebecca Eisenstat, May 11, 1939; and Mary Fisher, June 16, 1939.
- <sup>4</sup>*Women's Wear*, January 26, February 28, 1924.
- <sup>5</sup>Magee, *Women's Clothing Industry of Chicago*, 320.
- <sup>6</sup>J. N. Beffel, "Injunctions Don't Make Dresses," *The Nation*, May 14, 1924, 558-559; Joint Board, *Minutes*, February 8, 1924; Women's Trade Union League, *Biennial Reports*, 1922-1924, 8.
- <sup>7</sup>*Women's Wear*, March 5, 1924. Myers, *op. cit.*, 908. Joint Board, *Minutes*, March 7, 1924.
- <sup>8</sup>I.L.G.W.U. *Convention Proceedings*, 1924, 230.
- <sup>9</sup>Peter Sissman, in I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1924, 144.
- <sup>10</sup>Francine Frock Company *vs.* The Joint Board Chicago Locals of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union et al, Superior Court of Cook County, Illinois, General No. 400, 436, issued March 7, 1924. For other injunctions see G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1924, 155-156.
- <sup>11</sup>Table from Myers, *op. cit.*, 990. Checked by records of court cases of the Chicago Joint Board, I.L.G.W.U., "Record of dressmakers' strike of 1924," August 20, 1926.
- <sup>12</sup>Table from Myers, *op. cit.*, 992-996.
- <sup>13</sup>Magee, *Women's Clothing Industry of Chicago*, 338.
- <sup>14</sup>Myers, *op. cit.*, 942-948.
- <sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 928-930.
- <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 936.
- <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 928, 929, 931, 935, citing *New Majority*, March 15, 1924.
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 929, 931, 935, quoting from Citizens' Committee, *Reports*.
- <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 932-933, 957-958.
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 933, 957. Interview with Roy Glassman, June 29, 1939.
- <sup>21</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1924, 81. Women's Trade Union League, *Biennial Report*, 1922-1924, 9-10.
- <sup>22</sup>Magee, *Women's Clothing Industry of Chicago*, 331.
- <sup>23</sup>*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 24, 1924.
- <sup>24</sup>Magee, *Women's Clothing Industry of Chicago*, 334.
- <sup>25</sup>I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1924, 230.

- <sup>26</sup>Myers, *op. cit.*, 923-4. Joint Board, *Minutes*, July 3, 1924. Interviews with Rebecca Eisenstat, Meyer Barkan, Kate Koppa, Harry Messer, Bessie Goldberg.
- <sup>27</sup>Quoted by Magee, *Women's Clothing Industry of Chicago*, 338 and Myers, *op. cit.*, 983, from *Chicago Journal of Commerce*, May 24, 1926.
- <sup>28</sup>*Chicago Tribune*, June 13, June 14, 1926; *Chicago Herald and Examiner*, December 31, 1925; Federated Press, Chicago Bureau, press release, June 14, 1926; Mrs. Eleanor Sadlowski, Scrapbook on convicted strikers of 1924; Myers, *op. cit.*, 983; interviews with Agnes Nestor and Meyer Barkan; Women's Trade Union League of Chicago, *Bulletin*, XX (September, 1926).
- <sup>29</sup>Federated Press, Chicago Bureau, press release, June 14, 1926.
- <sup>30</sup>Women's Trade Union League, *Bulletin* XX (September, 1926); *Women's Wear*, June 22, 1926; Illinois State Federation of Labor, *Weekly News Letter*, June 19, 1926.
- <sup>31</sup>*International Labor News Service*, June 19, 1926.
- <sup>32</sup>*Chicago Daily Herald and Examiner*, August 10, 1926.

