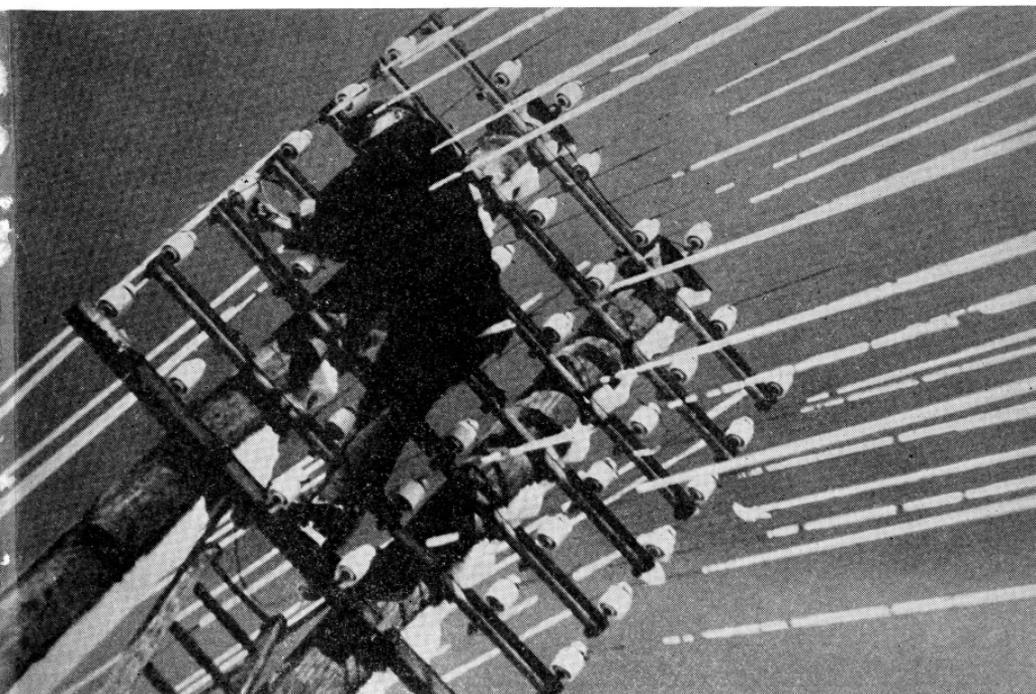




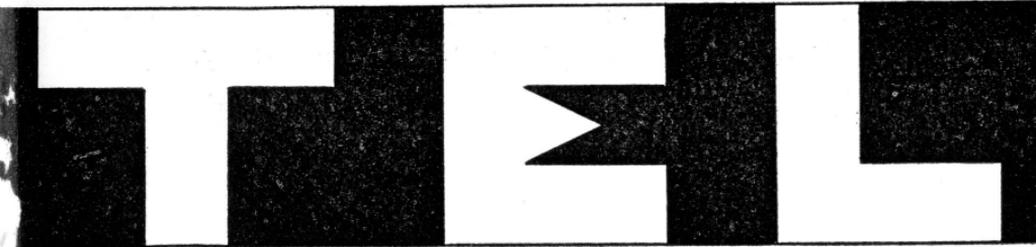
THE TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH WORKERS



By Hy Kravif

INTERNATIONAL PAMPHLETS No. 44

5 cents



TEL AND TEL

THE TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH WORKERS *

By HY KRAVIF

Pick up almost any newspaper or magazine. There you will find attractive advertisements telling you that the telegraph is "the nerve system of world commerce and trade"; that with the telephone came the "dawn of a new era of business civilization," outdistancing the "swift flight of seconds."

These typical advertisements are intended for consumers and potential consumers of telephone and telegraph. They aim to impress readers with the distances that can be covered in communication and to show how the company is "devoted" to the interests of the public. They are written to create "good will" and to get the business.

But there is another side of the picture which the communications companies do not care to advertise, *the conditions of the 350,000 workers who make possible the operation of telephone and telegraph*. What are their wages, their hours of work? Many suffer from unemployment; what protection do they have against it? What of the workers' attempts to organize and of the companies' relations to their employes? What is the significance of President Roosevelt's Communications Act of 1934?

This pamphlet approaches these questions and the industry as a whole from the workers' viewpoint. But to understand the forces lined up against the workers, we must first look into the companies.

Communications services occupy a strategic position in the nation's economy, *especially in time of war*. More than any other large industry, communications is characterized by outright or near-monopolies.

The Bell Telephone System, for example, with assets of over four billions, is the largest private business in the world. Its monopoly position permits it practically to dictate rates despite "regulation."

Four corporations and their subsidiaries dominate the three branches of the industry: two-way telephony; two-way or wire telegraphy; cable services and radio or wireless telegraphy.

* This pamphlet was prepared with the collaboration of Andrew Overgaard, E. Phillips and a number of union telegraph workers whose efforts are herewith gratefully acknowledged.

The industry is important also from the viewpoint of numbers employed. The following table from the 1930 Census lists those reported as "gainfully occupied," *but not necessarily employed at the time*:

<i>Telephone and Telegraph</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Telephone operators	248,884	13,625	235,259
Telephone and telegraph linemen.....	71,625	71,624	1
Telegraph operators	67,821	51,699	16,122
Clerks	51,553	21,232	30,321
Telegraph messengers	16,176	15,997	179
All others (including managers and officials)....	122,543	93,177	29,366
Totals	578,602	267,354	311,248
 <i>Radio Broadcasting and Transmitting</i>			
Radio operators	4,955	4,909	46
All others (including managers and officials)....	4,009	3,185	824
Totals	8,964	8,094	870

The monopolistic position of the four dominating companies is openly admitted in *The Index* (January, 1935), organ of the New York Trust Co., which says:

Other smaller companies are engaged in providing communications and the Government has several minor services, but *in the main, these four companies administer the national communications system and, through their cable or radio facilities, communications between this country and the rest of the world.* (My emphasis—H. K.)

Telephone Trust

The *Bell Telephone System* comprises *American Telephone & Telegraph Co.*, a holding company, with 24 subsidiaries in the telephone field covering practically the entire country. Western Electric Co. is the Bell manufacturing and equipment-unit.

The extent of Bell's monopoly is conclusively demonstrated from Interstate Commerce Commission figures on the 286 telephone companies operating in 1933. Bell had nearly 94% of the 82,086,828 miles of wire; over 87% of the 15,400,000 telephones; nearly 90% of the total number of employes; and over 97% of the "net income."

Roosevelt's Interdepartmental Communications Committee report of January 23, 1934, cited Bell as having "almost a monopoly in the domestic telephone service"; independent companies, the report

declared, only "handle a small percentage of the telephone service of the country."

A. T. & T. was organized by J. P. Morgan & Co. and Morgan influence has remained in control. Although no Morgan partner is on A. T. & T.'s Board of Directors, it is closely interlocked with such Morgan strongholds as General Electric Co., U. S. Steel Corp. as well as First National Bank and Guaranty Trust Co., both of New York City. Directors include John W. Davis, Morgan lawyer who with other A. T. & T. directors was on Morgan's "favored lists." The Rockefellers are represented on the Board through Winthrop W. Aldrich, president of the Rockefeller-controlled Chase National Bank. The Morgan discount or profit on three A. T. & T. bond flotations amounted to \$21,125,000.

