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A study of the participation of organized labor in social work in Indianapolis, Indiana, December 1, 1944 through November 30, 1946

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A STUDY OF THE PARTICIPATION OF ORGANIZED LABOR IN SOCIAL WORK IN
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA, DECEMBER 1, 1944 THROUGH NOVEMBER 30, 1946

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Procedure.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK IN ORGANIZED LABOR</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ORGANIZED LABOR'S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL WORK IN INDIANAPOLIS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Contributions to Established Agencies</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation on Boards of Public and Private Agencies</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work Programs of Organized Labor in Indianapolis</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Changing Concept of Social Work in Organized Labor</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Problem

This study has been made to present and analyze the participation of the labor organizations of Indianapolis in Social Work. This study points out the historical development of Social Work in Organized Labor. It tells of the type of Social Work programs in the labor organizations in Indianapolis and the significance of these programs in relationship to the success of organized labor. This analysis brings to light the changing concepts of Social Work in Organized Labor and tends to determine the actual value of social work as participated in by labor organizations.

The Economic Depression has dramatized and emphasized the interrelation of social work and organized labor. An increase of dislocated individuals resulted from the collapse of industry. This has resulted in labor organizations taking more and more social problems into consideration in the planning of their programs.

Social work offers certain definite contributions to society as a whole.

Organized labor and social workers have much in common in their efforts to improve the economic lot of wage earners. Social workers seek to protect families in that group against some of the consequences of inadequate and interrupted income, undernourishment, insufficient medical care, scarcity of cultural opportunities, and even dissolution of the family unit. Organized labor seeks to avert such consequences by so augmenting wages that families will be able to maintain high standards of living.1

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Economic and Social changes have resulted in bringing organized labor and social workers closer together. Social workers realize that government action is necessary to establish conditions essential to the prevention of destitution. Thus they have become active in the promotion of much legislation such as minimum wage and unemployment insurance laws. This legislation tends to augment insufficient income and to safeguard wage earners against a loss of income. Organized labor still stresses economic power but is increasingly dependent upon public action, both legislative and administrative.

The complete goal of labor organizations in social work may be expressed in the words of Wallace when he said:

We must do something about bringing the bottom half of our population within the economic frontiers at home. Moreover, by the very process of making it possible for all our people to enjoy decent housing, better health, and good education—by making it possible for all our people to have the things that represent the fruit of their labor—we will be providing more job opportunities for full post war employment.  

Only through the combined efforts of social work and industry can the decent living of all our people be accomplished, and the right given to them of adequate protection from the economic fear of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment.

Scope of Study

This study includes information concerning those organizations of labor which have been established within the urban area of Indianapolis. Since some organizations have no social work programs in their planning this study is limited to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the International

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Hod-Carriers, Builders and Common Labor, the Cement Finishers Local Union #532, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, United Transport Service Employees, and the United Automobile Workers. This study is further limited to a two year period beginning December 1, 1944 through November 30, 1946. This period was chosen in light of the ending of the war and the beginning of the post war period to determine what social work programs and activities of organized labor are carried over from the war period into the post war period.

Method of Procedure

Data for this study have been secured through personal interviews with the personnel and key persons in the organizations and industries. Periodicals and informational records were used as sources of information. Reading material in related fields was also used in compiling the data recorded herein.
CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK IN ORGANIZED LABOR

Traditionally, social workers were not in sympathy with organized labor—but with capital. Only in recent years have social workers begun to recognize the identity of their problems with those of organized labor. However, both organized labor and social workers have had much in common toward improving the economic status of the wage earner. The fundamental difference between the objectives of organized labor and social work is that while the social worker is interested in the individual family and the formulation of a program to meet its problems through case work, group work, and community organization organized labor, on the other hand, is concerned with its membership at large.

Organized labor has made many unsuccessful attempts to improve its economic and social position.

