

From Wage Slave to Model Union Member:
The Role of Rhetoric in the Institutionalization
of the
United Automobile Workers

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is part of the tradition in rhetorical criticism of studying movements; however, it is different in that it looks at the rhetoric of a movement once the movement has attained its goal(s) and begins the process of becoming a permanent participant in the social order. The thesis focuses on the role of rhetoric in the process of institutionalization. In particular, this thesis investigates the rhetoric directed toward the member of a movement which attempts to encourage continued membership in the movement's organization and, thus, helps to insure the permanency of the organization.

The industrial union movement of the 1930s in the United States is an example of a movement whose success required changing movement organizations into permanent organizations. The conflict between employers and members of the industrial union movement, workers, threatened the stability of American society. Successful resolution of this conflict required that both parties, employers and workers represented by their union, negotiate a mutually acceptable contract of employment through collective bargaining. This contract, however, could not be negotiated once, for the conflict which the contract resolved never entirely went away. Because of the continual re-emergence of this conflict, it had to be periodically resolved by renegotiating contracts through collective bargaining. The conflict and the means of conflict resolution, collective bargaining, became institutionalized, part of the social order. Because this method of periodic conflict and resolution of the conflict became a social institution, the organizations representing employers and workers also had to become institutions to maintain strong negotiating positions.

I selected the United Automobile Workers (UAW) as a union which exemplifies the industrial union movement of the 1930s and the process of institutionalization of a movement, especially in its conflict with the General Motors Corporation (GM). Unlimited conflict, into which any strike may erupt, threatens the permanency of the collective bargaining relationship, as well as the permanency of the organizations in that relationship. Because of this threat, union rhetors during a strike utilize all rhetorical means to induce commitment to the union among the membership, thus, providing a window for a critic to study rhetoric in the process of institutionalization.

There were three national strikes between the UAW and GM in 1936-1937, 1945-1946 and 1970, which occur at different stages of the process of institutionalization. In the first strike there was no collective bargaining relationship between the parties; thus, no institutionalized relationship existed. By the second strike the parties had participated in such a relationship for ten years and by the 1970 strike for twenty-five years.

The methodology for this thesis includes performing a careful descriptive analysis of all available rhetoric from these strikes, identifying key terms and performing a cluster-agon analysis of these terms. I pay special attention to dramatic elements in the discourse which I use to reconstruct a "myth of concern" for each strike. A "myth of concern" is the dramatic counterpart of a movement's or organization's ideology. I argue that evidence of the process of institutionalization (strategies for increasing commitment to the union and the loss of power by the rank and file) should be detectable when comparing the "myths of concern" of each strike.

I found rhetorical evidence of institutionalization by comparing the role of union member in each strike. In the 1936-1937 strike the rhetoric encouraged workers to change their roles from wage slaves to union members to gain self-respect, pride, industrial democracy and a living wage. By the 1945-1946 strike the role of union member in rhetoric directed toward members characterized members as soldiers in battle, sacrificing to save the union. In the 1970 strike there were two union "myths of concern," one for leaders and the other for rank and file members. The roles of leaders and rank and file members were different--leaders were active decision makers while the rank and file followed these decisions with quiet determination. Furthermore, the leader's "myth of concern" described the strike as one in a series of battles for justice, focusing on the union's future, while the rank and file's "myth of concern" focused on the present in its descriptions of the status of negotiations. There were few references to the future of members or of the UAW. The leader's "myth of concern" and the role of leader encouraged continued commitment to the union, while the rank and file's "myth of concern" and role of rank and file member did not. Potential dissatisfaction with the role of rank and file member could be the source of future conflict within the union.

Through my criticism of the rhetoric of these strikes I found not only evidence of the process of institutionalization, but also that the role of the union member which transformed the auto worker from a wage slave to a union member contained the basis of the role of union member in 1945 and of rank and file member in 1970 which constrained a member's behavior.

In short, the constraints found in institutionalization are implicit in the changes resulting from a movement's conflict with the social order.

I thank my committee members, Dr. Wil Linkugel, Dr. Tom Beisecker and Dr. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell for their advice and encouragement. I must thank Dr. Campbell, my adviser, for having the patience of a saint during those many moments I stumbled around trying to figure out where my analysis was leading me. Without her suggestions, criticism and the article she found by accident which helped me put things together in my head, I do not think this thesis could have been finished.

I thank the staff of the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in Detroit, Michigan for their interest in my research. With their permission, I searched through uncatalogued files to locate speeches and press releases which otherwise were unavailable to me.

Finally, I wish to thank Edward David Pribble, my husband, who encouraged me to work whenever I tried to avoid it. I thank him for introducing me to the union movement and to people who have participated in many facets of it. My thanks, gratitude and love I hope will begin to repay him for his support and love this past year.

IN MEMORY OF

Earl "Mike" Pribble, 1894-1959

An auto worker and United Automobile Workers member
who worked in, went on strike at and died in a GM
plant.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

I. Introduction and Purpose

Rhetorical critics have not investigated the process by which a protest movement is incorporated into the established social order and the role of rhetoric is that transformation; instead, they have investigated the conflict between a movement and an established order. In his seminal essay, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," Leland Griffin focuses on the conflict between rhetors of the movement and rhetors of the established order.

Let us say that within each movement two classes of rhetoricians may be distinguished: 1. aggressor orators and journalists who attempt, in the pro movement, to establish, and in the anti movement, to destroy; and, 2. defendant rhetoricians who attempt, in the pro movement, to resist reform, and in the anti movement, to defend institutions.¹

More recent rhetorical theory also emphasizes a movement's conflict with the established order. The following statement by Robert Cathcart is illustrative:

¹Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 38 (April 1952)2, p. 184-188, rpt. in Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth Century Perspective, eds. Robert L. Scott and Bernard L. Brock (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) p. 348.

It is not the alientation of an out-group alone that produces a movement, for there is always alienation and dissatisfaction in any social order. Rather, it is the formulation of a rhetoric proclaiming that the new order, the more perfect order, the desired order, cannot come about through the established agencies of change, and this, in turn, produces a counter-rhetoric that exposes the agitators as anarchists or devils of destruction.²

Thus, a rhetorical critic analyzes the rhetoric of a movement and of the established order which produce "a dialectical tension growing out of moral conflict."³

Few movements succeed in changing the established order. Some movements which do achieve their goals fall apart after success because there is no further reason for their existence. For example, after the passage of the nineteenth amendment, the organized movement for woman's suffrage disintegrated, apparently because it could not successfully redirect its efforts to organizing women as a political force.⁴ More recently, the movement for peace in Vietnam ended with the withdrawal of American forces from that country. Once the goal for these movements and their organizations was achieved, there was no reason for the movement's continued existence.

²Robert S. Cathcart, "New Approaches to the Study of Movements: Defining Movements Rhetorically," Western Speech 36(Spring 1972)86, p. 87.

³Cathcart, p. 87.

⁴The National American Woman Suffrage Association did not continue as an organization after the ratification of the suffrage amendment, although notions about women's rights did continue. Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (1959; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1972) p. 325-331.

The industrial union movement of the 1930s⁵ presents a somewhat different situation to a student of movements. The union movement is a protest movement which not only succeeded in changing the social and legal order, it also succeeded in becoming a permanent part of the new order. The industrial union movement provides the rhetorical critic with the opportunity to study how a movement becomes a permanent part of the social order and the role of rhetoric in that transformation.

The goal of the industrial union movement was to establish unions as organizations which bargained with the employers of its members for wages, working conditions, and the like. Bargaining for a contract was intended to reduce the violent expression of conflict in strikes and lockouts between employers and unions representing workers; conflict was to be limited to the bargaining table. Within limits, unions maintained the right to strike against employers, and employers maintained the right to lock employees out of the workplace in order to force the other party to negotiate at the bargaining table.

To limit industrial conflict successfully via collective bargaining, both unions and companies had to become permanent organizations so that neither the union nor the company would possess so much bargaining power that it could force the less

⁵For a discussion of the industrial union movement see Frances Fox Pivan and Richard A. Cloward, Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail, Vintage Books edn. (New York: Random House, 1977).

permanent party to agree to a contract.⁶ Thus, the union movement was forced to change itself from an organization seeking to change the industrial social order to a permanent organization within the new social order. Union leaders became concerned with how to maintain the union as a permanent organization--retaining members, encouraging commitment and loyalty to the union, and maintaining unified action.

For a union, the strike is the point at which the members' loyalty and commitment are needed most by the union organization. To win a strike, union members must act as a collective and unified body, following the directives of the union leaders. Disloyalty or lack of commitment threatens the success of the strike, and, indirectly, the permanency of the union organization. Because a strike requires unified and disciplined action by all union members, rhetoric which encourages commitment to the union becomes important for success; thus, during a strike, union rhetors use all rhetorical devices available to them which encourage loyalty to an organization.

When the rhetoric of an emerging union movement during a strike is compared with an analysis of the strike rhetoric of an established union, a critic may be able to identify the processes by which a movement in conflict with the established order becomes a permanent participant in the new order. This process I call the institutionalization of a movement. The movement's conflict with the established order is institutionalized so that the conflict's threat to the stability of the new order is diminished. A critic may identify changes in the

⁶Anthony Oberschall, Social Conflict and Social Movements (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1973) p. 264.

discourse which are indicative of the process of institutionalization of which may facilitate it.

In this thesis I shall analyze the rhetoric of the International Union, United Automobile Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) in three consecutive, national strikes against the General Motors Corporation (GM) as an example of the institutionalization of a protest movement. These strikes occurred in 1936-1937, 1945-1946 and 1970. National strikes, instead of local disputes, were chosen because they threaten the process of institutionalization by increasing the possibility of unlimited conflict between the union and the corporation. Since national strikes are points of tension in the process of institutionalization, they provide a window through which a critic may view this process and the role of rhetoric in it. Each of these strikes is located at a different stage in the institutionalization of union-management relations. During the 1936-1937 strike there were no institutionalized procedures to resolve a strike. The UAW had yet to establish itself as a legitimate organization both to GM and to many auto workers. By the 1945-1946 strike, the UAW had participated in a collective bargaining relationship with GM for ten years. The organization and the rhetoric of the union should exhibit tendencies toward institutionalization and organizational permanency. During the 1970 strike, definite patterns of institutionalization and organizational permanency should be present in the rhetoric of the UAW.

II. Research Materials and Organization of the Study

Two different types of primary materials were necessary for this analysis, rhetoric of the UAW which addresses non-members (often, but not always, the general public) and rhetoric which addresses union members. The former was found primarily in the New York Times which printed verbatim statements made by representatives of the UAW and GM during the 1945-1946 strike and closely reported the events of all three strikes. During the 1945-1946 strike, news magazines such as the Nation and the New Republic also contained discourse written by a rhetor representing the UAW. The public rhetoric of the 1970 strike was found in transcripts of press conferences and of a television interview at the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, hereafter referred to as the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs. In 1970, the news media rarely printed verbatim statements made by representatives of the UAW or GM.

Rhetoric addressed to union members, or intra-union rhetoric, is located in the official magazine of the UAW, the United Automobile Worker later renamed UAW Solidarity. The collections of the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs provided copies of ephemeral documents central to the strike activity, such as the Punch Press, a strike bulletin printed during the 1936-1937 strike, letters to union locals, letters to all union members, songs sung by strikers and speeches made by Leonard Woodcock, president of the UAW during the 1970 strike. The following collections were especially helpful: Mary Van Kleeck RSF Labor Research Papers, Bud and Hazel Simons Collection, George

Lyons--Local 174 Collection, R. J. Thomas Collection and Leonard Woodcock Presidential Speech Series in process.

This study will first discuss the relationship between conflict and institutionalization. It will develop a theoretical perspective on the role of rhetoric in the process of institutionalization. There will be a discussion of the bases of industrial conflict and how that conflict has been institutionalized. Then the rhetoric of the three UAW-GM strikes will be analyzed.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides an introduction to the notion that conflict is a productive process, that it provides the opportunity for new structures and traditions to be institutionalized. The similarities between conflict and movement theory are discussed, indicating that the two concepts are interchangeable and that the study of the rhetoric of movements might provide insight into the role of rhetoric in institutionalization. Richard B. Gregg's discussion of the ego-function of the rhetoric of protest when combined with George Herbert Mead's notions about the development of the human self provides a theoretical perspective on rhetoric in the process of institutionalization and a critical perspective for the analysis of the UAW rhetoric during the strikes.

Chapter 3: The Context for Industrial Conflict

An understanding of industrial conflict is necessary to comprehend the social pressure to institutionalize this conflict and the structure of collective bargaining that results. This chapter helps to explain some of the mechanisms by which conflict is limited in industrial relations.

Chapter 4: The Wage Slave and the Union Member:
The 1936-1937 Sitdown Strike

This chapter is an analysis of the UAW rhetoric during its first major strike against GM, before the process of institutionalization began.

Chapter 5: Two Battles: The 1945-1946 Strike

This chapter analyzes the rhetoric of the UAW strike against GM after unions are seen as legitimate participants in the social structure. The process of institutionalization is underway.

Chapter 6: Quiet Determination and the Battle of Principle:
The 1970 Strike

This chapter analyzes the UAW rhetoric during the 1970 strike, which occurs when institutionalization of the union-management relationship is virtually complete.

Chapter 7: The Role of Rhetoric in the Process of
Institutionalization

This chapter is a summary and evaluation of the thesis. It describes the functions of rhetoric in the institutionalization of a movement.

Chapter Two

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I. Conflict and Institutional Change

Conflict is commonly viewed in our society as something to be avoided, as a destructive force. Conflict destroys cherished traditions, breaks apart relationships and forces changes in behavior. A healthy society does not experience conflict. This, however, is an incomplete perspective, for conflict does not simply destroy the accepted ways of doing things; it helps to establish new traditions and organizations.

Conflicts may be said to be "productive" in two related ways: (1) they lead to the modification and creation of law; (2) the application of new rules leads to the growth of new institutional structures centering on the enforcement of these new rules and laws.¹

Conflict is part of the social process of change, for it helps establish new institutions. In a sense, conflict provides a link between the old and the new order.

Sociologists have recognized that conflict is crucial in the establishment of new social organizations. In his Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, Max Weber begins to describe this process. Weber identifies three types of organization--charismatic, rational-

¹Lewis Coser, The Functions of Social Conflict (New York: Free Press, 1956) p. 126.

legal and traditional. A charismatic organization is organized around one person who is seen by the members as someone with supernatural or exceptional powers.² A rational-legal organization is better known as a bureaucratic organization. It is characterized by the rational division of labor, a hierarchy of authority, rules and impersonal relationships.³ A traditional organization is based on custom. Loyalty to the head of the organization governs relationships. Arbitrary decisions made by the leader replace the rules and rational division of labor of the bureaucratic organization. A feudal society is a typical traditional organization.⁴

According to Weber, the charismatic organization is a revolutionary force in society which will evolve into either a rational-legal or a traditional organization or a combination of both. The charismatic organization's revolutionary force is found in the individual's personal experience rather than in the conclusions of rational argument.

²Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford Union Press, 1947) p. 358-359.

³Weber, Social and Economic Organizations, p. 329-333.

⁴Weber, Social and Economic Organizations, p. 341-346.

Charisma . . . may involve a subjective or internal reorientation born out of suffering, conflicts or enthusiasm. It may then result in a radical alteration of the central system of attitudes and directions of action with a completely new orientation of all attitudes toward the different problems and structures of the "world."⁵

Because the charismatic organization is unstable, it must go through a process of "routinization." "Indeed, in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both."⁶ Providing for the needs of the organization is a primary motive for "routinization." The problems of finding a successor for the charismatic leader exemplify this process. Members of the organization, especially those in high offices, become concerned with how to continue the organization, so that they may continue to receive the material benefits of membership. The members also must establish rules for the selection of a new leader. The legitimacy of a new leader depends upon the legitimacy of the selection process to members.⁷

Robert Merton further discusses the relationship between conflict and institutional change in his theory of functionalism, which focuses on the behavioral responses of human beings to social structure. These responses may help to adjust the social structure.

⁵Weber, Social and Economic Organizations, p. 363.

⁶Weber, Social and Economic Organizations, p. 364.

⁷Weber, Social and Economic Organizations, p. 364-369.

Functions are those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system; and dysfunctions, those observed consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system. There is also the empirical possibility of non-functional consequences, which are simply irrelevant to the system under consideration.⁸

At first, sociologists used functionalism to study how society maintained itself instead of how it changed.

Of key problematic importance to them has been the maintenance of existing structure and the ways and means of insuring their smooth functioning. They have focused upon maladjustments and tensions which interfere with consensus.⁹

This view of social structure helped to produce the notion that conflict is undesirable, something to avoid, because it indicates that society is unstable.¹⁰

Such a perspective on the functions of social structure and of human response to structure produces a distorted view of society as a static system which suppresses all conflict and change. Merton, however, argues that:

⁸Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, second edn. (1949: rpt., New York: The Free Press, 1957) p. 51.