Because of its impregnable monopoly position, the Bell System has coined hundreds of millions of dollars in profits. In the six crisis years 1929-34, total net earnings after all deductions (except interest) amounted to \$1,349,000,000, or an average of \$224,333,330 each year. Dividends to stockholders reached a new high of \$368,271,024 in the two years 1932 and 1933. Total net earnings of \$182 millions in 1934 were \$14 millions greater than in 1933.

At the same time the number of Bell workers was reduced from 364,045 in 1929 to only 248,497 in 1933. In 1931, the year in which Bell fired 28,000 workers, President Hoover chose Walter S. Gifford, A. T. & T. president, to head the national Committee on Unemployment Relief!

Gifford's 1933 salary amounted to \$206,000; 18 other Bell officials in the same year averaged over \$48,000 each; and another 57 officers and high salaried employes netted over \$20,000 each. In 1934, Gifford also drew \$206,000.

Two Telegraph Giants

Western Union Telegraph Co. in 1934 handled about four-fifths of the U. S. land telegraph business. At the end of 1933 it reported 21,261 offices and 47,798 employes. Western Union also operates 10 transatlantic cables and six to Latin America. Long-standing contracts with many railroads provide Western Union with exclusive station rights in return for transmitting the railroads' messages.

Western Union is one of the companies in the domain of Kuhn,

Loeb & Co., next to Morgan and Rockefeller, largest of the Wall Street financial groups.

On Western Union's Board of Directors is Vincent Astor, one of its largest stockholders. He is a personal friend of President Roosevelt and contributed \$10,000 to the latter's 1932 campaign. Roosevelt often spends vacations on the palatial Astor yacht. William Averell Harriman, Chairman of the Board of Union Pacific Railroad, and now administrative officer of NRA, is another Western Union director.

Western Union has been very profitable to investors. In the seven years 1928-34, after paying out \$28 millions in interest to bondholders, its *net income* after all charges totaled nearly \$52 millions.

In 1932, it was revealed, 68 Western Union officers were receiving \$900 each a month, or an average of \$10,800 each a year. *Average monthly earnings of all Western Union employes, however, were only about \$90.93 in 1933*, according to Interstate Commerce Commission figures.

Postal Telegraph & Cable Corp., with some 2,800 offices, is a subsidiary of *International Telephone & Telegraph Corp.* It is the second largest U. S. telegraph and cable service and is Western Union's most important competitor. Other I. T. & T. subsidiaries are *Commercial Cable Co.* with six transatlantic cables from New York; *All America Cables, Inc.*, with an extensive cable network from New York to Central and South America and the West Indies; *Commercial Pacific Cable Co.*, operating a cable from San Francisco to Shanghai via Honolulu, Midway, Guam and Manila; and *Mackay Radio & Telegraph Co.* I. T. & T. also operates 19 telephone and radio telegraph companies in the principal European countries, in Cuba, Central and South America; 29 foreign and two United States electrical equipment factories. I. T. & T. had over 72,000 employes (in all) at the end of 1933 of whom 16,800 were employed in its U. S. telegraph and cable units.

I. T. & T. like A. T. & T., is dominated by Morgan, with Arthur M. Anderson and Russell C. Leffingwell, both partners of J. P. Morgan & Co., on the Board of Directors. Lansing P. Reed, George H. Gardiner and Frank L. Polk, Morgan attorneys, are directors of I. T. & T. or its subsidiaries.

I. T. & T.'s "net earnings" after all charges, including nearly \$55 millions in bond interest, amounted to about \$73 millions in the seven years 1928-34. It paid out in salaries and bonuses to certain officers nearly \$3 millions in the five years 1928-32. Sosthenes Behn, Chairman of the Board, drew \$75,000 each year in the years 1928, 1929 and 1930, \$60,000 in 1931, \$51,258 in 1932. In 1933 Behn drew \$48,585; but *average monthly compensation of 16,860 I. T. & T. telegraph workers in the United States, including Postal Telegraph employes, was less than \$75 in 1933.*

Radio Telegraphy

Radio Corporation of America is engaged in international radio telegraph and telephone service through two subsidiaries. They are *R. C. A. Communications, Inc.*, with 40 circuits to the West Indies, South America, Europe, Asia and Africa; and *Radiomarine Corp. of America*, conducting 12 marine radio stations with ship-to-shore services, and ship-to-ship services.

Radio Corp. of America is also in the Morgan sphere, and has direct connections with the Morgan-controlled Bankers Trust Co. Rockefeller is also represented on the Board of Directors and close cooperation has been developed between R. C. A. and Rockefeller Center in New York City. Close ties have also been maintained with A. T. & T. and General Electric, both Morgan-controlled.

In 1934, net profits of R. C. A. Communications amounted to \$546,000 and of Radiomarine Corp. to \$111,000. Radio Corp. of America, the parent company, has been extremely kind to its top officers, paying David Sarnoff, president, and James G. Harbord, Chairman of the Board, over \$1,245,000 in bonus and salary for the six years 1928-33. In the five years 1928-32, at least \$2,181,000 was paid out to R. C. A. officials.

Mackay Radio & Telegraph Co., an I. T. & T. subsidiary, is the other large radio telegraph company in the United States, with seven stations. It has a marine radio service with ships at sea operating eight stations on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts; and 13 overseas radio circuits to Europe, the West Indies, South America.

Competition and Cooperation

We see then that *four huge corporations*, thoroughly dominated by Wall Street, are supreme in the communications services of the

United States. But despite the keen rivalry between financial groups backing the various companies, we find also: (1) cooperation between companies in rival financial camps and (2) opposition between companies in the same financial sphere! Thus Postal and Western Union join to protest A. T. & T.'s teletype service which they claim deprives them of revenue. Also, A. T. & T. has entered the wireless field with the radiotelephone, maintaining a dozen different circuits with foreign countries and 19 ship-to-shore contacts out of New York. On the other hand, Western Union has contracts with A. T. & T. and associated companies whereby the former's telegrams are transmitted over the Bell System in towns where Western Union has no offices. Also, in November, 1931, the competing Western Union and Postal concerns combined to introduce a new form of service through coordination of their printer facilities and through publication of a common directory of printer patrons.

In 1931, R. C. A.'s communications subsidiaries made an agreement with Western Union for transmitting messages to foreign points not directly reached by Western Union's own cable system. In exchange, Western Union relays Radiomarine Corp.'s ship-to-shore messages and also picks up and delivers R. C. A. Communications' messages. R. C. A. is a competitor of I. T. & T. wireless telegraph services and competes with both Postal and Western Union through its new domestic wireless telegraph service.

Approaching the Merger

For five years or more there had been talk of merging Western Union and Postal Telegraph and of "government regulation" of telephone, radio and other communications. But it remained for President Roosevelt to pave the way for mergers by suspending the operation of the anti-trust laws under the N. I. R. A.

