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# THE CHRISTIAN AND LABOR UNIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

The delegates to the 1966 General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches accepted a recommendation which called for three study conferences to be held during this conference triennium. These study conferences were to be attended by delegates from the churches in the Canadian and United States area conferences. It was hoped that a number of the delegates would be non-ordained brethren.

The Board of Reference and Counsel was charged with the responsibility of planning these study conferences, the first of which was held in Reedley, California, in the fall of 1967. The second conference, called to examine issues related to Discipleship and Evangelism, met in Winnipeg, May 7-9, 1968, and was planned in cooperation with the Boards of Evangelism of the Canadian and United States area conferences. Approximately 180 registered delegates were present. Six papers were read and discussed.

The papers assigned by the Board of Reference and Counsel, together with the findings that came out of the discussions at the conferences, will form the basis for recommendations to the 1969 General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

The brethren who wrote the papers were asked to present their insights based on their study of the Word and their experience in the Church. It was suggested that they avoid presenting "a mosaic of quotations." These papers are now being presented to the constituency for further consideration and study.

The brethren writing the papers have done us a great service. It is not always easy to advance convictions with which others might disagree. However, God calls leaders to step forward and share their insights humbly but also courageously. On the other hand, the listener or the reader has a responsibility as well. He must listen or read as a brother.

The issues which the church faces in this our day are grave. However, we dare not retreat to safer ground lest history will some day mock us. Let us as a brotherhood go forward in faith and continue our discussions in love. The Word has the answer. Let us continue to read it.

Frank C. Peters, Moderator  
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### The Writer

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# The Christian and Labor Unions

## I. Introduction

Traditionally, matters pertaining to organized labor were of little concern to Mennonites. An essentially rural denomination did not encounter union pressures, union problems, or union achievements. But times changed.

For one thing, unions expanded their scope and power and as this occurred, several aspects of their activity changed markedly. Even more importantly, in ever-increasing numbers Mennonites forsook the presumed tranquility of the "uncontaminated" countryside and moved to the cities.

A research project undertaken several years ago revealed that as early as 1950 about 70 per cent of all employed members of Mennonite churches in both Canada and the United States made their livelihood in occupations other than farming,<sup>1</sup> and many of these had found it "necessary" to join a union. By now that percentage must surely be significantly higher. In general, then, a continuing industrialization and widespread Mennonite urbanization have resulted in numerous new ethical and moral problems, not the least of which are associated with organized labor.

Although this paper focuses particularly on labor matters as they relate to unionism, there are other associated problems of which we should be aware. De-personalization, alienation, unemployment related to automation, proper utilization of leisure time, and a general drift of workmen away from organized Christianity are issues which should also be confronted. Concerning the latter problem we would do well to heed the indictment of an informed evangelical churchman. More than twenty years ago Harry Rimmer contended that

Labor Unions have displaced and re-placed the Church in the lives and thinking of the working masses. The affectionate loyalty that mechanics once manifested toward their place of worship has largely shifted to their trade unions, and the working man is conspicuous in the modern churches by his absence! I dare assert that not more than five per cent of the entire membership of any labor union habitually attends church.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately the situation in our churches is not that desperate, but we, too, need to ask ourselves whether we have a problem of laborers ignoring the church, or the church ignoring laborers, or both!

A third general introductory comment involves the matter of consistency. We must be careful not to require a higher ethical standard of labor than we do of management, business, agriculture, or professional groups. As Ephesians 6:5-10 reminds us, there is one Christian standard for all believers. This point merits special emphasis because our rural background, our present prosperity and our proportionately high professionalism probably tend to predispose us against organized labor's point of view.

We need also to remind ourselves that the Bible is neither pro-labor or pro-management. Jesus aided the poor, the oppressed and the disheartened of all levels, and he was very critical of the greedy and those who abused their power, whoever they were. I Timothy 6:10 is as relevant to employer as to

employee. "For loving money leads to all kinds of evil, and some men in the struggle to be rich have lost their faith and caused themselves untold agonies of mind" (Phillips). According to a careful study, many of us have a significant bias on this count.

Mennonite managers seem to resent organized labor. Collective bargaining in their view upsets the classical system of individual responsibility and competition. It threatens their traditional authority as managers which they also regard as being somehow divinely ordained.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps we should qualify this observation by saying that many of us see special moral problems in the area of labor not because laboring persons and their pursuits are somehow less moral but because of the present nature of most labor organizations. Also, we must not overlook the significant fact that some labor unions and their leaders are very considerate of those workmen whose conscience does not permit them to cooperate fully with the union in question and readily cooperate in arranging mutually satisfactory alternatives.

In the area of labor, as elsewhere, we must avoid a Gospel of "cheap grace." Christianity is no mere "Sunday religion." Living under "costly grace" means putting all of one's life in one moral category. The Lordship of Christ—the author and bearer of "costly grace"—is potentially and ideally a total Lordship. A person's work cannot be divorced from his Christian profession. His total witness is his total life.

The fact that we preach and believe in a Gospel of "costly grace" means that we preach a Gospel with social consequences. "By their fruits ye shall know them." It is not only a personal, inner faith, nor merely a spoken creed, but the actual quality, the total and social impact of the Christian life, both individually and collectively, that really counts.

The overall concern of making the Lordship of Christ relevant to the area of labor and of probing the consequence of "costly grace" in our industrialized environment is particularly relevant for heirs of the Anabaptist tradition, that is, for those who stress the separated life, Christian mutual aid, and the all-pervasiveness of Christian love and discipleship.

## II. Ethical Presuppositions

As previously stated, the elemental premise of this paper is that the ethic of our Lord is relevant to our industrial and organizational problems. The challenge comes to each one of us, "You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). Conformity to the image of Christ is a believer's ultimate ethical norm. But what does this mean specifically for the Christian employee and also employer? What are the essentials he must keep in mind as he evaluates the options to be presented in a later section of this paper?

The notion of justice is an indispensable ingredient in a Christian code of ethics. Justice is part of God's nature and of his norm for us: "He doth execute justice . . ." (Deuter-

enomy 10:18); "he loveth righteousness and justice . . ." (Psalms 33:5). Micah tells us, "He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (6:8). Even more to the point, Jeremiah proclaims, "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not his hire" (22:13 R.S.V.). "To do justice . . ." we read, "is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice" (Proverbs 21:3).

For Christians justice is relevant to all relationships Guy F. Hershberger tells us that

In the sense that all men and women as human beings are equal before God, the dignity of every man and woman as a human being must be respected by every other man and woman. That is, the equality of men and women as founded in creation is the source of the inalienable rights which belong to every man and woman alike. To respect these inalienable rights which are equal to all is justice; to violate them is injustice.

. . . Therefore a social system which denies the adult the right to do the work for which God has created him is unnatural and unjust.<sup>4</sup>

But the Christian concern for justice is a peculiar one, it is primarily a concern to do justice and only secondarily a concern to obtain justice.

Obedience is a second ingredient of the Christian ethic. We identify with Peter and the other apostles when they answered the queries of the priestly council by saying, "It is our duty to obey the orders of God rather than the orders of men" (Acts 5:29 Phillips). Christian obedience manifests itself as a willingness, indeed an eagerness, to follow in the footsteps of our Lord who was obedient unto death. For us, as for him, this may involve public rejection.<sup>5</sup> Obedient Christians are not normally, or at least not often, the most popular individuals in a predominantly non-Christian society. Unbelieving fellowmen have difficulty in coming to terms with an ethical orientation based on subservience to God in all areas of life. Customarily they want us to follow them in an un-Christian ethical compartmentalization. But,

the Christian is called to live his whole life in commitment to God under divine guidance; there are no compartments in his existence where he is exempt from responsibility. This is especially true of the realm of everyday affairs where we earn our livelihood and discharge our obligations in financial affairs.<sup>6</sup>

Love constitutes a third, and perhaps the most consequential, component of a Bible-based ethical system; a love that is prepared to go beyond justice and a love that ensures obedience. In the past we have placed much emphasis on peace, non-resistance, and related topics, and that is as it should be. However, the ultimate touchstone of the Christian ethic is a biblically-prescribed and divinely-inspired love, of which peace, non-resistance, evangelism, hospitality, etc. are various expressions. It is a love exemplified by Christ.

God, through inspired writers, tells us that he is love and that we are to walk in obedient love. "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3:11). Jesus challenges us, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).<sup>7</sup>

To violate the command of love is to walk in rebellion against God; to bring disorder and confusion into human relationships. To obey the command of love is to identify one's self and to synchronize one's life with the divine order in all of man's affairs. The words, "you shall" are not the words of a tyrant. They are the words of a loving Father seeking the eternal welfare of his children. It is not a command of caprice. It is a command of love. Throughout the Scriptures love and obedience are associated in the most intimate manner. They are integral parts of the same experience. In the divine order of things there can be no love without obedience, no obedience without love.<sup>8</sup>

Justice, obedience, and love, as well as the other Christian virtues, the discussion of which would take us too far afield,

are not unrelated standards but an integrated whole. They constitute a normal, as well as essential, ethical imperative for both the individual Christian and a Christian brotherhood. To ignore this imperative is to deny the claims of Christ.

