

ORGANIZING THE POSTINDUSTRIAL WORK FORCE: LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY OF WAITRESS UNIONISM

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Using previously unexamined archival material, the author reconstructs one successful historical alternative to the kind of unionism that developed in mass production industries: the "occupational unionism" practiced from the 1900s to the 1960s by waitresses organized into the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union. This form of employee representation was distinguished by an emphasis on occupational identity, control over the labor supply, portable rights and benefits, and peer determination of performance standards and workplace discipline. The author discusses the implications of this research for the work of labor relations scholars and policy analysts, and speculates that some elements of occupational unionism may hold promise for organizing and representing workers today.

CLOSE on the heels of Daniel Bell's pronouncement in 1973 that the United States had entered a "postindustrial era," economists and industrial relations scholars began offering their own version of the sea change occurring in the American economy (see, for example, Piore and Sabel 1984). Although disputes over the degree of discontinuity and the distinguishing features of the "critical divide" continue to proliferate (see, for example, Hyman 1988), an important consensus has emerged: the dominance of mass production manufacturing can no longer be assumed.

The implications of this scholarship for labor relations have just begun to be considered. Kochan, Katz, and McKersie (1986) advanced the debate beyond the question of the survival of unionism (all too often conflated with "mass production unionism") to the shape that employee representation systems might take in a postindustrial society. Ironically, however, most discussions have focused on how unions should modify their practices in response to innovations in the manufacturing sector (see, for example, Katz 1988); few scholars have directed their attention to unionism among the proliferating service work force.

Yet, economic restructuring continues to mean the growth of the service sector as well as the introduction of new methods of work production. As a consequence, the composition and working environment of the new postindustrial work force departs markedly from the past: a large proportion of the work force is female and

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minority, employed in decentralized service operations rather than large-scale goods production, and "casualized," with only marginal attachment to an individual employer. What form of unionism would appeal to this new work force? And of equal importance, what kind of unionism would enable these workers to secure representational rights?

In this article I attempt to answer these questions by reconstructing one successful historical alternative to mass production unionism: the "occupational unionism" devised and practiced by waitresses organized into the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE). The documents created by waitress unionists provide rich and previously untapped material for researchers.

Relying on an examination of culinary contracts, work rules, union constitutions and bylaws, membership and executive board minutes, newsletters, and correspondence held in both private union files and public archival collections,¹ I begin by establishing the distinguishing features of the unionism dominant among this group of female service workers from the turn of the century to the 1960s. I then turn to the implications of the research findings for labor relations scholars, labor practitioners, and policy analysts. What does the historical reconstruction of occupational unionism and the case of waitresses suggest about the conventional typology and periodization of twentieth-century unionism? Which elements of this historical model of successful service organizing could serve as a basis for representation today? What policy changes would be necessary to begin a reformulation of labor practices along the lines suggested?

Waitress Unionism and Occupational Unionism

Waitressing was one of the few female-dominated occupations to unionize early in the twentieth century and to sustain that organizational impulse. Beginning in 1900 with the founding of the Seattle waitresses local, waitresses established their own all-female unions in Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Cincinnati, and other communities across the country; they also joined mixed culinary locals of waiters, cooks, and bartenders. Affiliated almost exclusively with HERE, these food service locals survived the pre-New Deal period intact and experienced unprecedented growth in the 1930s and 1940s. By the end of the 1940s, union waitresses had expanded their ranks to nearly a fourth of the trade nationally, and in union strongholds such as San Francisco, New York, and Detroit, a majority of food servers worked under union contract. Waitress locals maintained their numbers throughout the 1950s, but by the early 1960s the proportion of organized food servers had begun a slow decline—a decline that has yet to be reversed.²

From the turn of the century to the 1960s, waitresses practiced a form of unionism that I term "occupational unionism." Occupational unionism had many features that have historically been associated solely with craft unionists—organization along craft lines, an emphasis on craft specialization, restrictive membership rules, and union monitoring of performance standards. Yet, occupational unionism also had characteristics in

² A full account of the vicissitudes of waitress organizing is in Cobble (1986), Chaps. 3 and 4. For estimates of the proportion of unionized culinary workers, see Wolman (1926); *Catering Industry Employee*, May 1949, p. 8, and January 1954, p. 2; *Officer's Report*, HERE, 1953, p. 48; Henderson (1965), p. 133; U.S. Department of Labor (1962), p. 9; U.S. Department of Labor (1968). The percentages for union waitresses were based in part on these estimates. Independent calculations were also made using Census Bureau data on the number of female food servers in conjunction with internal union documents concerning female membership. See Tables 1, 4A-4C, 6, and 7 in Cobble (1986) for further citations.

¹ The private collections include the voluminous archives of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union, which contain the records of culinary locals across the country, including all the major female-dominated organizations, and the files of local culinary unions in San Francisco, Detroit, New York City, and Butte, Montana. For other collections used in the first stage of research, see Cobble (1986); updated information is available directly from the author.

common with organizations formed by many non-factory workers, skilled and unskilled alike. Longshoremen, agricultural laborers, and janitors, as well as building tradesmen, musicians, and teamsters, strove for control over hiring through strong closed shop language and union hiring halls, stressed employment security rather than "job rights" at an individual worksite, and offered benefits and privileges that workers could carry with them from employer to employer.³

These practices can be grouped into four categories that reflect not only the philosophical orientations at the heart of this unionism but the ways in which it differed from the unionism dominant among mass production workers. I argue that occupational unionism was characterized by its emphasis on (1) occupational identity, (2) control over the labor supply in the occupation, (3) rights and benefits as a function of occupational membership rather than of worksite affiliation, and (4) peer control over occupational performance standards. The following sections explore each of these four overlapping categories in detail.⁴

The Craft Sisterhood

For waitresses, as for many other

³ For discussions of the practices and philosophy of craft unionists historically, see, for example, Perlman (1928), pp. 254-79; Lipset (1956), pp. 25-32, *passim*; Montgomery (1987), pp. 191-99, *passim*. Although occupational unionism has much in common with craft unionism as defined by non-historians (see, for example, Sabel and Piore 1984:111-32; Stinchcombe 1959:168-87; and Barbash 1967:21), I have chosen not to call waitress unionism simply craft unionism because in the historical literature the term is still closely associated with the elite, apprenticeable trades.

⁴ Due to space limitations, I am only able to provide two or three representative cites for many of my assertions in the following sections. More complete footnotes can be found in Cobble (1986), pp. 260-371 and in earlier drafts of this article available from the author. In addition, Reels 342-43, 415, 441, 525, 970-71, Local Union Records, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union Files [hereafter cited as LUR, HERE Files] contain the most complete available record of waitress bylaws and union agreements and are a source of further examples for many of the practices I detail.

groups of American workers, craft or occupational identity was one of the prime elements of their work culture and overall world view (Bensman 1985; Kazin 1987; Cooper 1987; Cobble 1986). The occupational identity of waitresses can be illustrated most concretely in the craft-based organization structures they created, in their choice to restrict union membership along occupational or craft lines, and in their delineation of their work as a distinct trade through the development of extensive "craft rules."