⁹Coser, Functions, p. 20.

¹⁰Coser, Functions, p. 23.

. . . functional analysis conceives of the social structure as active, as producing fresh motivations which cannot be predicted on the basis of knowledge about man's native drives. If the social structure restrains some dispositions to act, it creates others. The functional approach therefore abandons the position, held by various individualistic theories, that different rates of deviant behavior in diverse groups and social strata are the accidental result of varying proportions of pathological personalities found in these groups and strata. It attempts instead to determine how the social and cultural structure generates pressure for socially deviant behavior upon people variously located in that structure,¹¹

Merton identifies five discrete modes of behavior which are adaptations to social and cultural structure: conformity, ritualism, innovation, retreatism and rebellion. One can perceive a possible progression of adaptive behaviors from conformity to rebellion, if the behavior does not reduce the tension caused by social and cultural structures. Innovation, retreatism and rebellion are modes of socially deviant behavior which may produce some change in the social or cultural structure. Innovation occurs when individuals subscribe to cultural goals, while modifying the socially acceptable means of attaining those goals.¹² Retreatism occurs when individuals renounce culturally accepted goals and their behavior does not fit into socially acceptable patterns. Merton considers this "more a private than a collective" form of adaptive behavior.¹³ As adaptive behaviors, innovation and retreatism do not result in radical

¹¹Merton, Social Theory, p. 121-122.

¹²Merton, Social Theory, p. 141.

¹³Merton, Social Theory, p. 153-155.

changes in cultural and social structure; however, successful rebellion does result in such change. Rebellion "represents a transitional response seeking to institutionalize new goals and new procedures to be shared by other members of society. It thus refers to efforts to change the existing cultural and social structure rather than accommodate efforts within this structure."¹⁴ Rebellion is the point at which social change and social stability meet, for rebellion seeks to change social structure. Implicit in a rebellion are the traditions, institutions and bureaucracies of the new social order.

II. The Similarity of Conflict and Movement Theory

Study of the stages in the process of conflict enables one to understand the process of institutionalization referred to in Weber's and Merton's theories. Conflict includes the processes of mobilization of potential members of the protesting group, of confrontation between groups and of resolution of the conflict, which leads to conflict regulation and institutionalization. These are not necessarily discrete processes. If conflict is continuous, as is the conflict between an employer and workers over the allocation of profits and of power in the workplace, regulation and institutionalization are necessary to control the potential destructiveness of the conflict.¹⁵

¹⁴Merton, Social Theory, p. 140n.

¹⁵Anthony Oberschall, Social Conflict and Social Movements (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973) p. 31.

There are many similarities between theories of conflict and theories of social movements. The goal of conflict, as of a social movement, is to change the social order. A social movement arises because there is a sense of strain caused by an ambiguity or inconsistency in values, which motivates potential members to resolve that strain by changing the social order. Similarly, conflict is a product of the motivation to reduce tension caused by the inconsistency between cultural goals, such as wealth, and the socially acceptable means for achieving those goals, such as talent and hard work. A movement has members and leaders and is organized in some manner. Likewise, theories of conflict discuss mobilization and the formation of conflicting groups. The ideology of a movement explains why an ambiguity in values exists and indicates that membership in the movement will reduce the tension. Theories of conflict, however, contain little or no discussion of ideology.¹⁶

The similarity between social movements and the role of conflict in institutional change is evident in a perspective which considers social movements naturally developing historical processes.¹⁷ From this perspective there are four stages in the development of a social movement. First, there is a "preliminary stage of mass (individual)

¹⁶Virgil W. Balthrop, "The Rhetoric of Social Movements: Towards a Perspective for Criticism," M.A. Thesis, University of Kansas, 1967, p. 41-52 and Oberschall, Social Conflict, p. 31.

¹⁷Rex D. Hopper, "The Revolutionary Process: A Frame of Reference for the Study of Revolutionary Movements," Social Forces, 28(March 1950)3, p. 270-279.

excitement" when potential members become aware of their discontent, but cannot resolve it. This is comparable to the mobilization stage in conflict theory. The second stage is the "popular stage of crowd (collective) excitement and unrest" in which the individuals organize, identify the opposition and begin to develop an ideology. This also is comparable to mobilization of conflict groups. The third stage is the "formal stage of formulation of issues and formation of publics" in which the ideology, the movement organization and a program for action are developed. Confrontation with the opposition would occur here. This is comparable to the confrontive stage in conflict theory. The final step is the "institutional stage of legalization and societal organization" in which the social movement becomes part of the social structure against which it rebelled. This is the process of conflict resolution, regulation and institutionalization. Obviously, social movement and conflict theory describe the same phenomenon. The terms "conflict" and "social movement" can be used almost interchangeably.

Rhetoric is crucial to the stages of mobilization and confrontation in conflict. Rhetoric identifies the potential members of a protesting group or movement and distinguishes them from nonmembers. Rhetoric explains the reality of potential members in a sensible manner, by legitimizing the expression of their private feelings and frustrations, and indicates that the solution to their problems is found in membership in the conflict group.

What is largely expressive for the isolated individual is rhetorical to the movement's leadership. Particularly in militant movements, the leader wins and maintains adherents by saying to them what they cannot say to others or even to themselves. A major rhetorical process, then, consists of legitimizing privately-held feelings by providing social support and rationalizations for those feelings.¹⁸

The confrontation between the movement or conflict group and its opposition may occur on several different levels, such as legislative, physical, economic and rhetorical. Rhetorical confrontation, however, is crucial for the success of all other levels of confrontation, because it justifies and explains the proposed change to members, the opposition and interested observers. Rhetorical confrontations attempt to explain why there was a physical confrontation, why economic boycotts were necessary or why direct action was needed, for example. Rhetoric places the legislative and physical confrontations in the context of the overall goals of the movement. However, for the confrontation between the movement and the established order to develop, there must be rhetorical recognition by the established order that the movement is a threat to its existence. In short, if leaders of the established order do not perceive the movement as a threat and ignore the arguments made by the movement, no confrontation will develop.

¹⁸Herbert W. Simons, "Requirements, Problems and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 56 (February 1970)1, p. 6.

. . . [E] or a movement to come into being there must be one or more actors who, perceiving that the "good order" (the established system) is in reality a faulty order full of absurdity and injustice, cry out through various symbolic acts that true communication, justice, salvation cannot be achieved unless there is an immediate corrective applied to the established order. On the other hand there must be a reciprocating act from the establishment or counter rhetors which perceives the demands of the agitator-rhetors, not as calls for correction or re-righting the prevailing order, but as direct attacks on the foundations of the established order. . . .

The essential attribute here in the creation of a dialectical tension growing out of moral conflict.¹⁹

There has been little analysis of rhetoric in the third stage of conflict, that of resolution, and especially of the resulting regulation and institutionalization of conflict. A portion of this lack of interest may be attributed to Leland Griffin's discussion of the rhetorical analysis of movements. Griffin identifies three phases of a movement--a period of inception, of rhetorical crisis and of consummation. The first two periods are characterized by much rhetorical activity--pre-existing sentiment is "nourished by interested rhetoricians" in the inception period, while during a rhetorical crisis one of the "opposing groups of rhetoricians . . . succeeds in irrevocably disturbing that balance between the groups which had existed in the mind of the collective audience." The period of consummation, in contrast, is "a time when the great proportion of aggressor rhetoricians abandon their efforts, either

¹⁹Robert Cathcart, "New Approaches to the Study of Movements: Defining Movements Rhetorically," Western Speech 36(Spring 1972) p. 87.

because they are convinced that opinion has been satisfactorily developed and the cause won, or because they are convinced that perseverance is useless, or merely because they meet the press of new interests."²⁰ The critic is left with the impression that rhetoric in this phase is unimaginative and less important, because there is no further conflict. A critic may conclude that the first two phases of a movement are much more interesting to study. Yet, rhetoric continues to play an important role in the third phase of a movement, as the remainder of this thesis will attempt to demonstrate.

III. Institutionalization of Conflict

The decision by conflicting parties to regulate a conflict is based on a decision not to resolve their differences by destroying each other. The minimum condition for regulating, and later institutionalizing conflict, is recognition of the other party's right to exist.

²⁰Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 38 (April 1952), p. 184-188 rpt. in Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth Century Perspective, Robert L. Scott and Bernard L. Brock eds. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 348-349.

Recognition is the minimum condition for institutionalizing conflict. . . . The decision to negotiate means that the authorities publicly acknowledge the opposition and their representatives and, in that sense, acknowledge the legitimacy of the opposition, though they may not agree to their specific demands and manner of protest. . . . [T]he act of entering into negotiations represents a decision not to resolve the issue by destroying the opposition, but to include them as a party in a public decision that will affect both groups and the society at large.²¹

Some conflicts, however, cannot be resolved permanently. There must be some continuous form of regulation.

In the end, lasting conflict regulation requires more than ad hoc conciliation whenever disturbances occur; it requires institutionalization of the conflict. Institutionalization means that certain forms of protest are recognized as lawful and that consequently the agents of social control not only have no right to repress them but must protect the safety of the protesters against hostile interference. It also means that the leaders and organizations pressing for reforms are given the right to conduct their business, to recruit followers and raise resources, to publicly voice their position, in full freedom. It means that officials are bound by law and by public opinion to recognize these leaders as legitimate representatives of larger groups who must be received, listened to, and bargained with in good faith. Institutionalization may further mean that a concrete sequence of steps and appeals is spelled out for resolving outstanding differences. Thus, the question of whom to negotiate with, when, under what rules and which issues, is answered with reference to rights, laws, to precedent, and not the bargaining power or goodwill of adversaries.²²

The result is that when conflict is institutionalized, the social movement which rebelled against the established order becomes a

²¹Oberschall, Social Conflict, p. 243.

²²Oberschall, Social Conflict, p. 266-267.

permanent organization in a new order which represents the interests of its members in the institutionalized conflict.

In industrial relations, unions rebelled against a system which gave decision-making power only to employers. The new social order which unions sought to establish was based on collective bargaining--the joint determination of wages and other conditions of employment by employers and unions. Collective bargaining institutionalizes the conflict between the two parties by restricting the expression of conflict. Because collective bargaining periodically resolves this continuous conflict, both the union and the company must be permanent and stable organizations to ensure that the conflict always is contained. Consequently, unions had to change from a social movement advocating the establishment of collective bargaining to a permanent organization.

Organizational permanency is achieved with bureaucratic organization. In fact, all permanent organization, even democratic organization, eventually will exhibit bureaucratic tendencies. This is the argument proposed by Robert Michels, known as the "iron law of oligarchy." Michels derived this law from his study of the European democratic socialist and trade-union movement before World War I.²³

²³Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin A. Throw and James S. Coleman, Union Democracy (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1956) p. 5 and Lewis A. Coser and Bernard Rosenberg eds., Sociological Theory: A Book of Readings, 4th edn. (1957; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1976) p. 354.

Organization implies a tendency to oligarchy. In every organization, whether it be a political party, a professional union, or any other association of the kind, the aristocratic tendency manifests itself very clearly. The mechanism of the organization, while conferring a solidity of structure, induces serious changes in the organized mass, completely inverting the respective position of the leaders and the led. As a result of organization, every part [sic] or professional union becomes divided into a minority of directors and a majority of directed.²⁴

Other characteristics of bureaucratic organization were identified by Max Weber. These include the division of labor into specialized tasks, a system of rules which governs the organization, a hierarchy of authority and impersonal relationships.²⁵ The possession of technical knowledge determines who exercises control and has decision-making power.²⁶

In a collective bargaining relationship, the union must become a bureaucratic organization to remain a permanent participant in the institutionalized relationship which limits industrial conflict. Consequently, the union leadership becomes concerned about maintaining the permanency of the organization--recruiting new members, keeping old members and sustaining the union's bargaining power by encouraging unified action among members.

²⁴Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Free Press, 1962) p. 70.

²⁵Peter M. Black, Bureaucracy In America (New York. Random House, 1956) p. 19 and Weber, Social and Economic Organizations, p. 330-334.

²⁶Weber, Social and Economic Organizations, p. 337-339.

There also are other external and internal pressures for bureaucratic organization. First, the nature of the corporation with which the union negotiates pressures a union to acquire a bureaucratic organization, ". . . the degree of bureaucratic centralization of unions is influenced by the extent of centralization in the structures of outside groups with which they must deal."²⁷ To administer a contract to employees of a large corporation, a union also must become a large organization.

At the same time there are internal pressures for efficiency and stability. When a union administers a contract for the employees of a large corporation, there must be systems and procedures which insure that each complaint or problem in any plant anywhere in the country is treated in a similar manner. The more complex the industry and the greater the number of employees involved, the greater the problem of administration. "These tasks require the creation of a specializing staff which is appointed by and under control of the [union] officials. The knowledge and skill of union operation gradually become available only to members of the administrative elite."²⁸

²⁷Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Political Process in Trade Unions: A Theoretical Statement," in Freedom and Control In Modern Society, Monroe Berger, Theodore Abel and Charles H. Page eds. (New York Octagon Books, 1964) p. 84.

²⁸Lipset, "Political Process," Freedom and Control, p. 84.

A major goal of organizations is to reduce uncertainty about its operations.²⁹ For most organizations this means reducing uncertainty about relationships with other organizations (i.e. suppliers, buyers), but since unions are political organizations which ultimately derive their power from their members, there is an internal uncertainty which makes the union less stable and less predictable than a corporation.

In the context of his union the labor leader is an elected official, dependent ("in the last analysis," which is not always made by history) upon the loyalty of fellow leaders and upon the rank and file of his organization. The great organizing upsurge of the thirties showed that officers who were not sufficiently responsive to the demands of industrial workers could lose power. The corporation managers, on the other hand, in the context of his corporation, is not an elected official in the same sense. His power does not depend upon the loyalty of the men who work for him, and he does not usually lose his job if a union successfully invades his plant. The upsurge of the thirties did not oust the managers, whose responsibilities are not to the workers whom they employ but to themselves and their scattered stockholders.

This difference in power situation means that the power of the business leader is likely to be more continuous and more assured than that of the labor leader; the labor leader is more likely to be insecure in his job if he fails to "deliver the goods."³⁰

This inherent instability in the union leadership threatens the collective bargaining relationship with the corporation. Union leaders

²⁹Richard V. Farace, Peter R. Monge, Hamish M. Russel, Communicating and Organizing (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1977) p. 74.

³⁰C. Wright Mills, "The Labor Leaders and the Power Elite," in Industrial Conflict, Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin, Arthur M. Ross eds. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954) p. 148.

try to compensate for this by stabilizing internal union relations. A permanent union leadership is a simple and common means of attaining this goal. The leadership makes itself indispensable, or so it seems to the members, because the leaders possess the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to run the union which the rank and file lacks.³¹ Thus, the control and power for decision-making is left more and more in the hands of those who possess the skill and knowledge to use it, the union leaders.

Bureaucratic organization is a necessary outcome of the institutionalization of industrial conflict. To limit conflict successfully, the parties must have stable and permanent organizations. But of what interest is this to a rhetorical critic? The problem for unions as bureaucratic organizations becomes maintaining the members' commitment to an organization over which they are losing influence. Commitment of the rank and file is crucial to the union's bargaining power, since all union power rests ultimately on the economic impact of a strike by all union members. Rhetoric is used as a device for encouraging commitment to the union. As industrial conflict becomes more institutionalized and as union organization becomes more bureaucratic, the rhetorical means for inducing commitment become more important.

³¹Seymour Martin Lipset, "Introduction," in Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin A. Trow and James S. Coleman, Union Democracy (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1966) p. 16.

IV. A Perspective on Non-discursive Uses of Language

Rhetoric is the instrumental use of language to persuade and to influence. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."³² Rhetoric is a faculty, an instrument, for discovering arguments.³³ A rhetor's goal is to convince an audience to make a decision about the expediency of proposed action, which requires a deliberative decision, about the justice or injustice of some past action, which requires a forensic decision and about an orator's skills, which requires an epideictic decision.³⁴ Typically, the form of rhetoric is discursive, consisting of logical arguments and evidence.

There is, however, a second aspect of language, what I call the consummatory-expressive. Language is consummatory if it is the result of the individual's need to speak with symbols. It is speaking for the pleasure of speaking, for the aesthetic appeal of language. Kenneth Burke's perspective of human beings as symbol-using creatures helps to explain the consummatory nature of rhetoric.

³²Aristotle, Rhetoric, W. Rhys Roberts trans., Modern Library edn. (New York: Random House, 1954) 1355b. 11. 25-26.

³³Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1356a. 11. 32-33.

³⁴Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1358b. 11. 1-8 and 21-29.