A final comment to conclude this necessarily abbreviated review of our ethical presuppositions is that these presuppositions are not determined by our new urban environment and changing vocations, nor by our increasing evangelistic zeal and desire to rediscover the dimensions of discipleship, rather these changes merely constitute an occasion which forces us to re-evaluate essentials. They compel us to do what we ought to be doing in any event, namely, re-thinking, re-affirming, and re-applying ethical guidelines without which personal and corporate Christian growth is impossible.

### III. A Christian View of Labor

Although the Bible is not a sourcebook of specific answers for all contemporary social and economic problems, the ethical teachings surveyed above, together with various references dealing more particularly with work and the workman, do set forth some timeless guidelines and principles.

One of these is that work is part of the order of creation. Our God was, and is, a working God. We are all aware that on the seventh day God rested, a notion which we have readily appropriated and expanded, but the preceding six days were of much greater consequence. Jesus affirmed the fact of God's working when he answered his Sabbath-day accusers by saying, "My Father has never yet ceased his work, and I am working too" (John 5:17 NEB).

Human toil is not a result of sin, for Adam was a worker before he was a sinner: "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). True, sin changed both the nature and the meaning of his work, but when a person becomes a Christian his work takes on again the essential quality it had before the Fall. Christ's redeeming sacrifice has lifted the curse. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). Thus, a converted person reflects a changed attitude to his work, for he is now working to honor God, and not infrequently, therefore, his place of work changes as well.

Work constitutes an essential element of meaningful living for all of mankind, but especially for Christians. Sloth and laziness are despised by God. "If any one will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living" (II Thessalonians 3:10-12 RSV).<sup>9</sup> Paul the tent-maker, Peter the fisherman, and of course, Jesus the carpenter illustrate the point in question. Work also serves as a means to assist the needy (Ephesians 4:28). For Christians, work ought also to be creative in a special way; man, made in the image of God, reflects in his handiwork and achievements the creativeness of God. In many cultures, philosophies, and civilizations work, especially manual toil, is disparaged. But the Christian knows that on the job, no less than in the pew, he is God's temple as well as his servant. A fundamental result of this divine purpose is that the Christian must be free to work.

Furthermore, for Christians all work, unless intrinsically evil, constitutes a service to God. It ought to be God-pleasing and God-honoring. In Roman Catholicism, at least historically, only monks, priests, and nuns were considered to be commissioned by God. But we believe that we are all commissioned by our Master. All honorable occupations are equally sanctified by God. "God demands to be honored just as much

at the work bench as he does at the altar and in the pulpit."<sup>10</sup> For a believer "work" and "worship" are closely related. Dr. Carl F. H. Henry observes:

The believer's whole life is a mission "in the Lord"; hence if any activity whatsoever in his life becomes secular in its orientation, the believer's calling is profaned. The scriptural definition of "calling" makes no distinction between sacred and secular . . . . By insisting on the universal priesthood of all believers, the New Testament implies the necessity of doing any and all work as a spiritual service . . . . The Christian workman becomes a priest among his fellow-workers; he serves both God and neighbor by offering God the labor of his hands as a daily sacrifice . . . . Life's variety of callings implies no distinction in the respective value and dignity of those engaged therein; God's purpose in the calling is the discriminating factor and not man's superiority or inferiority.<sup>11</sup>

Someone has suggested that the concerned church should conduct a special commissioning service at which Christian workmen could express their commitment and "be empowered by God the Holy Ghost in their chosen vocations as carpenter, electrician, truck driver, factory worker and school teacher."<sup>12</sup> Let us not forget that in all things, "We are God's fellow-workers . . ." (1 Corinthians 3:9 NEB). As Kingdom workmen we ought to be known by employers and fellow employees for our diligence, honesty, integrity, courtesy, punctuality, dependability, co-operation, and sense of duty.

One of the conclusions to be drawn from the above analysis is that there is dignity in all honest work. But dignity is not synonymous with pleasantness. Many tasks are boring, frustrating, unappealing, or superficially unrewarding. A certain Dr. George MacLeod of Scotland cleaned out community lavatories once a year and when asked why he, a great preacher, performed such a supposedly menial job answered, "It is to prevent me from preaching sermons on the dignity of work."<sup>13</sup> We do need sermons on the dignity of work but they ought perhaps not to be preached only by ordained clergymen.

In all things a Christian's attitude is crucial. The story is told of three men who were building a cathedral. In answer to a query one said, "I am chipping these stones," another, "I am earning my wages," a third, "I am building a cathedral." "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward . . ." (Colossians 3:23,24). A Christian view of labor means that the workman is responsible first to God, then to his employer, and then perhaps to his union.

#### IV. The Contribution of Labor Unions

"The function of the church is to continue the healing ministry of Jesus . . ." and that requires diagnosis first.<sup>14</sup> At present, when unions are widely criticized for tolerating corruption and setting forth startling demands it is easy to forget the great contributions made by labor unions since their beginning. Unions arose mainly as a movement to counteract abuse and injustice. They developed as a natural counterpart to widespread, often brutally exploitative, concentrations of managerial power.

In the early period of industrialization, owners and managers, including some Christians, often saw workmen as mere means to as big a profitable end as possible. The emergence of the giant corporations in the nineteenth century hardly improved the situation. There is no doubt that before the organization of unions workmen were not getting a fair share. Labor leaders are quite right when they argue that they got rid of 72-hour work weeks, child labor, starvation wages, and a callous ignoring of safety standards, by long and bitter union struggles, and that, by and large, they did this

without the leadership or help of the church.<sup>15</sup> All too often the organized Church has tolerated or even promoted a crude and unfair laissez faire individualism without any significant concern for social justice. It is a sad commentary on at least a part of historical Christianity that it was a secular movement, rather than the Church, which functioned as the conscience of society in these areas.

"More than we realize, or are at times willing to admit, labor unions, in spite of their shortcomings, have made a real and constructive contribution" to our contemporary way of life.<sup>16</sup> That is one of several reasons why Christian employers, employees, and believers generally, ought not to view organized labor, per se, as at best a necessary evil.

Much of what unions undertake to do even in our own day is fully legitimate and praiseworthy. Efforts at mutual aid, apprentice training, social assistance, and community involvement are to be encouraged. Even lobbying, as such, is a respectable endeavor. It is an attempt to communicate a particular perspective, and in a democratic system, such activity conducted by groups and individuals is important, perhaps essential. The National Association of Evangelicals, The National Council of Churches, the Mennonite Central Committee, the National Service Board of Religious Objectors, and the National Association of Manufacturers are examples of legitimate pressure groups which probably lobby for their point of view. Laborers, represented by responsible spokesmen, have a right and duty to make their views known.

#### V. Labor Unions: Inherent Problems

There is no doubt about it: labor unions are necessary in the modern industrial world. But one of the difficulties today is the excessive power of labor unions. It is here that the Christian can and must make an invaluable contribution. Power in human hands is a dangerous weapon. A union must have power, but where are its limits? That question can only properly be answered when we have a religious interpretation of power. In a man-centered universe, it is extremely difficult to bind power within boundaries. In a God-centered universe, any human manifestation of power is limited. This is the essence of the Christian principle of sphere sovereignty which implies that social organizations are related to each other in coordinate fashion and not in a hierarchical or subordinate way.<sup>17</sup>

The above statement sets forth clearly the problem of power. In itself social power, any concentration of power, is neither ethical nor unethical. But where there is organized power, there tends to be an ethical problem. Any huge concentration of power, government, labor, management, a profession, etc., "enlarges the power of men to act for good or ill." In most instances powerful authorities have not been able to resist the temptation to misuse their power. Professor Rasmussen suggests that

One of the most important ethical functions of the church is to prepare all its members in the moral realism to understand that groups with the highest purposes, in the pursuit of benefits for their members, tend to press beyond the requirements of justice and infringe on the rights of others.<sup>18</sup>

Labor, it seems, is already the largest single power bloc in both the United States and Canada, yet its drive for power continues unabated. Labor leaders seem to forget that their major battles for justice have already been won. They seem to forget that capital and management are already largely regulated by government, indeed more so than labor itself, yet they seem bent on becoming ever more powerful and its leaders are comfortably situated, can be as un-Christian as powerful business is.<sup>19</sup> The Christian, conversely, operates on the unqualified premise that ultimately, and for him specifically, all power belongs to God.