HERE began encouraging its members to regroup their industrial or mixed organizations along craft lines in the 1890s, and by the turn of the century, most organized culinary workers belonged to distinct craft locals of bartenders, cooks, and waiters.⁵ As female servers began to organize, some joined these all-male waiters locals and a few were admitted to the remaining industrial or mixed locals. The majority, however, formed separate craft and gender-based locals.⁶ By the World War I era, at least 17 permanent waitress locals existed and approximately 70% of organized HERE waitresses belonged to separate waitress locals. With the rise of unionism in the 1930s and 1940s, culinary workers increasingly joined mixed-sex and mixed-craft organizations, but the majority of male and female waiters, cooks, and bartenders were in craft-based locals until the 1970s.⁷ At that point, the separate-sex locals were abandoned because of the threat of Title VII suits alleging sex

⁵ The division of locals along craft lines was decreed by the Fourth Annual HERE Convention. See "Brief History of Our Organization," *The Federation News*, January 25, 1930. The best overview of the history of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees remains that of Josephson (1956).

⁶ For a discussion of the origins of separate locals and the initiating role played by women, see Cobble (1986), Chaps. 3 and 7.

⁷ The precise numbers in gender-based locals over the course of the century are not available. Also, deciding whether a particular craft local was consciously organized along gender lines proved difficult outside the waiting craft. Many of the bartender and cook locals were all-male because few women practiced those trades and fewer still were organized.

discrimination in union dispatching and representational activities.⁸

The craft locals formed by waitresses were concerned with the economic advance of their members and their control over workplace conditions. They also evidenced a distinct awareness of their identity as "craftswomen" and repeatedly spoke of their union as a vehicle for advancing the status of their craft. Although society at large and their culinary union "brothers" thought otherwise (Cobble 1986:95-102, 138-47, *passim*), waitresses argued that their work required skill and was worthy of being considered, in the words of Chicago waitress leader Elizabeth Maloney, "a real trade by which any girl might be proud to earn her living" (Franklin 1913:36). The bylaws of waitress organizations from the Progressive era into the 1960s resembled the 1941 language of the Los Angeles local: membership was limited to "female persons working at the craft, of good moral character and qualifications."⁹

Waitress locals took craft and occupational competency seriously. Only experienced waitresses should bother applying for union membership in New York, one journalist turned "amateur waitress" reported in *McClure's Magazine* in 1907. Prospective candidates for membership in San Francisco's Local 48 were not only expected to have prior experience, but from at least the 1930s to the 1950s, the local required a six-month probationary period. Applicants who proved "qualified

and acceptable" were then taken in as full-fledged members. Not everyone succeeded. After working three weeks, one aspirant stated "she was ill and to [sic] nervous to be a waitress." Another completed probation but was rejected because "she was not a capable craftswoman."¹⁰

Waitresses also developed extensive "craft rules" that were designed in part to delineate the boundaries of their occupation and secure employer recognition of table service as a specialized trade.¹¹ These craft or work rules frequently were developed by the union members themselves, but employers who recognized the union were bound to honor these craft standards as well as pay the agreed-upon wage scales.¹²

In their work rules, waitresses defined themselves as food servers; any work that hinted of food preparation, pantry duties, or cleaning was outlawed. The Cleveland local specified in the 1920s that waitresses should not "make coffee, sweep or mop floors, wash silver or dishes, mirrors, windows or coffee urns, clean fruit, vegetables or make salads, put away or count silver." In this same period, San Francisco waitresses revealed their disdain for menial labor and clean-up or kitchen-

¹⁰ Younger (1907), pp. 665-77; typed reports, file, "Local 48, 1943," Box 46, SFLC Records, BL-UCB; Local 48 Executive Board Minutes, HERE Local 2 Files, San Francisco [hereafter cited as EBM, Local 2 Files], January 7, 1941; Local 48 Membership Minutes, HERE Local 2 Files [hereafter cited MM, Local 2 Files], November 3, 1937, November 1, 1938, October 27, 1948, June 24, 1952. For other examples, see R-415, 525, 627, 970-71, LUR, HERE Files.

¹¹ Craft rules delineating job classifications also protected free time, slowed the work pace, and allowed waitresses to avoid the most disagreeable aspects of restaurant work. For further examples of the kinds and uses of craft rules, see Reels 415, 441, 627, 970-71, LUR, HERE Files; Interview with Valentine Webster by Mary Murphy, February 24, 1980, Butte, Montana, University of Montana Oral History Collection; Interview with Clela Sullivan conducted by the author, August 1, 1989, Butte, Montana; *Hotel Monthly*, April 1918, p. 61.

¹² Cobble (1986), especially pp. 209-15. See also Interview with Paul St. Sure, employer representative, conducted by Corinne Gibb for the Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California at Berkeley, March-June 1957, pp. 487-89.

⁸ After one court ruling mandated the merger of the waiters and waitresses in Washington, D.C. (see *Evans v. Sheraton Park Hotel*, 5 Fair Employment Practices Cases 393, 396 [D.D.C. 1972]), the International feared further suits and began merger proceedings across the country during 1973-74. For examples, see Minutebook 1972-73, Local 457 Files; *Detroit News*, January 18, 1974; *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 6, 1973.

⁹ Bylaws, Local 639, 1941, Reel 627, LUR, HERE Files. For other examples, see Bylaws, Local 48, n.d. [pre-1938], file, "Local 48-Misc.," Box 22, San Francisco Labor Council Records, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley [hereafter cited as SFLC Records, BL-UCB]; Bylaws, Local 227, 1952, Reel 39, Defunct Union Records, HERE International Union Files [hereafter cited as DUR, HERE Files].

helper tasks in their rule that "steady or lunch girls can not shell peas, string rhubarb, peel apples; must not clean coffee urns, windows or ice boxes or scrub chairs . . . lunch girls must not sweep, clean catsup or mustard bottles or polish silver; not allowed to pick strawberries." Waitress organizers spoke pityingly of the poor unorganized waitresses who, without the union, were reduced to being "scrub women."¹³

Union negotiators of the 1930s and 1940s incorporated the earlier union-determined craft rules into their contracts and increased the complexity and specificity of these clauses.¹⁴ Negotiated agreements in San Francisco, bargained in the 1940s, stated that employees "shall perform only such services as are customarily performed by their crafts." A detailed list of forbidden tasks followed.¹⁵ Similar sections appeared in contracts across the country.¹⁶

Control over the Labor Supply

The occupational unionism of waitresses also utilized approaches associated with "less skilled" workers like longshore-

men and agricultural laborers, as well as the union practices prominent among the more elite trades. At the center of occupational unionism lay a reliance on union-run hiring halls and the closed shop. The hiring hall provided the union with a regular means of access to the mobile population that comprised the hotel and restaurant work force.¹⁷ Job-seekers went first to the hiring hall, where, through the use of a rotation system, they were dispatched according to the time they registered. Those desiring work had to meet the approval of the union dispatcher and were required to be fully qualified union members "in good standing." Unlike the employment agencies against which the union hiring halls competed, union-run agencies prided themselves on offering free service to workers and employers.¹⁸

Many culinary locals secured "100 percent" closed shop agreements; others achieved a diluted version of the closed shop, usually combining union shop with preferential hiring or hiring by "mutual agreement." Under the other typical arrangements, employers relied on the union hiring hall for referrals but different workers could be requested or, if "suitable" union members could not be located, the employer could hire off the street. Those hired, however, had to be approved by the union and were required to maintain their membership in "good standing."¹⁹ Workers who violated union bylaws and work rules were not consid-

¹³ *Mixer and Server*, December 1924, pp. 54-55, January 1929, p. 10, April 1927, p. 16; Local 48 Wage Rates and Work Rules, n.d. [pre-1935], Local 2 Files. See also, for example, Local 457 Minutebook, Box 14-2, June 19, 1942, Women's Protective Union Collection No. 174, Montana Historical Society [hereafter cited WPUC-174, MHS]; and Wage Scale and Work Rules, Local 249, Box 70, loose contracts, Record Group 257, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. [hereafter cited RG-257, NA].