The first outstanding attempt was the organization of the Knights of Labor, who after definite advances mixed economics with politics, lost power and fraudfully declined. They were succeeded in 1895 by the American Federation of Labor whose purpose was purely economic with a determination to keep out of politics.¹

The American Federation of Labor entered the field based upon ideas directly opposed to those held by the Knights of Labor; namely, the craft or trade union (excluding the unorganized and unskilled), wage bargaining, and abstention from political action and revolutionary theories. The Knights of Labor has made many unsuccessful attempts to improve its economic and social position.

Labor were primarily interested in the unskilled workers. The Knights were strong in number and they were prepared if necessary, to level the skilled laborers down in their efforts to raise the casual laborer.¹

In the contest of winning and holding the sympathy and support of the skilled craft unionist, the Knights were unable to get very far, because the skilled craftman resented the invasion of industry by the unskilled worker. The American Federation of Labor held out from the beginning that "self-preservation" had been its motive and it firmly took to this position: "to protect the skilled labor of America from being reduced to beggary and to sustain the standards of American workmanship and skill, the trade unions of America have been established."²

In spite of the difficulties met by the Knights of Labor, they were successful organizational workers during their time. The Knights exercised a great deal of influence upon legislation. They became successful lobbyists and were mainly responsible for the first restrictive immigration law, and for a considerable body of state legislation.³

During the period following the decline of the Knights of Labor and the predepression years, many groups were organized which had reactionary philosophies that were directly opposed to the philosophy of the American Federation of Labor. Among these groups were the Socialist Labor Party, which was politically inclined, the International Working People’s Association, endorsing trade union organization but rejecting all political action; the Industrial

¹Mary R. Beard, A Short History of The American Labor Movement, (New York, 1924), p. 120.
²Ibid., p. 121.
³Ibid., p. 124.
Workers of the World, interested in the formation of one grand union embracing all workers as equal and alike in their interests; and many other radical groups of smaller importance. All of these organizations were hostile toward the American Federation of Labor, first, because it was exclusive, being confined to the more skilled workers; secondly, because it accepted the capitalist system and the trade agreement as final; and thirdly, because its scheme of organization and tactics were objectionable to those practiced by the radicals.1

These groups were interested more or less in the organization of all workers in each of the great industries into one big industrial union, and to weld the organizations so formed into one national industrial organization. They proposed that each industry was to be managed by those employed in it.

The economic depression during the early 1930's led to governmentally sponsored programs of public assistance supported by taxation. It was during this period that organized labor to some extent changed its fundamental character. It became infused with a new militancy, thus causing it to look to the state to a greater extent to provide guarantees of economic security and material welfare as well as rules and apparatus enabling workers to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing.

Up to this time the American Federation of Labor and its membership barely two generations old in this area of work, was weighted down with too much inertia to alter it internal policies to meet the needs of the new kind of worker. The American Federation of Labor was made up primarily of craft unions - boilermakers, carpenters, and electricians. They did not understand the problems of workers in great mass production industries.2


During the depression period of the 1930's, millions of workers in organized labor were obliged to seek assistance for the first time. Previously, few of them had need for the services of agencies set up to administer relief during the emergency. Organized labor became aware of the need for the above type of social work after this bitter experience. This experience also brought a realization to both organized labor and community leaders that social work was concerned with more than a segment of the population and that social services must be set up as a community enterprise.¹

Organized labor supplemented relief and public works with programs of its own during the depression. Many unions that were affiliated with the American Federation of Labor had share-the-work programs in which those who were employed reduced their own work week and gave days of employment to their fellow members who were unemployed. Employed workers in some unions paid special self-imposed taxes in order to provide supplementary unemployment insurance.²

The starting-point for mass organization of labor and its interest in the welfare of industrial workers can be traceable to the first four years of the New Deal which were characterized by gains and losses for the labor movement. In the National Industrial Recovery Act, for the first time, clear recognition was given to labor's right to organize and bargain collectively. The general membership was not prepared for this type of


mass movement. The task of social work under these circumstances is to aid in perfecting and developing legislation and administration in fulfillment of a program expressed by organized labor.