A second general trait which most unions share with

organizations generally is their secular or humanistic philosophy. By that I mean that officially they recognize no authority higher than man, an orientation which "tends to absolutize human authority." Most union leaders see work as unrelated to Christ and his claims. For them it is only a means to an end, and that end is mainly material success. One authority has noted that labor unions generally lack long-term objectives, only a short-term vague or pure materialism underlies their policies. For all its talk, organized labor lacks both an integrative or directional philosophy.<sup>20</sup> Generally this orientation is described and justified as constituting ideological and religious neutralism. Do we agree? Or do we affirm that

Man's self-styled neutrality is an attempt to ignore the Creator of heaven and earth and to reject Christ as the Redeemer of life. It is, in effect, saying that God is a problem and that the best way to deal with the problem is to ban religion . . . and to declare God to be irrelevant.<sup>21</sup>

The writings of some labor leaders, however, reveal that labor's ideological neutrality is not always as deep-seated as some would make it out to be. Allan S. Haywood, the late Executive Vice-President of the CIO stated, "When you join a union, it's kind of like joining a church. You work for nothing else and you believe in nothing else."<sup>22</sup> The well-known Canadian labor spokesman Stanley Knowles has written, "Unions will stay in their place all right: their place is life itself, and everything that affects the lives of the people of this country."<sup>23</sup> An extreme case of ideological commitment is exemplified in the 10,000-member United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union, whose leader is Homer Stevens, a self-admitted, very active Communist.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the Christian response to these statements should be that if some employees want to organize and run their affairs in this fashion they should at least not force their views on others.

The problem of power and the problem of a humanistic orientation, as here described, are not peculiar to labor unions but they are for that reason of no less significance in our diagnosis and response.

## VI. Labor Unions: Specific Problems

A number of the problems which confront any analyst of the labor movement, are, however, more or less peculiar to organized labor. One of these is probably best termed the "class struggle orientation." Disharmony and strife are presented as being natural.<sup>25</sup> In this connection many union leaders assume a class unity, "the labor movement," and tend to act as if they are commanding troops in battle. Somewhat inconsistently they argue that a monolithic structure is moral and normative for workers but that society generally should be pluralistic. The Christian sees strife and warfare of all kinds as being rooted ultimately in man's alienation from God and rejection of his Lordship, not in class antagonisms. "If any man sayeth he loves God and hateth his neighbor, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20).

A second problem involves the entire matter of compulsion. At present, in both the United States and Canada, the law states that only one union is permitted to conclude an agreement between employer and employees in one plant or enterprise. (Not all employers have agreed to a "union shop" contract nor, of course, have all employees insisted on unionization and thus there are still some places of work in which some or all employees neither pay dues nor join, but the number of such places is diminishing.) A Christian union is allowed to function but only within this framework.

Someone has observed that "compulsory unionism is governmental power exercised by a private organization." Rev. Taylor asserts that the "natural function of a trade union is to represent those employees who want collective representation in bargaining with their employers . . ."<sup>26</sup> Is it biblically correct to assert that compulsion, the power of the sword,

is reserved by God for the state, essentially an involuntary entity, not for a presumably voluntary association? Scripture exhorts us to be free, it warns us not to be yoked together with unbelievers.<sup>27</sup> What does this mean in terms of union membership? Moreover, what does it mean for Christians in professional groups such as physicians and teachers which have been delegated the authority to rant and revoke licenses and certificates and which increasingly are also relying on coercion and the strike? Nowadays even the traditionally individualistic farmer and farm worker is at times coerced to join an organization which may employ intimidation and violence! What is our response to the ultimate threat, "Join or starve"?

Compulsory membership takes several forms. A "closed shop" situation means that the laborer must join the union before he is hired for the job. This practice is now illegal in both the United States and Canada; whether it is entirely non-existent is another matter. Hiring through the union office is common in various areas. A "union shop" situation is one which requires union membership after hiring, usually within 30 days, and thus makes membership a condition of continued employment. Often exorbitant initiation fees of hundreds of dollars are charged.

The argument in favor of the "union shop" is simply that since all benefit, all should join and pay. David B. Archer, President of the Ontario Federation of Labour, suggests that really there is no great moral problem. It is simply a case of "majority rule." If a prospective employee does not like the nature of a contract or the orientation of his bargaining agent he can go "to another factory, or office that is more to his liking, thus the minority position is preserved." Also, if some unionists do not like the way their union leadership is spending their dues they can console themselves with the idea that their particular contribution is used for purposes with which they agree. He argues that many of us dislike the way some of our tax money is spent and that we satisfy our consciences by telling ourselves that our dollars do not go to buy guns.<sup>28</sup> Such rationalization is presented as being the best solution. Is it? Is Archer's analogy valid? And what about the matter of majority rule?

Surely it is fundamental to democracy that the will of the majority must prevail but in no other area is it required that the minority join with the majority and in fact become a part of it. Were this the case then there would be no members of the New Democratic Party in Parliament; they would be absorbed by the ruling party, Liberal or Conservative as the case might be, and would be required to pay dues to it. This would be called preposterous, yet it is exactly what Labour demands . . .<sup>29</sup>

One writer observes,

A union may properly use the majority rule principle to arrive at decisions. But this should be done to conduct its internal business. It has no right to interfere with the constitutional rights of workers outside its membership.<sup>30</sup>

The Executive Secretary of the Christian Labour Association of Canada suggests that if a union must resort to coercion in order to bring in members and become strong, then it has already demonstrated its weakness, for it has failed to capture the imagination of the workingman.<sup>31</sup> Another critic adds that

No combination of employers and unions may place any worker in a position where he is forced to violate his conscience or face the loss of his job. For such is a cruel and unjust choice that has no place in a free society.<sup>32</sup>

After a careful analysis of the problem Professor Hershberger concludes that, "Insistence upon compulsory union membership is nothing less than a form of totalitarianism."<sup>33</sup>

A somewhat modified form of "union shop" is the so-called "Rand Formula," named after Mr. Justice Ivan Rand who in 1946 mediated a dispute between the Ford Motor Company and the United Automobile Workers of America. Under this arrangement the automatic check-off of union dues is made obligatory, but formal union membership is not. Again the rationale is simply that all who benefit should share an equal part of the cost. Presumably a further aspect of the rationale is that since the employee in question does not join

the union he is not legally or morally responsible for what happens to his dues and thus his conscience is clear. Is this an acceptable compromise? And how do we react to the Saskatchewan legislation which permits a union employee, for conscience reasons, to pay the equivalent of his union dues to a charity acceptable to the bargaining union and himself, or one designated by the Labour Relations Board?

A third specific area of concern is the strike. Should Christians ever go on strike? If so, how should they conduct themselves while on strike? To what extent is "going on strike" resistant? Is it dishonest to go on strike if you disagree with the majority strike vote for one reason or another? When does a mere withdrawal of services become unchristian? These are some of the questions with which a Christian employee must grapple.

Presumably any employee, including a Christian, has the right to withdraw his services provided that such action does not constitute breach of contract or promise. And if individual termination of service is proper, presumably a group of individuals acting collectively have the same right. Furthermore, if the action is justifiable it would seem to follow that it is also in place to declare it publicly. Does carrying informative placards and marching in front of a place of business or employment go beyond a morally justifiable expression of employees' views?

Assuming for the moment that the employee response described above is morally acceptable for a Christian, what kind of strike action ought he perhaps to reject? Presumably a strike against other than one's employer, i.e. a "sympathy strike," would come in this category, as would one interfering with normal business or one involving intimidation. A moral question must also be raised concerning the "target company" approach, which involves using the resources of a large union to force the employer of only part of the union to come to terms, and then coercing other employers to accept the same terms. In this, as in other things, the Christian employee must not let the union decision become a substitute for his Biblically-based ethical code. On the other hand, a strike to force an employer to maintain safe premises would appear to be justifiable, as would one against an employer's breach of contract for unacceptable reasons. But the standard union assumption that all strikes are inherently "just" is un-Christian and must be rejected. In any event, a picketer should have no special rights. When he breaks the law he should be treated just as any other law-breaker would be. Conversely, he should also be protected from intimidation, threats, and violence in the same manner as any other person would be. In sum, then, perhaps we can say that the strike, as such, is a permissible, if not exactly laudable, device but that a Christian would not be justified in supporting every strike called, especially in certain kinds of employment. Nor could he condone strikes called for wrong reasons, however these may be defined, nor could he support all the methods many strikers currently employ.

A particularly thorny question involves the hiring of so-called "strike-breakers." Is an employer justified in firing strikers and hiring replacements known by union members as "scabs"? Should Christians accept "scabs" jobs? Ought Christian union members to resist the hiring of "scabs"? Is a Christian unionist ever justified in participating in the various forms of reprisals against either "scabs" or their employers?

There is considerable disagreement, even among Christians, on the issue of striking. One author states,

The churches must condemn as morally and socially vicious the alleged "right" to strike. The strike has been christened as a right, not by the application of any ethical principle but by the catering of political parties and legislators to the power of the labor union.

In earlier days, says this author, the strike may have been justified on the grounds of necessity, but "its use was an index of the barbarian level of the economic segment of American civilization."<sup>34</sup> Another Christian writer, one who supports strikes, observes,

Remember when Laban changed Jacob's wages, Jacob walked out. And Moses led the biggest walk-out in history

when he took the Israelites across the Red Sea. They went out on strike and never came back.<sup>35</sup>

A fourth specific area of concern involves the matter of "feather-bedding," a practice in which the unions insist on the retention of unneeded workmen. The phenomenon appears to be sufficiently widespread to warrant inclusion in the category of specific, more or less intrinsic, labor problems. Should Christian employees encourage or condone such demands? It is easy to answer in the negative but what about the older employee who has spent his best years on a job, and has served his employer conscientiously and ably, and who suddenly finds himself out of work because of automation? What is our Christian response, and responsibility, in such a situation?