¹⁴ The best record of this incorporation can be found in the Women's Protective Union records held at the Montana Historical Society, Butte Silver Bow Archive [hereafter cited as MHS, BSBA] and the HERE Local 457 Files in Butte, Montana.

¹⁵ See, for example, Wage Scale and Working Conditions, San Francisco Local Joint Executive Board [hereafter cited SF LJEB], July 7, 1942, October 1, 1945, September 1, 1946, September 1, 1950, September 1, 1951, September 1, 1956, Local 2 Files.

¹⁶ See, for example, Bylaws, Local 180, October 1, 1937, Local 2 Files; Wage Rates and Working Conditions, Local 347 and 549, April 15, 1942, *ibid.*; Local 1 Work Rules, n.d., Reel 134, LUR, HERE Files; *Voice of Local 1*, December 1948, p. 3.

¹⁷ The tendency of waitresses to leave individual workplaces after a short tenure but to remain within the occupation itself on a long-term basis has been noted by researchers from Donovan (1920:124) to Butler and Skipper (1988:19-20).

¹⁸ See, for example, Local 457 Minutebook, 1903-5, January 28, 1904, February 18, 1904, April 14, 1904, and clipping stuck in book, Box 13-13, WPUC-174, MHS; and the agreements governing union halls maintained by the California State Department of Employment in Box 3, Folders 25 and 27, Jack Rugh Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan [hereafter cited as JRC, WRL-WSU].

¹⁹ See, for example, contracts in B-29 and B-70, RG-257, NA; and B-3, F-25 and 27, JRC, WRL-WSU.

ered in "good standing" and could be removed from the job.

Culinary hiring halls flourished when backed by a closed shop agreement, but most functioned smoothly under the less restrictive union shop and preferential hiring arrangements. Culinary employers relied on the hiring hall for "good and reliable" full-time workers as well as for the extras needed in emergencies. We have always employed "only union help," explained one employer, "because we believe the unions to be a more responsible and dependable source of supply for trained help than the employment agency."²⁰ His sentiments were mirrored by numerous other employers.²¹

Many waitress locals also persuaded the majority of workers in the occupation to seek work first through the union hall, thus making it difficult for employers to hire from any other source. Worker loyalty was achieved through appeals to the employee's self-interest in avoiding "the vampire system" of high-fee employment agencies and through the union's internal disciplinary system, whereby a worker would be fined and denied future use of the hiring hall if she solicited work on her own.²² Food servers also supported the hiring hall concept because it gave them, rather than the employer, control over when and how much they worked. As long as they maintained their union standing, waitresses could quit a job and "lay off" for however long they chose; they could also work on a regular part-time basis simply by relying on the extra jobs coming into the hall.²³

Through these negotiated provisions,

then, the union exercised control over the labor supply in the industry, offered employers a vital service, and provided members employment security and flexibility in a highly transitory, unstable sector of the economy. In addition, strong union security clauses provided membership stability (and hence financial stability) for the union as an institution and protected workers from employer harassment and favoritism on account of union membership.

Occupational as Opposed to Job-Based Rights and Protections

Unions that relied on the closed shop and the hiring hall typically paid little attention to the individual employee's right to a particular job; rather, they emphasized expanding the union's control over work in the industry and keeping union shops viable. They rarely battled employers who fired an individual member unless they suspected discrimination based on union activities; laid-off or fired individuals simply returned to the union hall and were sent out to another job. During times of economic adversity, locals abided by work-sharing principles in which all members cut back equally on their employment time rather than relying on seniority. Thus, as contrasted with the system developed primarily by mass production workers in the 1930s, occupationally based unions offered employment security, not job security.²⁴

The emphasis on employment security is evident in the response of waitress unions to unemployment. Rather than have a few members work full schedules while others were unemployed (as would typically occur where layoffs were governed by seniority), culinary locals distributed the available work among all union members. As Chicago's local secretary explained, "In slack seasons . . . in place of putting any [waitresses] . . . off the payroll . . . [we would have] each girl leave off one or two meals a week." No matter what the

²⁰ MS, February 1902, p. 21, September 1916, p. 7.

²¹ See MS, May 1917, p. 29, October 1928, p. 14, March 1932, p. 10. Survey forms in B-3, F-25, JRC, WRL-WSU.

²² Quote from L. S. Chumley, "Hotel, Restaurant, and Domestic Workers," B-163, IWW Collection, WRL-WSU; other examples in Minutebook, 1903-5, B-13, F-13, WPUC-174, MHS: R-415, 525, 627, 960-71, LUR, HERE Files.

²³ For examples, see B-3, F-27, and B-4, F-3, 4, 5, 25, JRC, WRL-WSU; and *Michigan Hotel Bar Restaurant Review*, September 1936, p. 1, March 1940, p. 1, October 1940, p. 1, May 1949, p. 3.

²⁴ I first encountered this distinction in Schatz (1983), pp. 105-36.

age of the employee or her longevity with the company, every worker, once a union member, had the same right to work as every other union member. Adversity was shared equally, and as long as the union had shops under contract, some employment would be available.²⁵

Paralleling their emphasis on employment security over job security, most culinary unions allowed employers wide discretion in discharging employees. Waitresses and Cafeteria Workers' Local 305, for example, mandated that an employer who discharged a worker in the middle of a shift must pay her at least a half-day's pay, but the employer was not required to demonstrate the justice of the decision or to show "just cause."²⁶ Indeed, in an ironic twist, some agreements contained a "just cause" clause that protected the employer, not the employee: "Any member walking out without 'just cause,'" one 1921 agreement read, "shall be subject to a fine by the local." Instead of requiring the employer to present legitimate reasons for his actions, the contract asked the member to justify *her* behavior.

In the instances where the union suspected discrimination on the basis of union activities, business agents or local officers would simply intervene, demanding the employer rehire the aggrieved party or face union sanctions.²⁷ These interventions, however, were seen as justi-

fied in order to protect the union as an institution. The individual job rights of the employee were not the controlling factor.

The benefit funds set up by waitress locals at the turn of the century are another example of how the rights and protections of culinary workers transcended any one jobsite.²⁸ Like employment security, the welfare funds were portable protections that waitresses enjoyed as long as they maintained "membership in good standing." These health and welfare funds bound members emotionally as well as financially to the union. Workers relied on each other in times of crisis; the tie with the employer was irrelevant.