So we find among Roosevelt's early requests upon assuming office a report on communications. The Interdepartmental Communications Committee then proposed gigantic communications "monopolies under government supervision." (See Labor Research Assn.'s *Economic Notes*, December, 1933, p. 10.)

Wall Street's reaction to this plan was immediate. The step was one which "bankers for all of the companies are said to favor," reported the New York *Herald-Tribune*, December 14, 1933.

Administration spokesmen cited the A. T. & T. monopoly as an example of what was desired. It was further argued that the proposed mergers would reduce overhead, avoid duplications and provide a "cheaper service" to consumers. The falseness of the "cheaper service" argument is perhaps best demonstrated by the telephone combine itself. As one of the Interdepartmental Committee's own members observed in speaking of the telephone monopoly's rates, "The absence of competition . . . is probably the major cause of such high rates." A. T. & T. has not taken advantage of its position to reduce rates and provide higher wages and better conditions to its employes. On the contrary, it has used its position to charge high rates, to profit enormously and to lay off workers.

As far back as June 11, 1933, the *New York Times*, referring to the proposed merger of Western Union and Postal Telegraph, pointed out that "savings in payroll would be a dominating factor from the business standpoint of such a deal."

The Interdepartmental Communications Committee specifically cited "the duplication of offices of the Western Union and Postal companies. . . . Each duplication means two sets of managers, messengers, clerks, operators and equipment." Exclusive of "estimates for savings through *discharges of employees* . . . [and] provisions for the replacement of such employees who left the service of either company," reported *New York Times*, December 15, 1933, savings through a Western Union-Postal merger "would amount to about \$20,000,000 a year at the end of three years . . ." (My emphasis—*H. K.*). This \$20 million a year saving plus the "savings" in payroll from the dis-employment of additional workers, can accrue only to the profit of the companies!

Communications Act a War Measure

The United States is practically the only important capitalist nation in which communications have not been operated under government monopoly. This has enabled foreign communications monopolies to best the private and competing United States companies in everyday economic warfare and in the periodic international telecommunication conferences. Hence the United States government was placed at a disadvantage *in case of war*. Here, then, is one of the main reasons for Roosevelt's Communications Act—to

provide a better coordinated communications set-up in time of war.

Thus the New York *Herald-Tribune* declared: "Considerations of economy and national defense in times of emergency are credited with the development of sentiment for private monopolies." And in outlining a similar plan before the Army Industrial College on May 4, 1933, David Sarnoff of Radio Corp. of America, stated: "This program is suggested as economically sound in times of peace [and] *practicable for prompt and effective transition for use in war.*" (My emphasis.—H. K.)

The Communications Act was passed on June 19, 1934. Whereupon it was again stressed that it "Empowered the President in time of war to take over radio and wire offices in the interests of national defense." This emphasis on the war aspect of the Act and the proposed telegraph merger under which it would be carried through, ties right in with the whole war preparations program of the Roosevelt government.

Federal Communications Commission

President Roosevelt appointed the seven members of the Federal Communications Commission which began to function on July 11, 1934. It took over the telephone, telegraph and cable authority of the Interstate Commerce Commission and the radio authority of the Federal Radio Commission which was abolished by the new act. The commission is headed by Anning S. Prall who succeeded Eugene O. Sykes as chairman. In December, 1934, it began hearings in Washington at which employers and representatives of the organized workers appeared.

Representatives of R. C. A., Postal and A. T. & T. all favored the merger. It was clear that J. P. Morgan & Co. approved it. But Western Union, a Kuhn, Loeb company outside the Morgan sphere, has been rather cool to the proposal. Because of its near-monopoly position, it does not have so much to gain from a merger as Postal.

As the hearings progressed, Western Union suddenly became solicitous of the workers' welfare. Its first vice-president, J. C. Willever, stated that a merger would result in "considerable increases of unemployment" and that the "major part of the operating economies possible under any plan for consolidation for competing telegraph companies must necessarily come through a reduction in

the force. . . ." At the same time he admitted that enormous profits would follow a merger. The *New York Times*, December 5, 1934, reported him as saying:

if all the telegraph and cable traffic of the United States were handled by one company, certain operating economies could be effected which, if there were no offset, would tend inevitably to increase the sum total of net income in the industry.

Joel Young, president, and Mary L. Cook, secretary, of the United Telegraphers of America likewise appeared at these hearings. They contended "that the proposed merger of the two major telegraph companies would lengthen breadlines and cause increased suffering to thousands of veteran telegraph operators."

Frank B. Powers of the Commercial Telegraphers' Union, estimated that at least 15,000 would lose their jobs if the Western Union-Postal Telegraph merger went through. Even F. G. Burton, president of the Association of Western Union Employees, the company union, although minimizing the extent of unemployment resulting from the merger, admitted that about 8,500 would be rendered jobless. He added that Western Union facilities with the addition of only 1,000 Postal employes are sufficient to care for normal wire traffic. It is doubtful if Burton would have made this admission, had it not been for Western Union's coolness toward the merger.

Despite the organized workers' determined opposition to the merger—expressed especially by the new independent unions—the Federal Communications Commission has gone ahead with its program. On January 21, 1935, it recommended to Congress that the consolidation be left to the telegraph company officials to work out with the approval of the Commission. There were demagogic promises of protecting the interests of the workers through a "dismissal wage." But the Commission virtually admitted that many workers would be fired as a result of the merger. It is significant also that no provisions are made for the more than 30,000 telegraph and cable workers who have been thrown out of the industry since 1929. It is but another example of the Roosevelt government aiding the monopolists at the expense of the workers.

Unemployment

In the years 1929 to 1933 inclusive, no fewer than 150,000, or 30%, of the workers have been squeezed out of the communications industry. This has been accomplished largely through direct layoffs practiced by all companies; by the furlough system used especially by Western Union; by increased mechanization and speed-up.

Companies Reporting Annually to Interstate Commerce Commission

	<i>Employed</i> <i>in 1929</i>	<i>Employed</i> <i>in 1933</i>	<i>Decline</i>
Telephone companies (as of December 31)....	402,255	282,388	119,867
Telegraph and cable companies (as of June 30)	92,958	62,342	30,616
Totals	495,213	344,730	150,483
	<i>Employed</i> <i>in 1929</i>	<i>Employed</i> <i>in 1933</i>	<i>Decline</i>
Bell System *	364,045	248,497	115,548
Western Union	69,409	45,328	24,081
Postal Telegraph **	23,195	16,860	6,335

Thus the three largest communications companies alone accounted for nearly 146,000 of the 150,000 workers rendered jobless in the industry in the 1929-33 period.

Nor has the Roosevelt "New Deal" brought any increase in employment. The Bell System, for example, boasts in its annual report for the year ending December 31, 1934, that it has been operating under the President's Reemployment Agreement since August, 1933. Yet the number of its employes under this "reemployment" program *increased by only 460*, from 248,497 in 1933 to 248,957 in 1934!

Employment of telephone and telegraph workers combined in 1934, actually averaged 0.1% *less than in 1933!* In both these years, employment was 11% lower than in 1932, according to the U. S. Department of Labor.