If man is characteristically the symbol-using animal, then he should take pleasure in the use of his powers as a symbolizer just as a bird presumably likes to fly or a fish to swim. Thus, on some occasions, in connection with aesthetic activities, we humans might like to exercise our prowess with symbol systems just because that's the kind of animal we are.³⁵

The expressive use of language is very similar to the consummatory use of language; in fact, the two are almost inseparable. Expressive language articulates the speaker's feelings and emotions. Lyric poetry exemplifies this process. The subject of a lyric poem is "usually emotion, often subjectively perceived and presented, . . ."³⁶ By using expressive language, an individual makes statements about her or his feelings towards and attitudes about a situation, a goal or a problem, for example. Consummatory-expressive language is created for the rhetor's own consumption, because of the rhetor's need to speak. The consummatory-expressive use of language has a non-discursive form, comprised of the ritualistic, aesthetic and poetic elements of language. These elements help make discourse vivid and memorable.

³⁵Kenneth Burke, Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature and Method (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1966) p. 29.

³⁶Wilfred L. Guerin, Earle G. Labor, Lee Morgan and John R. Willingham, A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) p. 226. For examples of lyric poems see John Keats "Ode on Melancholy," and Thomas Grey, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" in Wright Thomas and Stuart Gerry Brown, Eds., Reading Poems: An Introduction to Critical Study (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941) p. 83 and 123.

Yet, consummatory-expressive discourse also can be instrumental. The fact that a statement has been made changes the rhetorical scene. Through expression, the rhetor's needs may be met. If the statement were addressed to an audience or were overheard, it could encourage identification with the rhetor. Identification occurs because of a pool of "common experiences shared by the rhetor and the auditor based on common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them [the rhetor and the auditor] consubstantial."³⁷ A common symbol system allows humans to communicate with each other, to overcome their division and identify the ways in which they are "consubstantial" with others. Thus, when a consummatory-expressive statement is heard by an audience, members of the audience may identify with the persona of the rhetor, because they recognize themselves or what they wish to be in the rhetor's statements. Similarly, other members of the audience may not understand what the rhetor says, because of a dearth of "consubstantiality."

Consummatory-expressive rhetoric is instrumental when identification occurs with the rhetor's persona. If the persona represents an ideal to which the audience may aspire, the rhetoric may motivate the audience to attain that ideal. The persona also may confirm commonly held beliefs or deepen commitment to a common goal. The non-discursive images of the rhetor and the rhetor's explanation of reality are remembered by the audience, because they are presented in vivid and aesthetically pleasing language.

³⁷Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives (1950; rpt., Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969) p. 21-22.

Most members of a movement or organization already know and believe the ideology, the prerequisites of membership, arguments and supporting materials of the organization. What members need is to reconfirm their commitment to the organization and to the ideology, so they are motivated to act as its representatives. By using non-discursive discourse rhetors can encourage members to reconfirm their belief in the ideology of and their commitment to the organization. Because non-discursive discourses uses poetic, aesthetic and ritualistic elements of language, the members identify with the actors found in the rhetoric.³⁸ When members identify with actors who represent the ideals of the organization, members reconfirm what they already believe and are motivated to act according to these ideal models of conduct.

For example, when the believer in Christianity expresses her or his belief in salvation through Christ during the ritual of communion, the member's expression of belief and the role of believer to which a member aspires confirms the fact of salvation in the member's mind. It is a self-confirming argument--because I believe I will be saved and because I will be saved I believe. A similar process occurs when patriotic Americans sing songs like the "National Anthem." By singing about the country's ability to win a perilous battle fought throughout the night, a patriotic citizen not only expresses the

³⁸S. H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (1911; rpt. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1951) p. 257-261.

belief that the United States is strong and will endure but also proves that belief by the act of singing the song. Through the ritualistic expression of belief, the committed person simultaneously articulates beliefs and proves them by enactment.

Rhetoric which encourages commitment is consummatory-expressive rhetoric. It is a statement of beliefs, feelings, emotions or experiences which the audience can recognize as its own. The discourse affirms previously-held beliefs and proves their validity as an accurate explanation of reality by enactment.

V. The Role of Rhetoric in the Institutionalization of Conflict

To understand the role of rhetoric in the institutionalization of conflict, it helps to recall Robert Merton's theory of functionalism, which argues that the social process of change consists of continuous rebellion, institutionalization, rebellion, institutionalization and so on. Just as factors which allow institutionalization are implicit in rebellion, so the elements which encourage organizational permanency are implicit in the rhetoric of protest. Although rhetorical critics and scholars have not investigated the role of rhetoric in institutionalization, they have investigated rhetoric which encourages change in the social order. Within studies of the rhetoric of movements, one finds hints about the role of rhetoric in the process of institutionalization.

Richard B. Gregg's discussion of the ego-function of the rhetoric of protest provides an opportunity to identify a possible role of rhetoric in the institutionalization of a social movement. Gregg

argues that those rhetorical acts of the Black, Women's and Student Movements which alienated the public, actually were directed to members and were designed to create new identities containing desired strengths and virtues.³⁹ The recognition that Blacks and Women, for example, are exploited by society because of its inherent racism or sexism, respectively, leads to the conclusion that the traditional identities of Blacks and Women are not natural; they are imposed by society's institutions to preserve the social order. The process of transformation is a painful one for rhetors and their audiences, for they must discuss openly the inadequacies and failures of their original identity to demonstrate the need for a new identity.⁴⁰ According to Gregg, by attacking the racism or sexism of society, the rhetor not only aids the transformation to a new identity, but also enhances and affirms it.⁴¹ Enhancement and affirmation indicate that the rhetor is not simply concerned with changing identity, but also is concerned with maintaining the new identity to make it a permanent part of a new social order. Unfortunately, Gregg refers only briefly to these maintenance processes in his discussion.

³⁹Richard B. Gregg, "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 4 (Spring 1971)2, p. 75-75.

⁴⁰Gregg, "Ego-Function," Philosophy and Rhetoric, p. 74-75 and 85-86.

⁴¹Gregg, "Ego-Function," Philosophy and Rhetoric, p. 81-82 and 84.

George Herbert Mead's notions about the development of the self can explain more fully the process of transforming one's identity. They also indicate a possible relationship between a change in identity and the process of institutionalization. Within the self there is an "I" and a "me," Mead argues. The "I" is the uncertain, immediate and spontaneous aspect of a human being's self. "The 'I' is his action over against that social situation within his own conduct, and it gets into his experience only after he has carried out the act. Then he is aware of it." In contrast, the "me" is the "organized set of attitudes of others which he himself assumed" which governs conduct.⁴² The "me" contains the do's and don'ts of society, all of the roles which an individual is expected to play--woman, man, wife, husband, parent, child, teacher and student. The complete self is one which "takes on" the attitudes of the "me." "A person is a personality because he belongs to a community, because he takes over the institutions of that community into his own conduct."⁴³

A role does not exist except in relation to other roles and in a particular context. Within Mead's community there is an inter-dependent matrix of roles and relationships. A rhetor may enact this matrix dramatically. Such a dramatic enactment is what Northrop Frye calls a "myth of concern."

⁴²George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society, Vol. I of Works of George Herbert Mead, Charles W. Morris ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) p. 175.

⁴³Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 162.

The myth of concern exists to hold society together, so far as words can do this. For it, truth and reality are not directly connected with reasoning or evidence, but are socially established. What is true, for concern, is what society does and believes in response to authority, and a belief, so far as a belief is verbalized, is a statement of willingness to participate in a myth of concern. The typical language of concern tends to become the language of belief. In origin, a myth of concern is largely undifferentiated; it has its roots in religion, but religion also at that stage has the function of religio, the binding together of the community in common acts and assumptions.⁴⁴

Frye recognizes that a culture contains a group of stories which take on central importance--"they are believed to have really happened, or else to explain or recount something that is centrally important for a society's history, religion or social structure."⁴⁵ When combined, these stories produce the myth of a society. This myth is a dramatic enactment of the community's beliefs, values and roles, in Mead's terminology. The myth develops as society develops, until the former becomes encyclopedic--covering the society's past, future, its relationship to deities and neighbors, traditions and duties. In short, the "myth of concern" contains in dramatic form what a person needs to know to be a member of that society.

Frye's "myth of concern" is the dramatic counterpart of a society's ideology. A "myth of concern" is like an ideology in that both synthesize and integrate experience into a consistent explanation of reality: ". . . there is a synthesizing and

⁴⁴Northrop Frye, The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism, Midland Book edn. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1971) p. 36.

⁴⁵Frye, Critical Path, p. 34.

integrating process through which the concept of consciousness [the embryonic conception of ideology] comes to furnish a unitary centre in a infinitely variable world: . . ."⁴⁶

The "me" or the "myth of concern" is a form of social control over the individual, for it identifies socially acceptable behavior.

Social control is the expression of the "me" over against the expression of the "I". It sets the limits, it gives the determination that enables the "I" so to speak, to use the "me" as the means of carrying out what is the undertaking that all are interested in.⁴⁷

Social control is accomplished through a process of internal self-criticism.

The physiological mechanism of the human individual's central nervous system makes it possible for him to take the attitude of other individuals, and the attitudes of the organized social group of which he and they are members, toward himself, in terms of his integrated social relations to them and to the group as a whole; so that the general social process of experience and behavior which the group is carrying on is directly presented to him in his own experience, and so that he is thereby able to govern and direct his conduct consciously and critically, in terms of this social process. Thus he becomes not only self-conscious but also self-critical; and, thus, through self-criticism, social control over individual behavior and conduct operates; by virtue of the social origin and basis of such criticism. That is to say, self-criticism is essentially social criticism, and behavior controlled by self-criticism is essentially behavior controlled socially.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge, Harvert edn. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1936) p. 68.

⁴⁷Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 210-211.

⁴⁸Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 270.

Social control not only limits behavior, but also enables an individual to realize that he or she is part of the community.

It is the ability of the person to put himself in other people's places that gives him his cues as to what he is to do under specific situation. It is this that gives to the man what we term his character as a member of the community; his citizenship, from a political standpoint; his membership from any one of the different standpoints in which he belongs to the community. It makes him a part of the community, and he recognizes himself as a member of it just because he does take the attitudes of those concerned, and does control his own conduct in terms of common attitudes.⁴⁹

Social control may be accomplished by encouraging certain behaviors in the roles individuals play as members of a community or organization. These behaviors encourage commitment to the community or organization, making social control easier. In a survey of nineteenth century utopian communities, Rosebeth Moss Kanter identifies mechanisms which encourage commitment that are incorporated into the role of utopian community member. The greater the number of mechanisms used by a given utopian community, the greater the likelihood that it would exist for at least 25 years, the sociological definition of one generation. Kanter identifies five mechanisms-- sacrifice, the conscious distinction of the community from the rest of the world, emphasis on the community as a collective whole instead of the separateness of an individual community member, community control over an individual's behavior and encouraging a member to surrender his or her identity to the community. An example of sacrifice would

⁴⁹Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 270.

be selling all personal possessions and donating the proceeds to the community. Conscious distinction of the community from the rest of the world could be operationalized by requiring unusual dress, such as the dress of the Amish community, or by ideological distinctions between members and non-members which "proved" the superiority of members over non-members. Group activities, such as singing, are ways to de-emphasize the individuality of members and emphasize the community as an undivided whole. Community control over an individual member's behavior may be exercised through self or group criticism and confession. Kanter argues that sacrifice promoted continued membership in the utopian community, because members justified their sacrifice by increasing the importance of the community in their lives. Distinguishing the community from the rest of the world and emphasizing the group rather than individual identity promoted cohesion. Self or group criticism of behavior encouraged adherence to the normative behaviors of the community. Surrender was the cumulative effective of these other devices which was heightened to create a total dependence on the community.⁵⁰

The social control function of the "me" helps provide a new social order with the stability and permanency necessary for institutionalization. Commitment to the social order is crucial to the success of social control.

⁵⁰Rosebeth Moss Kanter, "Commitment and Social Organization: A Study of Commitment Mechanisms in Utopian Communities," American Sociological Review 33(August 1968)4, p. 499-517.

The "I" is the creative and spontaneous aspect of self which has the potential to change the "me." In Mead's words, "the individual . . . is continually reacting back against this society." The reaction of great individual and of countless lesser minds slowly changes society, the "me" in the individual self.⁵¹

The human being's ability to communicate with symbols is what allows the self to develop.

The ability to pick these meanings out and to indicate them to others and to the organism is an ability which gives peculiar power to the human individual. The control has been made possible by language. It is that mechanism of control over meaning in this sense which has, I say, constituted what we term "mind." The mental processes do not, however, lie in words any more than the intelligence of the organism lies in the elements of the central nervous system. Both are part of a process that is going on between organism and environment. The symbols serve their part in this process, and it is that which makes communication so important. Out of language emerges the field of mind.⁵²

Symbols also create the common environment in which human beings live, in that by describing the environment we emphasize certain facets of it and ignore others, because of the words we choose for description. This is similar to Kenneth Burke's notion of language as a series of terministic screens, that "much that we take as observations about 'reality' may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms."⁵³

⁵¹Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 210.

⁵²Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 133.

⁵³Burke, Language as Symbolic Action, p. 46.

A reflexive relationship arises between the human mind and its environment, the mind "creates" the environment, because symbols used to describe the environment select what the mind perceives. The mind, in turn, must adjust to that environment.⁵⁴ Thus, human beings are responsible for the environment and for their mind.

Mead does not discuss how to change the "me" in an individual; however, Gregg's discussion of the ego-function provides the link. The function of the rhetoric of protest is the creation of a new identity, a new role. This role, however, cannot exist in isolation; it must exist in relation to other roles in a particular context. If a rhetor creates a new role, he or she also must create a new "myth of concern" and an ideology in which that role will exist. The "myth of concern" and ideology will explain reality and provide models of conduct. A rhetor uses the imagery of the "myth of concern" or the logical arguments of the ideology to confirm certain explanations of reality and, indirectly, to preserve the institutions which they created.

VI. A Perspective Drawn From Rhetorical Criticism

A traditional perspective of rhetoric as a discursive phenomenon is not entirely adequate to analyze rhetoric in an increasingly institutionalized conflict, so a traditional critical perspective also is problematic, for it assumes that rhetoric requires

⁵⁴Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 245-246.

logical arguments to persuade an audience, while rhetoric in the institutionalization of conflict has a more non-discursive form. A traditional perspective

. . . emphasizes the examination of the presuppositions; underlying arguments; the validity of argumentative structure; and the credibility, relevance, and sufficiency of evidence. It stresses the adequacy of the speaker's or writer's analysis of the issue; his ability to respond to counterarguments; and his capacity to adapt the materials of his discourse to the expectations, experiences and interests of his audience.⁵⁵

In contrast, Kenneth Burke's theory of dramatism focuses on rhetorical processes similar to non-discursive rhetoric in an institutionalized conflict. For Burke,

. . . rhetoric is not rooted in any past condition of human society. It is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.⁵⁶

Identification is the central rhetorical process in dramatism. The audience identifies with the rhetor because it recognizes a pool of common experiences, ideas and attitudes which make the audience and rhetor "consubstantial." Identification induces cooperation because of the recognition of "consubstantiality." However, the divisive nature of human beings, caused by the lack of

⁵⁵Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1972) p. 24-25.

⁵⁶Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives, p. 43.

"consubstantiality," always is working against identification and cooperation.⁵⁷

For Burke, rhetoric is not simply a means of conveying information, but is a mode of action--symbolic action.⁵⁸ Thus, the use of language has both causes and consequences which a critic must consider. For example, when a rhetor states that a particular confrontation is a battle, he or she is shaping the perceptions of the audience. The rhetor is limiting the audience's alternatives to act in this situation. The critic could explore what motivated the rhetor to make this statement and its consequences for future public discussion or resolution of the conflict, for example.

These two perspectives reflect two fundamentally different, yet complementary perspectives on language--language as conveying information and language as conveying perceptions. The traditional perspective emphasizes verifiable facts and logical arguments, while the dramatistic perspective emphasizes how language qua language affects perceptions of reality and actions. The words an individual uses reflect her or his perceptions of attitudes toward the world and, thus, are important indications of future action. Because non-discursive rhetoric utilizes the poetic, aesthetic and ritualistic aspects of language, a dramatistic perspective on language would be

⁵⁷Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives, p. 20-22.

⁵⁸Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) p. 235-247.

a logical perspective for a criticism of the role of rhetoric in the process of institutionalization.

VII. Methodology

The methodology for this thesis consists of a descriptive analysis and cluster and agon analyses of all available rhetoric generated during the 1936-1937, 1945-1946 and 1970 UAW national strikes against GM. A descriptive analysis consists of careful and detailed descriptions of arguments, supporting materials, appeals to values, thesis statements, purpose, tone, persona, as well as poetic and rhetorical strategies utilized by the rhetor. In short, it is a description of the ways in which the rhetor used symbols in her or his attempt to persuade the audience.⁵⁹ Because of my interest in how a rhetor induces commitment through the use of language, I paid special attention to how UAW rhetors utilized non-discursive elements of language. I noted, in particular, characterizations and imagery.

