

times the effect of this was ferocious. She did not move but moved herself. Her cheeks and brow were generally immobile while she moved her mouth; occasionally, however, at moments whose meaning I could not fathom, her brow would suddenly furrow with intense questioning perplexity that seemed to say, "Am I doing all right?" Her shoulders were held firm, so her hand gestures, again, did not flow or spring from her but were pushed forward. She had one commercial pitch—for Office Temporaries, "Use your spare time profitably"—and this was disastrously deflating of her precarious authority; she should resolutely refuse to say it. Professionals do not plug ads. On the whole, the effect of the performance (on me) was the unease that arises in the presence of irrelevant and misplaced effort; I felt a compassionate desire to cut the song-and-dance and get to the reality, the person herself who was over-controlling all this behavior; to ask her, "What is the matter, dear?"

By and large the tension and anxiety in these presentations seem to start from the commercials and spread over all the rest. I suppose the effect is inevitable in the commercials themselves, for their time is evidently scheduled to the second and greed crams them over-full. But the persons also are caught in the wooden framework and generally express the strain of it. If this painful feeling is not experienced by the spectators (I do not know if it is), it is because they are glued in it themselves. I could not habitually watch these programs without emotional damage.

I doubt that the whole can be remedied. Any attempt to "correct" the conditions I have been describing must result in some other phony format, some other wooden framework. On the other hand, to achieve documentary naturalism, or the feeling and imagination of art, would require allowing the spontaneous, the unscheduled, the empty, or the honest.

Herman Benson

THE SICKNESS OF THE UNIONS

After years of effort and expense, the Fund for the Republic's Trade Union Project is coming to an end. One of the rare products of this concentration of talent, resources, and contemplation is a 75-page booklet by Solomon Barkin, "The Decline of the Labor Movement and What Can Be Done About It."

Mr. Barkin has been Research Director of the Textile Workers Union of America for twenty-five years and is not one to rush angrily into headlong criticism of unions. He maintains the demeanor of an analytical scholar; at the most extreme, he becomes a gently chiding, somewhat disappointed but loyal member of the family. His

pamphlet is important as the symptomatic expression of the state of mind of a highly regarded union staff intellectual; and that is how it should be read. It has not been welcomed with unanimous acclaim in the labor movement; some unions have praised it; others demur; most ignore it. It is not an "official" work but it echoes the sentiments of many alert labor leaders and staff intellectuals.

The author concludes by prescribing solutions for a multitude of big problems. And yet, as it is sketched here, "the decline of the labor movement" will surely seem overwhelmingly and unmanageable to the reader. It appears compounded of so many simultaneous, interlocking, and deeply implanted social, economic, and historical factors that no single generation of mortals could work its way out: union membership has fallen; jobs disappear in unionized mass production; employers resist fiercely any advance of unionism; Taft-Hartley and "Right-to-Work" stand in the way; social discontent is dulled and the spur to unionization blunted; labor's "public image" is "sullied"; some unions are insensitive to the need to organize; members are apathetic; some workers will not heed the union call; women are slow to join; white-collar and professional employees grow in numbers but remain suspicious of unions; some unions are "tardy" in lifting racial bars and Negroes are disillusioned; low-wage workers remain to be organized; organizing staffs are inadequate; there is jurisdictional squabbling where there should be unity and centralization. This is only part of a long list of troubles that Mr. Barkin sees and he recommends a "drastic overhaul of spirit and structure" in eight pages. There is a cer-

tain scope to it all; the remedy for the illnesses is to cure them. Yet, in this sweep something vital is missing.

Suppose in analyzing the character of a man we wrote: he has been out of work for months and people say he is an embezzler; he misses church; his taste in ties is atrocious; enemies say he tortures dogs and children; he smokes, avoids great literature, watches TV incessantly, and irritates the neighbors; his political opinions are primitive; his economic philosophy is uninformed; he drives without a license and passes through red lights and is said to have murdered a friend; one arm is shorter than the other. In all this, some qualities might be more significant than others. And people say? But are they right or wrong? just or unjust? That would be the crux of everything. This comes to mind in pondering Barkin's long list.

When the author sets out to discuss labor's crisis we need help in determining which facts are actually central to that crisis and which are chronic, long-term, nagging difficulties. Otherwise, everything is cluttered together with everything else.