Since the depression of the early 1930's, business men and employers of industry have made large financial contributions to campaigns of social agencies in their local communities. Through this contact, they were able to recognize social work and organized labor as natural allies. Organized labor has for its objective the prevention of those social ills that social work treats and recognizes as the major cause of social breakdowns.

As a result of World War II, labor took an increased interest in community affairs. Organized labor was one of the largest single sources of support for private welfare during the war.

Organized labor has come to be a power in the community, and it is a power to be recognized in more than financial terms. In such terms alone, however, labor is worthy of recognition. To day labor contributes more to chest funds than unorganized workers did yesterday. The contributions of organized labor are somewhat comparable in the total financing program to the role of international trade in the maintenance of domestic prosperity. With these contributions security and stability are maintained; without them, we would have to operate on a depressed and insecure level.

In cooperation with community chests and councils, labor is helping to finance a program and to demonstrate its interest in local welfare and health planning and to insure the greater integration of Labor's point of view in the field of social work. Organized labor is equally interested in extending the scope of government responsibility in health and social welfare programs, because it feels that private agencies can not do the job adequately as

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shown from experience during the depression.  

At many points today, organized labor and social work share identical interests. Social work and organized labor are consistently laboring for the enactment of legislation that will provide greater security for the masses of people.

Organized labor is equally interested in the improvement of health standards, better housing, wholesome and creative recreational opportunities, a broader social insurance program, health and safety devices in industrial employment, and adequate protection for childhood through legislative enactment. It is in a position to exercise tremendous influence, speaking as it does for millions of men and women.

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Social Service today is a national service. It is concerned with the people throughout the country who are unable to adequately support themselves and their families and who need help. The spirit of social work grows out of the inability of the philosophy of rugged individualism in times of economic stress to meet the needs of people living in an industrial society.

The broad humanitarian spirit which has developed with the downfall of the idea of rugged individualism—and which is the mainspring of this profession—prompts the social worker today to answer in the affirmative. The social worker has the opportunity to save our nation's material and human resources. It is a career in saving 'manpower', a career in humanity.1

In all activities of social work there is usually one underlying responsibility—that of aiding humanity. Throughout the history of social work this has been true whether public or private agencies have been involved. Professional service work is practically new as a modern career in humanity—but its very foundation can be traced to colonial periods.

According to Steele and Blatt there are three main objectives of social work.

One main goal of social service is to care for physical needs. Whenever necessary, social workers help to obtain food, clothing, shelter, sanitary conditions, medical aid and suitable surroundings for their clients. Relief from physical want is a first aid rendered by social service—but only as an emergency measure.

A second objective of social service is to secure a proper adjustment of the individual to his environment. Social service not only gives physical help but also aids in the rehabilitation of the maladjusted so as

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to reign new hope and new courage in facing life's difficulties.

A third goal of social service is the prevention of the conditions which give rise to physical destitution and social maladjustment. It urges the enactment of laws which will hold in check the enemies of society; poverty, diseases, ignorance, and crime. It champions the cause of social insurance to give aid in emergencies of unemployment, accident, old age, child welfare, the blind and disabled. Social service carries on educational work and research to help ameliorate the evils of slums, bad housing, overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions. Although it is ever ready to help adjust the lives of the underprivileged, Social Security strongly believes in the value of an ounce of prevention.1

It is necessary however, to differentiate between organized labor in social work and social work in organized labor as used in this study. Social work in organized labor has reference to those programs that have been set up within organized labor to accomplish one or more of the above mentioned objectives. On the other hand, the participation of organized labor in social work as used here, has reference to those programs of either private or public agencies which labor organizations aid to carry out their programs. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the participation of organized labor in social work in Indianapolis.

There are certain established agencies whose constitutional foundation is built upon the goals of social work as previously outlined. Many of these agencies are nationally known and are maintained by funds realized from individuals, businesses, industries, and organizations. The American Red Cross and the Salvation Army are two of the most familiar of these.