From the descriptive analysis I also generated a list of the key terms of each strike, based upon frequency and intensity of the use of these terms in the rhetoric of each strike. I also noted if there were characterizations of these key terms in the discourse. I then performed cluster and agon analyses of the key terms or their

⁵⁹Campbell, Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric, p. 14-19.

characterizations for each strike.⁶⁰ Very simply, cluster analysis consists of looking for what terms or characterizations go with what other terms or characterizations. What characterizations are associated with each other in the rhetoric of each strike and do these associations change with each successive strike? An agon analysis looks for the opposition of key terms or characterizations. This indicates the existence of any conflict or tension between characterizations for the rhetor and provides the basis of any drama found in the rhetoric. I also tried to determine if these oppositions change with each successive strike.

Based on the results of the cluster and agon analysis, I attempted to reconstruct relationships between the non-discursive elements of the rhetoric of each strike, in order to determine the union's perception of reality during each strike. I describe these perceptions of reality as "myths of concern." I then attempt to compare these "myths of concern" and discuss the implications of their differences for the UAW as an organization and as part of a social movement. This analysis also has broader implications for understanding how conflict is institutionalized, because these three UAW strikes occur at different stages in the process by which industrial conflict is institutionalized. Thus, the rhetoric of the strikes provides the critic with an opportunity to study the role of rhetoric in this social process.

⁶⁰Carol A. Berthold, "Kenneth Burke's Cluster-Agon Method: Its Development and an Application," Central States Speech Journal, 27(Spring 1977)1 p. 302-309.

Chapter Three

THE CONTEXT FOR INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT

"Anyone," the noted arbitrator Theodore W. Kheel once remarked, "who starts a sentence by saying that 'the trouble with labor or management is' is bound to be partially right but mostly wrong."¹

Mr. Kheel's caveat is worth remembering for even the most casual discussion about unions, management or labor relations, because variety is often the rule rather than the exception. For example, definitions of unions vary enough to include organizations which are not usually considered unions as well as organizations widely recognized as unions. A general definition of unions, such as "an association of individuals in a particular trade or place of work who voluntarily unite for collective action to improve their individual status,"² could include such professional organizations as the National Education Association and the American Bar Association, as well as the Teamsters. More specific definitions of unions such as:

¹Theodore W. Kheel, "A Labor Relations Policy for 1964," Personnel Journal, April 1964, p. 181 cited in Arthur A. Sloane and Fred Witney, Labor Relations, 3rd edn. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977) p. 47.

²E. Wight Bakke, Clark Kerr and Charles W. Anrod, Unions, Management and the Public, 3rd edn. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967) p. 74.

. . . any organization of any kind, or any agency or employee representation committee or plan, in which employees participate and which exists for the purpose, in whole or in part, of dealing with employers concerning grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours of employment, or conditions of work.³

delineate union activities with which the public is familiar and recognizes as characteristic of unions. Historically, the goals of unions are varied. There are the utopian cooperative efforts of the Knights of Labor,⁴ the syndicalism of the International Workers of the World,⁵ and the business unionism which focuses on issues of wages, pensions and the like which characterizes most unions today.

Generally, two types of unions are most common in labor relations today, craft and industrial unions. Craft unions have a horizontal organization of highly skilled workers, such as carpenters or machinists, while industrial unions have a vertical organization of all workers--skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled--who work in an industry, such as steelworkers or automobile workers. Before the merger of the American Federation of Labor (A. F. of L.) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (C. I. O.), the A. F. of L. was an organization of craft unions while the C. I. O. was an organization

³49 U.S. Code 449, sec. 2(5). (National Labors Relations Act)

⁴Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order: 1877-1920, American Century Series (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967) p. 66-69.

⁵Melvyn Dubofsky, We Shall Be All: A History of the IWW (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1969).

of industrial unions.⁶ Today, industrial unions like the United Automobile Workers (U.A.W.) have made special arrangements for skilled workers within the industrial union organization, because of what they perceive as differences in the needs of skilled and semi or unskilled workers.⁷

There are many factors which affect the particular relationship between a union and the management of a business which help to make that relationship distinctive. Peculiarities of the industry, such as the differences between construction and oil production, the size of the company, the company's financial situation, the philosophy of management, the size and structure of the union and the like, all make it difficult to generalize about the nature of all union-management relationships by studying one relationship. This is not to say, however, that there are no similarities in union-management relationships, but that care must be taken in applying any conclusions reached here to other relationships. By limiting myself to the relationship between the U.A.W. and the General Motors Corporation (G.M.), I am focusing on union-management relations in industrial manufacturing. The fact that both G.M. and the U.A.W. are powerful organizations also limits the application of this analysis to other

⁶Arthur A. Sloane and Fred Witney, Labor Relations, 3rd edn. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977) p. 67-84.

⁷Arnold R. Weber, "Stability and Change in the Structure of Collective Bargaining," Challenges to Collective Bargaining (New York: Columbia University, The American Assembly, n.d.) p. 34.

union-management relationships. Similarly, the limitation of my analysis to the rhetoric of the U.A.W. during national strikes also restricts the application of any conclusions reached in this analysis to other social movements in which conflict with the social order is not institutionalized.

The strike is part of the collective bargaining process in industrial relations and must be viewed as one element within that process. Collective bargaining is the joint determination of hours, fringe benefits and other conditions of employment by unions and management through negotiation.

Collective bargaining would have little meaning were it not for the possibility of a strike, with attendant losses on both sides, since there would be little pressure on the parties to modify their positions and reach agreements. It follows that the strike and the lockout [a lockout is where the employer prevents his or her employees from working by locking them out of the workplace] are really two-sided contests and that there are two parties to every stoppage, equally in disagreement with each other. . . . The fact of a lockout does not necessarily mean that the employer is at fault, nor the fact of a strike that the union is to blame.⁸

The occurrence of a strike is the point at which the union-management relationship moves out of the realm of private negotiations into the realm of public debate. The bargaining relationship is primarily between the company and the union, but once the intention to strike is announced and especially when a strike is called, the public interest directly is involved. The new relationship is between the company, the union, other companies who see the outcome of the strike affecting

⁸Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin and Arthur M. Ross, eds., Industrial Conflict (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954) p. 12.

union-management relations at their companies, the government which is concerned about the economic impact of the strike and the public as consumers of the company's goods or services. The public has an interest in ending the strike at some point at which the lack of goods or services provided by the company becomes intolerable. The public may put pressure on either/or both parties to end the strike, to resume bargaining and to conclude a contract. Consequently, to understand a strike and the role of union discourse in it, one must understand the context in which strikes occur--the relationship between the company and its workers, between management and the union, and between both the company and the union and both the public and the government.

I. The Bases of Industrial Conflict

The conflict of interest between a business person and a worker is based on the scarcity of money and of power.

For what is of fundamental significance in the culture of capitalism is its emphasis on the economic individual, that is, the rational, acquisitive, self-interested individual who goes about the pursuit of private ends (generally capable of expression in monetary terms in the form of wages, rents or profits) in the most efficient manner possible. His prototype is popularly supposed to be the ingenious Yankee, whether as industrious laborers with the reasonable hope of better things, the inventive manufacturer or the shrewd trader.⁹

⁹Wilbert E. Moore, Industrial Relations and the Social Order (New York: Macmillan, 1946) p. 37-38.

The business person makes a profit to pay dividends to investors, if any, to buy new equipment, and then to make money for herself or himself. In contrast, the worker is interested in making a profit from wages, which is seen as a cost of production in business. To pay higher wages, a business person must either pay lower dividends to investors, which decreases the desirability of investing in the business; decrease the amount of money used to make capital improvements, which could hurt future production; or increase the price of products, which may decrease consumer demand for the product.

Ultimately, the conflict over profits is based on a conflict over power, since power helps determine who makes the greatest profits. The conflict over power is central to disputes about the rights of management or of workers.

The pronouncements of the participants in industrial disputes are likely to contain repeated references to "rights" which are being won or defended. Thus the representatives of labor may claim the right of union recognition, collective bargaining, or a fair return for labor. The representatives of management will uphold the property rights of the company, the right of the company to run its own business, or the right of capital for a fair return on investments.¹⁰

The conflict is over who has the power to determine wage rates and other conditions of employment or, more simply, who has power in the workplace.

Theoretically, this conflict of interest contributes to the welfare of the economic system and to society, by preventing one

¹⁰Moore, Industrial Relations, p. 402.

person or group of people from dominating the marketplace. This conflict of interest enhances the significance of individual input in economic relationships,¹¹ however, the implications of this conflict of interest place a worker in a position subservient to the employer. If wages simply are seen as part of the cost of production, there is little concern by the business person for the people earning the wages, which implies that the workers are nonhuman, machine-like.¹² The belief that workers are only a cog in the process of production is perilously close to anti-democratic notions that the working class is incapable of appreciating the "finer" things in life, of governing themselves or of deserving a higher standard of living.

The theoretical basis of classical or laissez-faire economic theory is individualism. Any organized attempt to affect economic processes disrupts the balance created by the conflict of interests, which allows the economy to work optimally. The worker must remain an individual, since any form of organization disrupts natural economic laws.

¹¹Moore, Industrial Relations, p. 50.

¹²Lazar Teper and Sally Loomis' mass recitation Machine, translated and adapted from Andreyev's King Hunger, is a statement by workers about being treated like machines. Machine was performed before different union locals in a traveling Labor Chautauqua during the 1920s and 1930s. Brookwood Collection, Labor Chautauqua Series, Box 98, Folder: 98-9, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

A critic of laissez-faire economics describes the theory in the following manner.

In economics the manifestation of individualism was the theory known as laissez-faire. Based on the paradox that private vices could be public virtues, this theory saw in the free and unrestricted pursuit of self-interest the key to material progress. Its proponents argued that the competition resulting from the uninhibited rush of a variety of individuals to increase their fortunes would be a sufficient check on avarice and would constitute the only kind of regulation--"natural" self-regulation--which economic activity required. The State had only to keep order, like a policeman, and prevent any combination of individuals that might interfere with the free operation of the law of supply and demand. Such a system, or lack of system, would reward the energetic and enterprising, and punish the slothful and improvident. It would inevitably result in national and international prosperity.¹³

Ideally, without governmental intervention or collective action, everyone is free to contract for services, goods and labor as free agents, "bound only to those obligations to which he himself has willingly agreed."¹⁴ Thus, the worker and business person, as individuals, must try to reconcile their differences as to wages and to profits. When a group of workers attempt to influence wages or working conditions, they disrupt the economic system, for they are entering the domain of the business person. This is the assumption underlying statements by managers which express frustration with

¹³ Reverend Benjamin L. Masse, S.J., "The Popes and the Industrial Revolution," America, May 12, 1951 p. 157-159; rpt. in Bakke, Kerr and Anrod eds., Unions, Management and the Public, p. 32.

¹⁴ Moore, Industrial Relations, p. 39.

unions encroaching on management's decision-making powers by taking authority away from managers, by frustrating managers in their attempt to meet demands of different economic and social forces, by limiting a business's flexibility and by endangering economic progress.¹⁵

Today, the values of individualism are so entrenched in business that a survey of management personnel produced what one author called the "conviction of the 'American Way of Life'."

Individualism is the mainspring of our economic and political system. Anything that introduces collectivism or hampers the individual's opportunity to take advantage of his superior worth or "grasp the main chance" breaks this mainspring.

The line of progress in the industrial situation is from worker to manager. Advance in these respects is a sign of superior brains and ability.

The best way to preserve these values is to reward individuals in proportion to their demonstrated ability as measured by men who have demonstrated even greater ability.

A condition of this sort of achievement is the preservation of competition among individuals, and in this competition the fittest will survive.

There are natural economic laws which govern this process and which, if not interfered with, will work out to the advantage of the whole people, not only for employers but for consumers and labor as well. Not only businessmen, but workers, consumers, union leaders, and even government should realize this fact and act accordingly, that is not set up "artificial" barriers to the operation of these laws.¹⁶

The values of individualism also pervade American legal theory, which helps to create a paradox for the American workers and demonstrates the importance of collective action for workers. The Bill of Rights enumerates the rights of an American citizen which the

¹⁵Sloane and Witney, Labor Relations, p. 26.

¹⁶E. Wight Bakke, "The Goals of Management," in Bakke, Kerr and Anrod eds., Unions, Management and the Public p. 208.

government cannot deny to ensure the freedom of the individual citizen; however, in the legal theory of business, individualism takes a strange twist when the corporation legally is defined as a person with the rights accompanying personhood--property ownership, liability and ability to file suit.¹⁷ This twist of definition makes laissez-faire economics consistent by disregarding the fact that a corporation is an organization. When a worker contracts with a corporation for employment, by definition it is a contract between two individuals.

What makes this significant in industrial relations is that a small number of corporations have an important impact on the economy.

There are more than 200,000 industrial corporations in the United States with total assets in 1970 of \$554 billion. But 100 corporations . . . control 50 percent (\$290 billion) of all industrial assets. The five largest industrial corporation--Exxon (Standard Oil of New Jersey), General Motors, Texaco, Ford Motors and Gulf Oil--control 10 percent of all industrial assets themselves (emphasis in original).¹⁸

At this point the theory that an individual worker contacts for employment with an individual employer is an absurdity, except by the twist of legal definition.

The fact that a corporation functions as an organization and not as an individual is further substantiated and complicated by the

¹⁷Henry C. Black, Black's Law Dictionary (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1951) p. 409.

¹⁸Thomas R. Dye, Who's Running America: Institutional Leadership in the United States (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976) p. 20.

presence of stockholders. Theoretically, the corporation is organized as a democracy.

That is, each unit in the total system is given as much weight as every other unit: each counts as one. The initial peculiarity of corporate democracy, however, is the nature of the unit--the share of stock not the stockholder. It is not sufficient to say, therefore, even in theory, that managers of a corporation are elected representatives of the shareholders; they are representatives of shares of stock. Put in terms which are only slightly oversimplified, the corporation in legal theory is a fictional person whose behavior is determined by its elements, which are pieces of paper.¹⁹

In corporations where the ownership of stock is diffused so that no individual or group can control the corporation, management is independent of the shareholders, except for paying adequate dividends, and becomes self-perpetuating.²⁰ The result is that ownership of stock in a corporation is not necessarily equal to control over the policies of the corporation.

As far as the physical wealth, patent rights, undivided surplus, and other valuable assets are concerned, there is no question about their legal ownership; they belong to the corporation. The stockholder owns a right to a possible return on an investment, plus a theoretical right to share in the control of the total organization. The extent of the modification in the traditional view of property may be seen concretely in the fact that an owner of a share of stock can claim no particular share in the physical wealth of the corporation. He can claim no piece of equipment

¹⁹ Moore, Industrial Relations, p. 74.

²⁰ Moore, Industrial Relations, p. 82-84.

of manufactured product as rightfully his because he owns part of the company. He owns only an investment.²¹

Consequently, while management and perhaps stockholders applaud the advantages of individual competition, individual initiative and "natural" laws of economics based on individualism, an individual has little impact on the corporation. Decisions are made by management, not individuals. Individual stockholders cannot affect corporate policy unless they own large amounts of stock. In this instance, arguing that an individual worker contracts with an individual employer for a job is ludicrous.

In this situation the individual worker faces a management which is not the owner of the corporation, which is organized and which is backed by the corporation's assets in decision-making. Under such conditions, contracts between individual workers and management cannot be equal. For the individual worker, the solution literally is all around her or him, other workers in the same situation with similar goals. "The original organizer of the trade-union movement is the shop, the factory, the mine and the industry. The agitator or the labor leader merely announces the already existing fact."²²

²¹Moore, Industrial Relations, p. 81-82. "But how rigorously should the concept of ownership be applied to shareholders? In the real world, shareholders seldom act as owners. They seldom invest with the interest of being--or acting as--owners. Their functional relationship to the enterprise is much more that of a lender-investor than that of an owner" (emphasis added). Simon M. Lorn, "The Impending Raid on your Private Life," The Wharton Magazine, 3 (Winter 1979) 2, p. 45.

²²Frank Tannenbaum, A Philosophy of Labor (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951) pp. 7-12, 58-61, 79-84, 94-95, 176-177, 198-199; rpt. in Bakke, Kerr and Anrod, Unions, Management and the Public p. 59.