Bell Kills Jobs

The telephone trust is probably the largest single employer of women workers in the country. By the same token the Bell System

* Not including its subsidiaries, Western Electric Co. and Bell Telephone Laboratories.

** Including also its associate companies, Commercial Cable, All America Cables and Mackay Radio & Telegraph Co.

has become the largest mass *dis*-employer of woman labor. For women telephone operators have been the chief victims of the introduction of automatic operation—the dial system of rationalization. Between 1925 and 1932, dial telephones increased from 12.4% to 42.5% of all the telephones in the Bell System.

Even the U. S. Department of Labor said of the dial system that it has “decreased the employment opportunities for operators by about two-thirds.”

Another trick has been to seek “voluntary resignation” of telephone workers. “The New York Telephone Company,” reported *New York Times*, March 29, 1933, three weeks after Roosevelt’s inauguration, “has instituted a policy of seeking ‘voluntary resignations’ among the more than 20,000 employees comprising its operating force. . . . It is said to be in line with the action of several other subsidiaries of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company . . .”

The inducement to “resign voluntarily” was a so-called “vacation payment,” “equivalent to a week’s salary for every year of service.” This was the workers’ “reward” after long years of service to the company. But during the same years that New York Telephone Co. was laying off workers—19,000 were dropped in the five years 1929-33—the number of higher paid officers was increased as were their salaries.

The City Affairs Committee on June 12, 1933, charged:

In 1930 the New York Telephone Co. paid 48 general officers an average of \$306 a week, or \$15,912 for the year. In 1932 the number of general officers was increased to 51 with an average of \$332 a week, or an average annual increase of \$832. In the meantime the wages of lowly telephone operators decreased from \$32,174,905 to \$22,696,406. Twenty-dollar-a-week operators were compelled to take one, two and three days off a week with a resulting decrease in pay to distribute the burden of depression equitably.

What happens to these discharged telephone workers? Unprotected by a genuine system of unemployment and social insurance such as the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill (H. R. 2827) proposes, many are forced onto breadlines or compelled to live on charity and relief handouts. Even government investigators have admitted that despite the youth of many laid-off operators, it was difficult for them to find jobs of any kind.

"Force-Reduction-Furloughs"

Early in 1931 Western Union introduced on a broad scale the mass layoff system known as "force-reduction-furloughs." Workers in the entire system were affected, from messengers up.

Originally, under the furlough system, workers who were not called to work within two years were automatically dropped from the system. However, the expiration date of the furloughs has been twice extended. In a letter written November 19, 1934, vice-president J. C. Willever again "agreed to renew the special concession (!) stated in my letter of November 28, 1933, by changing the effective dates and extending it through the year 1935."

How does the furlough system operate? A furloughed worker might be called to work one, two or three days a week and work from four to seven hours a day. Those on "unassigned lists" may be called by phone or telegram. They are thus "on the payroll" which not only disqualifies them from unemployment relief, but also serves to keep them on the jump every day waiting to be called to work. Constant worry and stress results from this company policy.

Some workers have been called in for only a few hours when the business rush was such that it could not be handled by the curtailed force. During Christmas and other holidays, furloughed workers might be called in every day and in the busy summer periods for five or six hours a day. They are paid on an hourly rather than a daily basis, so the company "saves" at the expense of the workers.

The furlough system is a potent weapon for the company, which is the reason for its extension. It creates a large reserve force for possible use in strikes; and with such a force the company can lower labor standards of the employed workers—"if you don't like it there are plenty more." Thus vice-president Willever stated in Spring, 1934, that the "present plenitude of available messengers should not cause our people to recruit a larger force than is really necessary." (Letter, May 29, 1934.)

Decline of Morse Operators

The rationalization movement to cut out jobs in telegraphy became particularly marked after 1922 with the introduction of the printer telegraph—known also as the teletypewriter or teletype. (The

teletypewriter is manufactured by Teletype Corp., a subsidiary of A. T. & T. and is used by Western Union and Postal Telegraph; by newspapers, press services, brokers and investment bankers.)

As a result, skilled Morse operators, formerly among the most highly paid workers in the industry, have faced "near-extinction" in the words of the U. S. Department of Labor. "In the larger offices," the same agency adds, "Morse operators have been somewhat slowly but very largely displaced by operators of printer telegraphs, and the productivity of printer operators is so great that technological displacement approximates 50 per cent of the number of operators who would be required under Morse manual operation." These highly skilled operators have been replaced by women workers who are paid a fraction of the wages formerly paid Morse men. As a result, "In all offices combined the proportion of male operators has been reduced from about 80 per cent to about 40 per cent of the total number. . . ." Even in 1932, the government agency could say, "The number of Morse operators is now negligible," having declined from 63.1% in 1925 to only 15.5% of all Morse and printer operators combined in 1931.

Messenger Boys

Messenger "boys" are often grown men with families who have been forced into this low-paid work because of unemployment in other occupations. Mary L. Cook of the United Telegraphers of America, speaking also for the Telegraph Messengers Union at the hearings in Washington last December, "painted a picture of underpaid messengers being kept from work because they could not afford to pay repair bills for their dilapidated bicycles . . . she also charged that messengers were discharged and reemployed at smaller wages." (*New York Times*, December 6, 1934.) Messengers have been paid as little as \$22 a month on full time.

The company, of course, prefers to employ younger, unmarried boys because it can pay them lower wages and speed them up more. A Western Union Messenger School is operated in cooperation with the New York City Board of Education at the Western Union Building. Another school for training clerks, operators and the like is located in Bloomfield, N. J. Students of these schools have been hired to replace furloughed employes at lower wages.

In April, 1934, Grace Abbott of the U. S. Children's Bureau criticized the employment of messengers under 18 years of age to make deliveries on bicycles or motor vehicles "because of the extra hazards involved in this work." (*New York Times*, April 4, 1934.) And yet in August, 1934, vice-president Willever urged an "effort to increase the turnover in messenger personnel and thus decrease the average age of messengers." By arrangement with the Junior Vocational Employment Bureau "at Philadelphia, Delivery Manager Allison made an agreement . . . to exchange older boys who will be placed by the Bureau for 16 year old boys who will enter our service," Willever reported. (Letter dated August 9, 1934.)

Wages and Codes

Weekly payrolls of telephone and telegraph workers combined dropped 30.5% between 1930 and 1934, according to indices of the U. S. Department of Labor. For 1934, weekly payrolls still averaged 11.8% below 1932.

According to the conservative figures of the same agency, per capita weekly earnings of communications workers increased 2.7% between November, 1933, and November, 1934. But cost of living (all items including rent) rose 14% between Roosevelt's inauguration and March, 1935. The higher prices, workers now have to pay for necessities, have more than wiped out what slight wage rises there may have been. The *real wages* of communications workers, like those of millions of other workers, have been slashed under the "New Deal."

The communications companies do not operate under NRA codes. Western Union, Postal Telegraph and A. T. & T. operate under the President's Reemployment Agreement (PRA). Even former NRA Administrator Gen. Hugh Johnson was forced to remark that telegraph workers' conditions under the PRA were "highly unsatisfactory." At the 1933 A. F. of L. convention it was reported that under PRA "telegraph messengers are working for as low as 10 cents an hour. Skilled telegraph girls working in the hotels in Washington under the Blue Eagle are making only \$54 a month, 48 hours a week."

