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Book Reviews

THE HOUSE OF LABOR: INTERNAL OPERATIONS OF AMERICAN UNIONS. Edited by J. B. S. Hardman and Maurice F. Neufeld. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951. Pp. xviii, 555. \$7.65.

"The daily frustrations of top labor leaders, actually, are painful and ulcerating. They are men of ambitious will and plastic shrewdness, who, by dint of vision, sometimes brawn, and often real intelligence, managed a fundamental revolution on the American Industrial scene. By habit they are more exhilarating in strife, whether on the picket line or at the collective bargaining table, than in the slow, detailed, consolidating, administrative operations that large, established and responsible organizations are inevitably forced to undertake in our contemporary society. Labor leaders would be more than human if they could readily admit that their proclivities and training did not prepare them for this emerging phase of painstaking, modern institutional management. . . ."

"What, then, is the prospect that a large proportion of top labor leadership can adapt itself to present exigencies? In many important unions, the possibility of change, except through death itself, is slight. Since able successors are rarely trained either by labor leaders or political chieftans, given the nature of politics, even the contemplation of death grants but an attenuated hope. Moreover, it is highly questionable whether present leaders, with understandable limitations, could possibly prepare younger men for the type of responsibilities we have in mind, even if the will to do so existed."

These frank words of Maurice F. Neufeld indicate why *The House of Labor* is a unique and significant contribution to an understanding of the function and administration of unions in today's society. A "managerial revolution" is taking place in the House of Labor just as a "managerial revolution" has been, and is still taking place in industry and business.

No longer can unions, vast in size and in area of interests and activities, be operated in a haphazard manner by the force of the personality and knowledge of one individual, or even several individuals. Just as industry's early promoters, to use Mr. Neufeld's illustration, such as William C. Durrant, had to give way to production managers, such as Charles W. Nash, before General Motors was transformed from a mere holding company into a giant manufacturing enterprise, so must unions develop their technically competent managers.

The House of Labor is a compilation of especially written articles by 49 contributors. Only one of these contributors, James B. Carey, comes from the ranks of labor's top management. While a few contributors are academicians such as William M. Leiserson, Robert C. Lynd and C. Wright Mills, the majority of the articles are written by people who are actively and avidly serving unions in various staff capacities.

Editorially, the articles are grouped in eight parts. Part One considers generally The American Labor Movement. Two of the articles in this part are written by the editors—State of Unions by Mr. Neufeld and State of the Movement by J. B. S.

Hardman. These two articles, trenchantly written, go directly to basic questions affecting the development of contemporary unionism and set the tone for the rest of the book. Part Two considers Unions and Political Activity. Part Three develops Union Communication: Publicity, Public Relations. Part Four examines the activities and programs in Union Research and Engineering. Welfare Health and Community Services are considered in Part Five. This is followed by parts devoted to Union Administration and Union Education Activity. Part Eight, entitled The Union Staff-Function and Aim, is a provocative round table discussion. The contributors to this section are not in total agreement on every point as to what is or should be the function and aim of union staff personnel. Their discussion of the problems involved is illuminating and the ultimate decisions reached by unions on these problems will determine the future role of unions in our economy and social life.

The editors could have substantially improved the book if they would have omitted about a third of the articles. Some of these were obviously dictated off-the-cuff. A few contain so little of value in either information or analysis that their inclusion dulls the brilliance of some of the other contributions.

Most of the contributions to *The House of Labor* are marked by an attitude of honest self-evaluation. The staff contributors are all ardent unionists, but they are realists who are not afraid to consider thoroughly the fundamental issues and the facts which must be considered in meeting those issues.

It is not strange that the position of these staff specialists is not unlike the position of staff specialists in industry. At almost any meeting of industrial relations or personnel men from industry the discussion almost inevitably involves the question of "selling" top management and the question of the relationship between line and staff personnel. In *The House of Labor* the same questions are presented. J. B. S. Hardman's article, Labor Education a Complicated Thing, graphically points out the perplexities of a labor educationalist in selling a real educational program to "the union manager." Virtually all of Part Eight is directed to line-staff relationships. It is apparent that problems of organization and administration are essentially similar regardless of whether a management organization or a labor organization is involved.

Joseph Kovner's brief discussion of the labor lawyer contains some interesting observations such as the following comments:

"The economics of a labor lawyer's practice ties him closely to his clients. The labor lawyer is confined to the union side of labor relations law. With few exceptions, unions will not retain lawyers who represent employers; and employers are suspicious of union lawyers. The reluctance of unions to entrust their affairs to outsiders tends to concentrate legal business in the hands of a small number of practitioners. In Chicago and Boston, each with hundreds of locals, the bulk of union legal business is concentrated in two firms, one representing most of the AFL locals, the other, most of the CIO locals.

"In addition, there is little turnover. If he loses a union client, the labor lawyer is not likely to find another. . . ."

The House of Labor is imperative reading to anyone who really wants to understand some of the basic trends in American unionism. The thinking of most of the contributors is not typical of those who hold union offices of one kind or another. Instead, this thinking points the direction in which unionism must go—if unions are to be effective organizations.

Among some of the most pertinent articles not already mentioned are the articles of Val R. Lorwin and Eleanor Finger which discuss the interests of labor in international relations. The significance of labor's international policy is indicated by a picture in the June 1951 *Fortune* of Victor Reuther addressing 500,000 people at West Berlin's May Day rally where he told the audience that it had the support of American labor against "the extreme right and the phony left." William Gomberg's *The Union and Industrial Engineering* is an excellent discussion of union attitudes toward incentive plans. Maurice F. Neufeld's *Administration of a Local Union* is an informative analysis of the operation of the widely known Local 3, IBEW. J. B. S. Hardman's *The Union Press—An Evaluation* contains some vital observations concerning democracy and unionism.

It so happens that this reviewer represents management in labor relations matters. It is not unnatural that he would disagree with a number of statements found in the various articles. For instance, he emphatically takes issue with the implications of Robert S. Lynd's statement: "In general, social scientists have sold their talents to the highest bidders; those bidders have been, directly or indirectly, business corporations; the problems on which the latter wanted work done were problems in which business corporations were interested, and social scientists have, for the most part, worked at such partial problems in the name of 'objective research.'" The book was not, however, compiled to cater to the viewpoints or sentiments of those not in the ranks of labor. Nor for that matter do the contributors cater to the sentiments of those in the ranks of labor which they feel are detrimental to the interests of unionism as they see it. It is this "calling the shots as they see them," that makes *The House of Labor* the provocative book that most of it is.

The book was prepared by Editors Hardman and Neufeld under the auspices of the Inter-Union Institute, Inc. The Institute also publishes a quarterly, *Labor and Nation*, under editorship of Mr. Hardman. It is to be hoped that the Institute will continue making possible the publication of such significant literature as is *The House of Labor* and *Labor and Nation*.

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