The crisis of unionism is not a crisis of diminished numbers and lessened power. It is a crisis of moral standing. *Unionism is in trouble not because it is weaker but because the liberal community has come to distrust its power.* As Barkin puts it, labor's public image is "sullied." That raises the question: are liberals justified in that misgiving? Mr. Barkin does not attempt to reply. Yet the answer is quintessential. If the "sullied image" is the product of a misunderstanding, then a campaign of enlightenment and public relations would be adequate. But if there are proper grounds for the liberal's dis-

trust, a deeper operation is required. The author never faces up to this question, as we can see in two examples:

More than any other fact, exposures of corruption have damaged unionism's public standing. Yet, the AFL-CIO has abandoned its crusade against crooked officials and the Ethical Practices Committee is moribund. That is not the worst of it; the decent, socially enlightened wing of labor seems unable even to raise the issue for renewed action. In a fleeting phrase, Mr. Barkin refers to the "misbehavior of individual union leaders." A passing word mentions "scandals that have engulfed some leaders of organized labor." A short paragraph ends "Unions have at times undertaken to uproot proven cases of misconduct and to halt abuses that have been publicly documented." (It is characteristic of Mr. Barkin's scrupulous treatment of sensitive subjects that he writes carefully only of "some" leaders when misdeeds take place but neglects that qualifying "some" when praise is distributed. In actuality, only "some" proven cases of misconduct were acted upon and that was long ago.) That's about it on corruption, hardly an adequate treatment of a wracking problem.

Internal democracy suffers the same neglect. Simple rights that we take for granted in a democratic political community are customarily suppressed in some of our most powerful unions. This, too, is at the heart of the liberal disenchantment with unions. In the Painters Union in New York City, mass trials of dissidents have just concluded with the expected fines and suspensions. In the Papermakers Union the Administration is busy cutting down a reform movement which represented half the last convention and

elected almost half the International Executive Board. The recent convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union staged a sickening Moscow Trial type of demonstration, complete with conspiring Trotskyites, unanimous votes, and public recantations, against FOUR, the little union of staff employees. These are events which "sully." Mr. Barkin merely notes that some liberals "stressed the need for more internal democracy." He, however, does not. He ignores the subject until page 71 where, in one of his briefest prescriptions, he advises, ". . . unions must adhere to democratic principles in making their decisions on all issues affecting employees. This concept has now been written into law and has to be fully implemented. The stewards of the movement must be beyond reproach." He never tells us how far they are, now, beyond reproach; because on one of the key issues of our day, democracy, his talents for research and analysis fail.

To put it bluntly, Mr. Barkin evades these critical issues. That said, we hasten to add that his pamphlet is nevertheless welcome. Any change inside the labor movement must be spurred on from outside. That drastic transformation in spirit which Barkin desires, requires the efforts of decent-

CLOSE-OUT NOT FALL-OUT

"In its fifteen months of operation only one person has bought its product, and so the assets of the Living Circle Company, makers of fall-out shelters, were auctioned off yesterday to satisfy creditors. Nine shelters, valued at \$27,000 retail, went for a total of \$5,250. Buyers planned various uses for them—as a 'dandy dark-room,' as a place to store garden tools, as a mountain cabin."—From the *N. Y. Times*, April 2.

minded labor leaders, liberal intellectuals, and rank-and-file reformers. Mr. Barkin's work is ample evidence that the liberals' criticism of labor has

had its effect. By helping to continue the public discussion, he helps the liberal world prod the conscience of organized labor.

Philip Green

THE POLITICS OF OIL

A Challenge to American Liberalism

For over a decade American social scientists have been developing a theory of political pluralism which claims that real political power is parcelled out, more or less equally, among the various groups and classes of American society. At the same time a sort of underground movement, led by Robert S. Lynd and the late C. Wright Mills, has attempted to revive the now old-fashioned critique of power in a capitalist society, while avoiding the more obviously dated clichés of 1930's Marxism. Such critics, however, have always found extremely difficult the problem of empirical verification, and with it the task of persuading the politically uncommitted. By its nature, social power does not operate openly in a society which swears by the myth of popular democracy. Those who assert the primacy of a particular class or group often seem to be open to the charge (made by Robert Dahl with regard to Lynd and Mills, for instance) of going beyond their own evidence to make up hidden bogeymen of power, whose existence can be neither con-

firmed nor denied scientifically.

By comparison, those engaged in the kind of studies which are associated with pluralist theory—studies of small towns, interest-groups, etc.—are using material which is more amenable to study and experimental manipulation, and which often leads to optimistic findings about the problem of power. I do not think a convincing case has yet been made that these findings are useful when brought to bear on the more complex area of national institutions. On the other hand, judged according to strict standards of evidence the critics have until now been at least equally unconvincing.

In this context, therefore, the publication of Robert Engler's *The Politics of Oil** represents a major breakthrough for the critics of liberal ideology. The oil industry has been the subject of intensive study before, especially by E. V. Rostow and Harvey O'Connor, but Engler has gone beyond both of these previous works. His major—and original—contribution

* Macmillan, 1961.