The companies in September, 1933, had submitted a code "unsatisfactory to NRA." This code provided for minimum weekly wages

of \$12 to \$15 (\$1 less in 15 southern states), depending upon population. Later, proposed amendments called for a 43-hour week; exemption of "professional" employes, those receiving over \$35 a week and employes in towns with three or less persons in an office, exclusive of the manager.

But Col. Manton Davis of the R. C. A. said that his company "would have difficulty" even in complying with a 44-hour, \$15 weekly code! Representatives of the Telegraph Messengers Union, however, demanded a minimum weekly wage of \$15 for messengers, the lowest paid employes.

The Bell System was extremely reluctant to submit to an NRA code, it stated, because of its "non-competitive," i. e., monopoly position. Hearings on a telephone code were announced for April 23, 1934. American Telephone & Telegraph Co. itself submitted the proposed code which was almost identical with that of the United States Independent Telephone Assn., representing the "independents" in the industry. The telephone code called for minimum weekly wages of from \$11 to \$15 a week, according to the size of the exchanges, and \$10 for learners. Proposed maximum hours were 40 a week, but employes with salaries of \$35 or more were exempted. These were such openly sweatshop wages that Marie Correll, a representative of the Women's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor, was forced to state: "The minimum wages represent lower wages than have been paid in the past in the telephone industry and are lower than those for other industries."

Wage Slashes During Crisis

On November 1, 1931, a 10% wage cut affecting some 50,000 workers was put into effect by Western Union with the aid of its company union, the Association of Western Union Employees. Some 14,000 messenger boys were excepted because they had previously had their wages cut. In August, 1932, Western Union handed out another 10% cut to workers earning above the "basic rate" of \$80 a month.

When Western Union announced its first 10% slash, *New York Times*, October 14, 1931, reported: "Employees of the Postal Telegraph, Commercial Cable, All America Cables, Mackay Radio and other divisions of the International Telephone & Telegraph

Corporation have received various pay cuts." Postal's slashes amounted to from 10% to 25%.

As a result of workers' direct and indirect pressure, Postal Telegraph in July, 1933, was forced to restore 6% of its wage reductions—but on the basis of the reduced earnings. Western Union followed suit with 10% on July 1, 1933, and another 5% on April 16, 1934. But Western Union wages are still 5% below the time of the first wage cut.

Direct wage cuts have been accompanied by a whole series of devices calculated to increase exploitation of the workers. For example, on November 29, 1933, Western Union announced: "Sunday work to be paid for during this period at straight time rate," instead of at time-and-a-half as before. Vacation pay was cut and vacations spread "over the 12 months period beginning with January 1," to quote Western Union's order. And workers were forced to take vacations "with the minimum number of reliefs and with the least disturbance to the service"—i. e., at the convenience of the company, but not of the workers.

Short tours and compulsory time off without pay, have likewise reduced earnings. Some skilled workers have been reduced to a less skilled status with consequent wage reductions. Telegraph company managers have been demoted to become supervisors, supervisors to operators, while operators have been reduced to lower paid jobs or "furloughed."

Telephone Speed-Up

"It's the greatest speed-up system in the world," wrote a switch-board operator in the *Journal of Electrical Workers and Operators*. Here is a description of the telephone speed-up provided by this operator:

Suddenly I saw the supervisor dart forward. . . "That light has been going for 12 seconds. Snap into it" . . .

You are allowed only 10 seconds to complete a call—and just let the supervisor see you take more than six.

What I hate is this awful sense of being hurried so.

"Girls often faint during the rush hours and are revived in the 'attractive rest-rooms' of which the company boasts in its publicity,"

writes Grace Hutchins in her book *Women Who Work* (International Publishers).

Hours at the switchboard are generally 48 a week. But in Nevada, for example, the law permits women to work as high as 56 hours a week in telephone exchanges. Overtime is common. The "split trick" operators have their day's work separated into two divisions by a period of two to five hours. Older workers are used on the night shift, but most operators are young girls, starting at 18, since it is only the young who can keep up such speed.

Increasing Load of Telegraph Workers

Telegraphers, particularly in the larger offices, have to become accustomed to roaring noises and vibrations peculiar to the telegraph industry. The process of feeding into transmitters, for instance, is accompanied by the monotonous banging of the printing machine. There is the rattle of transmitters, the sharp clicking of typewriter keys, the clangor of bells, the noise of buzzers and so on. The speed-up is terrific.

A large number of the operators in telegraph offices are women. They pound out telegrams on multiplex or "mux" machines, feeding tape into a transmitter at a rate of 60 or more words a minute or from 70 to 80—and sometimes more—messages an hour. The transmitter is stepped up to a high rate and the operators must race to keep up with it.

Western Union operators in the simplex department are often forced to work two positions simultaneously. Averages of each employee are taken to assure the highest possible rate of output. Supervisors and staff chiefs see that no one is idle and that the workers are always "on their toes."

Managers are also subject to speed-up. One complained that he had to combine the duties of porter, operator, stenographer, delivery clerk, call clerk, typist, telephone operator, salesman and various others; to read bulletins from various top officials; inspect messengers' uniforms; dispatch them and take care of business details.

It is no wonder that many telegraph workers, from messengers to managers, are victims of nervous breakdowns and that various nervous disorders are common among them.

Messenger boys are of course forced to use dangerous intersections

and heavily travelled streets in the rush to deliver messages. Often they have to ride defective bicycles in the delivery of telegrams, because they are paid too little and cannot afford to have their bicycles repaired.

The messenger accident rate in Western Union's divisional offices increased 44% between June, 1933, and June, 1934, official records show. For the system as a whole they increased 33% and in district offices 38% in the same period. That "Defective bicycle equipment has been prevalent as a cause for accidents," is recognized by the company, but the company refuses to acknowledge that low wages prevent repair of second-hand vehicles.

Workers Begin to Organize

Western Union has "always taken an attitude of open opposition to the membership of any of its 'essential employees, especially those working the wires,' in any labor unions which would subject them to a 'strike order either for their own benefit or sympathetically for the benefit of others,'" writes Alexander M. Bing in his book *War-Time Strikes and Their Adjustment*, quoting a company statement of 1918.

Union members or those attending union meetings were fired; a secret service department was employed to spy on workers; and workers were discharged by Western Union just before reaching pension age. We have the admission of Newcomb Carlton, before the Congressional Commission on Industrial Relations in 1915 that: "We do not disguise the fact that we do have special agents" to spy on workers and that "men have been discharged from the Western Union since I have been there for membership in the telegraphers' union." As early as 1911 and 1912, the hearings further revealed, telegraphers in St. Louis, Sioux City, New York City and Buffalo, for example, had been discharged because of union affiliation.