#### CHAPTER XVI. LEFTS AND RIGHTS

- <sup>1</sup>Agreement, February 25, 1925; Chicago Joint Board, Booklet of rules in connection with the agreement of 1925, February, 1925; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1928, 183; Joint Board, *Minutes*, May 5, June 19, 1925.
- <sup>2</sup>Perlstein to Sigman, August 23, 1924.
- <sup>3</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1925, 97-8; *Convention Proceedings*, 1925, 184. Interview with Mollie Friedman, May 18, 1939.
- <sup>4</sup>Chicago Dress Manufacturers' Association, *Bulletin*, February 2, 1925.
- <sup>5</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1925, 97-98; Joint Board, *Minutes*, September 25, 1925.
- <sup>6</sup>Local 5, Executive Board, *Minutes*, October 5, October 28, 1925.
- <sup>7</sup>General discussions in G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1925, 68; 1928, 183; Sylvia Kopald, *Rebellion in Labor Unions*, 3-100. Joint Board, *Minutes*, January 30, 1925.
- <sup>8</sup>Salvatore Ninno to Morris Rappaport, March 12, 1925.
- <sup>9</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, September 11, 1925, October 2.
- <sup>10</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1925, 70.
- <sup>11</sup>I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1925, 286-292.
- <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 340-342.
- <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 40-45.

- <sup>14</sup>*Ladies' Garment Worker*, June 13, 1926. Joint Board, *Minutes*, February 26, 1926; *Forward*, February 1, 1926; *Women's Wear*, May 11, 18, 1926.
- <sup>15</sup>Joseph Levin, "Accomplishments of the Progressive Administration," February 4, 1927.
- <sup>16</sup>Local 5, *Minutes*, February 27, 1926.
- <sup>17</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 28, 1926; circular letter to locals, September 1, 1926.
- <sup>18</sup>*Gerechtigkeit*, January 20, 1928.
- <sup>19</sup>*Forward*, July 19, 1926.
- <sup>20</sup>Levin, *op. cit.*, 7-8; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1928, 185; *Gerechtigkeit*, January 20, 1928.
- <sup>21</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, May 7, 1927.
- <sup>22</sup>Mollie Friedman to Joint Board, March 25, 1927.
- <sup>23</sup>Unemployment Insurance Fund, *Records*, April 26, 1926; *Gerechtigkeit*, January 20, 1928; Joint Board, *Minutes*, May 27, 1927; Magee, *Women's Clothing Workers of Chicago*, 246-249.
- <sup>24</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1928, 184; Joint Board, *Minutes*, June 10, 1927; Schenker Michel and Weinstock shop meeting, *Minutes*, June 22, 1927; *Gerechtigkeit*, January 20, 1928.
- <sup>25</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1928, 186-188; *Gerechtigkeit*, January 20, 1928; *Freiheit*, July 17, 1927; interviews with Meyer Friedman, May 11, 1939; Abraham Rabinowitz, August 9, 1939; Helen Stewart, May 30, 1939; Anna Klibanoff, May 12, 1939; Barnett Schaffer; Harry Rufer; and Max Graffman; Letter Harry Rufer to Meyer Friedman, July 13, 1927.
- <sup>26</sup>Joint Committee Investigating the Chicago Joint Board, *Report of Investigation*, August 1, 1927 (9 pp., typewritten). Also in G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1928, 189-195.
- <sup>27</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1928, 196; *Gerechtigkeit*, February 3, 1928.
- <sup>28</sup>Joint Board, *Election Record*, August 5, 1927.
- <sup>29</sup>Circular letter of the deposed officials (n. d.); *The Chicago Cloak and Dressmaker*, November 10, 1927.
- <sup>30</sup>Chicago Joint Board, Circular letter, August 22, 1927, signed by Barnett Schaffer and Nathan Mintz; *Gerechtigkeit*, November 11, 1927; Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 26, September 2, 1927.
- <sup>31</sup>M. A. Goldstein et al vs. B. Soll, E. Nadel, et al, Superior Court of Cook County, General No. 463, 237, issued September 1, 1927.
- <sup>32</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1928, 197; *Gerechtigkeit*, February 19, 1928.
- <sup>33</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, September 9, 1927; Bialis to Sigman, December 13, 1927.