As early as 1909, many of the major waitress locals had functioning benefit funds. Despite the small sums available to individual workers from these funds, waitresses placed welfare benefits among the chief advantages of unionism.²⁹ The benefit funds provided some very basic necessities, such as financial assistance during illness. When their sick benefits ran out, workers could borrow money from the union treasury. The bylaws of St. Louis Waitresses' Local 249 promised money to an ill member until she was once again "able to follow her vocation."³⁰

In addition, upon a member's death, waitress unions offered a lump sum payment to the closest surviving relative. If burial benefits were insufficient, locals took up collections or made donations from the treasury to cover "whatever amount" was needed.³¹ They also made funeral arrangements when no family member was forthcoming. Without the

²⁵ Quote is from the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, "Industrial Conditions and Relations in Chicago," *Final Report and Testimony*, Vol. 4 (Washington, D.C., 1916), p. 3254. For other examples of worksharing, see Agreement, adopted June 1921, Local 48; Local 48 Executive Board Minutes, February 15, 1937; SF LJEB Minutes, June 20, 1939; Bylaws, Buffalo, Local 347, 1958, R-441, LUR, HERE Files; and Minutebooks, November 23, 1973, Local 457 Files.

²⁶ "Wage Scale and Working Rules," Local 305, 1932, Box 29; Scale of Wages and Working Rules, Local 457, 1922, Box 70, RG-257, NA. See also Contract, Local 457 and Silver Bow Employers Association, 1943, 1946, and 1950, Box 13-8, WPUC-174, MHS.

²⁷ Matthews (1913), pp. 79-80; Agreement, Local 48, June 1921, HERE Files. See also, for example, Local 48 EBM, August 11, 1943, May 23, 1944, Local 2 Files; Local 550 Agreement, Bakersfield, California, Box 122, RG-257, NA.

²⁸ Benefit unionism is often associated with craft unionists such as Samuel Gompers, who saw it as a way of binding members to the organization. But Derickson (1989) makes it clear that "radical" industrial unionists also practiced benefit unionism.

²⁹ MS, June 1905, p. 49; Andrews and Bliss (1911), p. 203; Franklin (1913), p. 38; Abbott (1914), p. 48.

³⁰ Bylaws, Waitresses' Local 249, n.d., pp. 8-9, R-350, DUR, HERE Files; discussion of Local 457's fund, R-970, LUR, HERE Files.

³¹ *Proceedings*, HERE Convention, 1953, pp. 52-58; Matthews (1913), pp. 79, 91; Local 48 MM, July 8, 1936, February 25, 1948.

union, many a waitress would have been buried in "potters field" and her death uncommemorated, one secretary declared.³²

In most locals, health and welfare assistance meant something beyond the mere monetary. Many locals had active sick committees that not only oversaw the disbursement of union funds, but screened and hired a physician for union members to consult without charge. They also visited the sick and bereaved. "If a waitress got sick," an official from Portland's waitress local recalled, "there was often real problems without somebody looking after her kids, or getting her bills paid. I remember even picking up radios [from] . . . the repair shop or getting the laundry done for them. . . . There was never a person that we knew about on the sick list that we didn't look after."³³

Peer Control over Occupational Standards and Performance

Waitresses also conceived of their organizations as vehicles for setting and regulating occupational standards. The union would not only be a source of employment security and mutual aid but a guardian of occupational status. Waitress locals upheld the standards of competence in the trade by overseeing training for their members, by developing guidelines for acceptable work performance, and by devising just discipline for those who violated these group norms.³⁴ Indeed, culinary unionists

assumed responsibility for "management" tasks such as the hiring and discharge of employees, the mediation of on-the-job disputes, and the assurance of fair first-line supervisory practices. In a sense, workers in the culinary industry had instituted a form of self-management.

To ensure the competence and skill level of members dispatched from the hiring hall, locals screened applicants carefully, weeding out the inexperienced and inept. Members whose performance was unacceptable lost the use of the hiring hall. Local 48's business agent told one "sister" to solicit her own work because of "the way she acted on a job." In reporting her action to the membership, the business agent explained that she did not wish to deprive anyone of work but "there will be less [work] if the jobs are not taken care of and worked proper."³⁵

Locals invested in training programs to upgrade the skills of members and hence the reputation and appeal of the union. Portland, Oregon's Gertrude Sweet reported in the 1925 HERE national journal that "much interest" had been generated in "instituting a training school for waitresses—one that will teach the girls who have gained their experience in the smaller places the finer points of service work." In the Seattle local's "personalized dining service" training, subjects included wine appreciation, service styles, personality, salesmanship, courtesy, menu terminology, and teamwork. Long Beach, California waitresses opened a free school in 1939 "to create a higher type of service." The "Culinary Arts School" evidently thrived, with a full curriculum on waitress training in place by 1947. As late as 1966, 16 graduates completed the "waitresses apprenticeship courses" by then offered in conjunction with Long Beach City College. The apprenticeship model of combining classroom and on-the-job training caught on in other locals as well.³⁶

³² Letter, May 22, 1939, R-39, DUR, HERE Files.

³³ Interview with Beulah Compton by Elizabeth Compton, conducted for the Institute of Industrial Relations, University of Michigan's Trade Union Women Oral History Project, p. 38. See also the thoroughly documented activities of Local 457's sick committee in the Minutebooks of Local 457 located in the MHS, BSBA, and at the office of HERE Local 457.

³⁴ Waitress locals also used their fining systems to require and enforce loyalty to the union as an institution. Fines were routinely meted out, for example, for failure to picket or for working with a nonunion worker. The union existed for the good of the whole; individual rights were subordinate to the advancement of the collective. See Cobble (1986), pp. 348–54.

³⁵ Typed reports, file, "Local 48, 1943," Box 46, SFLC Records, BL-UCB; Local 48 EBM, January 7, 1941; Local 48 MM, October 27, 1948, November 1, 1938, June 24, 1952, Local 2 Files.