## VII Labor Unions: Circumstantial Problems

Many of the problems Christian employees encounter in their relations with labor unions are not necessarily part of unionism but may occur more or less incidentally in the course of events. It is to these circumstantial problems that we now turn our attention.

A fairly widespread occurrence can perhaps best be termed "abuse of power," a problem which manifests itself in several ways. One of these is a deplorable attitude toward contract negotiations. A common union accusation is that employers do not "bargain in good faith," but what options do employers have if they are told, "accept our demands or we'll strike!" As one labor leader put it after stating his demands, "The directors of millionaire and multi-millionaire timber companies will fry in hell before we settle for less."<sup>36</sup> This particular statement was made not in 1867 or in 1900, but in 1967! The employer, presumably had the options of knuckling under, closing down, or risking union reprisals after hiring replacements. Furthermore, many union demands are quite unrelated to productivity or profits. One analyst has observed that between 1949 and 1963 wages increased three times as fast as the cost of living.<sup>37</sup> The emphasis seems to have shifted, at least in part, from justice to greed. In the late nineteenth century the famous American labor leader Samuel Gompers was asked what labor actually wanted. He replied simply and unequivocally, "More!" One of his successors, Walter Reuther, reflected the same orientation by recently insisting, "We want more money and we want it guaranteed!"<sup>38</sup>

The cumulative actions and policies of the union indicate that its leaders are not content to achieve mere parity with management—which it has already attained—but are determined to gain the whip hand in industry.<sup>39</sup>

Many statements by union leaders themselves lend credence to this criticism. G. Stob comments,

the worker has been taught to think in terms of what he can wrest from the man who needs his skill . . . This is part of labor's great temptation. The very thing for which it was forced to fight, a share in the goods it produces, can, if this becomes an all-consuming objective, make this giant a monstrosity—a big body with all appetite and no soul.<sup>40</sup>

In similar vein Rev. Taylor writes,

It must be obvious by now to every Christian in Canada and the United States that such international unions as the United Automobile Workers, the Pulp and Paper Workers, the United Steel Workers, and the Teamsters are all completely self-centered in their aims and purposes, their object being simply to obtain all they can out of management and the consumers with little, if any, regard for the public interest.<sup>41</sup>

Are these indictments too strong? It is, of course, partly a matter of opinion, but I for one, am getting somewhat tired of hearing many union leaders refer to all their demands

as "decent," to most employer proposals as "unrealistic," and to any labor-controlling legislation as "vicious." Union leaders are quick to argue that all they want is justice and general improvement, but these affirmations lose much of their appeal when one sees union members refuse to work alongside non-union help, refuse to handle so-called "hot" cargo, and tolerate widespread violence and intimidation. Particularly annoying is the standard union argument that the issuance of court injunctions, to forbid picketing when accompanied by violence, is somehow anti-labor and is an attempt to suppress the "rights" of unions. Increasingly frequently there is open defiance of the law!<sup>42</sup>

Where does all of this abuse of power, this toying with the temptation to tyranny, leave the Christian worker? Should a Christian union member separate himself completely from unions which abuse their power? When does use of power become abuse for a Christian? The needed answers are neither easy to come by nor easy to put into practice.

Another general problem area has to do with the matter of political connections. Presumably no one disputes the right of a group, voluntarily constituted, to support a particular party or policy. But should the majority in a "union shop" bargaining unit be able to demand such support from all its members? The practice is common in both the United States<sup>43</sup> and Canada. Reportedly, although about 60 per cent of union members oppose the policy, something like 40 per cent of New Democratic Party (a Canadian political party) financial support comes from unions.<sup>44</sup> Canadian labor leader Stanley Knowles boasts that unions provide a "goodly portion of the funds" for NDP.<sup>45</sup> Comments to the effect that the NDP is the "political arm" of the major unions in Canada abound in Knowles' writings.

The crucial result of these financial connections is that an employee even under the "Rand Formula," may be forced to support a political movement propagating or implementing the exact opposite of his own views and convictions. Can this be justified or rationalized in terms of Christian stewardship?

A final point to be raised in this section is the problem of gross corruption. The utterly shocking extent of the use of thugs, goon squads, hired murderers, and jungle tactics generally, is thoroughly documented in forty volumes of evidence given to the United States Senate Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor or Management field.<sup>46</sup> The situation in Canada is almost equally deplorable. What Teamster member in either country can rest at ease after seeing president James Hoffa, although convicted of crimes, re-elected president of the 1,700,000-member Teamsters Union in 1966 without any opposition? Proclamations of innocence are not substitute for a thorough house-cleaning and change of tactics involving both physical violence and misuse of funds. This general criticism is not an indictment of all unions or union leaders, but it purports to be a factually-based reaction to what is either encouraged or tolerated in many of the large unions. What have we to say to our Christian brother who finds himself in the unhappy predicament of having to forfeit his job or help finance corruption?

More could, and perhaps should, be said about both the weaknesses, and especially the strengths, of existing unions. This omission does not necessarily imply lack of awareness. The reason that this paper emphasizes organized labor's shortcomings rather than its significant and laudable achievements is that it is mainly in the former that the ethical problems lie.

## VIII Alternatives: Available "Solutions"

A common response, even among Christian analysts, is to argue that the present situation is really not "that serious." Unions ought to be recognized for the secular institutions they are; one ought not to try to apply Christian ethics to them. Union membership is like national citizenship; the individual

workman should contribute his dues willingly, realizing that he is not responsible for what the majority or the leadership decides to do. Union corruption is not his corruption. As long as he personally stays clear of violence and intimidation he has no need to worry. The Christian union member, it is argued, should remember that he shares many other common associations with "neutral" groups; the Red Cross, the PTA, hobby clubs, and producer (and consumer) co-ops are cases in point. Besides, if he is really so concerned, why doesn't he personally do something about it? Why does he not utilize his opportunities to witness and be influential? Let him ponder carefully the criticism of Christian labor leader Harry Johnson.

If the Christian union members would go to meetings and vote according to their consciences, they could control the meetings. You know how a church business meeting goes—about 20 per cent of the members show up. Well, it's the same way in the unions. If the Christian union members would vote, they would be plenty powerful.<sup>47</sup> And besides, there are still many "open shop," or non-union, employment opportunities in North American business and industry, so why make a big issue over unions? That, in summary, is the defence of the acceptance of the present situation; what is the response?

In the first place, it is argued, the situation is not one of "status quo," but rather one of deterioration. Surely no one can deny that there is a decreasing incidence of meaningful union-management negotiation procedures. Furthermore, most unions can hardly be described as being ideologically neutral. They tend to have very definite political and philosophical orientations. "A union is a political organization, and it is a folly to judge it by standards other than political."<sup>48</sup> A common humanistic orientation can hardly be denied, and it becomes centrally significant, for example in view of the context of the CIO membership pledge which hundreds of thousands of members have had to repeat.

I do sincerely promise, of my own free will, to bear true allegiance to, and keep inviolate, the principles of the Committee for Industrial Organization, . . . to defend on all occasions and to the extent of my ability the members of our organization . . . I promise to cease work at any time I am called upon by the organization to do so.<sup>49</sup>

Taylor adds, "Far from being themselves religiously neutral, the present day big labor unions display definite views and beliefs about man's nature and destiny. Such unions have a very clear-cut philosophy of their own and they invariably act in accordance with it."<sup>50</sup>

The Christian code of ethics, it is argued, is always valid for a Christian. Responsibility and accountability are not so easily set aside. Christianity, as shown earlier, is totally and intricately related to the field of work. Therefore it is un-Christian to live by one ethic in private life and another in organizational activities. Thus,

anyone who wants to construct a distance between the Christian Gospel and modern industrial problems is radically and principally wrong. He then constructs a distance which has already been bridged by the Lord Jesus.<sup>51</sup>

Then, too, the response continues, working for and with non-believers in the Red Cross or PTA is basically different from joining labor unions which clearly act in an anti-Christian manner and require the same of us. Certainly, Christians ought to participate in community-based humanitarian ventures but always this participation and cooperation must be qualified. But what room for qualification is there, for example, in the membership pledge required by the Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators, and Paper-hangers of America?

I will render full allegiance to this Brotherhood and never consent to subordinate its interests to those of any other organization of which I am now or may, hereafter, become a member.<sup>52</sup>

Nobody disagrees with the notion that a Christian should witness wherever he is, but it can surely be argued that by joining an intrinsically anti-Christian organization which requires the type of pledge cited above, one has already compromised, if not completely undermined, a possible prophetic ministry. Every Christian should strive to be a "whole man" but he cannot be a "whole man" if he is a wholly union man!

Granted, those places of employment where the "Rand Formula" is tolerated are somewhat more acceptable, but the difference is perhaps only one of degree. And finally, it is true that there are still some "open shop" situations but their number will likely decrease. To look in that direction for a workable solution is only running away from the problem, and it is perhaps tantamount to saying that there is no Christian answer to the problems associated with organized labor.