## CHAPTER XVII. FACING THE DEPRESSION

- <sup>1</sup>I. E. Rubovits to Bialis, May 22, 1928.
- <sup>2</sup>Shop Chairman Meeting, *Minutes*, June 2, 1928; *Forward*, June 3, June 4, 1928; G.E.B., *Minutes*, June 25, 1928; Joint Board, *Minutes*, June 1, 1928.
- <sup>3</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, February 17, 1928.
- <sup>4</sup>*Federation News*, December 21, 1929; Joint Board, *Minutes*, October 17, 1929.
- <sup>5</sup>*Gerechtigkeit*, October 21, 1927.
- <sup>6</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, April 19, 1929.
- <sup>7</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1928, 201-202; Joint Board, *Minutes*, February 24, March 2, March 30, April 6, 1928; *Women's Wear*, February 25, 1928; interview with Mollie Friedman, May 17, 1939.
- <sup>8</sup>*Justice*, July 13, 1928; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1928, 202; Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 17, 1928.
- <sup>9</sup>M. A. Goldstein to Nathan Mintz, June 26, 1929; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1929, 93.
- <sup>10</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, January 10, September 3, 1930. *Gerechtigkeit*, August 29, 1930.
- <sup>11</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 8, 1930.
- <sup>12</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, March 28, 1930; *Gerechtigkeit*, August 29, 1930.
- <sup>13</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, February 7, 1930.
- <sup>14</sup>*Gerechtigkeit*, August 29, 1930; Joint Board, *Minutes*, September 3, 10, 19, 1930; *Forward*, November 14, 1930.
- <sup>15</sup>Schlesigner to Bialis, September 7, 1930.
- <sup>16</sup>Dubinsky to Bialis, September 11, 1930.
- <sup>17</sup>G.E.B., *Minutes*, October, 1930, pp. 24-26, 36-38.
- <sup>18</sup>Dubinsky to Bialis, telegram November 13, 1930.
- <sup>19</sup>Bialis to Dubinsky, telegram November 13, 1930, letter November 14, 1930.
- <sup>20</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, November 28, 1930.
- <sup>21</sup>*Gary Post-Tribune*, December 3, 1930.
- <sup>22</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, December 3, December 10, December 22, 1930, March 13, 1931; *Federation News*, January 10, 1931; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1932, 40-41; G.E.B., *Minutes*, January 30, 1931.
- <sup>23</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, December 12, 22, 1930.
- <sup>24</sup>Needle Trades Industrial Union, Leaflet, 2 pp. Yiddish [n.d.], and circulars in English.
- <sup>25</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, December 7, 1931; Interviews with Harry Rufer, July 18, 1939 and Aaron Sher, June 15, 1939.
- <sup>26</sup>I.L.G.W.U., *Convention Proceedings*, 1932, 281.
- <sup>27</sup>Chicago Joint Board, Board of Directors, *Minutes*, July 14, 1932.

- <sup>28</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, February 10, 1933, September 23, 1932.
- <sup>29</sup>Women's Trade Union League of Chicago, *Convention Report*, May, 1936; Joint Board, *Minutes*, December 20, December 30, 1932; interviews with Agnes Nestor, June 12, 1939, and Anna Klibanoff, May 11, 1939.

#### CHAPTER XVIII. THE NEW ADVANCE

- <sup>1</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, June 17, 1933.
- <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, June 27, 1933.
- <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, June 27, June 30, July 7, 1933.
- <sup>4</sup>Interview with Anna Klibanoff, May 11, 1939; Women's Trade Union League of Chicago, *Convention Report*, May, 1936.
- <sup>5</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, March 13, 1931; interview with Abraham Rabinowitz, August 9, 1939.
- <sup>6</sup>Interviews with Mary Fisher, June 16, 1939; Alice Hinton, June 19, 1939; Rebecca Eisenstat, July 27, 1939; Helen Stewart, July 30, 1939; Anna Klibanoff, May 11, 1939.
- <sup>7</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1932, 43.
- <sup>8</sup>Interviews with Alice Hinton, June 19, 1939; Leo Lavender, July 7, 1939; and I. Sayewitz, July 7, 1939.
- <sup>9</sup>*Women's Wear*, March 18, March 21, March 28, April 4, September 13, 1932; Joint Board, *Minutes*, March 25, 1932.
- <sup>10</sup>Interviews with Mary Fisher and Alice Hinton; *Justice*, August 1, 1933; *Women's Wear*, June 13, June 22, July 6, 1933; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1934, 79.
- <sup>11</sup>*Women's Wear*, August 8, 1933. Joint Board, *Minutes*, August 11, 1933.
- <sup>12</sup>Interview with Alice Hinton, June 12, 1939.
- <sup>13</sup>Interviews with Leonard Axelrod, Alice Hinton, Morris Seskind, Sol Kaufman, Morris Bialis, Kate Koppa, and Sophie Bogrow.
- <sup>14</sup>*Justice*, September 1, 1933. *Women's Wear*, August 28, 1933.
- <sup>15</sup>Letter of Eisenberg & Sons to its employees.
- <sup>16</sup>Edward J. Nockles to Mayor Edward J. Kelly, day letter August 30, 1933.
- <sup>17</sup>*Agreement between the Association of Dress Manufacturers and Independent Dress Manufacturers Association with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and Chicago Joint Board of Locals* 5, 18, 59, 81 and 100, September, 1933.
- <sup>18</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1934, 80; *Justice*, September 15, 1933; Chicago Joint Board, Secretary-Treasurer, *Financial Statement*, September, 1933.