During 1918, in common with other trade unions, the Commercial Telegraphers Union began an organization drive. They were encouraged by the promises of the National War Labor Board which—like Section 7a of the NIRA in 1933, and in almost the same language—decreed: "The right of workers to organize in trade unions and to bargain collectively through chosen representatives is recognized and affirmed." (But the Board also ruled that: "There should be no strikes or lockouts during the war.")

Just as under NRA, workers took the "collective bargaining" declaration at its face value. Organization spread to both Western Union and Postal Telegraph. After a C. T. U. meeting of telegraphers in Seattle on April 28, 1918, 140 workers were discharged, Western Union admitted. At the 1918 convention of the A. F. of L., it was charged that at least 250 Western Union and Postal Telegraph workers in Seattle alone were fired; and that over 1,000 unionists had been locked out throughout the country. The resistance of the workers led to President Woodrow Wilson's letter on June 11, urging both companies to accept the decision of the National War Labor Board which was: to permit the men to join the union on condition that they did not strike during the war and that their grievances be left for adjustment by the Board. But even such an anti-labor settlement was rejected by Western Union

The Government as Boss

Accordingly, the government took over operation of the telegraph companies together with the telephone system. Administration was placed in the hands of the Post Office Department under the notoriously anti-labor Postmaster General Burluson. A Wire Control Board of three government officials was appointed and an Operating Board of four—three of them telephone company officials and the fourth C. M. Yorks of Western Union. What happened then is best described by Alexander Bing—himself an employer and one of the "dollar-a-year-men" of the government during the World War—as follows:

The workers had hoped that Government control would result in the removal of grievances; instead its only effect was that *company officials who had been fighting the demands of the men were thereby changed into officers of the Government whose wishes it was just that much harder for the workers to oppose.* [Just as under NRA!—H. K.] The policy of discriminating against members and officers of the union was, the employes claimed, more vigorously pursued under Government than under private control. . . (My emphasis—H. K.)

Western Union workers were further incensed at the government's handling of the wage increases which the company had conceded just before being taken over by the government. Increases were to range from 5% to 15% depending upon seniority and were to be

retroactive to August 1, 1918. But, to quote Bing again: "After the Government had taken over the wires, a demand for this increase was presented to the Wage Committee. . . . The Post Office Department, however . . . reduced the maximum increase to 10% and later the entire wage advance from January 1, 1919, instead of from August 1, 1918."

As the time approached for return of the telegraph companies to private operation, the C. T. U. called a strike on June 11, 1919, against both Western Union and Postal Telegraph. Demands were: increased wages; collective bargaining; the right to join the union; and reinstatement of all fired unionists. In some sections of the country, especially in the South, the strike was very effective, badly crippling the service. In Seattle, Western Union sent a detective to obtain the registration numbers of strikers within draft age; they were threatened with being called to war service unless they returned to work.

Company Union Organized

A major factor in the defeat of the strike was the formation of the Association of Western Union Employees in July, 1918, one year before the strike. It is one of the oldest company unions in the country and its whole history, literature and actions stamp it as a creature of the employers. The Association was designed to forestall the growth of a real trade union, to breed "loyalty" and "efficiency," and to ease the way for wage-cuts and bigger profits.

The famous Omaha Agreement of July 25, 1918, is still in effect between the company and the Association. This agreement binds the members not to strike, depriving the workers of their strongest economic weapon. Another provision is for a check-off system whereby the employers are able to keep tabs on workers who refuse to "join." Clauses 1 and 21 provide a form of "yellow dog" contract. Proof of the "yellow dog" nature of the Omaha Agreement is seen in a letter Newcomb Carlton wrote at the time. Workers fired since January, 1918, Carlton said, would be reemployed "upon their application and submission of evidence that they have joined the Association of Western Union Employees and *relinquished the undesirable outside affiliation.*" (My emphasis.—H. K.)

Company Union's Fake Claims

The Association makes a great show of the periodic conferences held with company officials and of the "innumerable benefits and concessions obtained," to quote its monthly organ *Telegraph World*. It boasts, for instance, of "general wage increases" from July 1, 1918 to January 1, 1920. But this is a falsehood on the face of it. For we have already seen that the 1918 concessions were granted by Western Union *as a result of the activity of workers in the Commercial Telegraphers Union*.

After the wage increases of 1919 and 1920, the company union helped to put over a *wage reduction in 1921*. As President Hayes of the "association" stated to company officials in 1925, "In 1921 *we shared with you* the fall in the revenue and since that time we have been stationary, based on the figures furnished by Vice-President Gallagher" of the company. (*Telegraph World*, October, 1925.) Hayes further admitted that between 1920 and 1925 "we have been sitting on the fence," uncritically accepting the management's figures on revenue. So high were Western Union's profits in these years that the workers were beginning to get suspicious. The company was thinking of raising the dividend rate to stockholders from 7% to 8% a year. To allay "unrest," the Association went through all the motions of "wringing" a concession by asking for "not less than a 10 per cent increase." After the conference, September 24 to October 3, 1925, it was announced that pay increases aggregating \$3,000,000 a year, or about 7%, were to be put into effect early in 1926. The increase was *not to go to all workers*, but was to be based "on merit."

It cannot be over-emphasized that the 1926 wage increase and those during the war, were *not* a result of the Association's efforts. For workers in other non-company unionized industries were winning increases at the same time, during the so-called "prosperity" years. Western Union had to fall in line to prevent real trade unions from signing up its workers.

Company Union Helps Employers

The outstanding fact about the recent history of the Association, is the ease with which it was used by the company in slashing wages 20% within a year and in otherwise reducing labor standards. Pres.

Carlton's annual report to Western Union stockholders for the year 1932 acknowledged the Association's role in cutting wages 10% in November, 1931, and again in August, 1932. In addition, the A. W. U. E. during the crisis agreed to abolition of vacations with pay, time-and-a-half for Sundays, holidays and overtime, and reduction from full pay to half pay under the Employees Benefit Fund.

F. G. Burton virtually admitted that Association leaders were afraid to submit the wage cut proposal to a referendum of the rank and file "membership." "A referendum meant serious, vital perhaps fatal delay," wrote the A. W. U. E. president in his review of 1931.

Nor can we accept the Association's claims for the 1933 and 1934 partial wage cut restoration. Full restoration of the second 10% cut had been promised. Yet in April, 1934, it agreed to continuance of the 5% basic reduction in the face of constantly soaring living costs; and in November, 1933, it agreed to payment of only 75% of vacation wages.

"Unrest"

The restorations arose rather from the company's fear that the workers would join hundreds of thousands of their fellows in the great labor struggles of 1933 and 1934. Albert Vitucci, an A. W. U. E. official in New York City might declare that through the company union "unrest" "is missing" and that "the Company achieves a stabilized state with its employees, i.e., the always horrible threat, and wasteful act, of strike is done away with." But Western Union officials had reason to fear that rank and file workers, both within and without the Association, would take things into their own hands. A typical intra-company communication from J. C. Willever (November 19, 1934) demonstrates this fear:

... the membership at large shows increasingly a captious disposition and a tendency to criticize the Association officials for alleged ineffectiveness in the adjustment of individual grievances. . .