A second general option is to contend that Christians should become their own employers and employees. Presumably the acceptance of the Christian code of ethics by both sides would result in amiable relations, easy negotiations, and no intimidation, coercion, or violence of any kind. Employees of these Christian firms might or might not choose to form a union or join an existing Christian union, as the case might be. The account of the Winnipeg-based B. F. Klassen Construction Ltd. and its employees relationship is an interesting case in point.<sup>53</sup> Such an approach means, of course, that we are prepared to give up a certain amount of freedom of location and of vocation, but presumably these freedoms are not the highest values for a disciple of Christ.

A third approach is built around the idea that we ought to avoid all places of employment which have been unionized or where there is any kind of necessity to associate with unions. In other words, to use in a somewhat different sense the categories spelled out by Peter Rideman and Menno Simons centuries ago, when they argued that believers should avoid all "dangerous" occupations and be active only in "safe" pursuits. The criticism of this suggestion is that while there may at one time have been considerable merit in such a dichotomization, it is now quite unrealistic. We agree that certain pursuits are intrinsically un-Christian but we must also assert that temptations to do wrong abound everywhere. Also, it is no longer a simple matter to run away from the areas of unionism. The civil service, farming, and almost all of the professions are either already becoming unionized or behaving as if they were unions. And to argue that we should become employers rather than employees is, quite apart from the problematic financial aspects, no escape from the ethical problems involved. It merely means that we must face the issues from the other side of the bargaining table.

A fourth general approach is that Christians should try to change both the unions and labor legislation, the former mainly by making a strong and positive internal contribution and the latter by pressuring law-makers. As "the salt of the earth," say proponents of this view, we have a duty to try to transform evil into good in all areas of life. How do we know that we cannot improve union morality and coercive practices? Have we really tried? And why should we not appeal to our government for remedial action? After all, Paul did and the government of his day was not even a constitutional democracy! Furthermore, is it not our duty to testify to governors and kings concerning what things are right? Indeed, are there not already indications that unions are being brought to heel? Is not the revelation of corruption producing a natural antidote and will this not make it easier for us to achieve even greater legislative restraints and reforms?

Possibly so, the other side responds, but the real problem will not be solved by the elimination of corruption or even increased governmental controls. What is needed is an entirely new orientation on the part of millions of unionists and their leaders. It is a fine goal, but also an unlikely prospect, to try to bring the bulk of the economic order, and perhaps the political also, to conform to "the way of the cross." Besides, the response continues, how can we expect to get anywhere via the reformist approach in view of the fact that the campaign to promote "right-to-work" laws is hardly holding its own?

Perhaps at this point we should take a few minutes to review the pros and cons of "right-to-work" legislation which has itself become a major item of contention. A "right-to-work" law is a law which makes compulsory union membership illegal; it declares illegal any collective agreement which makes membership in a labor union a condition for continued employment. A better term might be "compulsory open shop." The

law does, however, in some instances, admit the application of the "Rand Formula." "Right-to-work" laws now exist in 19 states in the United States, generally in the non-industrial areas. The supporting arguments are the following.

The right to work comes from God . . . . Man is primarily and first of all responsible to God. That implies that no roadblocks may be thrown in his way to live responsibly, that is, obediently before the face of God.<sup>54</sup>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 states,

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment. Article 23 (1)

No one may be compelled to belong to an association. Article 20 (2)

Although both Canada and the United States have declared their full acceptance of the entire Declaration, both governments currently oppose national "right-to-work" laws and in the United States there is a concerted effort to deny states the right to enact such laws.<sup>55</sup> In Canada, responsibility for labor laws is divided between national and provincial governments; at both levels there is the constitutional right to enact such laws but at present no "right to work" statutes exist.

As Fannin observes, the workers right to organize in a "right-to-work" state is still protected, and the majority still decides.

The only aspect of bargaining which right-to-work laws prohibit is compulsory membership agreements. Such agreements are for the benefit of labor leaders rather than that of the workers . . . . The chief argument of advocates of repeal is that all workers should be union members if they are to receive the benefits of collective bargaining. This is known as the "free rider" argument. It assumes that it is better for a worker to be forced to join the union than for the union to be deprived of his dues. It should be remembered, however, that a substantial portion of union dues is spent on civic, political and promotional activity having no relation to the service of collective bargaining—a fact which seriously weakens the "free rider" argument.<sup>56</sup>

The state may never become the tool of one party or pressure group for the attainments of its goals only . . . . When the state does that, it lends its power of compulsion in the public sphere to a private organization. This results in the removal of a significant distinction between the state and other institutions, and it is a move into a totalitarian direction.<sup>57</sup>

[The] entire Christian community should unite to secure the enactment of right to work laws. Right to work, that is with religious differences intact. Right to work under fair and equal conditions. Right to work without having the unions in control force unionism upon workers. Without having to leave one's religion, his service of God, at the shop door.<sup>58</sup>

If the government, as it does, grants exemption to conscientious objectors in the area of military service, which is far more crucial to the country than private employment, why should it not also respect the rights of conscientious objection in the latter realm? Ultimately the right to organize, as also the right to worship, is meaningful and freedom-promoting only if it includes its opposite, the right not to organize and the right not to worship.

The arguments opposing "right to work" laws center primarily on the question of "free-loading." "A worker who refuses to join the union weakens it, and to that extent weakens the collective effort to win the terms that all should enjoy. That is why union workers feel so deeply about this matter of union security."<sup>59</sup> Less responsible, but highly revealing, is Knowles' comment,

The campaign for so-called "right to work" laws goes on, a misnomer if there ever was one, for this is nothing less than a cry for legislation to deny to employees the right to belong to a union, the right to work under conditions agreed to at the bargaining table. It is nothing less than an attempt to get rid of the rule of law of industrial democracy, in labour-management relations.<sup>60</sup>

What is our Christian response to these arguments? Do our

ethical presuppositions necessitate a particular course of action?

The fifth and final option to be evaluated here is the endorsement of separate Christian-oriented labor unions. To some extent I shall take the Christian Labour Association of Canada as a case study for this section, partly because its principles appear to be closer to the ethical values described in the earlier sections of this paper than do those of its American counterpart, and partly because the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) was the only one which provided me with all the information I requested. The substance of the pro and con arguments presented below are, of course, not necessarily more valid because they may refer specifically to the CLAC: they must be evaluated independent of any particular organization.

What is the general orientation of persons who promote the cause of Christian labor unions? Gerald Vandezande contends that

Christian organization—the communal walk of Christians before the face of their Lord in obedience to his Word—is inherent in the demands of the Christian religion; Christian organizations should, consequently, not be classified as a luxury we can ill afford, as a pressure group, or as a necessary evil.<sup>61</sup>

Professor Seerveld adds that

a Christian labour union seeks to articulate, implement, redeem the working man's responsible laboring prerogatives in a way that obeys Jesus Christ, the Lord's guidelines of love and justice as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.<sup>62</sup>

Rev. Taylor points out that

members of the Christian Labour Association are fully conscious of the necessity of organizing labour unions to combat the injustices of monopolistic capitalism and to eliminate low wages and poor working conditions.<sup>63</sup>

Viewing the problem in a broader perspective Joel Nederhood argues that

In the long run, our opposition to the non-Christian labour unions does not exist because of their violence, which we are not particularly surprised about, but we oppose them because we know that they are essentially unequipped to offer viable, important, and useful solutions to the complex problems that exist today and which will exist tomorrow. On the long term, we know that it is only the Christian man, infused with the data of the sacred Scriptures . . . and fired by the power of the Holy Spirit who is able to suggest useful solutions within the world of human work.<sup>64</sup>

Numerous additional supporting arguments are presented by proponents of this perspective. Hyper-individualism, it is held, is not intrinsically Christian; it has been, and continues to be, the cause of much injustice. In our age of big business and big government, etc., a cooperative approach for Christian workmen is fully appropriate. After all, it is not power but its abuse which is un-Christian. True, the arguments continue, committed Christians are frequently tolerated in non-Christian unions but often the price is a high one—Christianity must be made so inoffensive that it becomes ineffective. Citing many of the kinds of criticisms of most unions analyzed in earlier sections of this paper, these advocates insist that it is virtually impossible to accept the ethical norms of most of the labor unions and still abide by the biblical imperative as exemplified in Galatians 5:1 "Stand fast . . . be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Commenting from an Anabaptist perspective Professor Hershberger states,

If by the admission of labor's own leaders a true application of Christian principles obviates the need for labor organizations operating on the traditional coercive pattern, it would seem that Christian employers and employees should rise to meet this challenge for the blazing of a new trail in industrial relations.<sup>65</sup>

Would a Christian labor union strike? Not "unless the employer refuses to abide by an arbitration award."<sup>66</sup> It is noteworthy that since its founding in 1952 the Christian Labour Association of Canada has not once been involved in a strike.