<sup>19</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, June 24, June 30, July 14, 1933.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, October 27, November 8, 1933.

<sup>21</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1934, 84.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

#### CHAPTER XIX. THE UNION AND THE INDUSTRY, 1933-1939

<sup>1</sup>Morris Bialis to J. Schwartz, president of the Dress Contractors' Association, February 14, 1934.

<sup>2</sup>*Women's Wear*, January 25, 1935; *Gerechtigkeit*, February, 1936.

<sup>3</sup>*Agreement*, 1936; Chicago Joint Board, Board of Directors, *Minutes*, March 11, 1936; G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1937, 58.

<sup>4</sup>*Women's Wear*, March 27, April 17, 1936; Joint Board, *Minutes*, April 17, 1936.

<sup>5</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, April 9, April 20, 1938.

<sup>6</sup>*Agreement*, 1939.

<sup>7</sup>*Women's Wear Daily*, *The Dress Industry*, 8, 20.

<sup>8</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, September 30, November 4, 1938.

<sup>9</sup>Code Authority cloak trade, 1934, tables 121, 140, 124.

<sup>10</sup>*Our Voice*, January, February, March, 1939, July, 1939; *Justice*, February 15, March 1, 1939; *Chicago Daily News*, February 14, 1939; *Daily Jewish Courier*, February 14, 1939; *Forward*, February 14, 1939.

<sup>11</sup>"Record of Cloak Shops Attended by business agents," July, 1939, (12 pp., typewritten).

<sup>12</sup>M. A. Goldstein in *Gerechtigkeit*, February, 1936.

<sup>13</sup>Morris Bialis, *Office Report*, November 29, 1935; interview with Bialis, July 28, 1939; interview with Abraham Plotkin.

<sup>14</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1934, 81-82; Meyer Barkan telegram to Peter Sissman on August 4, 1933, and night letter to Hugh S. Johnson, August 4, 1934.

<sup>15</sup>G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1937, 60-62; interview with Samuel Glassman and Abraham Plotkin; Kathryn Daly, *The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in Chicago 1930-1939* (in preparation).

<sup>16</sup>*Women's Wear*, July 3, 1935; Joint Board, *Minutes*, July 1, 1935.

<sup>17</sup>*Oglesby Daily Post Tribune*, May 17, April 9, June 3, July 5, July 12, 1935.

<sup>18</sup>*Women's Wear*, August 14, 1935; *Oglesby Daily Post Tribune*, August 22, 1935; Joseph Zuckerman to Morris Bialis, July 9, 1935.

<sup>19</sup>"Meeting at Oglesby Public Library" (20 pp. typewritten copy of hearings), August 16, August 21, 1935.

- <sup>20</sup>Interviews with Morris Bialis and Harry Rufer; Joint Board, *Minutes*, September 30, 1935.
- <sup>21</sup>A list and description of the I.L.G.W.U. locals in the region around Chicago as of May, 1937, is to be found in G.E.B., *Report to Convention*, 1937, 62-66.