It is to be expected that in times like the present when our organization is being curtailed and every possible expedient is being tried to keep our outgo well within our income, there will be a great deal of unrest and much unhappiness and even downright hardship as the necessary adjustments are made.

Because of this "unrest" and the "activities of would-be rival organizations to discredit the Association"—i.e., the campaigns of

real unions—the company felt that things were getting a little out of hand. Willever then ordered lesser company officials: “*Instead of discrediting Association officials with employees every proper opportunity shall be availed of to strengthen such Association officials in the esteem of their supporting members.*”

Support for Low Wage Code

Another grievance by A.W.U.E. members was the leaders' presentation of substitute provisions at the NRA code hearings in April and May, 1934. The A.W.U.E. suggested minimum weekly wages of \$15 for a work week of 40 hours averaged over four weeks; and for messengers, minimum weekly wages ranging from \$10 and \$10.50 to \$12.50. Although the company union officials pretended to favor work-spreading, they opposed a maximum 40-hour week because it might “force the Company to carry an overstaff at all times of approximately 10% to 20%”! W. C. Welch, Gulf Division A.W.U.E. president, admitted that “when it comes to minimum wages, \$15 per week is little enough,” and yet argued in support of such wages! When Burton was queried on the lack of detailed provisions covering messengers, he replied: “We left that out in the interest of brevity. . .”! But later in the hearings he revealed the real reason for his lack of concern with the interests of the messengers. He feared that the company might “under the code be faced with the necessity” of increasing wages for messengers and objected to any NRA code which “increases the operating expenses of the company. . .” This is typical of company union assistance to the employer.

The Association's monthly organ, *Telegraph World*, mirrors its pro-company policies. Pictures of and articles by leading company executives appear frequently. Under the headline “Chicago Strike Cost Since NRA Set At \$5,000,000,” it recently carried a vicious article in opposition to strikes, reprinted from the reactionary anti-labor *Chicago Tribune*. And the leading article of the November, 1934, issue, featured a complete account of the General Motors Corp. company union plan.

Association leaders now complain “of the very poor attendance which most of our regular monthly A.W.U.E. meetings bring out.” Membership has declined from a peak of 37,683, in 1930, accord-

ing to official figures, to an average of 25,254 in the first six months of 1934.

Telephone Company Unions

Nearly all telephone companies have conducted company unions at one time or another. Since the NRA, they have revived this method of fooling the workers. The Constitution of the New York Telephone Co.'s "Telephone Employees' Organization" in the Manhattan Plant Department is dated January, 1934.

In Boston, Grace Barry of the I.B.E.W. Telephone Operators' Department charged, according to *Federated Press*, April 25, 1934:

Even after the operators in her district had expressed their desire to discontinue the company union and be represented by the I.B.E.W., the bosses got after them individually, putting each one "on the spot" by asking her to continue with the company outfit.

One company union representative, Marguerite M. Hartnett of South Portland, Maine, admitted working only about one-third of the time in the previous six months while the company paid her expenses on "organizing" trips. There were sometimes as many as 15 to 20 girls in Boston on company union work. These "employee representatives" supported the low-wage Bell NRA code as written by the company.

Vice-President Charles S. Pierce of the New England Telephone & Telegraph Co. admitted at a New England Regional Labor Board hearing in June, 1934, that the "settled policy of the company was to favor the committee organization [i.e., company union—*H. K.*] in opposition to a real union. He conceded that the management 'worked in close cooperation' with the company union and that 'the expenses of organizing and operating the committee organization were financed by the company.'" (*Federated Press*, June 12, 1934.) The New England Regional Labor Board ruling that the company "has the right to announce to its employes its preference" for the company union as against the real union, shows how the government lines up against the workers.

Telephone Workers' Struggles

The Telephone Operators Department of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (A. F. of L.) arose out of

the spontaneous revolt of Boston telephone workers in 1912. Like the telegraph workers, telephone workers have been faced with spies, intimidation and bitter company hostility to unions. Since Bell employs most of the telephone workers, those blacklisted for union activity in one Bell company have little chance of obtaining employment in its other subsidiaries.

During the war period telephone workers struck in a number of mid-western cities against low wages and union discrimination. They had practically the same experiences as the telegraph workers with Postmaster General Burleson who dictated the terms of the strike settlements.

After being given the run-around by the Wire Control Board in connection with the refusal of the New England Telephone & Telegraph Co. to renew its agreement with the union, some 12,000 workers struck April 15, 1919. The strike was 100% effective, tying up five New England States for six days. Union waiters refused to serve strikebreakers and union taxi drivers refused to transport them in an effective demonstration of labor solidarity.

Two-thirds of the strikers were girls and they picketed the exchanges for 24 hours a day. Although Burleson attempted to alienate public sympathy from the strikers, an almost complete victory was won. Restoration of jobs for strikers was secured; also wage increases of \$10 to \$19 a week for operators and from 50 cents to 62½ cents a day for plant men. Discrimination against unionists continued elsewhere and a general strike was averted only because an A. F. of L. committee consulted Burleson who issued a conciliatory statement. Other strikes followed in the South, the Middle West and on the coast. They were largely successful in winning wage increases.

In more recent years the union has lacked the aggressive spirit of its earlier years, following in the footsteps of other A. F. of L. unions led by reactionary officials. The workers must make of it a fighting organization, extending its influence to the thousands of unorganized telephone workers.

Commercial Telegraphers' Union

The *Commercial Telegraphers' Union of North America*, functioning in the United States and Canada, is the oldest organization

of its kind. Like other A. F. of L. unions under the thumb of reactionary labor leaders, the C.T.U. has remained a small craft organization made up chiefly of highly skilled workers. The displacement of Morse operators, for instance, has greatly weakened the union, since a large part of its membership was among them.

Membership of the C.T.U. has declined from a peak of 4,200 claimed at the 1926 convention of the A. F. of L. to 2,200 in 1933 and only 2,000 in 1934. In 1928-31 it claimed a membership of 3,800. But the 3,800 figure for 1931 was inflated by about 700 so that its actual membership in that year was about 3,100.

The obstructionist activities of S. J. Konencamp, who was president of the C.T.U. during the war years, were very similar to the present-day sabotage of strikes under NRA as practiced by William Green and other A. F. of L. top leaders. Konencamp and President Samuel Gompers of the A. F. of L. were largely responsible for the belated calling of the telegraphers' strike in June, 1919, when the government was about to turn back operation of the wire services to the companies. Had the strike been called earlier, when the workers were in position to win large concessions, they might have been as successful as were the telephone operators in their war-time struggles.

In more recent years the C.T.U. has made little or no attempt to organize the unorganized; to expose and defeat company unions; and to lead the workers in struggle. It has failed to organize the women and youth who now comprise a large proportion of telegraph workers. Instead, the C.T.U. leadership has been intent on weeding out militants, on conducting "red scares" and in praising the NRA.

As late as 1931 President Powers of the C.T.U. received an annual salary of \$10,000 a year which is in sharp contrast to the subsistence level earnings of employed workers and the army of unemployed telegraphers. The union's failure to organize messengers was virtually admitted by Powers at the May, 1934, hearings at Washington, when he said: "Messengers have been under jurisdiction of the C.T.U. of N.A. by charter from the A. F. of L. for many years, but *we do not give authorization for sporadic strikes, nor to strikes of any character* until all constitutional steps have been carried out." (My emphasis.—H. K.)