³⁶ MS, November 1925, p. 49; *Catering Industry*

At times, occupational competency was fostered by pegging wage rates to skill level.³⁷ Locals in the 1920s and 1930s negotiated an apprentice or starter rate for inexperienced waitresses; trainees were entitled to union scale only after satisfactorily completing their apprenticeship.³⁸ Wage gradations could exist between journey-level waitresses as well. For Butte, Montana waitresses in the 1940s, the union scale acted as "a minimum" and did "not prevent a superior . . . craftswoman from receiving more." Waiters and waitresses in Dallas, Texas agreed: their wage scale specified that "nothing contained herein shall prohibit first class help from receiving higher wages."³⁹

The details of acceptable work performance expected of craftswomen were hammered out in union membership and executive board meetings; historically they were not a matter of management prerogative or even a proper subject for collective bargaining.⁴⁰ Upon entering the craft sisterhood, union members vowed to uphold the craft standards devised by their fellow members; noncomplying waitresses faced discipline from other waitresses, not the employer. Penalties for infraction of the group-devised codes ranged from minimal fines or loss of a few

days' pay to union blacklisting in the industry and social ostracism.⁴¹

The first responsibility of waitresses was regular attendance and punctuality. Working rules in Chicago, in force from 1909 to 1962, fined waitresses for absences and for "walking out during meals." Proper behavior meant arriving for work "at least 15 minutes before the hour called for" and not leaving "during working hours except in case of sickness." Employees were expected to arrange for their own substitutes, and, if overtime was necessitated by the failure of a coworker to appear, "the wages for the overtime must be paid by the one causing the extra labor." Maintaining staffing levels was, then, the responsibility of the union and of individual employees, not the employer. The culinary union in Tacoma, Washington even allowed the employer to file charges against the local and collect the day's pay of any member who quit without notification.⁴²

Locals guaranteed the honesty and sobriety of their members. Waitresses' Local 484 reimbursed "proprietors for all losses caused through dishonesty on the part of the members, provided the report is made in writing to the organization and accusations substantiated before the grievance committee." Local 227 of Rochester required that members not "smoke or drink while on duty." Portland waitresses and others devised similar rules.⁴³

Employee, February 1947, p. 19, March 1941, p. 48; (Long Beach, California) *Serving America*, January 1951, p. 3, May 1951, p. 5, January 1954, p. 1, May 1966, p. 8. For further examples: R-30, Section on Apprenticeship, General Office Records, HERE Files; Minutebook, November 9, 1959, Box 17, WPUC-174, MHS.

³⁷ See Piore and Sabel (1984:116-18) for an argument that linking wages to skill grades rather than job classifications and seniority is a distinguishing characteristic of the craft system.

³⁸ See, for example, Culinary Alliance, Local 258, Marion, Ill., July 1925, Box 29, file, "Hotel:C-M"; Agreement, Local 529, Bellingham, Washington, 1938, Box 122, RG-257, NA.

³⁹ Contract, Local 457 and Silver Bow Employers Association, 1943 and 1946, Box 13, Folder 8, WPUC-174, MHS; Wage Scale, 1929, Local 659, Box 70, loose contracts, RG-257, NA.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the replacement of the unilateral system with a bilateral bargaining approach see Cobble (1986), Chap. 4.

⁴¹ Younger (1908), p. 521. See, for example, "Rules and Regulations," Local 249, R-350, LUR, HERE Files; SF LJEB to SF Restaurant Association, October 25, 1933, LJEB Correspondence Folder, Local 2 Files; Agreement, Portland LJEB and Portland Employers Association, October 1, 1950, pp. 21-22, Matthew Josephson Materials, HERE Files.

⁴² "Sample Agreement, Local 484," n.d. [c. 1909], reproduced in Andrews and Bliss (1911), pp. 228-29; Bylaws and Union Agreements, Local 484, 1909-62, Reel 525, LUR, HERE Files; Wage Scale, 1913, Local 48, Local 2 Files; *Proceedings*, 1921, HERE, p. 179; Local 20, August 1977, Box 3, Folder 22, IWW Collection, WRL-WSU.

⁴³ "Sample Agreement, Local 484," n.d. [c. 1909], in Andrews and Bliss (1911), pp. 228-29; Bylaws and Union Agreements, Local 484, 1909-62, R-525, LUR, HERE Files; Bylaws, Local 227, 1952, Reel 39, DUR, HERE Files. See also, for example, Working

Proper attention to duty and civil behavior with customers was essential. One local promised that its members would "care for . . . the business of our employer with courtesy"; another agreed "to discipline members for incivility to customers." Locals held trials in which members accused by employers of inattention to duty were prosecuted. One such trial, held before the executive board of the San Francisco local in 1951, involved "the trouble at Jeanettes with a customer." The waitress, appearing in her own defense, said she had been "very busy working her station . . . and [only] threw her tray at the customer . . . after he called her a slob."⁴⁴ As it was her first offense, the waitress escaped with a warning and a lecture on handling offensive customers.

When personality problems and other disputes between members interfered with job performance, the local, not the employer, stepped in to resolve them. One waitress, summoned to the union executive board "on a complaint she was making life miserable for other girls," received instructions from the president of the local about "her duties as a member" and was told to "refrain from interfering with other members on the job." Another local prosecuted "any sister who abused, called vile names, or in any way . . . mistreat[ed] another sister while on duty." Butte officers rebuked union members for their treatment of each other at work and asked "girls with experience to consider the less experienced girls and help them out instead of mocking them."⁴⁵

Rules, Local 305, n.d., R-415, and Bylaws, Local 507, 1955 and 1962, R-543, DUR, HERE Files.

⁴⁴ Agreement, Local 670, 1925-26, Box 29, file, "Hotel, C-M," RG-257, NA; Andrews and Bliss (1911), pp. 228-29; Local 48 EBM, February 13, 1951, Local 2 Files. Union trials, held before either union officials or a special trial committee of union members, were quasi-legal proceedings, and decisions made by the local union could be appealed to the Culinary Joint Boards.

⁴⁵ Local 48 EBM, March 9, 1944, June 25, 1945, February 27, 1945, March 7, 1944, July 13, 1943, Local 2 Files; Minutebook, May 9, 1919, Local 457 Files; Minutebooks, October 19, 1928, March 12, 1943, and October 2, 1942, 14-1 and 2, WPUC-174, MHS.

Since adequate job performance as a food server involved the cooperation of cooks, busboys, and sometimes bartenders, waitress locals mediated disputes between their members and coworkers belonging to other locals. When a Local 48 waitress claimed she walked off the job because the cook slapped her in the face, Local 48 demanded the cook be brought up on charges before his own local. After hearing complaints from waiters and bartenders that a certain cocktail waitress "was impossible to work with," Local 48's president scolded her and threatened to remove her from the job if the complaints persisted. When the lounge manager attempted to find out why the waitress was cited, the local made it clear that "this was our business, not his."⁴⁶

Waitress locals even took responsibility for fair first-line supervisory techniques. Since supervisors—hostesses, head waiters, and waitresses—belonged to the union, they were subject to union bylaws forbidding "conduct unbecoming a union member" and could be brought before the union upon a charge by a subordinate. Unions heard accusations ranging from uneven tip distribution, unfair station and shift assignment, and unjust firings, to what boiled down to poor supervisory techniques and simple unpleasantness. One waitress faced the wrath of the Butte executive board for "slapping a sister across the face," with "nagging and abusing" five other sisters, and with holding up the orders of waitresses she did not like. In a second case, San Francisco's officers removed a head hostess after finding her guilty of discharging girls without reason, failing to notify the union for replacements, engaging in "conduct unbecoming to the union," and "making conditions miserable for the crew."⁴⁷

In general, proper union wage scales, working conditions, and craft rules were

⁴⁶ Local 48 EBM, March 9, 1944, June 25, 1945, February 27, 1945, March 7, 1944, July 13, 1943, Local 2 Files.