Financial Contributions to Established Agencies

The first real line of assistance from organized labor in social work in Indianapolis was in the area of financial contributions to established social agencies. Of the organizations contacted for data for this study all

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of them made 100 per cent financial contributions to such agencies as the
Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, Marion County Society
For The Crippled, Crossroad Rehabilitation Center, Marion County Tuberculosis
Association, Boys' Club Association, and the Indianapolis Chapter of The Amer-
ican Red Cross.

Labor organizations make dual financial contributions to many of the social
agencies by contributing to the Community Fund Campaign and directly to the
agencies.

The labor organizations contacted for data for this study also make
financial contributions to the cancer, infantile paralysis and tuberculosis
drives.

Representation on Boards of Public and Private Agencies

Another method of participation in social work by organized labor in
Indianapolis is through representation on boards of social agencies. Organ-
ized labor has representation on the boards of the Indianapolis Council of
Social Agencies, Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, Boy's
Club Association, Marion County Society For The Crippled, Marion County Tuber-
culosi s Association and the Indianapolis Chapter of The American Red Cross.

The representatives of organized labor serving on the boards of the
social agencies work with some of the main committees such as the Executive
Committee, Policy Making Committee, and the Fund Raising Committee.

The humanitarian philosophy in American will continue to develop, and
with it social welfare work will expand. A feeling of responsibility for
the underprivileged developed rapidly during the decade before World War
II. It expresses itself concretely in many Federal and State laws to aid
those in need. "Freedom from Want" became one of the social ideals in
fighting the war.¹

Social Work Programs of Organized Labor in Indianapolis

A presentation of the social work programs found in the labor organizations of Indianapolis used in this study will help to show the type of social work that is being carried on within the unions. This study also revealed that whenever a local union negotiates a contract with management, a stipulation is put in the contract to the effect that management and labor will cooperate jointly in a health and welfare program for the workers, whereas in some cases, the contract may not call for joint participation on the part of management and labor. In such cases organized labor has found it expedient to operate such programs with funds paid as "union dues".

Welfare program.—Organized labor has undergone many bitter experiences while on strike or in the process of a lockout. It became aware of the fact that union members are not entitled to unemployment compensation while on strike. This has made it necessary for a strike fund program which has been set up to provide relief so as to alleviate suffering for union members while on strike or during the process of a lockout.

Each local labor union of the Congress of Industrial Organizations is entitled to three delegates to serve on the Strike Relief Committee, each of whom has one vote in all committee meetings. Each union member is required to pay a yearly fee for membership in order to be eligible to receive relief from the committee whenever his union is on strike. However, there is little possibility of a union member suffering while his union is on strike, providing all of his union dues are paid up.

¹Evelyn Steele and H. K. Blatt, op. cit., p. 29.
Health program.—The local union of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America have one of the best health and insurance programs to be found among the unions in Indianapolis. The contract of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America has a clause to the effect that the employer should pay an amount equal to 2 per cent of all wages to an insurance fund. This money is used for the benefit of the workers according the Amalgamated Insurance Plan. The workers do not pay anything. The employers pay the entire amount to cover the cost of the Insurance Plan. The workers receive the benefits of the Plan, not as a privilege but as their right.

The workers covered by the plan are entitled to four kinds of insurance: (1) life insurance, a flat sum of $500.00 is payable in case of death from any cause; (2) accident and health, for everyday (after the first seven days) that a member is disabled, due to accident, and for everyday from the eighth day due to illness (if he is ill more than fourteen days) male workers receive $12.00 a week and female workers $8.00 per week; (3) hospitalization, any worker covered who has to go to the hospital is entitled to $5.00 a day for a maximum of 31 days for illness in any one year, and 31 days for disability due to accident; and (4) maternity insurance, women workers who have been employed under the union contract within nine months of their confinement, are entitled to a cash benefit of $50.00.

There are health and insurance programs in other unions but they are not as broad and effective as the one of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers’ Plan.