Only an organization of workers in the same workplace which bargains with management for a contract to work can begin to equalize the worker-management relationship. Yet, organized workers must find a counterpart for the capital which gives the corporation its economic power. The union counterpart is the strike--the monetary value of labor lost to the corporation during the collective cessation of working. All union power is based on the strike, or the threat of a strike. "The fact is that without strikes or at least the right to strike, collective bargaining is nothing more than collective begging."²³

For workers, the freedom to fulfill individual needs and desires is found by becoming a member of a group, the union. This contradicts all of the values of individualism on which economic and legal theory is based. A union worker does not contract for work as an individual, but as a member of a group. A union member must subordinate his or her individual desires to the desires of the group to ensure the group's success. To maintain unity, individual workers who stridently object to unions or to union policies must be disciplined in some manner; consequently, unions appear coercive and anti-democratic, for they deny the freedom of the individual worker to voice her or his opinion.

²³Statement made by Floyd Smith, President of the AFL-CIO International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, in Neil Gilbride, "Strike! Is it the only Way," Detroit News 9/20/70, Vertical File: Strikes, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

Yet, unions actually are more democratic than a corporation. If ownership of stock is diffused, individual stockholders probably have no impact on corporate policies. However, a union is a political organization in which members have the right to vote for union officials. Depending upon the particular union constitution, members may vote directly for national officers, contract proposals and other issues. At the local level of union organization, union officers are elected directly by the local union membership.²⁴ For business to be as democratic as unions, management would have to obtain the consent of stockholders for many decisions or allow that ". . . a stockholder . . . could object, not by selling his stock to someone else but by actually withdrawing capital from the business. Management would then be compelled to develop in relation to their stockholders the same kind of political strategies which union leaders must develop in relation to their members."²⁵

Standards of individualism, such as individual initiative and individual contract, which are used to criticize unions are not often used to criticize business; yet, neither unions nor business meet such standards. In a union, an individual member defers to the

²⁴Sloane and Witney, Labor Relations, p. 165-173.

²⁵E. Wight Bakke, Mutual Survival: The Goal of Unions and Management (New Haven, Conn: Labor and Management Center, Yale University, 1946) p. 13.

authority of the group to achieve the goals of collective action. In a business, a worker or member of management defers to the authority of someone higher up in the organizational hierarchy to coordinate the activity of the company.

Within a manufacturing establishment coordination is accomplished on a different basis; that of authority. Thus in contemporary industry a major task of management is that of maintaining coordination of effort and effectiveness of the entire unit in the face of large-scale diversification. It is axiomatic, if somewhat paradoxical, that increased diversification of individual positions in society require at the same time increased cooperation because of widespread independence. Economic individualists have not always recognized this in theory, although they have done fairly well in practice.²⁶

For example, in a plant where workers have the freedom as individuals to contract for wages and working conditions, the diversity of the contracts would be mind-boggling. Different workers would want different hours of work, work weeks, rest periods, vacations and so on. In order to create some regularity in plant operations, management must coordinate the workers' activities on the job, wages, vacations and the like by imposing rules, regulations and wage rates on workers. Whatever individuality a worker theoretically has is lost, because of management's efforts to coordinate and systematize plant activity.

The inability of members of the business community to recognize that values of individualism do not fit the realities of corporate organization creates this ironic scenario:

²⁶Herbert G. Gutman, Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, Vintage Books edn. (New York: Random House, 1977) p. 63.

. . . the executive is likely to view himself as an old-style entrepreneur despite his position as a professional manager. Thus one is treated to the rather amusing spectacle of a salaried executive, with little or no actual ownership of the stock of his company, engaging in a controversy with governmental agencies or labor representatives and maintaining his individualistic rights of running his own company his own way. This is, of course, not to be particularly wondered at in view of the existence of cultural conceptions which do not precisely fit the contemporary characteristics of corporation [sic] organization.²⁷

Besides contradicting notions about individualism, which are central to economic and legal theory, unions also contradict nineteenth century notions about property rights and about business as a cultural ideal, which still have enough significance in the twentieth century to affect the union's public image adversely. On a very obvious level, destruction of company property by union members violates a business's property rights. Less obvious property rights, based on the ownership of relationships necessary to conduct business, also are violated by unions. Membership in a union "violates" the contract between a worker and his employer for employment.

By strict application of judicial doctrine, the worker had not only given up all claim to his job by his refusal to fulfill his "contract" with the employer, but the banding together of several workmen constituted a criminal conspiracy. Although the doctrine of criminal conspiracy did not last much beyond the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, it was simply an extreme statement of the predominant view of the courts until fairly recent years. [This statement was made during the 1940s

²⁷ Moore, Industrial Relations, p. 89.

referring to the changes in labor law during the
1930s.^{7 28}

Here, notions about employee loyalty to the employer--loyalty being refusal to join a union--are equated with a contract to work between an employee and employer. Employers operationalized this notion by using "yellow-dog" contracts" which are contracts for employment in which employment is contingent upon the worker not being a union member. Membership in a union automatically terminates the contract for employment.²⁹ These notions are related to assumptions of feudalism--that the serf pledged lifelong allegiance and labor to the lord in return for protection--and indentured servitude--where a servant was owned until his or her services equaled the debt which the master paid. Employee loyalty is the right of the employer because of the contract to work, which implies that the employee is the "property" of the employer because of that contract.

The conduct of business also was considered a property right of the business person. Strikes or boycotts by unions interfered with the relations necessary for the conduct of business:

²⁸Moore, Industrial Relations, p. 361. For an example of the Supreme Court's application of this notion see Hitchman Coal and v. Mitchell (1917), 245 S.C. 229.

²⁹Irving Bernstein, The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker 1920-1933, Sentry edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960) p. 149.

. . . the courts occasionally claimed to recognize the abstract "right" of labor to organize, and even perhaps to engage in "collective bargaining." But what the courts fairly uniformly denied to labor was any power to implement those "rights," especially if faced with a militantly antiunion employer. Any strike which could be shown to interfere with the commerce or business of nonpartisans; any picket lines which seemed to the judges to be "coercive" in its restraint on nonunion workers; and certainly any "secondary boycott" which attempted to induce persons not engaged in the dispute to withhold their patronage from the employer--all these were more or less uniformly condemned. By means of injunctions secured from the courts, as well as by the less austere legal means of partisan police groups and National Guard units, employers forced the unions to "bargain" not only with the company but with the government.³⁰

The existence of unions also contradict the belief that the conduct of business is an American ideal.

The dominant creed of nineteenth century American capitalism, fashioned largely by the Supreme Court philosophy of Justice Field, saw in economic freedom a natural right. Any state attempt to regulate the conditions of work, interfere with the liberty of private contract, or curb private property was rejected out of hand. "Throughout the period, indeed the presumption of immorality rested on those who would detract from the rewards of capitalism," writes an historian of the period. The social Darwinism which underlay this doctrine sanctioned industry's resistance to unionism. In fact, beginning with the railroad strike of 1877, which arose at the end of the longest depression in United States history, almost every major strike for the following forty years was attended by the outbreak of violence. By threatening the integrated philosophical value system of the business community, unionism provoked anxiety regarding the correctness of a style of life, in all its dimensions.³¹

³⁰Moore, Industrial Relations, p. 381.

³¹Daniel Bell, "Industrial Conflict and Public Opinion," in Kornhauser, Dubin and Ross, Industrial Conflict, p. 243.

The importance of business to American prosperity from the business perspective is still evident today, when members of management describe themselves. They are inventors and initiators, leaders, organizers, trustees and stewards, builders, benefactors and finally successful.³² Anyone opposing persons so crucial to American prosperity must be anti-American.

Because unions contradict the values of individualism and notions about property rights, and because they stand in opposition to business, taken to exemplify an American ideal, unions are not seen by onlookers as truly legitimate organizations. Businesses' legitimacy is based on public support and the tradition of legal and of economic theory. In contrast, unions' legitimacy is based on legislative intervention, the National Labor Relations Act (N.L.R.A.) which gave workers the right to organize without interference from employers and the right to strike and which set up a federal agency to enforce the Act.³³ This Act contradicts the attitudes and legal doctrines described above. In fact, until the Supreme Court upheld the N.L.R.A., the business community did not consider it constitutional.³⁴ This is not to say, however, that there was no legal tradition for unions.

³²Bakke, "Goals of Management," in Unions, Management and the Public, p. 202-204.

³³49 U.S. Code 449.

³⁴Irving Bernstein, The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker 1933-1941 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970) p. 633 and 642.

There was the development of two mutually incompatible national policies toward organized labor, one regarding it as creating market restraints inimical to the national economy and the other regarding it as necessary to the regime of industrial peace based upon a balanced bargaining relationship between employees [sic] wielding the combined power of incorporated capital wealth and unions wielding the power of organized labor.³⁵

Because the courts, as final arbiter in the American legal system, consistently interpreted labor laws in an anti-union manner, union activity was not considered legal by the business and much of the public until the Supreme Court upheld the N.L.R.A. Consequently, unions and union activity are not considered by much of the public to be a legitimate part of American experience, or at least as legitimate as business activity.

II. Institutionalization of Industrial Conflict

The basis of the conflict between unions and management over profits and power and between the values of individualism and of collectivism, indicate that this conflict, if unregulated, easily could result in violent attempts of a union trying to force management to accede to union demands or a management forcibly keeping workers from joining a union. The history of union-management relations is dotted with such events. At times violence has been so great that it threatened to disrupt society. The success of the Minneapolis Teamster's strike in 1937 resulted in the arming of

³⁵ Charles J. Morris, ed., The Developing Labor Law: The Board, the Courts and the National Labor Relations Act (Chicago; Ill: American Bar Association, 1971) p. 3.

business members and their supporters, as well as employers and their supporters. It ended after two confrontations, much legal maneuvering and federal intervention.³⁶ During the Pullman Strike in 1894, federal troops killed 25 workers and injured 60.³⁷ In the Memorial Day Massacre on May 30, 1937, over-reaction by Chicago police resulted in ten deaths and thirty injuries among strikers and thirty-five minor injuries to police.³⁸ The LaFollette Committee hearings on the violations of free speech and other rights of labor documented the purchase of almost \$500,000 of tear gas between January 1933 and June 1937 for use in labor disputes.³⁹ During this period businesses purchased sub-machine guns, revolvers, shotguns and ammunition also for use in labor disputes.

In union-management relations, the strike is the union's primary weapon; yet, it represents all that is violent and destructive in union-management relations to the public and to management. The strike denies the freedom of management to run a company as it sees

³⁶Bernstein, Turbulent Years, p. 243-252.

³⁷Philip S. Foner, From the Founding of the A.F. of L. to the Emergence of American Imperialism, vol. 2 of History of the Labor Movement in the United States, 2nd edn. (1955; rpt. New York: International Publishers, 1975) p. 269.

³⁸Bernstein, Turbulent Years, p. 485-490.

³⁹Jerold S. Auerbach, American Labor: The Twentieth Century, American Heritage Series (Indianapolis, Ind: Bobbs-Merill Educational Publishing, 1969) p. 254-260.

fit, because a strike coerces management to accede to the union's demands. The fact that the strike is defined as legally sanctioned coercion indicates the strength of this perception.⁴⁰ The strike also is perceived as destructive, for it prevents a firm from conducting business during a strike, a property right of business noted above. Thus, to the casual onlooker and often to management, unions appear to cause labor unrest, since there were no overt indications of dissatisfaction before workers joined the union. One observer of labor relations describes this perception in the following manner:

Even if the manager does not view the union as gang, he often still feels that they strike a discordant note in the happy home. Once there, unrest develops. A peer group outside the home becomes more important to the children than the parents; the father's powers are challenged; the child begins to think his goals are not synonymous with those of the parents (he may even want his allowance raised); and perhaps worse of all, he wants to have his voice heard in how the home should be run.⁴¹

Because unions appear to be the source of violence and coercion in labor relations, unions are seen as inherently violent and coercive; consequently, business responds to the unions in kind. The violence escalates and erupts into incidents like the Memorial Day Massacre which threaten to disrupt society if the conflict is not regulated.

The National Labor Relations Act began such regulation. It recognizes that:

⁴⁰Black, Black's Law Dictionary, p. 1591.

⁴¹Albert A. Blum, "Management Paternalism and Collective Bargaining," Personnel Administration January-February 1963 p. 38 cited in Sloane and Witney, Labor Relations, p. 5.

Experience has proved that protection by law of the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively safeguards commerce from injury, impairment or interruption, and promotes the flow of commerce by removing certain recognized sources of industrial strife and unrest, by encouraging practices fundamental to the friendly adjustment of industrial disputes arising out of differences as to wages, hours or other working conditions, and by restoring equality of bargaining power between employers and employees.⁴²

The Act focuses on the commercial role of industry in society and recognizes that both employees and employers are essential to the continuation of commerce, rather than focusing only on the rights of employees or of employers. It raises above the immediate conflict and places it in perspective with other social processes.

This legislative intervention, by recognizing the rights of both parties, creates a mechanism for the containment of industrial conflict. The new relationship, which is between an organization of workers and of management, provides a means for guaranteeing those rights by appealing to a third party, the federal government; however, management and unions must attempt to resolve their differences through collective bargaining before appealing to the government to resolve the conflict. Collective bargaining became the primary means through which industrial conflict was limited and periodically resolved by the participants in the conflict.

There are four aspects of collective bargaining that warrant recognition. First, collective bargaining is a relationship between organizations, not a relationship between management and workers.

⁴²49 U.S. Code 449, sec. 1.

Only the representatives of management and representatives of the union can bargain. Second, collective bargaining is a power relationship between organizations, for it ultimately is based upon the right of either party to use force in a limited manner. Third, collective bargaining is a treaty-making and treaty-enforcing process. The objective of collective bargaining is arriving at a mutually satisfying contract which determines wages, hours and other conditions of employment for a limited period of time. While the contract is in force, the primary activity of management and the union is interpretation and administration of the contract. Finally, collective bargaining is a process of accommodation between companies and unions. In collective bargaining both parties recognize that there is a basic conflict of interest, but they also recognize that they are interdependent, that employers need workers to make a product and that workers need employers to provide jobs.⁴³

Collective bargaining also provides benefits to workers and to management which may not be obvious to the casual observer. For workers, collective bargaining helps to humanize the blind and impersonal economic forces, such as supply and demand, by focusing on the productive input of the worker in economic processes. It also

⁴³Frederick H. Harbison, "Collective Bargaining and American Capitalism," in Kornhauser, Dubin and Ross, Industrial Conflict, p. 270-271.

provides a system for seeking redress for grievances against management. Seeking redress for grievances is something every American is told he or she has a right to do. Because the workplace is humanized and because workers have a means for having grievances redressed, workers have a rationale for believing that the economic system can work for their benefit. In this sense, collective bargaining is a means of siphoning off workers' dissatisfaction with the economic system, which could be expressed violently if the collective bargaining system did not exist, so that expressions of dissatisfaction will not disrupt the processes of production. Obviously, management prefers the continuation of production.⁴⁴

A strike which occurs in a collective bargaining relationship is considered a failure of collective bargaining by many observers, because production has stopped. Both unions and companies consider the cost of a strike to exceed the short-term gains which are won. Settlements often appear to the public as something which both parties should have rationally agreed to without a strike.⁴⁵ Yet, the strike in the collective bargaining relationship is much less destructive and violent than strikes which do not occur in this institutionalized relationship.

⁴⁴Harbison, "Collective Bargaining and American Capitalism," in Kornhauser, Dubin and Ross, Industrial Conflict, p. 266-277.

⁴⁵Sumner H. Slichter, James Healy and E. Robert Livernash, The Impact of Collective Bargaining on Management (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institute, 1960) p. 944.

As the strike has become "institutionalized" in recent decades, most of the violence and much of the excitement have disappeared. The strike is no longer an improvident emotional outburst nor a pitched battle between opposing armies intent on gaining unconditional surrender but rather a coldblooded and hardheaded bargaining maneuver conducted by professional negotiators.⁴⁶

The strike is the source of power for the union in collective bargaining, but it only is a means to an end, not the end itself. A union leader will not propose a strike unless "(1) he thinks that he has a much better than even chance to win the strike, (2) he is driven to a strike by the pressure of rank and file sentiment, or (3) in order to save face when he has made an 'or else' demand to the employer from which he cannot back away."⁴⁷

A strike, however, is not entirely a rational and strategic device, for it has a special significance to rank and file union members.

The strike cannot be treated as the economist might like to treat it, as a rational phenomenon, in which each side nicely calculates the expected benefit of another day's strike and weighs this against an equally nice calculated loss. It is, in part, a catharsis, a release of tensions, but it is also a drama, something that brings excitement and a sense of high purpose into otherwise humdrum lives. The labor movement appeals to the heroic as well as to the economic in man. This aspect of the strike is more important to the workers than it is to the employers. Employers are actors; they move men around, they organize great processes of production,

⁴⁶Kornhauser, Dubin and Ross, Industrial Conflict, p. 12.