What has been the record of the major existing Christian

unions to date? Referring to the Christian Labour Association in the United States, which has been in existence since 1932, commentator Stob writes:

Though it has won some notable victories . . . the general effect on existing unions has been that of a nuisance value in certain areas. For the rest, the significance of this small labor movement is that it stands as a protest against the moral and spiritual failures of existing labor unions, and it is an attempt to give witness by embodiment to the Christian social ideal.<sup>67</sup>

Now let us turn to the opposing view, namely, that the sponsorship of, and membership in, Christian unions is not the best answer to an admittedly difficult problem. Is it desirable for Christians to go off by themselves somewhere, completely separated from their non-Christian fellow workers? Does this not preclude even the possibility of an effective witness? Is not united action by Christians in fact coercive power just as much as pressure by non-Christians? Is a "Christian union" anything more than the covering of an essentially neutral, or perhaps intrinsically non-Christian, activity with a Christian veneer? Can any labor union function entirely, or even largely, according to the "way of the Cross" when most of management and the rest of society does not?

There are also, say the critics, formidable practical problems. The CLA approach is allegedly workable only where the CLA has become the bargaining agent, and how common is such a situation likely to be? In how many significant establishments would a majority of the employees support a truly Christian union? Otherwise, providing the law permits it, the result is either a number of different contracts with varying provisions, and likely resulting friction, or a binding collective agreement based on the views of various unions, arrived at by compromise, in which the Christian emphasis would likely be minimal. A special problem involves those vocational and professional associations, or unions, which have been empowered in at least some states and provinces to be professional licensing agencies. It is one thing to insist that no Christian should join an association which employs un-Christian coercion, but are we really prepared to accept the probable, more or less logical, consequences, namely, that then in all likelihood there would be no Christian physicians, teachers, lawyers, etc.?

What is our response to these contentions? How do the arguments for and against a separate Christian union relate to the previously enunciated Biblical value? No doubt we are not entirely united in our response, but perhaps we can all agree with the observer who suggests that

The Christian Labor Association may not be the final answer of evangelicals to the labor problem, but it deserves the careful consideration of all and a fair chance to prove itself.<sup>68</sup>

## IX Conclusion

Do unions have a place in our society? It would appear that they do. Should Christians join them? Should they press for the formation of Christian locals? Should they work for other solutions? These questions cannot be answered easily, or at least not definitively. In all likelihood the most satisfactory approach, at least in the long run, will involve the implementation of at least several of the alternatives which have been delineated above.

No matter what our individual and corporate response may be there seems little likelihood that we can avoid a crucial dilemma. Either as members of a Christian union or of a non-Christian union, or even as non-member of any union, we all have ethical-social relationships involving non-Christians. These relationships create tensions, and as long as the bulk of society is sub-Christian these problems will persist. In a sense our dilemma constitutes a normal situation. As Christians we ought not to expect that we can live without these problems, without frustrations, and even without rejection in

this essentially sinful world. We remember the experience of our Lord and also his reminder that we, who claim to be his followers, should be prepared for frustrations and rejection such as he experienced.

As a brotherhood we need to realize that a truly Christian response to the ethical problems associated with labor unions will probably threaten both our extensive comfort and considerable complacency. If we are really sincere when we say that we want to tackle the ethical-spiritual problems associated with organized labor then we must be willing and

prepared to adopt drastic changes in both orientation and practice. We may be called upon to assist in massive ways those of our Christian brethren who, because they live their faith, face intimidation, unemployment, or other hardships. We may well have to rediscover what it means to give, and what is perhaps even more difficult, to receive true Christian charity. May our Lord and Master guide us as we seek his will, and may he give us both courage and strength to be obedient. Let us work diligently and pray fervently so that he will be honored and that his will might be accomplished.

## Appendix

### Appendix A

#### Christian Labour Association of Canada

##### A Christian Choice

The Christian Labour Association of Canada, usually referred to as the CLAC, is an independent, government-certified Christian labour movement. It was organized in 1952 by several groups of workers who recognized the urgent need for a strong, independent trade union movement which would conscientiously seek to speak and act in harmony with the all-inclusive authority of the Word of God. These Christian men and women believed that labour organizations should promote peace, harmony, liberty, and justice in humble obedience to the God-given command. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind . . . and thy neighbour as thyself." In short, the founders of the CLAC were convinced that labour-management relations, working conditions, and labour legislation should reflect man's obligation to serve his Maker and his neighbour.

The CLAC's constitution acknowledges the Bible as the basis and norm for its activity. Consequently, the organization aims to organize workers for the purpose of establishing freedom and justice in labour relations, promoting the workers' well-being, and assisting them in the discharge of their Christian calling. The CLAC therefore advocates full representation rights, harmonious employer-employee relations, good wages, excellent working conditions, just labour agreements, and effective educational programs.

Presently the CLAC enjoys the whole-hearted, voluntary support of approximately 3,000 members affiliated with about 70 locals in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia. In the near future it also hopes to establish locals in Saskatchewan. The CLAC strives to become a nation-wide labour movement. It shall not rest until every Canadian worker has been concretely confronted with the significant implications of the Christian faith as it applies to labour and labour relations.

The CLAC is an entirely independent Canadian movement. It has no formal ties or connections with any church or political party. CLAC membership is open to all who desire to help realize the organization's Christian principles and objectives. We naturally welcome the support of everyone who wishes to make it possible for Canada's workers to be represented by a Canadian labour organization which is motivated by a genuine desire to uphold the Christian principles.

The CLAC is not only independent; it is also a free organization. It is committed to freedom of association, because free men should have full opportunity to order their lives in accordance with their deepest convictions. In the area of labour relations this requires that workers have the liberty to form and support free organizations through which they can give practical expression to their convictions, be they Christian or otherwise.

It is vitally important to workers whether a labour union

accepts a Marxian, a socialist, or a Christian point of view. Therefore, freedom of choice in regard to union membership and financial support must be established. It is high time the undemocratic, discriminatory practice of forcing workers into unions as a condition of their employment be discontinued.

The CLAC, in keeping with the intent of the law and the express provisions of the Canadian Bill of Rights, honours the principle of freedom of association. Wherever it obtains the right to represent people, the workers are free to join or not to join. The CLAC respects men's God-given right to work. It continually demonstrates the crying need for legislation that will safeguard the Canadian workers' freedom to join unions of their own choice and to be represented by them.

When the CLAC first became organized it ran into serious difficulties. On three occasions the Ontario Labour Relation Board refused to certify CLAC-affiliated trade locals. It ruled that their Christian character made them ineligible. The Board argued that the CLAC's commitment to Christian principles violated anti-discrimination legislation.

If this negative ruling had not been challenged, the CLAC's effectiveness would have been greatly reduced. Since the freedom of Christian action is very vital, we decided to appeal the Board's arbitrary decision in the Supreme Court of Ontario.

On March 5, 1963, the CLAC's case was ably defended by two Toronto lawyers before Chief Justice J. C. McRuer. The Chief Justice ruled in favour of the CLAC and stated in his decision, among other things: "It cannot be said that in law a requirement that the meetings of a trade union must be opened with prayer makes the trade union discriminatory. . . . Prayer is a supplication for divine guidance . . . . However, the Legislature that passed the Labour Relations Act opened its sessions the day the Act was passed with prayer. Likewise, the Parliament of Canada opens its daily sessions with prayer. The British National Anthem, used as the Canadian National Anthem, is a prayer. The Bill of Rights affirms 'that the Canadian Nation is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God'. The oaths of office of all public officials all acknowledge the supremacy of God.

" . . . if I supported the Board's refusal to certify the union on the ground that its members engage in prayer, read passages from the Bible and sing psalms and hymns at their meetings, the results would be that a union that required no standards of ethical or moral conduct and opened its meetings by reading from Karl Marx and singing the Red International might be certified but one that permits the practices here in question could not be.

"I would be very loath," reasoned Chief Justice McRuer, "to hold that the Legislature meant that a trade union that sought to maintain such standards of behavior could not be certified, while one that permitted among its members anarchists, Communists, and disciples of all sorts of violence could be certified."

This significant victory for Christian action paved the way for further expansion. Additional locals were organized and received certification from the respective labour boards, in the province of Ontario (June 4, 1963), Alberta (April 9, 1964), and British Columbia (June 2, 1964).

—Prepared and distributed by the Christian Labour Association of Canada 1058A Albion Road, Rexdale, Ontario.