⁴⁷ Local 48 EBM, May 25, 1942, November 9, 1943, March 7, 1944, May 29, 1947, February 13, 1951, Local 2 Files; Minutebook, February 10, 1950, Box 15-2, WPUC-174, MHS.

maintained as much through self-regulation as through actions taken against the employer. St. Louis waitresses, like the majority of locals, explicitly stated their expectations: "Any employee not receiving correct wages, overtime, or working conditions, shall, upon conviction thereof, be suspended from the local."⁴⁸ Locals even removed whole crews when individual offenders were found—the theory being that the others knew of the violation and were thus equally guilty.⁴⁹

The Appeal of Occupational Unionism for Employers

Why did employers tolerate the union's control over work standards and work performance?⁵⁰ At times, as in the heyday of culinary unionism in the 1940s and 1950s, locals simply called the shots because of their economic and political clout. At other times, however, locals secured recognition because they offered employers concrete services and assistance. Indeed, although unionization could mean a loss of flexibility and authority, some employers tolerated that loss because, as noted earlier, they relied on the union to provide trained, competent labor and to oversee employee job performance.

The union's willingness to shoulder responsibility for the economic viability of union enterprises enticed others. In an industry renowned for its high percentage of business failures, unionization could enhance business stability and prove critical to the success of an individual enterprise. Once an employer adopted union

standards and hired only union help, the union helped protect the business interests of this "fair" employer by attacking his "unfair" competition and by encouraging patronage of union houses. Numerous culinary contracts bound the unionists to help "stabilize business" and to maintain the efficiency and profitability of the establishment where they worked. Locals agreed to use their "influence with organized labor and its friends to patronize only such places as display the Union House Card" and "to distribute printed matter, visit various labor groups and advise them to patronize union houses." Applicants for membership into the Los Angeles waitresses' union pledged to "interest themselves individually and collectively in protecting the trade and the business of the employers."⁵¹

Culinary unionists also promised more general kinds of business assistance. Union bylaws from the turn of the century to the 1960s vowed to "assist employers in all legitimate ways," and to "look after the boss's interests." One waitress local stated that "the object of this organization shall be a fair rate of wages, reasonable hours of labor, and recognition of [the] just claims of employers." The bylaws of another summarized its aims: to "promote . . . friendly relations between the employer and the union; to establish fair, equitable, and profitable . . . working conditions and to achieve . . . a high standard of service to the public."⁵²

The recognition of mutual interests and obligations between unions and employers

⁴⁸ Bylaws, Local 249, n.d., R-350, LUR, HERE Files. See also, for example, Local 48 Meeting Minutes, February 3, 1937, February 25, 1948; Local 48 EBM, April 19, 1938, June 7, 1938; Bylaws, Local 48, 1953, Local 2 Files; and R-415, 525, 970-71, LUR, HERE Files.

⁴⁹ See Local 48 EBM, October 11, 1938, Local 2 Files for an example of the removal of an entire crew.

⁵⁰ A few proprietors were philosophically sympathetic to unions and needed no prompting. Others supported unions because they had been union members before opening their businesses and were aware that they might return to the ranks of the employed.

⁵¹ Seattle LJEB and Washington State Restaurant Association, June 4, 1937, in *Catering Industry Employee*, June 1937, p. 35; Agreement, Local 670, 1925-26, Box 29, file, "Hotel: C-M," RG-257, NA; Bylaws, Local 639, 1962, Reel 627, LUR, HERE Files; Interview with Charles Paulsen, former Director of Organization, HERE, by author, July 28, 1983, Cincinnati, Ohio; Local 48 Bylaws, 1921-1948, Local 2 Files.

⁵² See Younger (1908), p. 521; Local 457 Bylaws, 1964, MHS, BSBA; Agreement, Local 670, 1925-26, Box 29, file, "Hotel: C-M," RG-257, NA; Bylaws, Local 126, Box 87, SFLC Records, BL-UCB; Bylaws, Local 347, 1960, R-441, LUR, HERE Files; Bylaws, Local 227, 1952, R-39, DUR, HERE Files; Bylaws, Local 507, 1954, R-543, LUR, HERE Files.

often precluded the necessity of a formal grievance procedure ending in binding arbitration. Since occupational unionists placed less emphasis on the protection of individual members than on the mutual interests of the overall industry and the occupation, disputes were less frequent and common ground more easily found than in worker representation systems in which the union was continually reacting to employer discipline and its identity and appeal were based largely on a day-to-day adversarial stance. Moreover, as Piore and Sabel (1984:116) have argued for the construction trades and other crafts, the "collaborative character" of the relation between craft workers, union officials, and management, and the transient nature of the work force, reinforced simple, quick methods of problem-solving and a focus on outcomes rather than procedural justice.

The Unraveling of Occupational Unionism

Occupational unionism among waitresses did not always appear in a pure undiluted form, nor did it remain static over the course of the twentieth century. Increasingly after the 1930s, waitresses belonged to mixed-craft locals and to newly established locals with members in hotels as well as restaurants.

The hotel locals, in particular, were influenced by the mass production unionism that rose to prominence during the 1930s and 1940s.⁵³ Hotel locals organized along industrial lines and tended to develop employer or worksite-centered protections and rights: they stressed individual job security through "just cause" protections and relied on seniority provisions to govern layoffs and rehires. They de-emphasized worksharing approaches

and union formulation of performance standards and proper job discipline. "It is usually regarded as the function of the management to take disciplinary action," one newly organized hotel waitress explained.⁵⁴

Moreover, the first employer-paid health care plans took hold in the 1940s. New York City's hotel local led the way by negotiating an industrywide, employer-paid plan in 1945 that included hospitalization and maternity benefits, weekly sick leave pay, life insurance, and death benefits. Similar plans soon appeared across the country. (See Cobble 1986:313-14.)

The impact of these changes was paradoxical. When locals began recognizing the employee's right to retain her individual job, they took less responsibility for providing full employment for all their members. The principle of a worker's right to a particular job came to predominate over the principle of union members' collective claim to all work in their craft jurisdiction. As locals concentrated on protection against unjust firings and layoffs, they also expended less energy on organizing the industry and upholding occupational performance standards. Individual employees benefited from the more extensive financial reimbursements available through employer-paid health and welfare plans, but the union as an institution lost a powerful force for binding members together and to the union.

Despite the new practices instituted by the hotel locals and the dilution of the older traditions under the influence of mass production unionism, the majority of culinary locals retained their allegiance to the basic tenets of occupational unionism into the 1960s. Throughout the 1950s, waitress bylaws continued to mandate worksharing and the equal division of overtime hours. A few even kept control over the funding and disbursement of

⁵³ The openness of hotel locals to mass production unionism was due in part to the historical period in which they were organized—few locals existed in hotels until the 1930s—and in part to the nature of the hotel sector as compared to the restaurant sector (for example, hotels were much larger establishments and hotel employers tended to hire a more long-term, permanent work force).

⁵⁴ Agreement, Local 1, June 1, 1930, Box 70, RG-257, NA. See Horowitz (1960) and the *Hotel and Club Voice*, 1936-50 for the emphasis on seniority and discharge protection by Local 6 in New York. Quotation: *Hotel and Club Voice*, December 23, 1944, p. 3.

benefits. Most significant, however, was the continuing commitment to craft structures, to employment security rather than individual job rights, and to setting and regulating occupational standards.⁵⁵ These approaches were abandoned only in the face of new legal restrictions.