New Unions

Failure of the C.T.U. to carry out aggressive organization campaigns has resulted in the formation of three independent, militant unions in recent years.

The *American Radio Telegraphists Assn.* was organized in August, 1931. It functions among commercial radio operators in "marine, broadcast, airways, point-to-point," according to *ARTA*, its official monthly organ. Nearly every issue of this publication has told the story of the victories recorded by the union during its brief history. Wage increases and other improvements in workers' conditions have been won through strikes and militant actions. The union cooperates with other workers' organizations as with the seamen's union in the October, 1934, strike on the Pacific Coast steamer, *Emma Alexander*. Wages were raised from \$70 and \$80 a month to \$100 and \$120 as a result of this strike.

At about the same time the A.R.T.A. won wage increases of \$10 a month on four ships of the Matson Navigation Co. A strike on 45 Pacific Coast ships led by this union during 1934 won for 45 radio operators increases totaling \$1,500 a month or \$18,000 a year. In February, 1935, a threatened coastwise strike of freightship radio operators led by the A.R.T.A. won wage increases of \$25 a month for coastwise operators; raised wages of intercoastal operators from \$85 to \$110 a month; established the 8-hour day, first class accommodations, and hiring through the union. The union's fighting policy resulted in tripling its membership in 1934.

The *United Telegraphers of America* was organized in October, 1933, among commercial telegraph workers in both Western Union and Postal Telegraph. The U.T.A. has carried on a persistent campaign to organize the unorganized and to expose the Association of Western Union Employees as a company tool. U.T.A. accomplishments include reinstatement of Postal Telegraph workers fired for belonging to the union; abolition of extra lists and establishment of the minimum four-hour trick; exposure of the anti-labor activities of the companies. In January, 1935, the union led picket lines in front of Western Union offices in New York City to protest the proposed merger.

Organized in January, 1934, as an independent union, the *Tele-*

graph Messengers Union, in February, 1935, became part of the United Telegraphers of America. Successful messengers' struggles which took place in the Spring of 1934 in Detroit, Cleveland and Minneapolis inspired the T.M.U. to take action in New York City. Faced with a threatened strike led by the messengers' union, Western Union made certain concessions: a 10% increase in errand services; no dollar limit on books; 10 cents daily allowance for bicycle messengers and the like. The T.M.U. was represented at three Washington hearings and at one of them its leader testified how he had been fired from Western Union for union activity as had the boy who succeeded him. Picket lines in front of important Western Union offices and similar militant actions won reinstatement of three messengers dismissed for union activity by Western Union.

In recognition of the need for unity, all three unions in August, 1934, established a joint council and pressed for a united front with the C.T.U. to organize telegraph workers and win better conditions through struggle. Furthermore, the U.T.A. began negotiations for a merger with the C.T.U.

Tasks Facing Communications Workers

The outstanding task facing the communications workers today is one of organization of the men, women and young workers in the industry. For many years these workers have been herded into company unions while thousands remained unorganized due to the weakness of existing unions and their lack of unity.

Lack of strong communications unions controlled by the rank and file aided the employers in putting over wage cuts and otherwise reducing labor standards. Only the determination of the communications workers to build powerful rank-and-file-controlled unions with a militant program of action will win better conditions in the industry.

Already the independent United Telegraphers of America (and its constituent Telegraph Messengers Union) has merged with the Commercial Telegraphers Union of the American Federation of Labor. This should result in greater unity among the workers, in the development of a real organization campaign to secure immediate concessions from the employers, and to destroy the company unions.

The workers in the real unions will need to fight hard—

1. For *higher wages* to meet the greatly increased cost of living.
2. For *reduction in working hours* without any reduction in weekly earnings.
3. Against mass *lay-offs*.
4. Against the inhuman *speed-up* and labor-driving system.
5. Against the proposed Western Union-Postal Telegraph *merger* which would throw thousands out of their jobs.
6. Against *company unions* and "associations."
7. For enactment by Congress of the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill which not only provides payment for those who may become unemployed, but *guarantees payments to the millions who are now jobless*.

These are important and essential demands. But they will be accomplished neither through NRA boards, nor by the "good will" of the employers. These demands will be gained only by genuine workers' unions leading stubborn struggles.

Build the Unions

It is therefore necessary to establish strong committees of workers in each communications office. Organization of such committees in each telephone and telegraph office, ship and broadcasting station should be brought about through the widest participation of workers in every branch of industry. This will insure the confidence of the majority. These committees will take up all grievances of the workers and fight discrimination of any sort. They should be in close contact with the executive boards or grievance committees of their respective unions. And every union member should carry on an extensive recruiting campaign in order to strengthen the union.

It is of great importance to carry on work within the company unions where they are influential, particularly in the Association of Western Union Employees, in order to expose them and to win over the majority of the workers to unions they themselves control. Within the company unions candidates can be put forward who are pledged to the above program of action. Demands can be made upon company officials to restore wage cuts, and for other concessions. Most important of all is to recruit members of the company unions into the ranks of the *bona fide* unions with a view to smashing the rubber stamp, boot-licking "associations."

Employed must join hands with unemployed workers in order to win adequate relief from the various local and other governmental agencies. They should unite to seek enactment of the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill (known in the 74th Congress as H.R. 2827) so that the companies cannot use the weapon of a jobless reserve army to reduce standards.

“Red Scare”

With the development of organized resistance by the workers against the attacks of the employers, the latter always resort to many tricks to destroy the unions and the unity of the workers. Along with the company unions, the bosses will employ the “Red Scare.” When they see the workers’ unions growing and fighting honestly and sincerely for improved conditions, the employers always try to drive the workers from such unions by labelling them “Red,” regardless of the name. In this way employers hope to split and weaken the ranks of the organized workers in order to defeat all attempts to achieve higher wages and better working conditions. The “Red Scare” is thus used to cloud the eyes of the workers, to lead them away from their main demands for improved conditions. It is to the companies’ advantage to raise the cry of “Reds” so as to divide inexperienced workers from the most militant and courageous workers.

Not only do the bosses label as “radicals” and “agitators” all those workers who fight to better their standard of living, but they foster various racial, religious and sectional prejudices to accomplish the same end. Thus Jews are pitted against Gentiles, whites against Negroes, southerners against northerners, young workers against adults, men against women. This is the customary trick of the corporations bent on destroying workers’ unions.

Communications workers must always be on guard against such tricks. They should realize that only if all workers fight side by side with their fellow workers for better conditions—regardless of politics, race, religious or other beliefs—will they establish the unity which will enable them to defeat employers’ efforts to split their ranks.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THIS pamphlet, prepared under the direction of Labor Research Association, is one of a series published by International Pamphlets, 799 Broadway, New York, from whom additional copies may be obtained at five cents each. Special rates on quantity orders.

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Printed in the U. S. A. (1935)

COMPOSED AND PRINTED BY UNION LABOR