## Appendix B

### Supplement "A"

Principles to which the CLAC is committed are these:

1. All human beings bear the image of their Creator and must as such be treated with dignity, respect and love. Every violation of the divinely given law of love among men is a sin against God.
2. Discrimination in employment because of color, creed, race or national origin conflicts with the biblical principle of equality of all human beings before God and the law of love toward all men.
3. The task of developing the resources of the world has been entrusted to the human race as a whole, which implies that there must be opportunities for participation in the fulfillment of that task for all members of society.
4. It has been so ordered that men shall live by the fruit of their labours and that in the performance of their work they shall make use of and develop the physical and intellectual qualities with which they have been endowed; hence all men are entitled to such a reward upon their labours as will be adequate to meet their family needs and social obligations in a respectable and honourable manner, and which will reflect also the measure of their devotion to their respective tasks.
5. Creational resources may not be exploited for personal gain of the enrichment of a group or a community or a nation, but must be developed for use in the service of all mankind.
6. Injustice in relations among men are due, basically, to violation of divinely instituted law and order. Removal of injustices may not be sought by means of promotion of class conflict or by revolution against properly established authority—actions which are in themselves contrary to divine law—but must be promoted through reformative measures that are in harmony with divinely instituted law and order.
7. The interdependence of employers and employees, their many common interests, their obligations and responsibilities toward each other, their mutual obligations and responsibilities toward society in general and given fulfillment in obedience to the law of love, demand that there be cooperation between them in the promotion of the best interest and welfare of all concerned.
8. Employers and workers and their organizations must constantly drive for the attainment and maintenance of labour conditions in which the spiritual and the physical and moral well-being of the workers are advanced; which demands conditions in which interest in the work being done and joy in the performance of it are stimulated.
9. The common bonds of interest between workers demand that there be organization among them for the purposes of protection of inherent and lawfully established rights and the promotion of their mutual welfare, through collective bargaining and the negotiation of labour agreements.
10. Workers who share in the benefits gained through the activity of an organization that represents them are socially and morally obligated to assume a just share of the obligations that are attendant upon such organized activity; provided however, that no worker who because of a conscientious conviction cannot join the organization shall be refused employment.
11. When labour disputes arise both employers and workers must use every available means to settle their differences by means of conferences, mediation or arbitration. The use of violence against persons or property, the unlawful seizure of property, the employment of labour spies intimidation, coercion, discrimination and all other unchristian methods for either advancing or discouraging organization, or forcing the settlement of a dispute, stand condemned.
12. All workers, whether acting individually or collectively, have the inherent right to refuse to continue work under an unjust condition, after having exhausted every reasonable means to remove the injustice by means of conference, mediation or arbitration; except that in any industry or institution or public service, where a cessation of work might endanger the life and health of people, or might directly imperil the welfare of the community or nation, the right to refuse to continue to work must be surrendered and all disputes settled by means of neutral arbitration.

## Supplement "B"

Among practical measures which the CLAC will take to reach its objectives are these:

1. Encourage its members to render the highest grade of workmanship and service in the trades or occupations in which they are engaged and promote cooperation between workers and their employers on the basis of justice, love and mutual interests.
2. By organized activity negotiate and maintain labour contracts that will guarantee to workers adequate wages and other just labour conditions in keeping with the Christian social principles set forth in this Constitution.
3. Maintain Sunday as a day of rest and oppose all Sunday labour except that which is necessary because of natural laws and the protection of health and the public welfare; provided that the CLAC shall also protect the right of people who because of religious convictions hold their sabbath on another day of the week; to do so and not to suffer any discrimination as a result.
4. Encourage its members to study and discuss current economic and social conditions and the bearing of Christian principles upon them.
5. Carry on propaganda through the written and spoken word for Christian economic and social principles, and for the taking of measures which will improve labour conditions and relationships and will counteract the unwholesome influence of labour groups that are inspired by communistic or other un-Christian principles.
6. Bring influence to bear upon the government of municipalities, province or nation whenever important interests of labour and industry are at stake in legislative assemblies and exert legitimate influence upon administrative bodies or agencies.
7. Take practical measures to avoid labour disputes and if such disputes do arise champion methods for peaceful settlement.
8. Cooperate with organizations pursuing similar objectives, whenever such action is deemed advisable and does not conflict with the Christian principles to which the CLAC is committed.
9. Assist its members in securing employment and through such practical measures as are feasible, relieve as much as possible financial pressure upon its members when it is caused by involuntary unemployment, disability or old age.
10. Such activities that are in accord with CLAC principles and objectives as may be decided upon by the organization from time to time.

—Taken from the Constitution and By-Laws of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, 1960.

## Appendix C

### "The Rules of the Game"

by David B. Archer, President, Ontario Federation of Labour

The Ontario Labour Relations Act grants every employee the right to join an association, or, union of his own choice. It also preserves his right to not join if he so desires. With this no person, or, organization that believes in democratic procedures can disagree. However, with rights come responsibilities. One of these is the rule of the majority, that is accepted in all areas of our democratic society. This seems to be the area where the Christian Labour Association of Canada and the mainstream of the Canadian Union Movement part company. Our Labour Act certifies "all employees in a particular bargaining unit save and except foremen and above," [sic] the union therefore must represent all employees, union and non-union in the company, and the company is obliged to bargain with only one union. This is quite different from the European procedures where a number of unions based on craft, creed, political affiliation and other differences can represent employees in the same company. For better or worse Canadians have decided not to adopt this system.

In return for "no strike" and other restraints on the union movement, the union is given certain advantages. One of these is to negotiate a union shop, i.e., where every employee as a condition of employment is obliged to join the union or at least contribute an amount equal to dues to the union. This

second procedure is called the Rand Formula after Chief Justice Rand's decision in the Ford Motor Case who suggested since everyone received the benefits of the union negotiations, they should share in the cost. Other jurists have suggested that paying dues as a term of employment is no different than paying P.S.I., pension plans, or, other fringe benefits. On joining any company there are company rules that must be accepted such as hours of work, work rules, etc., and if a prospective employee, for any reason, feels he is unable to accept the job, [he] goes to another factory, or office that is more to his liking, thus the minority position is preserved. None of us like paying taxes. Some dedicated Christians feel a peculiar revulsion about that portion of their taxes that is used for military purposes. This does not allow us the privilege of not paying taxes, or deciding what portion of the tax we pay. We can console ourselves that since the National Budget is so tremendous that our small contribution is used exclusively for welfare or other purpose of which we approve. I think the same reasoning must apply to Canadian unionists unless we are prepared to alter our whole approach and upset our whole industrial relationship.

I do not believe any government in Canada is prepared to depart from the one-union-one-company concept except, of course, in crafts where it is one-craft-one-union. I do not believe management would allow it even if the unions agreed. The "no strike" clauses in return for sole collective bargaining rights is a quid pro quo that will not lightly be upset by any legislature. The responsibility of the union to represent all employees will not be changed, and, therefore, the demand by

the union that all employees contribute to its existence will naturally follow.

All of these procedures and more would have to be radically altered to achieve the seeming objectives of the Christian Labour Association of Canada. I do not think any Canadian Government in its right mind would attempt it. Management, unions and every other interested group in the community would rise in protest.

Therefore my advice to the Christian Labour Association of Canada is to accept the legislation as it exists while working for repeal, amendment, or, additions thereto. I cannot see any diminishment or principle in so doing. Where the majority wish the Christian Labour Association of Canada, the minority will have to accept them as their collective bargaining agency. Where a Christian Labour Association of Canada supporter finds himself in a minority position, he must also accept, or endeavor to change his minority status to a majority one, or, find a more suitable place of employment. These are the rules of the game. They are not faultless but they have contributed to industrial productivity and stability in Canada. Very few Canadians would suggest fundamental changes and no government, yet elected, is prepared to depart very radically from what they consider a tried and true formula.

This is the challenge to the Christian Labour Association of Canada, can they survive and prosper in this industrial climate because, in my opinion, there is going to be no other in the foreseeable future.

—reprinted from *The Guide*, May, 1967

## Footnotes

1 See "Christian Relations in Labor and Management," *The Canadian Mennonite* (November 23, 1962) pp. 5,6,8.

2 Harry Rimmer, *Christianity and Modern Crisis*, East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania: Pinebrook, 1944, p. 13.  
cf. E. L. H. Taylor, *Why Work? The Christian Answer*, Rexdale, Ontario: Christian Labour Association of Canada, 1962; p. 16: "How can any sane workman remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of his life? The Canadian churches' official approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours and to come to church on Sundays."

3 *The Canadian Mennonite*, (November 23, 1962), p. 6. For a depiction of Christianity as pro-union see "Labour Unions and You," *Christian Life* (February, 1956), pp. 20-22.

4 Guy Franklin Hershberger, *The Way of the Cross in Human Relations*, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1958, pp. 13,14. See also Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947.

5 See also Matthew 5:10-16.

6 Albert T. Rasmussen, *Christian Social Ethics*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1956, pp. 255-256.

7 See also Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 22:37-40; and Leviticus 19:18.

8 Guy Franklin Hershberger, *The Way of the Cross in Human Relations*, pp. 6-7.

9 See also 1 Thessalonians 4:11 and Ephesians 6:5-9.

10 E. L. H. Taylor, *Why Work? The Christian Answer*, p. 17.

11 Carl F. H. Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964, pp. 41,42,43,44. See also Paul P. Fryhling, "The Layman and His Work," *United Evangelical Action* (December, 1967), pp. 17-19,31; Alan Richardson, *The Biblical Doctrine of Work*, SCM Press, 1952; Joseph C. McLeiland, *The Other Six Days*, Toronto: Burns and McEachren, 1959; J. Oldham, *Work in Modern Society*, CSM Press, 1950.