With the extension of the Taft-Hartley Act to the hotel and restaurant industry in 1955, and the passage of the Landrum-Griffin Act in 1959, the ability of waitress unions to exert control over their occupation was severely hampered.⁵⁶ Closed shop, the removal of members from the job for noncompliance with union bylaws and work rules, union membership for supervisors, and top-down organizing all became illegal. Locals lost their ability to set entrance requirements for the trade, to oversee job performance, and to punish recalcitrant members.⁵⁷ Union-sponsored training programs declined; hiring halls fell into disrepair and neglect.⁵⁸ The death knell for the craft-based structure sounded in the early 1970s when, as noted earlier, the International began demanding the merger of separate-craft and gender-based locals nationwide because of threatened legal action. By the late 1970s, the separate waitress locals were a relic of history.

The Implications of Occupational Unionism and the Case of the Waitresses

The reconstruction of the historical

⁵⁵ For example, see Minutebook, November 23, 1973, Local 457; Files and Contracts, Local 457 and Silver Bow Employers Association, 1950, 1959, and 1961, WPUC-174, B-13, F-8,9, MHS.

⁵⁶ The hotel and restaurant industry did not at first fall under Taft-Hartley jurisdiction because of the low volume of its interstate commerce. A 1955 Supreme Court action "brought a segment of the industry's labor relations under federal jurisdiction" (Henderson 1965:44); an NLRB ruling extended the coverage. (*Floridan Hotel of Tampa, Inc.*, 124 NLRB 261, 44 LRRM 1345 [1959].)

⁵⁷ Disciplinary actions by unions against their own members became difficult to enforce once removal from a job was allowed only for nonpayment of dues.

⁵⁸ Letter, February 24, 1967, B-3, File 26, JRC, WRL-WSU; Contracts, Local 457 and Silver Bow Employers Association, 1943, 1946, 1950, 1959, 1961, WPUC-174, Box 13, F-8, 9, MHS.

practices of waitress unionists has important implications in at least three arenas. First, the case of waitresses adds new dimensions to labor history scholarship and extends the research under way by industrial relations scholars on innovative workplace representational systems. Second, labor practitioners and others concerned with the future of organized labor may find significant heuristic value in thinking about the appropriateness of occupational unionism for segments of the new service work force. Third, the potential adoption of occupational unionism by today's postindustrial work force points to specific public policy questions that need reevaluation.

For labor historians and others concerned with the nature and evolution of the labor movement in the twentieth century, the history of waitress unions suggests several new ways of thinking. First, the conventional depiction of craft unionists as simply elite tradesmen holding on to an outmoded approach toward worker representation must be reconsidered. Despite their "unskilled" and marginal status as female service workers, waitresses found many features of craft unionism suitable to their industry and workplace. Indeed, the term craft unionism itself may be in need of redefinition.⁵⁹

Moreover, the success of these practices into the 1960s prompts a reconsideration of the continuing viability of craft union practices for certain groups of workers. Certainly, many trades, especially those connected with manufacturing, faced "deskilling" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—or, in the words of other scholars, were being moved from "batch production" to "mass production" technologies (Montgomery 1987; Sabel

⁵⁹ Montgomery (1987), Kazin (1987), and others have begun a reassessment of craft unionists historically, particularly in regard to their political orientation, but the concept of craft unionism needs further rethinking. A revised redefinition should recognize not only that many so-called craft practices were relied upon by skilled as well as unskilled workers but that the conventional definitions of skill have been gender-biased. For elaboration of the latter point, see Phillips and Taylor (1980).

and Zeitlin 1985). For these workers, a new unionism was necessary. The transformation of their work, however, and their subsequent need for a new form of unionism should not blind researchers to the very different history of the non-manufacturing trades. "Deskilling" may not have occurred until much later (if at all) for service workers, and many continued to work primarily in small shops with informal systems of work organization (Benson 1986:286; Scranton 1989:5-7). It is not surprising that their different experience in the workplace resulted in the creation and maintenance of a different form of unionism.

Second, the study of occupational unionism adds another dimension to our understanding of what was new about the mass production unionism of the 1930s. Indeed, a different kind of unionism did develop during the 1930s and 1940s, but its distinguishing characteristics have been only partially understood. A shift occurred from an occupational unionism—an approach that emphasized the occupational identity of the worker and tied union power to control over those within the occupation—to what can be called "worksites unionism"—a form of unionism that emphasized industry identity and linked rights and protections to employment at a particular worksite.

In other words, I propose a new typology of occupational unionism/worksites unionism, one that parallels the conventional craft/industrial typology⁶⁰ but recognizes the distinctive workplace representation systems adopted by unions as well as their differing political orientation and membership composition. The new typology springs from a revisionist

reading of twentieth-century labor history according to which the unionism dominant in the pre-New Deal period was distinguished as much by its commitment to a particular form of representation as by its stance in relation to the state or its adoption by elite craftsmen. Similarly, the new unionism that arose in the 1930s and 1940s was new in form and organizational practice as well as in its sympathy to governmental regulation and its more inclusive membership.

Using the proposed typology of occupational unionism/worksites unionism also allows for a fuller understanding of what went awry for the labor movement after World War II. In the postwar era, legal and government policy came to be based on a worksite model of unionism; other forms of representation were hobbled. Organizing and representing workers outside large institutional settings or without a long-term relation to a single employer became increasingly difficult. In the food service sector, for example, restaurant workers, once the mainstay of HERE, were now outnumbered by those employed in large hotels and other settings with long-term tenure—all workplaces more suited to the approaches of a worksites unionism.

Simply revitalizing "occupational unionism" in a wholesale fashion, however, is not the answer to labor's woes. Without an alteration in the balance of economic and political power between labor and capital, any shape organized labor assumes is condemned to remain but an apparition of its robust past. Nonetheless, the successful unionism practiced by waitresses—a group prototypical of the new service work force—does offer intriguing alternative approaches to representation that could prove advantageous for labor.⁶¹

The new service work force is varied, and no single model of unionism would be

⁶⁰ This typology resembles the non-factory/factory typology developed by industrial relations scholar Van Dusen Kennedy (1955). Nevertheless, I rejected Kennedy's terms, because many of the features he associates with factory unionism—large employers, plant-centered activities, and an elaborate seniority system, for example—also characterize many unions formed by non-factory workers such as those among government employees, hospital workers, or even hotel employees. For a critique of Kennedy see Wallihan (1985), pp. 76-79.

⁶¹ Green and Tilly (1987) have urged unions to abandon "factory-oriented" tactics in organizing service workers. I am arguing that the restructuring of the work force and the changing nature of the relation between employer and employee demand an even broader structural and philosophical reorientation by unions.

suitable for the entire range of workplaces and occupations. But a postindustrial unionism that laid emphasis on controlling the labor supply through worker-run employment agencies and building cohesion through occupational identity rather than opposition to a single employer could appeal to the flourishing contingent work force engaged in "self-employment," independent contracting, and temporary, part-time work. These workers need to be bound together by more than animus against a single employer or the promise of job security at a single worksite. A unionism that relied on the ties of occupational identity and the mechanism of the hiring hall would create bonds between workers that cross the boundaries of individual workplaces and aid organizing efforts. Representation based on individual workplace rights and protections is simply untenable in sectors characterized by high turnover. Moreover, such a reformulated unionism would offer practical, appealing new services to this floating, decentralized, increasingly female population.