⁴⁷Jack Barbash, The Practice of Unionism (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956) p. 235.

and they are likely to find in the high decisions and risk taking of business the danger and excitement that help to satisfy the heroic element in man as well as the financial rewards that assuage his economic yearnings. The strike to them, therefore, is a meaningless interruption of the grand drama of enterprise; it is like a rebellion in the middle of a war, and they react to it with distaste and alarm. The workers, however, sense very little of the drama of enterprise; they make no high decisions, nor are they conscious of the excitement involved in keeping an organization alive and thriving in a dangerous world. The strike to them may be their only chance to participate in what seems to be dramatic and important events and to take sacrificial risks in the hope of future betterment.⁴⁸

Thus, the strike can represent what the union means to the union member, a fight for future security. The strike also is a drama in which the union member is an actor, because he or she fights against a foe who is trying to prevent the member's attainment of economic security. However, both the drama of the strike and the strike itself is limited, because the purpose is to force consideration of proposals at the negotiating table, not the destruction of the opposition.

The institutionalization of industrial conflict by collective bargaining limits the potentially destructive elements of strikes, for it is a peaceful means for changing worker-management relations.

We can appreciate the importance of stabilizing the basis of social change in industry when we recall that ours is an industrial society. It is industry that constitutes one of the most basic or central elements of our total

⁴⁸Kenneth E. Boulding, Conflict and Defense: A General Theory (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) p. 217-218.

social structure. What happens in society is, to an important degree, a direct or indirect consequence of developments in the industrial sector.⁴⁹

Collective bargaining institutionalizes conflict by requiring that the parties be "loyal opponents," in that each party must abide by the agreement reached through the bargaining process for the duration of the agreement. Once the agreement is terminated, the limited conflict process of bargaining resumes. Both parties recognize that a basic conflict of interest exists, but they also recognize that they must rise above that conflict to resolve it for short periods of time or destroy the opponent. "Collective bargaining is the great social invention that has institutionalized industrial conflict. In much the same way that the electoral process and majority rule have institutionalized political conflict in a democracy, collective bargaining has created a stable means for resolving industrial conflict."⁵⁰ In the electoral process, political opponents are bound by the decisions of the voters until the next election, for the sake of political and social stability. In courts, lawyers for the plaintiff and the defendant engage in a legal conflict over the appropriate and just application of the law in a particular situation. Once the judge or the jury makes a decision, both parties must abide by the decision or appeal it through

⁴⁹Robert Dubin, "Constructive Aspects of Industrial Conflict," in Kornhauser, Dubin and Ross, Industrial Conflict, p. 46.

⁵⁰Dubin, "Constructive Aspects," in Kornhauser, Dubin and Ross, Industrial Conflict, p. 46.

the appropriate judicial channels. Until the next election and until the judicial decision is reversed, both parties are required to abide by those decisions for the sake of political and social stability. Conflict in a political campaign or in the courts is limited so that the potential destructiveness of the conflict is minimized. Acceptable modes of conduct and ritual arise, such as debates by candidates or the cross-examination of witnesses, which help contain the conflict. Assassination of one's political opponent is not acceptable, while attacking her or his political beliefs and programs is proper. Courtroom decorum and procedure help to assure that the legal issues are addressed and that due process of the law is given to each participant in the legal conflict, instead of allowing the whims and biases of the participants to determine entirely the outcome of the legal confrontation.

The creation of a loyal opposition increases the commitment of the participants to the system which periodically resolves the conflict, instead of motivating participants to find more radical resolution of the conflict, because both parties may gain from the agreement without escalating the conflict to a more destructive level. Energy is focused on periodic resolution of limited conflict and the concomitant gains.

The process of collective bargaining also absorbs the energies and interests of many leaders of the working masses who might otherwise direct their energies to the overthrow of the existing economic order. Most students of labor movements would agree, I think, that the more a union leader concentrates on collective bargaining, the more conservative he is likely to become. American labor leaders, almost without exception, have

moved from left to right as they have gained experience with, and become absorbed by, the process of negotiating and administering treaties with employers. To the extent that collective bargaining appears to bring results and to command the support of the rank and file, the labor leader devotes more time and energy to it; and, to the extent that he concentrates on bargaining, the chances are that he may make it more successful. This is, of course, one of the reasons why the American labor movement is so job centered rather than politically oriented. Labor leaders in this country can effectively command the support of their constituents and rise to positions of fame and power without bothering very much about political objectives.⁵¹

Because the union leader's power and success is based upon the collective bargaining relationship with the company, the union leader is committed to the continuation of the relationship. The union's leadership and appointed officials negotiate the contract, administer it and govern the internal relations of the union. Changing the formulas of past success is viewed by union leaders with suspicion, because change injects unpredictability into collective bargaining, which increases the likelihood of an uncontrollable confrontation between the union and management.

As the union becomes increasingly bureaucratic, the source of power shifts from the rank and file members to the leaders. This process alienates many members from the union. The leaders have several advantages over rank and file members which help to perpetuate the concentration of power at the leadership level--access to knowledge of which the rank and file is not aware, control over

⁵¹Harbison, "Collective Bargaining and American Capitalism," in Kornhauser, Dubin and Ross, Industrial Conflict, p. 277.

formal channels of communication such as union publications, ability to travel from one local to another to present their position on issues to the rank and file members at the union's expense, and political skills such as making speeches, organizing activities and the like which the average rank and file member does not have.⁵²

The union leaders soon become experts who see the complete picture which the rank and file member cannot see.

Union leadership could increase rank and file participation in union decision-making by educating members about union history, union values, how to make speeches, parliamentary procedure and the like.

Nevertheless, union leadership has typically put its faith to a far greater extent in control devices, such as the union security clause, than in educational programs designed to build better understanding and thereby inspire greater loyalty. Experience in collective bargaining and in strikes and the knowledge of economic problems in an industry tend to make leaders impatient with the proposals offered by less experienced and more poorly informed union members. The leaders of any union, understandably enough, think themselves most competent to determine strategy and believe that the membership will progress most rapidly by accepting the leaders' advice and responding to their orders in disciplined fashion. To this must be added the fear, seldom admitted but nevertheless real, that, as the membership becomes more informed, the number of potential rivals for union office is increased.⁵³

The possibility does exist that leadership and bureaucracy of the union could become so out of touch with rank and file members

⁵²Seymour Martin Lipset, "Introduction," Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: The Free Press, 1962) p. 16.

⁵³Joel Seidman, "The Labor Union as an Organization," in Kornhauser, Dubin and Ross, Industrial Conflict, p. 112.

that the former do not recognize the latter's discontent.

When discontent seethes in the shop, local union leaders at all levels--from stewards to top officers--bear the brunt. From below, the workers demand strong action; from above the International executive board and regional staff members insist that the local officers "hold the ranks in line," that they prevent unauthorized strikes [wildcat strikes] or slowdowns. How this puts local officers in an untenable position was recently told to me by a local union officer:

'We [the local union administration] are in the middle. Whatever we do turns out to be wrong. If there's a wildcat, the company won't even discuss grievances with us until the guys go back to work, so nothing gets solved. Besides, the International union jumps on our necks, gives us hell for not providing responsible leadership. And if we succeed in holding the guys in line so that they don't walkout then our political opposition in the shop does a job on us by agitating the workers against us, telling them we're not on the ball, and so on. It's easy enough for the International to tell us to be responsible, to lecture us about providing good leadership and all that. They've been away from the shop so long they don't know what goes on there anymore. They think they know but they don't. They don't know what it means to be in a position where no matter what you do it turns out to be wrong. How can people on the shop level or on the local level cope with the effects of automation, the company's drive for more production, management's policy of moving operations to another plant or contracting work out to a supplier firm? And, because we can't solve such problems our political opponents build themselves up in the shop by tearing us down. Their opposition caucus is getting stronger all the time. But if we get defeated in the next local union election, what does the International care? And if Chrysler keeps on decentralizing, building new assembly plants in other states and dues will roll into the International just the same [sic]. Besides, small locals are easier to control than large locals, especially militant locals like ours. We can't win and the International can't lose--

or so they think. . .⁵⁴

If discontent is widespread, a wildcat strike by one union local could spread to others. Because the strike is not authorized by the international union leadership, the institutionalized bargaining procedures do not apply, and because management legitimately may refuse to bargain with the wildcat strikers, the collective bargaining relationship is threatened. The rank and file union members, because of their alienation from the union's leadership and bureaucracy, do not see themselves as part of the loyal opposition in the collective bargaining relationship. They have chosen the wildcat strike as an alternative to the institutionalized collective bargaining channels.

Wildcat strikes are indications of the tension between the conservative tendencies of the union leadership which tries to preserve the collective bargaining relationship as well as their jobs and prestige and the desire of the rank and file members to change the collective bargaining relationship to win more radical concessions from management. The fact that the union is a political organization in which leaders are elected by the rank and file and ultimately are answerable to them, creates a problem for union leaders. The union leader has an interest in preserving the institution of collective bargaining, but as a representative of the union members, the union

⁵⁴Frank Marquart, "The Auto Workers: Voices of Dissent," a collection of articles from Dissent Magazine, 1959, p. 146-147, Vertical File: Strikes, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

leader also must express the proposals of rank and file members to management. In a strike situation these two motives could be incompatible. A union leader may appear to coopt the union members when reassuring the public and management that the strike will have little economic impact, while repetition of militant rank and file grievances and proposals could appear to the public and to management to threaten economic or even social stability.

III. Rhetorical Implications

During a strike, a labor union rhetor speaks in a situation in which conflicting motivations direct her or his rhetorical activity. There is the conservative motive to preserve the bargaining relationship with management by avoiding potential conflict situations and the more radical motive to express the proposals and feelings of the rank and file members which may antagonize management in order to remain an elected union official. This is somewhat similar to the situation described by Herbert Simons in "Requirements, Problems and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements."

Movements require a diversity of leadership types with whom any one leader must both compete and cooperate. Theoreticians, agitators and propagandists must launch the movement; political and bureaucratic types must carry it forward. Ideological differences among the leadership must also be expected insofar as the leadership reflects internal divisions among the following.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Herbert Simons, "Requirements, Problems and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 56(February 1970) p. 7.

The union rhetor must enact both the conservative tendencies of the union leadership and the radical tendencies of the rank and file in discourse during a strike, to ensure the continued institutionalization of industrial conflict. The union rhetor must depict the union members as good American citizens whose actions do not jeopardize freedom, business relations and the well being of society. To management the union must appear a necessary inconvenience rather than as a threat to successful conduct of business. In discourse to union members union rhetors must encourage the members' loyalty to the union and at the same time limit their behavior so it does not threaten the collective bargaining relationship.

Chapter Four

THE WAGE SLAVE AND THE UNION MEMBER:

THE 1936-1937 SITDOWN STRIKE

I. The General Motors Corporation

The General Motors Corporation (GM) is the giant of the automobile industry. Its policies are conservative and cautious.¹ Since the 1920s it has aimed for a profit of 20 percent.² In fact, GM has changed its policies and its structure very little since the 1920s. At the time of the 1936-1937 sitdown strike, GM was composed of 33 divisions and 112 manufacturing plants in 67 cities.⁵

William Crapo (Billy) Durant founded GM on September 16, 1908. Under Durant's direction GM acquired Buick, Olds, Oakland (later Pontiac), Cadillac Motor Company, Chevrolet, a refrigerator company which he renamed Frigidaire, Hyatt Roller Bearing Company and various small companies which manufactured automobile parts such as New Departure Manufacturing (ball bearings), Remy Electric Company (electrical starting and ignition equipment), Dayton Engineering

¹William Serrin, The Company and the Union: The "Civilized Relationship" of the General Motors Corporation and the United Automobile Workers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973) p. 105.

²Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 71.

³Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 70-71.

Laboratories also known as Delco (electric equipment) and Perlman Rim Company (wheel rims). However, Durant's poor management practices produced near bankruptcy, on two occasions. In 1910 a group of Eastern investment concerns headed by James J. Storrow loaned GM the money which prevented bankruptcy, on the condition that Durant resign as chief executive. Durant stayed in the automobile industry. In 1911 he and Louis Chevrolet founded Chevrolet Motors. By producing a small, low-priced car, Durant met a growing market demand. In 1915, Durant regained control of GM when he exchanged Chevrolet stock for undervalued GM stock at a ratio of five to one. By 1920, Durant had succeeded in almost bankrupting the corporation again. This time the du Pont family and a group of J.P. Morgan bankers assumed the corporation's debts on the condition that Durant resign.⁴

Pierre S. du Pont became president of GM in 1920. du Pont requested that Alfred P. Sloan become the chief operating officer. Sloan is responsible for reorganizing GM and for setting some important early policies. His strategy for reorganization was centralization of policy-making powers.

What Sloan did was merely impose a formal method of control upon what was then a loosely organized corporation [sic] structure of sixty or more largely autonomous organizations. The organizations were grouped into divisions according to function. Division managers retained much autonomy, as they do today, but centralized control was placed in the head of what was to become a largely expanded central

⁴Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 77-89.

office headed by general executives and staff officers.⁵

Sloan also was responsible for the GM policies of making a complete line of cars from the lowest priced, Chevrolet, to the highest priced, Cadillac, and for the policy of the annual model change.⁶

II. The Environment of Protest

The Depression and a series of new labor laws, starting with National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), passed in 1933, and ending with the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), passed in 1935, are the two factors primarily responsible for creating the environment of protest in which the 1936-1937 sitdown strike against GM occurred. The Depression proved to workers that their jobs were, at best, marginal in the American economy during times of crisis.

By 1932 half of all manufacturing units had closed down; production fell by 48 percent; reported corporate income fell from \$11 billion to \$2 billion; the value of industrial and railroad stock fell by 80 percent; and the numbers out of work continued to rise. An estimated 8 million were jobless by the spring of 1931, 13.5 million by the end of 1932, and over 15 million, or one-third of the work force, in 1933.⁷

In the automobile industry almost fifty percent of the workers lost their jobs. In 1929, there was slightly more than 470,000 workers in Detroit's auto plants; by 1931 there were 257,000 workers, with

⁵Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 99.

⁶Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 101-102.

⁷Frances Fox Pivan and Richard A. Cloward, Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail, Vintage Books Edn., (New York: Random House, 1977) p. 108.

very few working a full work week.⁸ The American relief and charity system was not equipped to provide food and housing to unemployed workers, let alone the large numbers of unemployed during the Depression. A national relief system did exist, but it severely restricted the type of people to which it would give support. It restricted the dispersal of its funds to the aged, crippled, widowed and orphaned-- "deserving people" who clearly could not work.⁹

Franklin Roosevelt realized that for the country to recover from the Depression, industry must be revitalized. The Roosevelt administration concluded that business must be given the right to fix prices, so it could make a profit and, hence, employ more workers to help bring America out of the Depression. This was the intent of the NIRA. To make this legislation palatable to organized labor, essentially the American Federation of Labor (A. F. of L.), the administration included what was known as Section 7(a). This section required "that every industry code or agreement [industrial codes and agreements set wages, hours and prices for the industry] promulgated under the statute provide 'that employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and shall be free from the interference, restraint, or coercion of employers.'"¹⁰

⁸Irving Howe and B. J. Widick, The UAW and Walter Reuther (New York: Random House, 1949) p. 29.

⁹Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 41-42.

¹⁰Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 111.

For the first time workers were told that they had a right to organize and to seek redress for their grievances against management. "Felt grievances became public grievances, for the federal government itself had declared the workers' cause to be just."¹¹ Membership in already existing unions increased dramatically, while workers in unorganized industries were organizing themselves and asking for recognition from the A. F. of L. It, however, was not enthusiastic about organizing the nonunion workers, especially workers in mass production industries, because the A. F. of L. was a federation of craft unions. Workers organize into a craft union when they possess a common skill, such as carpentry, which is highly valued and requires much knowledge and training to acquire. Workers in the mass production industries, such as automobiles and steel, generally did not possess highly-valued skills and, consequently, were easy to replace. The best method of organization in a mass production industry is the organization of all workers into one union, rather than organization based upon workers' skills, so that management would bargain with all workers rather than bargain only with skilled workers because they are more difficult to replace. Because of the greater number of mass production workers than skilled craft workers, industrial unions eventually would dominate the A. F. of L.¹²

Business was successful in resisting the unions, because the A. F. of L. was not eagerly organizing workers, and because business-

¹¹Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 113.

¹²Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 115-119.

men dominated the industrial code authorities, authorized by the NIRA, which set an industry's wages and hours.¹³ GM's attitudes towards workers and unions were typical of business during this period. GM followed an open shop policy--that a worker does not have to be a union member to be employed. The legal application of the open shop policy, however, gave employers the right to intervene in attempts to organize workers into a union and to refuse to bargain with the union.¹⁴ To GM, collective bargaining meant accepting a closed shop, in which all employees must be members of the union, and surrendering the prerogatives of management.¹⁵ GM officials believed that there was no basis for a conflict of interest between workers and employers and that any problems could be settled within the organization.¹⁶ GM made sure that few problems between workers and management ever surfaced by paying detective agencies to spy on workers and to report on any union activity. Between January 1, 1934, and July 31, 1936, GM employed at least 15 detective agencies and paid at least \$1 million for industrial espionage.¹⁷

¹³Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 119.