Educational program.—Organized labor has become aware of the fact that there are certain very important things in our social, economic and political life that are hardly touched upon in public schools—such things as the organization of labor unions and consumer cooperatives. Because of this fact the
Indianapolis Industrial Union Council has been formed. This council embraces all of the local unions in the Indianapolis area, regardless of international union affiliation. Through the council the international unions and women's auxiliaries and people who never before participated in community affairs are finding new outlets for their leisure time and creative impulses.

In the field of adult education, organized labor is cooperating with the public school authorities in conducting special classes to eliminate illiteracy among both Negro and white workers.

This study revealed that many of the local unions have a movie projector machine or can rent one to show films on consumer education and other phases of union activities.

The American Federation of Labor, Congress of Industrial Organizations and International union organizations, each publishes weekly, bi-monthly or monthly newspapers that are sold or given to members and interested people. These newspapers carry a section that is devoted to the activities of the local unions.

The national headquarters of each labor organization publishes pamphlets on matters of interest to each labor organization.

Recreational Program.—During the war the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America operated a center for servicemen. However, after the termination of the war it was necessary to close the center because of a decrease in the number of servicemen stationed in or near the Indianapolis area.

There is a bowling alley that is operated by the United Automobile Workers and several of the other local unions for members only. Organized labor does not have a large recreational program in the community because of the large number of social recreational agencies, both public and private.
There are many boxing teams representing the different labor organizations. These teams participate in the city boxing tournament each year.

Many of the local labor unions had some type of recreation in the plants during the war. Recreation for the workers during the war was provided for by management. Now that the war is over and a decrease in the number of persons employed as well as a shift in working hours, there is on a small scale some recreation provided for the workers in the plants.

Credit Unions.—Most all of the labor unions in Indianapolis have some type of credit union. The members of the credit unions have the privilege of borrowing small amounts of money whenever they find it necessary. However, the members must be in good standing in their union. One credit union has developed to the place where it now operates a Cooperative Store in the community on a small scale. There are unlimited possibilities in the field of credit unions for the improvement of the economic status of members, as has been demonstrated in Cooperative Credit Associations throughout the country.

Cooperative Credit Associations have sometimes been called "baby banks". Some credit unions have been established by union members, each of whom subscribes for one or more shares of stock. They are managed by the members in a democratic fashion with one vote for each member. The members elect a Board of Directors and a Credit Committee which passes on all applications for loans; and a Treasurer. The purpose of the credit union is to make loans at low interest rates to their members when they need them. Credit unions are also used as a means for saving, members depositing in their own "baby banks" weekly or monthly amounts on which they receive interest and which comes in handy on a rainy day.
The credit union is incorporated under a Federal or State Charter (not run by the labor union) but membership is restricted to members of the particular labor union.

The Changing Concept of Social Work in Organized Labor

Historically, organized labor has been more or less tactfully excluded from participation in planning for social work. It has had little or no place in the governing bodies of chests and councils and has, accordingly, been deprived of a voice in policy making and administration. This historic relationship is understandable enough for in its origin private social work was largely a matter of effective charity distribution, and fund donors were, primarily, a relatively small humanitarian group of wealthy and influential persons. It is understandable also in terms of labor's attitude, for some of the more vocal radically inclined labor groups held to the view that social work aimed at patching up a rotting social order, and that approval of efforts and admiration constituted betrayal of the revolutionary labor movement. Labor tends to view private social work as parentalistic charity, while organized social work tends to view unions as parasites on the body of politics.\(^1\)

Fortunately, alterations have occurred in both conceptions, and cooperative efforts for the achievement of the common goals of organized labor and social work are now possible. Therefore, organized labor and social workers are planning and building together for a better social order.

The economic depression and World War II helped to bring about closer cooperation between organized labor and social work. It was during the war when social service employees were recognized as being essential in war production by the government.\(^2\)

The close cooperation between social work and organized labor in planning and building a broader social welfare program may be expressed in the words of Hillman when he said:

Political action and social work have a common goal. They both seek to improve the lot of man, and for this reason both fields should work

\(^1\)Robert H. MacRae, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

in close harmony with each other.