Many workers desire mobility between employers and a variety of work experience.⁶² This female-dominated work force is also desirous of shortened hours and more flexible work scheduling.⁶³ The worker-run employment agency, in particular, has the potential to offer workers flexibility in scheduling and overall work-time (since arrangements for qualified substitutes can be made through the union), to provide work variety and on-the-job training, to monitor and improve working conditions at a multitude of worksites, and to make available portable, high-quality benefits that do not penalize members for work force intermittence.

Second, a postindustrial unionism that not only emphasized occupational identity, but shouldered responsibility for upgrading and monitoring occupational standards, would draw in "permanent" service workers, both of the non-professional as well as the professional and technical rank.⁶⁴ Professional associations from physicians to teachers routinely take on these tasks; unions representing "blue-collar" service workers have been more reluctant. As a consequence, recent organizing campaigns among restaurant workers in the high-priced, high-profit sector of food service—the traditional bastion of restaurant unionism—have suffered in part from a widely held view among food servers that unionization would lower performance standards and that inept, "over-protected" employees would drive away customers, hence reducing tip income.⁶⁵ In an ironic reversal of its status fifty years ago, HERE membership now connotes *inferior* skill and competence.

In fact, the so-called "blue-collar" or non-professional service workers actually appear to have more in common with the better-paid professional workers than with the blue-collar industrial workers. Like professional workers, they serve the public, are dependent on the good will (and tips) of their client population, and operate fairly autonomously. Hence, like their better-paid counterparts, they want an organization that assists them in improving the image of their occupation, in achieving "professional recognition," and in performing their work to the best of their abilities. Maintaining the quality of service is central to those who face the public daily. (See, for example, Cobble 1986:95–109; Butler and Skipper 1980:499; Butler and Snizek 1976; Young 1986.)

⁶² For example, see Olesen and Katsuranis (1978), pp. 316–38.

⁶³ With the rise of wage work for women and the decline of "family time," the demand for shortened worktime and flexible scheduling goes beyond female workers. For a survey showing both men's and women's interest in reduced worktime, see U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (1980).

⁶⁴ Heckscher (1988) also argues that a reorientation in the philosophy and practices of U.S. unions is necessary to appeal to the postindustrial work force. His proposals for an "associational unionism," however, are geared primarily to the professional and managerial work force.

⁶⁵ For examples, see *Nation's Restaurant News*, May 27, 1985, p. 15; *Seattle Times*, August 15, 1985, p. D1; *Berkeley-Oakland East Bay Express*, May–July, 1985.

Unions representing service workers, then, professional or non-professional, should consider the importance of investing in training for members, keeping members informed about "professional opportunities," and guarding the image of the trade through control over access to employment and through monitoring of performance standards. Indeed, the stress placed by occupational unionists on skill development, quality performance, and peer management appears to be increasingly appropriate in manufacturing settings as well, especially those moving toward flexible specialization and work teams. Of course, reviving the tradition of peer management would mean making some difficult decisions in weighing the claims of individual and group rights. Yet, the issue facing unions is not whether decisions concerning workplace discipline and regulation can be eliminated, but who will be making them.

In the long run, would a commitment by the new service work force to a postindustrial unionism result in securing representational rights? Employers in the United States have grown increasingly accustomed to operating in an environment in which they retain unilateral authority. Nevertheless, a union that took over time-consuming personnel functions such as recruitment, selection, training, and supervision might actually be attractive to harried small employers. Piore and Sabel (1984:3-4) have also noted the possible benefits for large employers accruing from a unionism that encourages skill development and shop-floor peer management.

Current labor policy, however, might prove to be as formidable an obstacle to the emergence of a postindustrial unionism as employer resistance. Moving away from the current dominance of mass production unionism means challenging a number of restrictive legal policies governing unions. Recent attempts to use worker-run employment agencies to organize low-paid service workers have been hamstrung by legal restrictions on union control over hiring, discipline, and dis-

charge.⁶⁶ Other restrictions prevent greater union and worker participation in decision-making at the workplace.

The stymieing of occupational unionism, then, needs to be added to the growing list of ways in which present-day labor law is "mismatched" to current reality.⁶⁷ Consideration should be given to devising new statutory language that would allow for increased union involvement in hiring, firing, and other traditional supervisory matters. At the very minimum, the legal exemptions enjoyed by the building trades under Taft-Hartley could be extended to other sectors of the economy. These exemptions allow for "pre-hire" agreements and, hence, the continuation of many hiring hall practices.⁶⁸

Although a postindustrial unionism formulated along the lines suggested has much to offer, it is not a path without risks. Occupational unionism provides a powerful centripetal force uniting workers across an industry, but it can also segment workers along gender, racial, and craft lines. Moreover, individual rights may sometimes be sacrificed unnecessarily in the name of group progress.

Thus, any attempt to refashion contemporary unionism that draws on labor's historical traditions must do so in a critical, selective, experimental manner, recapturing certain elements while remaining alert to potential abuses inherent in those approaches. Occupational consciousness, for example, must be coupled with a vision that incorporates the need for internal democratic processes and realizes that the

⁶⁶ One such national campaign focusing on janitors was described by Steve Lerner, SEIU Organizing Director, in a talk, "The Justice for Janitors Campaign," presented to the University and College Labor Education Association Eastern Regional Meeting, November 5, 1987, George Meany Center, Silver Spring, Maryland.

⁶⁷ For an overview of the potential legal roadblocks to labor-management cooperation, see Schlossberg and Fetter (1986). Sockell (1989) presents one of the most comprehensive critiques of current labor law and its inadequacy in a postindustrial era.

⁶⁸ 29 U.S.C. 158(f) allows for "pre-hire" agreements with building and construction industry employers. Sockell (1990) has incorporated some of these suggestions and added others of her own.

ability of any single group to survive is ultimately dependent on ties that transcend craft, class, and even national boundaries. In short, the strongest postin-

dustrial unionism would be an alloy, a judicious blend of past and present, of reclaimed historical practices and approaches that have yet to be conceived.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOOTNOTES

DUR, HERE Files: Defunct Union Records, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union Files.
EBM, Local 2 Files: Local 48 Executive Board Minutes, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union Local 2 Files.
JRC, WRL-WSU: Jack Rugh Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University.
LUR, HERE Files: Local Union Records, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union Files.

MHS, BSBA: Montana Historical Society, Butte Silver Bow Archive.
MM, Local 2 Files: Local 48 Meeting Minutes, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union Local 2 Files.
RG-257, NA: Record Group 257, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.
SF LJEB: San Francisco Local Joint Executive Board.
SFLC Records, BL-UCB: San Francisco Labor Council Records, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
WPUC-174, MHS: Women's Protective Union Collection No. 174, Montana Historical Society.

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