#### CHAPTER XX. THE FUNCTIONING OF THE UNION

- <sup>1</sup>The materials for this chapter were obtained mainly from interviews with M. A. Goldstein, Morris Bialis, Meyer Barkan, Rebecca Eisenstat, Roy Glassman, Aaron Sher, Ray Blottiaux, and Harry Messer; from information supplied by the recording secretaries of the various locals, from *Our Voice*, 1935-1939, and the *Voice of Education*, 1936-1937; from the constitutions of the International and of the Chicago Joint Board and the by-laws of the Chicago locals; and from Levine, *op. cit.*, chapters 34-36.
- <sup>2</sup>Chicago Joint Board, Secretary-Treasurer, Ledger Books of the Financial Department, entries for July 1, 1939.
- <sup>3</sup>Interviews with O. A. Nudleman, Roy Glassman, and Aaron Sher.
- <sup>4</sup>Interview with M. A. Goldstein, January 29, 1939.
- <sup>5</sup>Joint Board, *Minutes*, February 24, March 1, March 14, 1934; September 30, 1935.
- <sup>6</sup>*Our Voice*, November, 1938, and July, 1939.
- <sup>7</sup>Interview with Meyer Friedman, August 17, 1939.
- <sup>8</sup>Chicago Joint Board, Educational Department, *Class Announcements*, 1934-1939; Reports of the Educational Committee; *Our Voice*, November, 1938; *Voice of Education*, January, 1937, June, 1937, and December, 1937.

## Glossary

(DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF TECHNICAL TERMS AND PHRASES USED IN TEXT.)

- "AMERICAN PLAN." Title of open shop movement in 1920's.
- ASSORTERS. Assemble the cut cloth into bundles.
- BASTERS. Those who perform needle work exclusively of temporary character.
- BUNDLES. Packages of cut garments ready for the operator.
- CLEANERS. Remove loose threads, sponge and remove spots from finished garments.
- CLOSED SHOP. Shop which by terms of agreement with the union may employ only members of the union in operations performed by crafts within their jurisdiction.
- COLUMBUS TAILORS. Derisive term applied by skilled tailors to immigrants who learned the trade in the United States.
- CONSUMERS' PROTECTION LABEL. Label issued by National Suit and Coat Industry Recovery Board.
- CONTRACTORS. Those who take out either cut bundles or raw material from a manufacturer or jobber for the purpose of producing garments for them at a fixed price.
- CORPORATION SHOP. Corruption of term cooperative shop, since it was operated as a partnership among the workers who were also its owners. Sometimes also called social shop, because most of the workers were drawn from the immediate family, near-relatives, and friends.
- COUNTRY SHOP. Shops located in small cities or towns; in the earlier history of the union usually owned by a Chicago manufacturer or operated by a contractor who worked for him.
- CUTTERS. Those who cut cloth according to patterns with shears, hand-knives, or machines.
- DESIGNERS. Create the styles; usually specialize in one branch of the industry.
- DRAPERS. Receive garments from operators, hang them on a dummy, and make all necessary adjustments by fastening the various parts of the garment with pins.
- EXAMINERS. Examine finished garments to see that they fit the measurements given and meet the standards of the firm.
- FINISHERS. Do most of the hand sewing on the garments; sew on hooks and eyes, buttons, belts; do basting, etc.
- FUGITIVE SHOP or run-away shop. Shop which flees, usually from

larger center of trade, to a smaller city or town for the purpose of evading terms of union contract.

**GRADERS.** Produce patterns from standard size of paper pattern to a variety of sizes.

**INSIDE SHOP.** Shop owned and controlled by the manufacturer and in which the workers work directly for the manufacturer. Contrast with "contractor shop."

**INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD (I.W.W.).** Founded in 1905 as a rival national labor body to the American Federation of Labor. It was organized upon an industrial basis.

**JOBBER.** In the ladies' garment industry, they are not only middlemen, but also arrange directly for the production of most of the garments which they carry in stock.

**KNIGHTS OF LABOR.** National labor body founded in 1869, which preceded the American Federation of Labor. It was organized on an industrial basis.

**LOCKOUT.** Withdrawal of work by an employer from his employees for the purpose of attaining certain objectives.

**MARKERS.** Mark out cloth with chalk according to patterns laid out on it.

**MIXED SHOPS.** Shops producing both cloaks and dresses.

**NATIONAL SUIT AND COAT INDUS-**

**TRY RECOVERY BOARD.** Voluntary national organization of manufacturers in the cloak and suit industry to maintain fair labor standards, founded in 1935 as a substitute for the N.R.A.

**OFF-PRESSERS.** See under-pressers.

**OPEN SHOPS.** Shops having no agreement with the union.

**OPERATORS.** Sew garments together on sewing machines.

**OUTSIDE SHOP.** Contractor shop. See contractor.

**PATTERNMAKERS.** Prepare first set of paper patterns for all parts of the garments from the original sample made up by designer and samplemaker.