¹⁴Irving Bernstein, The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker 1920-1933, Sentry edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960) p. 205 and Sidney Fine, Sit-down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1969) p. 29.

¹⁵Fine, Sit-down, p. 29.

¹⁶Fine, Sit-down, p. 33.

¹⁷Fine, Sit-down, p. 37-38.

The increasing interest in unions among workers and the intransigence of businessmen to recognize unions as legitimate organizations resulted in large numbers of strikes. This was exactly what the government was trying to avoid to bring the country out of the Depression. "Three times as many workers struck in 1933 after NIRA as in 1932; the number of disputes rose from 841 in 1932 to 1,695 in 1933 and then to 1,856 in 1934 when a million and a half workers were involved in strikes."¹⁸ The conflicts began to erupt into actual battles between workers and employers.¹⁹ To stop this industrial conflict so that the economy would have a chance to recover from the Depression, Congress passed the NLRA which contained Section 7(a) of the NIRA and an effective enforcement mechanism, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) which had powers to enforce the Act as well as its own decisions.²⁰ Business, however, did not consider the NLRA constitutional and believed that they did not have to obey it. This reasoning was reinforced by a Supreme Court decision in 1935 which found the NIRA and Section 7(a) unconstitutional.²¹

¹⁸Harry A. Millis and Royal E. Montgomery, Organized Labor, vol. 2 of The Economics of Labor (New York: McGraw-Edison, 1945) p. 700-701 cited in Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 121.

¹⁹Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 125. See also Irving Bernstein, Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker 1935-1941 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970) for a detailed account of labor relations and labor conflicts during this period.

²⁰Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 131-132.

²¹Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 133.

III. The History of the Sitdown Strike

During the early thirties the auto workers organized themselves into several different organizations--Automobile Workers of America (AAWA), Automobile Industrial Workers Association (AIWA) and the Mechanics Educational Society of America (MESA).²² The A. F. of L. half-heartedly tried to organize the auto industry by founding the United Automobile Workers (UAW) and appointing Francis Dillon president of the new union in 1935.²³ The A. F. of L.'s lack of support for the new union became evident when the labor federation did not support auto workers in several strikes against employers.²⁴ Not until John L. Lewis founded the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) within the A. F. of L. did any labor leader seriously try to organize mass production workers. Lewis later withdrew from the A. F. of L. and made the CIO a permanent organization and changed the name to the Congress of Industrial Organizations.²⁵ Members of the UAW began to express their support for Lewis and the CIO rather than for the A. F. of L. At the UAW convention in South Bend, Indiana, on April 7, 1936, the A. F. of L. influence on the UAW ended when Dillon stepped down as president. For the first time the UAW elected all of its own officers, and Homer Martin became president.²⁶ That summer

²²Fine, Sit-down, p. 71-72.

²³Fine, Sit-down, p. 81-82.

²⁴Fine, Sit-down, p. 73-75 and 83.

²⁵Fine, Sit-down, p. 84-85.

²⁶Fine, Sit-down, p. 89-90.

Martin met with the CIO leadership and announced that the UAW would join the new organization. The UAW's general executive board soon ratified this decision.²⁷

Shortly after the South Bend convention, the AIWA and AAWA affiliated with the UAW. Three of MESA's Detroit locals also affiliated, bringing in a large number of Communist Party members.²⁸ The influence of the Communist Party is evident throughout much of the early history of the UAW. In fact, many historians argue that the Communists were crucial to the UAW's success, because they had experience in organizing and an ideological commitment to the radical actions required during the 1936-1937 strike.²⁹ The presence of Communists in the UAW also contributed to the factionalism which was to plague the union until 1947. Within the union there were Communists, Socialists and supporters of the A. F. of L. policies.³⁰

The UAW leadership never made a conscious decision to have a major confrontation between itself and GM in Flint, Michigan, during the last days of 1936. A major confrontation was planned, but it was questionable whether or not it would occur in Flint. Flint was a company town. GM's employees were more than two-thirds of all gainfully employed workers in the city and more than one-fourth of

²⁷Fine, Sit-down, p. 93.

²⁸Fine, Sit-down, p. 90.

²⁹Fine, Sit-down, p. 90-91 and 220-221.

³⁰Fine, Sit-down, p. 220-221.

the city's entire population. Almost 80 percent of Flint's families depended on GM in some manner.³¹ The concentration of GM's production capacity in Flint made the plants there strategically important to the fledgling UAW; however, the union had few members in the Flint plants.³²

Flint auto workers were disillusioned with the UAW's ability to negotiate with GM; however, several months before the sitdown strike this attitude began to change. By working closely with the La Follette Senate committee, which was investigating the violations of the rights of union workers by business, UAW organizers were able to expose GM spies on union committees. This demonstrated to the workers that the federal government was on their side.³³

A successful strike in the Fisher Body No.1 plant in Flint on November 13, 1936, demonstrated to the auto workers that the union could beat GM.³⁴ However, the UAW executive board was very cautious about urging union members to strike, because they didn't want to force a confrontation before they were ready.³⁵ Union members, however, had different ideas. There was a spontaneous strike in a Kansas City,

³¹Fine, Sit-down, p. 107.

³²Fine, Sit-down, p. 310.

³³Fine, Sit-down, p. 114-115.

³⁴Fine, Sit-down, p. 116-117.

³⁵Fine, Sit-down, p. 136-137.

Missouri, plant lasting 8 days. After this strike, UAW president Martin sent a letter to William Knudsen, executive vice-president of GM, which stated that negotiations with local plant officials were fruitless and that the UAW wanted a national meeting with GM officials to discuss GM's labor policies. Because GM's policies were made at a national level, national negotiations rather than local negotiations were needed. Knudsen refused Martin's offer and told him to return to the local plant to resolve differences.³⁶

Shortly after this exchange of letters there was a sitdown strike at the Cleveland Fisher Body plant on December 28 which lasted 3 days.³⁷ On December 30, workers at the Fisher Body No. 2 plant in Flint sat down on the job, beginning the Flint sitdown strike which would culminate 43 days later in GM's recognition of the UAW as the autoworkers' sole bargaining agent. The sitdown strike in Fisher No. 2 was a spontaneous strike apparently caused when management requested that three union members quit the union because management considered them supervisors.³⁸ That night UAW organizer Robert Travis decided to expand the strike to include Fisher Body No. 1, because of a report that GM was transporting dies to other plants so production could continue even if there was a strike in the Flint plants.

³⁶Fine, Sit-down, p. 139-140.

³⁷Fine, Sit-down, p. 141-144.

³⁸Fine, Sit-down, p. 144.

Workers in other GM plants around the country joined in the strike--Norwood, Ohio; Anderson, Illinois; Toledo, Ohio; Janesville, Wisconsin; St. Louis, Missouri; and Oakland, California. However, attention was focused on Flint, Michigan, because it was here that the UAW would win or lose the strike.

Because Flint was dependent on GM for its livelihood, many citizens supported GM during the strike. Prominent citizens associated with GM organized the Flint Alliance, which urged the workers to leave the plants in GM's control and later return to work.³⁹ Throughout the strike, in order to dispute the UAW's claim to be the sole bargaining agent of the auto workers, GM treated the Flint Alliance as an official representative of the autoworkers, even though anyone in Flint could join the Alliance.⁴⁰

The 1936-1937 strike literally was like a battle. There was the "Battle of Running Bulls" on January 11, 1937, between auto workers and police. Police shot tear gas against picketing workers, while sitdown strikers in Fisher Body No. 2 and pickets responded with water from fire hoses and missiles made from cans, car-door hinges, pieces of pavement and the like. After the police retreated, Victor Reuther, who directed the auto workers' barrage, ordered that workers put up a barricade of automobiles to prevent the police from reaching Fisher No. 2. The police responded by intermittently firing tear gas at long

³⁹Fine, Sit-down, p. 187.

⁴⁰Fine, Sit-down, p. 252.

range toward the pickets and the plant.⁴¹ The use of force and violence throughout the strike prompted Governor Frank Murphy to call out the National Guard on January 12 to prevent further violence.⁴² The appearance of the National Guard, however, did not prevent the UAW from taking the offensive. On February 1, the UAW expanded the sitdown strike to include Chevrolet No. 4, the only plant at that time which produced Chevrolet engines. The UAW had control of the two plants crucial to the continued production of GM automobiles.⁴³

For GM the primary issue during the strike was the protection of private property. Because the strikers remained in the plants and denied GM officials access to the plants, the strikers violated GM's property rights. GM officials used this argument in attempts to convince Governor Murphy to use the National Guard to evict sitdown strikers by force from the plants. Only Murphy's fear of the bloodshed which would ensue prevented this.⁴⁴

GM and UAW were at a stalemate throughout the strike. GM refused to recognize the UAW as the sole representative of the auto workers and continually tried to include the Flint Alliance in all proposed solutions. The UAW refused to leave the plants until GM

⁴¹Fine, Sit-down, p. 1-6.

⁴²Fine, Sit-down, p. 239.

⁴³Fine, Sit-down, p. 266-270.

⁴⁴Fine, Sit-down, p. 296-300.

gave the UAW recognition. The UAW was in the better bargaining position in this situation. GM was losing money because it was not producing cars. GM officials could not convince the government to protect its property rights by evicting the strikers so production could resume. To end the strike, GM capitulated to many of the UAW's demands. In the February 11 agreement, it recognized the UAW as the bargaining agent for GM employees who also were members of the union, recognized and promised not to interfere with the right of its employees to be union members, and agreed not to discriminate against workers simply because they were union members. More importantly, GM agreed not to bargain with any other representative of the auto workers for six months, which essentially made the UAW the only bargaining agent for the auto workers. The UAW, in return, agreed to end the strike and to evacuate the plants.⁴⁵

The 1936-1937 sitdown strike probably was the major factor in the UAW's early growth. The union not only proved that it would fight for its members, but also that it could beat the most powerful auto manufacturer in the U.S.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Fine, Sit-down, p. 304-305.

⁴⁶The 1936-1937 sit-down strike was not only an important factor in the early growth of the UAW, but also in the early growth of the CIO, for the strike was the first conducted under the CIO banner. The strike demonstrated to industrial workers that the UAW and the CIO fought for the rights of workers against management and won. Some historians argue that the success of the UAW strike primarily was responsible for the rapid growth of the CIO during the late thirties, especially in light of the CIO's unsuccessful organizing drive in the steel industry. See for a discussion of the industrial union movement in the 1930s Piven and Cloward Poor People's Movements, Chapter 2 and Irvan Bernstein, Turbulent Years.

IV. The Beginning of Institutionalized Conflict

Conflict theory can help one to understand this strike in relation to other societal processes. The 1936-1937 strike was not a discrete event, but part of a continuous process of conflict, because the struggle between workers and employers over profit and power is never resolved. Both parties seek periodic resolution of this continuous conflict. The process of mobilization, confrontation and resolution through regulation all occur in this strike.⁴⁷ The strike and the rhetoric of the strike mobilized the uncommitted GM workers to support the strike and to join the union by proving to them that the UAW could stand up to GM. The rhetoric of the strike is important for describing the positive characteristics of the union member and demonstrating the advantages of union membership. In this particular strike, the confrontation may be characterized as industrial war, for there were occupations, battles, and the use of some weapons of war. The fact that the strike occurs to pressure GM to recognize the UAW as the sole bargaining agent for the auto workers ties the confrontation to the third process of resolution and of regulation of future conflict.⁴⁸ The UAW's right to recognition by GM is based on the NLRA which gives workers the right to organize into unions and through the unions to bargain with the employer. The NLRA was a conscious attempt by Congress to regulate industrial conflict by institutionalizing the process through collective bargaining.

⁴⁷Anthony Oberschall, Social Conflict and Social Movements (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973) p. 31.

⁴⁸Oberschall, Social Conflict, p. 243.

The NLRA, however, was not dealing with a short-term conflict, but with an on-going conflict, which requires procedures to resolve differences again and again. Institutionalization through collective bargaining requires that both parties recognize each other as legitimate organizations, that they bargain in good faith and that the procedures for resolving differences be made explicit.⁴⁹

The result of collective bargaining is to make relations between the union and management predictable.⁵⁰ The conflict is restricted to the bargaining table. The contract produced by the bargaining process governs the behavior of both parties until it expires or is renegotiated.

V. The Rhetoric of the Sitdown Strike

The rhetoric of the sitdown strike which is preserved today takes the form, for the most part, of short, two and three paragraph statements⁵¹ and songs⁵² which were written by workers, rank and file union members, and individuals sympathetic to the UAW. There

⁴⁹Oberschall, Social Conflict, p. 266-267.

⁵⁰Louis Kriesberg, The Sociology of Social Conflict (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973) p. 113.

⁵¹See various editions of the Punch Press: Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, Mary Van Kleeck RSH Labor Research Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 13, A-1 and 14, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

⁵²See for examples, United Automobile Worker, 22 January 1937, p. 7.

are two major sources of this discourse, the United Automobile Worker, which was the official magazine of the UAW, and the Punch Press, which was a strike bulletin written and edited by a group of University of Michigan students at the urging of UAW officials.⁵³ Other forms of rhetoric did exist, such as speeches made at rallies or broadcast from the union sound car, but this discourse was never preserved. The UAW rhetors were not trying to convince the public that the strike was justified, but were trying to convince auto workers to support the strike and join the union.

The short form of the discourse is not conducive to logical reasoning and explanation of the strike, but to the use of dramatic elements, such as images, characterizations of the strike and characterizations of the participants with which an auto worker might identify. The structure and appeals of the rhetoric of the 1936-1937 strike are dramatic rather than logical in the sense that the rhetoric describes

⁵³Fine, Sit-down, p. 245. During the 1930s it was not unusual for some workers in auto plants to have one to two years of college education or to want to go to college. The Depression prevented many capable people from continuing or starting a college education. They went to work as laborers or skilled workers. For example see Clayton W. Fountain, Union Guy (New York: The Viking Press, 1949); Wyndham Mortimer, Organize! My Life as a Union Man ed. Leo Fenster (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971) and Victor G. Reuther, The Brothers Reuther and the Story of the UAW (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976). These workers often assumed leadership positions in the UAW. The Punch Press, however, was not simply addressed to educated workers, but to all auto workers. The persona of the bulletin was that of a group of auto workers directly involved in the strike. Bob Travis and Merlin Bishop, two UAW organizers, were advisors to the staff and wrote some of the articles.

scenes of the strike, creates characters such as GM, the UAW, the union worker and the non-union worker and describes past and future action, rather than making arguments based on facts and statistics. The following are examples of typical rhetoric in this strike.

Industrial democracy is the democracy of the living wage, of seniority rights, of a human speed on the line. It is the right to collective bargaining. It is the only real democracy.

Men have always had to fight for industrial democracy. The situation in Flint is no different. Workers here are fighting for the right of a happy life for themselves and for their women and children.

Industry has fought industrial democracy with every means at its control.

It has used local city government--sometimes the national guard (when industry controlled it)--tear gas and guns from its private arsenals--armies of thugs and spies from strike breaking agencies--the courts, the legal system, the press.

When it could not organize vigilanti mobs from sentiment it paid for them.

Workers have fought all these weapons with the only weapons they have--unity and their lives. They have been willing to die to establish industrial democracy.

This is what the boys in Fisher 1 and 2, from Chevy 4, and all those who are not in the plants are fighting for--industrial democracy.⁵⁴

"Hot Time in the Old Town Last Night"

I
 Cheer, boys, cheer
 For we are full of fun;
 Cheer, boys, cheer,
 Old Parker's on the run;
 We had a fight last night
 And I tell you, boys, we won,
 We had a hot time in the old town last night.

⁵⁴Punch Press: Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, #12, 7 February 1937, p. 1, Van Kleeck Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 14, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

II

Tear gas bombs
 Were flying thick and fast;
 The lousy police,
 They knew they couldn't last,
 Because in all their lives they never ran so fast,
 As in the hot time in this old town last night.

III

The police are sick
 Their bodies they are sore
 I'll bet they'll never
 Fight us any more;
 Because they learned last night
 That we had quite a corps.
 We had a hot time in the old town last night.