12 E. L. H. Taylor, *Why Work? The Christian Answer*, p. 15. See also Stewart Meacham, "Assembly Line Christians," *Christian Century* (August 13, 1952), pp. 920-921; Stewart Crysdale, *The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada*, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1961; Clifford Scotton, *Canadian Labour and Politics*, published by Canadian Labour Congress, c. 1966; and Stuart Jamieson, *Industrial Relations in Canada*, Toronto: Macmillan, 1957.

13 Sherwood E. Wirt, "Is Work So Holy?" *Christian Century* (August 29, 1956), p. 995. See also Romans 11:36. See also Carl F. H. Henry, "Dignity of Work: The Christian Concept," *Vital Speeches* (August 15, 1954), pp. 665-671.

14 J. E. Carothers, "Churches and Steel," *Christian Century* (December 9, 1959), p. 1434.

15 See "Labor Unions and You," *Christian Life* (February, 1956), pp. 20-22.

16 See W. R. Hashinger, "Are Labor Unions Justified?" *United Evangelical Action* (September 1, 1956), p. 248, and "Union Labor Acts Responsibility," *Christian Century* (December 18, 1957), p. 1500.

17 Bernard Zylstra, *Challenge and Response*, Rexdale, Ontario: Christian Labour Association of Canada, 1960, pp. 18-19. See also, Gerald Vandezande, *Must Christians Form Power Organizations?* Rexdale, Ontario: CLAC 1964; Lester Velie, *Labor U.S.A.*, New York: Harper & Brothers; Donald

R. Richberg, *Labour Union Monopoly*, Chicago: Henry Regnery Company 1975.

18 Albert T. Rasmussen, *Christian Social Ethics*, p. 276. See also Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, New York: Scribner's, 1932 (1962).

19 Guy F. Hershberger, *The Way of the Cross in Human Relations*, p. 271.

20 D. S. Burgess, "Labor's Board to Power" *Christian Century* (August 30, 1950), pp. 1017-1018.

21 Harry Antonides, *Some Thoughts on Christian Social Action*, Rexdale, Ontario: Christian Labour Association of Canada, n.d., p. 34.

22 Quoted in E. L. H. Taylor, *Why Work? The Christian Answer*, p. 19.

23 Stanley Knowles, *The New Party*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961, p. 120.

24 For a discussion of Stevens' union see *The Guide*, published by the CLAC, (August-September, 1967), p. 8.

25 See Gerald Vandezande, "Commentary," *The Guide*, (November, 1967), pp. 12-13, and Bernard Zylstra, *Challenge and Response*, p. 19.

26 E. L. H. Taylor, *Why Work? The Christian Answer*, p. 23.

27 Galatians 5:1; II Corinthians 6:14.

28 David B. Archer, "The Rules of the Game," *The Guide* (May, 1967) p. 10. See also C. M. Cook and W. J. Fannin, "Battle Over 14(b) Taft-Hartley Act's Controversial Clause," *Christian Century* (July 28, 1965), pp. 937-940. Archer's Article is reproduced as Appendix C.

29 B. E. Howell, "The Strategy of Penetration," *The Guide* (August-September, 1967), pp. 4-5.

30 Harry Antonides, *Some Thoughts on Christian Social Action*, p. 38.

31 Gerald Vandezande, *The Freedom to Serve*, *The Guide* (December, 1967), p. 11.

32 Harry Antonides, *Some Thoughts on Christian Social Action*, p. 40.

33 Guy Franklin Hershberger, *The Way of the Cross in Human Relations*, p. 269. See Calvin Seerveld, *Labour, A Burning Bush*, Rexdale, Ontario: CLAC, 1965.

34 C. C. Morrison "Re-examine the Social Ideals," *Christian Century* (January 21, 1953), p. 77. For a case record of a "Christian" strike see J. G. Ramsay, "Labor as a Christian Vocation," *Christian Century* (May 27, 1953), pp. 624-626.

35 Harry Johnson in "Labor Unions and You," *Christian Life* (February, 1956), p. 21.

36 See *The Guide* (January, 1968), p. 4.

37 See *The Guide* (December, 1967), p. 1.

38 See *The Guide* (December, 1967), p. 1.

39 C. C. Morrison, "Re-examine the Social Ideals," *Christian Century* (January 21, 1953) p. 76.

40 G. Stob, "Labor Needs a Conscience," *Christianity Today* (September 2, 1957), pp. 17,18. See also Kermit Eby, "Glass-top Desk" *Christianity Today* (December 10, 1956), p. 15: "After working for unions full time for twelve years and having studied them for an equal length of time, I have become convinced that the greatest threat unions face today is their corruption by the mores of the society that they once had expected to turn."

- 41 E. L. H. Taylor, *Why Work? The Christian Answer*, p. 17. See also Guy F. Hershberger, *The Way of the Cross in Human Relations*, p. 308.
- 42 For documentation see Joel H. Nederhood, *Neither Slave Nor Tyrant, Ontario*: Christian Labour Association of Canada, 1966, esp. p. 9.
- 43 See James B. Carey, "Organized Labor in Politics" *The Annuals* (September, 1958), pp. 52-62.
- 44 See *The Guide* (November, 1967), p. 12.
- 45 Stanley Knowles, *The New Party*, p. 116. See also pp. 9, 13, 14, 18, etc.
- 46 For an enlightening summary of these volumes see Sylvester Petro, *Power Unlimited—The Corruption of Union Leadership*, New York: Ronald Press, 1959, especially page 288. See also Kermit Eby, "Union Corruption Has Broad Base," *Christian Century* (July 3, 1959), pp. 818-819, and Sidney Lens, *The Crisis of American Labor*, New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1959 (1961).
- 47 "Labor Unions and You", *Christian Life* (February, 1956), p. 21.
- 48 Frank M. Kleider, "Education for Industrial Citizenship" *Christian Century* (May 29, 1957), p. 682.
- 49 Cited in Harry Antonides, *Some Thoughts on Christian Social Action*, pp. 14-15.
- 50 E. L. H. Taylor, *Why Work? The Christian Answer*, p. 19.
- 51 Bob Goudzwaard, *The Christian and Modern Business Enterprise*, Rexdale, Ontario: Christian Labour Association of Canada, 1967, p. 5.
- 52 Cited in Harry Antonides, *Some Thoughts on Christian Social Action*, p. 20.
- 53 See the account in *The Guide* (February, 1968), pp. 1-3, 15.
- 54 Harry Antonides, *Some Thoughts on Christian Social Action*, p. 26; See also William T. Harrison, *The Truth About Right-To-Work Laws*, Washington, D.C.: The National Right To Work Committee; John E. Coogan, *Voluntary Unionism for Free Americans*, Washington, D.C.: The National Right To Work Committee; J. C. Gibson, *The Legal and Moral Basis of Right to Work Laws*, Washington, D.C.: The National Right To Work Committee, 1955; Edward A. Keller, *The Case for Right-to-Work Laws*, Chicago: The Heritage Foundation, 1956; Peter H. Eldersveld, *The Right To Work*, Chicago: "The Back To God Hour," 1956.
- 55 For a clear presentation of both sides of the argument see Cook and Fannin, "Battle Over 14(b) Taft-Hartley Act's Controversial Clause," *Christian Century*, (July 28, 1965), pp. 937-940.
- 56 Cook and Fannin, *Christian Century* (July 28, 1965), p. 940.
- 57 Harry Antonides, *Some Thoughts on Christian Social Action*, p. 29.
- 58 Paul G. Schrotenboer, *Freedom and Justice for All*, Rexdale, Ontario: C. J. L. Foundation, 1954, p. 10.
- 59 Cook and Fannin, *Christian Century* (July 28, 1965), p. 937.
- 60 Stanley Knowles, *The New Party*, p. 104.
- 61 Gerald Vandezande, *The Guide* (December, 1967), p. 10. See also H. Evan Runner, *Can Canada Tolerate The C.L.A.C.?* Rexdale, Ontario: C.L.A.C., 1967.
- 62 Calvin Seerveld, *Labour, A Burning Bush*, Rexdale, Ontario: C.L.A.C., 1965, p. 13. See also Seerveld's *Christian Workers, UNITE!*, Rexdale, Ontario: C.L.A.C., 1964.
- 63 E. L. H. Taylor, *Why Work? The Christian Answer*, p. 24.
- 64 Joel Nederhood, *Neither Slave Nor Tyrant*, pp. 14-15.
- 65 Guy F. Hershberger, *The Way of the Cross in Human Relations*, pp. 310-311.
- 66 J. Gritter, "A Christian Experiment in the Field of Labor," *United Evangelical Action*, (September, 1956), p. 241. See also Appendices A and B.
- 67 G. Stob, "Labor Needs a Conscience," p. 24. See also *Submissions of the Christian Labour Association of Canada and the C. J. L. Foundation to the Royal Commission Inquiry into Labour Disputes*, Commissioner Hon. Ivan C. Rand, Toronto, 1967.
- 68 J. Gritter, "A Christian Experiment in the Field of Labor," p. 248.