Labor knew from bitter experience the misery and suffering of depression, of unstable economies and the personal maladjustments which such conditions produce. They saw, too, in the war-time production accomplishments of American labor, government and business what intelligent planning and cooperation could do. And they knew the instrument for achieving the era of peace and plenty they so earnestly desired lay in the political structure of the country. They realized that as long as reaction and its spokesmen predominated in the Congress and local and state legislative chambers, so long would progressive legislation be stifled and so long would the common people be deprived of the just fruits of our great victory over fascism. They realized that what most governed their lives, their wages, working conditions, their homes and health was the performance of the representatives they elected to public office.

Examine the specifics of this document and the connection between labor's political action and social work's aim to improve the individual's lot in life is seen at once. "The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health, the right to a good education ...," imperatives if our society is not only to grow and prosper, but to actually hold together.

For these things labor through its political arm will fight. For these things they should be joined by workers in the field of social work. For these things are, in essence, the goals toward which we are both striving—full security for all men.

In keeping with the broad aspects of modern life, organized labor has progressed from the early labor movement's preoccupation with wages, hours and working conditions in a given locality, to an active interest in the wide fields affecting the living standards of workers everywhere. In so doing, it has become involved in cooperation with government, with management and with professional, civic and church groups in many communities. It has proposed and supported a great deal of social legislation. It has actively entered politics, and in recent years, it has entered into the field of race relations. It has even called for close collaboration between labor movements of the world.

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CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The following is a summary of the findings and conclusions of the study of the participation of organized labor in social work in Indianapolis from December 1, 1944 through November 30, 1946.

This study has been made to present and analyze the participation of the labor organizations of Indianapolis in Social Work. This study points out the historical development of Social Work in Organized Labor. It tells of Social Work programs in the labor organizations in Indianapolis and the significance of these programs in relationship to the success of organized labor. This analysis brings to light the changing concepts of Social Work in Organized Labor and tends to determine the actual value of social work as participated in by labor organizations.

The establishment of labor unions in the mass production industries has been one of the most stirring chapters in the development of democracy in America. By gaining a voice in the conduct of economic affairs, and some degree of job security, union workers have taken an important step in the direction of industrial democracy. With this new power has come added responsibility. Organized labor had concerned itself with the social and economic welfare of the nation as a whole, and had steadfastly refused to adopt a purely business unionism outlook since the termination of World War II. Organized labor on the local level has for a long period of time recognized its community responsibilities and is working toward broadening and enriching everyday life.
The interest of unions in health and welfare plans is in line with their basic desire to improve the living conditions of their members. Many early unions set up their own benefit plans for accidents or other hazards, but found the cost very great. And because of that fact, organized labor has actively entered the field of politics to press for better health and welfare legislation laws.

Since the economic depression of the early 1930's, organized labor has been interested in more than the basic matter of wages, hours and working conditions in the plants. Historically, organized labor has been pressing for public education and social advancement of all kinds. Organized labor is aware of the fact that a worker must have good community conditions as well as good working conditions, therefore, it is interested in total community welfare—the health and welfare of all citizens.

Many social workers are aware of the fact that organized labor has raised the working standards and living conditions of millions of people, that organized labor has in recent years defended the civil liberties of minority groups, that organized labor has help promote sound community health and welfare services, that organized labor has been a pillar of democracy.

As a result of this study it is felt that:

1. Social work in organized labor on a large scale is a development brought about because of mass industrialization.

2. The responsibility of social work in organized labor can not be stressed to greatly, and a greater unity of purpose than now exists must be achieved if social workers want the continued support of labor unions.

3. The participation of organized labor in social work depends, in a great part, on the councils of social agencies and on the meaning they give
to their work for laymen, labor, and non-labor in the community.

4. The aims or goals of organized labor and social work are somewhat the same. The fundamental difference between the two might lie in the methods or ways in which each attempts to accomplish its objectives.
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