**PIECE WORK SYSTEM.** The common system of work for operators, pressers and finishers in the trade. The workers are paid for the labor on each garment according to the price fixed by the respective price committee and employer.

**PINKERS.** Operate a machine with a cutting device which cuts edges of seams, after they are sewed together, in zig-zag fashion to prevent them from ravelling.

**PIPING.** Folded bias strip of cloth sewed on the raw edge of a collar, cuff or yoke, turned over and stitched in such a way that the stitches do not touch the piping on the outside.

**PLEATERS.** Fold the fabric on desired portion of garment, tempo-

rarily fixing in place, as by basting or steam.

**PLUSH TAILORS.** Exclusively employed in the production of plush garments.

**PREFERENTIAL UNION SHOP.** Shops which by term of agreement with the union are not closed shops, but where union workers would receive preference in hiring new help and would also be the last to be laid off during slow periods of work.

**PRESSERS.** Iron the garments either by hand or by special machines.

**RUN-AWAY SHOP.** See fugitive shop.

**SAMPLEMAKERS.** Make up the models or trial garments for the designers.

**SCAB NESTS.** Term applied particularly to small open shops operating in the 1920's.

**SCABS.** Workers who take the place of union members on strike or locked out.

**SECTION CHAIRMAN.** Chairman of the workers engaged in a given craft in a shop.

**SECTION WORK SYSTEM.** System of dividing the operations on a garment into minute sub-divisions. Used particularly in cotton and white goods trades with the objective of utilizing unskilled labor.

**SHOP CHAIRMAN.** Officer elected by workers in a shop from among

them for the purpose of seeing that union conditions are observed and of acting as the spokesman of the workers in the shop.

**SOCIAL SHOP.** See corporation shop.

**SOCIALIST TRADE AND LABOR ALLIANCE.** Rival of the American Federation of Labor in the 1890's. Dominated by the Socialist Labor Party.

**SORTERS.** Those who assemble the cut parts that make up a garment into one bundle to be given to the operators.

**STANDARD OF PRODUCTION.** A system by which a worker is to produce a stipulated amount of garments for the wages he receives. A bone of contention between the union and the cloak manufacturers in the days of week work. The union maintained that the introduction of a standard of production would result in reintroduction of piece work under a disguised name.

**STITCHERS.** Perform fancy stitches on a special machine.

**STOPPAGES.** Cessation from work for a limited time for various purposes, as forcing employers to speed up settlement of prices, etc.

**SUB-CONTRACTING.** Before the 1915 Collective Agreement in the cloak trade, the system by which an employer contracted with a few of his employees for the work done in his shop. These favored employees hired helpers to whom

- they stood in the relation of employers.
- SUB-CONTRACTOR.** See contractor and sub-manufacturer.
- SUB-MANUFACTURERS.** Produce garments for jobbers, theoretically "purchasing" the raw materials from them and "reselling" the finished products; in effect working for hire.
- SWEATSHOP.** A shop characterized by unsanitary conditions of work, excessive hours of labor, and gross underpayment of workers.
- TRIMMERS.** Receive cloth cut by cutters and cut out linings and combinations.
- TUCKING.** Process of stitching narrow folds that are called tucks. They can be  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{1}{10}$ , or  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide.
- UNDER-PRESSERS.** Get garments from operators and press out seams, etc. on the inside of garment, before lining is inserted.
- UNIT SYSTEM.** System of determining piece rates for dress operators and finishers by judging the time required for certain operations. The unit scale is one-tenth of a minute.
- UPPER-PRESSERS, or up-pressers.** Do final pressing on the finished garments.
- VEREINIGTE YIDDISHE GEWERKSCHAFTEN** or Federation of Jewish Trade Unions. Central body composed of delegates from trade unions whose personnel is largely Jewish.
- WEEK WORK.** Applied to system of work in which rate of pay was fixed by the week. Between 1919 and 1931, however, all workers in cloak industry worked by the week.
- YELLOW DOG CONTRACTS.** Individual contracts signed by workers as a condition of employment, which prohibited the workers from joining the union or even talking to union officials and organizers.

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