IV

Now this scrap is o'er;
 The boys are sticking fast
 We'll hold our grounds
 And fight here to the last
 And when this strike is o'er
 We'll have out contract fast,
 We'll have a hot time in the old town that nite! [sic]⁵⁵

Because of the reliance on dramatic structure and technique, it is not possible to perform a critical analysis of this rhetoric using traditional logical standards. If, however, one analyzes all of the discourse of this strike as one rhetorical act, paying special attention to the dramatic aspects of the rhetoric, a scenario begins to appear. Different characters, relationships between characters and different scenes describe the world of the auto worker in a way which makes sense to an auto worker. I shall argue that a scenario, comprised of dramatic elements and structures, is the dramatic counterpart of the ideology of the UAW during this strike. The scenario is a specific

⁵⁵ "Hot Time in the Old Town Last Night" United Automobile Worker, 22 January 1937, p. 7.

arrangement of common symbols and images which union rhetors use in their statements throughout the strike. The following is the scenario which I recreated from the rhetoric.

According to the scenario the individual worker has been living as a "wage slave."⁵⁶ A worker's children were destined to grow up only to work in the factory, to lose their jobs when they get older and, because low wages prevents them from saving for their forced retirement, to die poor.⁵⁷ The wage slave works for GM, a tyrannical and autocratic corporation which "does not want anything that cuts into profits--that gives auto workers decent working and living conditions."⁵⁸ The wage slave passively accepts the decisions of management about hirings, wages, grievances against management and the like. The wage slave even passively accepts the speed of the machine at which he or she⁵⁹ works, because there is nothing a wage slave can do to stop or slow down the machine.⁶⁰

⁵⁶"Gains Marked Since Sitdown," United Automobile Worker, 22 January 1937, p. 5.

⁵⁷"Rock a Bye Baby" and "Soup Song" in Bud and Hazel Simons Collection, Box 1, Folder: Misc. Picket Cards, Songs, etc., Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

⁵⁸"GM Balks at Collective Bargaining," Punch Press: Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, #6, p. 1, Van Kleeck Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 13, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

⁵⁹Women were employed at the AC Spark Plug plant in Flint. See Fine, Sit-down, p. 119.

⁶⁰"Gains Marked," United Automobile Worker, p. 5.

Once the strike occurred, the role of the wage slave changed. Auto workers stopped passively accepting the decisions and treatment of management and began to act independently. "After years of speed up and small pay the boys didn't find it hard to lay down their tools that Wednesday morning, and tell GM they were out for better conditions. Comical, the way the bosses hung around and watched us make up nice beds from cotton upholstering and seat springs and make ourselves at home. . ."⁶¹ The discourse argues that the union was responsible for the strike and the independent action among the auto workers, because "[w]hen the dies they started moving, / The Union Men they had a meeting. / To decide right then and there what must be done."⁶² Historians, however, argue that the strike was originally a spontaneous action by auto workers, with the small UAW appointing itself speaker for the strikers.⁶³ Because the union did not instigate the strike and because many participants in the strike were not union members, union rhetors were vulnerable to arguments that the UAW did not represent the majority of auto workers. To refute these arguments, union rhetors characterized the non-union worker as supporting the union. "In not a single instance could GM get a worker to take part against his fellow

⁶¹"Remarks of a Fisher #2 Sitdowner," Punch Press, Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, #6, p. 1, Van Kleeck Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 13, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

⁶²"The Fisher Strike," United Automobile Worker, 22 January 1937, p. 7.

⁶³Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 137-140.

workers. On the contrary, in each case, many non-union workers helped the union men--and then joined the union."⁶⁴

The union had a special importance to the average auto worker, for it was through the union that a worker could transform herself or himself from a wage slave into a human being who assert her or his right to respect, humane treatment and a decent standard of living. The workers ran the union, which made it an even greater threat to GM, because, as a result, management could not coopt union leaders as easily.⁶⁵ The style of the rhetoric also confirms this argument, for the persona found in the discourse is that of a rank and file union member.

In the union the workers were actors, running the union, striking GM and actively trying to change their lives for the better.

Joining the union means participation in a gigantic fight against a corporation which has a monopoly on financial and legal weapons, which has a strangle hold on Flint. Join the union now and lend your services to a movement which will give you new life and courage as well as a means to live a decent American life when the strike is won.⁶⁶

⁶⁴"What Next for GM?" Punch Press: Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, #5, p. 1, Van Kleeck Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 13, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

⁶⁵"GM Balks at Collective Bargaining," Punch Press, p. 2.

⁶⁶"To Non-Union Men," Punch Press: Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, #6, p. 2, Van Kleeck Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 13, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

After the strike, the workers had a new sense of self respect, for they had "held control of the factory which before had ruled their lives. They had completely silenced the machines whose speed had formerly dictated their every motion. They had measured their own strength and resourcefulness against the money power of management; and the management had admitted defeat."⁶⁷ Because the union gave a worker a chance to be proud, to be confident and to work for a better future, the worker is loyal to the union.

You're in a mass meeting listening to speeches, you're ready to go out picketing, you're talking in the hall about the latest Journal hot air--then something happens. . . Somebody comes out of the office, shouts--"Everybody out!" You grab your hat and coat and run for the stairs in a crowd. You pile five and six into cars, and there's women with you. . .

You race around curves, the springs snap on bumps. Nobody talks much, there's cars following behind, filled with men like yourself. You park, open its door and run to the plant. You slow down as you get near because you don't want the cops on you before you can fight. And you walk, heart pumping, fist clenched with your brother with you, knowing there's tear gas and bullets ahead of you. You watch for stools, for uniformed gun wielders. Then you see the sound car--you go for it, for you know your leaders are there.

And then--you find it is a mistake. You are thankful, but you say in the deepest part of you, "if it had been tonight, "I'd have been in there with all my strength for the union!"⁶⁸

⁶⁷"Gains Marked," United Automobile Worker, p. 5.

⁶⁸"Gives Us 5 Minutes," Punch Press: Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, unnumbered, p. 3, Van Kleeck Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 14, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

The strike itself is part of the fight of the union to establish Industrial Democracy, "the democracy of the living wage, of seniority rights, of a human speed on the line. It is the right to collective [sic] bargain. It is the only real democracy."⁶⁹ GM feared the UAW because the company feared industrial democracy, which would allow workers to affect decisions concerning the workplace.⁷⁰ Consequently, "General Motors has bought tear gas from chemical companies, hired spies and thugs from strike breaking corporations, used city government, the courts and a small army of company stool pigeons all to strike Industrial Democracy."⁷¹ The strike soon took on the characteristics of a war that ". . . won't be won until every plant has signed up for the Union,"⁷² with each confrontation becoming a battle between union supporters and opponents.⁷³ Even death in battle is a possibility. "Unarmed as we are, the introduction of the militia,

⁶⁹"Industrial Democracy," Punch Press: Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, special AC edn., p. 2, Van Kleeck Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 14, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

⁷⁰"GM Balks at Collective Bargaining," Punch Press, p. 2.

⁷¹"GM Balks at Collective Bargaining," Punch Press, p. 1.

⁷²"The Strike Today," Punch Press: Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, special AC edn., p. 2, Van Kleeck Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 14, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

⁷³"After the Battle" and "Hot Time in the Old Town Last Night," United Automobile Worker, 22 January 1937, p. 7.

sheriffs or police with murderous weapons will mean a blood bath of unarmed workers."⁷⁴

The goal of the strikers and of the union members is the establishment of collective bargaining, in which the union represents the workers in the joint determination of wages, hours, working conditions and the resolution of workers' grievances against management.⁷⁵

The following described this desired relationship:

In one department we had the machines down for a few minutes. Our Shop Stewards went into the Superintendent to request a conference and met a surly refusal. They left the office and went straight to pull the whistle cord for a sit-down. The conference was arranged in ten minutes in a very polite atmosphere and machines began again."⁷⁶

The rhetoric of the UAW in the 1936-1937 strike is an example of rhetoric in an uninstitutionalized conflict. The conflict is unlimited, as the imagery in the scenario would indicate. The auto workers are battling GM for Industrial Democracy, their self respect and their livelihoods. There are battles in the "old town last night!" in which death or physical injury are real possibilities. The second indication that this is an uninstitutionalized conflict is evidence of democratic organization. The strike is run by auto workers, not union leaders. Auto workers "held control of the factory which before

⁷⁴Text of a telegram from the strikers in Fisher #2 to Governor Frank Murphy, Walter P. Reuther, pre-presidential series, Box 2, Folder: GM Department, Flint Sit-down Strikes, 1937, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

⁷⁵"A Union that Fights and Wins Is a Union Worth Belonging To!" United Automobile Worker, 22, January 1937, p. 8.

⁷⁶"Gains Marked," United Automobile Worker, 22 January 1937, p. 6.

had ruled their lives." Auto workers decided whether or not they would participate in the strike. In fact, the success of the strike depended on their participation. The workers also participated in the union's system of government.

My department held its first meeting immediately after work the second day after the strike. Out of 350 workers in the department, over 300 were present. We first elected our Operation Stewards--one man from each separate line or gang in the department--to collect union dues, to handle complaints, to watch for unsafe working conditions, and to check on the speed-up.⁷⁷

VI. From Wage Slave to Union Member

The rhetoric of the strike and the scenario contained in it have instrumental functions similar to those described by Richard Gregg in his discussion of the ego-function of the rhetoric of protest.⁷⁸ The scenario found in the strike rhetoric depicts the average worker as an individual who is immobilized in the workplace, because of the immense power which the corporation has over the legal system, police and society in general. However, as a member of the union, a worker has a chance to become an actor who changes her or his life for the better, instead of being a passive recipient of the corporation's decisions.

Gregg's discussion is not adequate to describe fully the rhetorical creation of a new identity or role for workers and the subsequent process by which a worker might assume that role. A role does not exist

⁷⁷"Gains Marked, " United Automobile Worker, 22 January 1937, p. 6.

⁷⁸Richard B. Gregg, "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 4(Spring 1971)1, p. 73-86.

except in relation to other roles in a particular context. There is an interdependent matrix of roles and relationships which create the scenario described above. This scenario functions as a "myth of concern" to hold the union community together.⁷⁹ The union "myth of concern" is a dramatic counterpart of the union's ideology, for it describes union members, relationships to GM and to non-members and proper modes of behavior.

George Herbert Mead's notion about the development of the self indicate how the non-union auto worker becomes a union member. To be a self-conscious human being, an individual's self must have both an "I" and a "me." In the union "myth of concern" the wage slave is the "me" in the non-union workplace. This "me" severely restricts the behavior of workers to the extent that "I" aspect of their selves becomes dissatisfied and begins to react against the restrictions of the "me."

The reaction of the "I" against the restrictions of the "me" is not without purpose. Recall that for Mead it is the human being's ability to communicate with symbols which allows the self to develop. The symbols which humans use to communicate with each other "create" the environment in which they live. Humans, in turn, must adjust to the environment which they created.⁸⁰ This reflexive relationship

⁷⁹Northrop Frye, The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literacy Criticism, Midland Book edn. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1973) p. 36.

⁸⁰George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society, Vol. I of Works of George Herbert Mead, Charles W. Morris ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. 133 and 245-246.

between humans and their environment contains within it the possibility of liberation from an overly restrictive environment, which severely limits an individual by emphasizing the "me" aspect of the self over the "I" aspect. The "I" may create new roles and a new community in which the self may exist through its reactions against an overly restrictive "me." The union "myth of concern" is an example of humans creating a new community and new roles for the movement's membership. The rhetoric contains a new set of terms which provide the audience with a new look at reality, Implicit in the new terms are new roles and relationships which explain the world of the member.

Yet, somehow individuals dissatisfied with the restrictive roles of society must find a means to transform themselves, so that they may acquire new roles which more accurately fit the creative and spontaneous aspects of themselves. In the rhetoric of the 1936-1937 strike, a wage slave transforms herself or himself into an active and proud worker by joining the union. Union membership enables the industrial worker to live in a new environment centered around the union. Note the similar transformation which church membership has for Christians. Members of the church are believers who will be saved from eternal damnation, in contrast to non-believers who are lost forever. The transformation from non-believer to believing church member had developed into the ritual of baptism. The signing of a union membership card performs the same function. The rituals of baptism and of signing the union card separate believers in Christianity from non-believers and union members from non-union members, respectively. The believer or member has the ritual as evidence of this distinction.

The transformation from wage slave to a union member occurs because the role of union member is part of a symbolic community, a "myth of concern," which explains why events happen and explains why people act the way they do and provides models for conduct.

The dramatic form of the scenario and the rhetoric is important in and of itself, for it transforms the conflict over power between two organizations into a personal struggle for every auto worker. For example, a shop steward in an auto worker's department negotiates with the immediate supervisor over disagreements. Similarly, the images of an individual auto worker rushing to the picket lines not know what awaits her or him there creates a perception of her or his action as a personal sacrifice which, in turn, develops commitment to the UAW.

VII. Summary

The rhetoric of the 1936-1937 strike is an example of protest rhetoric which enables the members of a protest movement to change their identities. Gregg's discussion of this process, however, does not take into account all of the elements which rhetoric must contain to enable a person to change her or his identity. Although Mead does not describe this process of transformation, he does discuss the factors crucial to the development of self. Thus, when one combines Gregg and Mead, one can better understand this process of transformation. There must be a "me," the organized attitudes and assumptions of the community, and an "I," the spontaneous and creative aspect of self. The "me" contains the community's "myth of concern" which is a dramatic counterpart of the community's ideology and which demonstrates the community's beliefs,

explanations of existence and norms for behavior. The "me" is as necessary for the development of identity as is the "I."

For a group of people to transform their identities, to acquire a new set of roles, there must be a new "me" and a new "myth of concern" which they may "take on." Rhetoric which appears to change the identities of a group of people will not be effective unless the rhetoric contains a system of roles which exist in relation to other roles and which exist in an environment. In short, a rhetor must create a new symbolic world which explains events and guides conduct and which makes sense to the members of the group. The scenario found in the rhetoric of the 1936-1937 strike is a new "myth of concern" for auto workers. This new explanation of industrial reality focuses on the union and on union membership and how they may change an auto worker's identity and her or his relationship with GM.

Chapter Five

TWO BATTLES

THE 1945-1946 STRIKE

I. The UAW between 1937 and 1945

Fractional politics dominated the UAW from 1937 to 1947.

Immediately after the 1936-1937 strike there were two major factions, one which supported President Homer Martin and preferred conservative policies and another which was anti-Martin and dominated by Communist Party members. The latter faction also included a small group of Socialists lead by Walter Reuther.¹ The UAW was so severely divided that in 1939 two separate UAW conventions were held. In the convention run by Martin supporters, Martin urged the UAW to return to the A. F. of L. Because this policy was unpopular among the majority of union members, Martin's A. F. of L. union died out. In the anti-Martin convention to which most UAW locals sent representatives, delegates decided to remain with the C. I. O. The problem of factionalism, however, was not resolved with Martin's departure. Three groups participated in the anti-Martin convention--Communists, the most powerful group, Socialists and a group of unionists more concerned with bread and butter issues than with political ideologies. Only intervention by the C. I. O. leadership prevented the Communists from entirely dominating the union. R. J. Thomas, a "bread and butter"

¹Irving Howe and B. J. Widick, The UAW and Walter Reuther (New York: Random House, 1949) p. 70.

unionist, was the compromise candidate for UAW president. Thomas held this position until 1946, when he was defeated by Walter Reuther.²

The factionalism between the Communist and Socialists divided the union until 1947, when Reuther was overwhelmingly re-elected president of the UAW and removed known Communists from their official positions in the union.³

World War II exacerbated the factionalism within the UAW. The Communists in their support of the Soviet Union made 180 degree changes in their proposals for union policies toward the war. During the Hitler-Stalin pact, the Communists supported an isolationist policy which called on workers to slow down war production. They supported wildcat strikes which would momentarily stop war production. When Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, however, the Communists changed their official positions. They opposed all strikes for any reason and advocated incentive pay proposals to increase war production.⁴ The incentive pay proposals were attempts to re-establish the piecework system in which a worker is paid for the amount of work he or she finishes rather than by a standard hourly wage. The advantage from the Communist perspective was that workers would work faster to earn more money and, thus, increase war production. The Socialist faction

²Howe and Widick, UAW and Walter Reuther, p. 77-78.

³Howe and Widick, UAW and Walter Reuther, p. 79 and William Serrin, The Company and the Union: The "Civilized Relationship" of the General Motors Corporation and the United Automobile Workers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973) p. 141.

⁴Howe and Widick, UAW and Walter Reuther, p. 79-80 and 223-224.

headed by Reuther opposed this proposal, because it would threaten the economic security of older workers who could not work as fast as younger workers. However, the Reuther faction did join the Communists in their opposition to strikes during the war. Both of these proposals were very unpopular among union members.⁵

The anti-inflation policy of the federal government during the war also increased the discontent among union members. The government wage policy, known as the "little steel" formula, restricted wage increases to 15 percent of the wage rates of January 1, 1941, regardless of how much prices increased during the same period.⁶ The result was that at the end of the war wages had increased 15 percent, but the cost of living had increased 30 to 40 percent. By some estimates food costs had increased as much as 50 percent.⁷

After the war, Walter Reuther, as head of the GM department in the UAW, capitalized on rank and file discontent over wages in the UAW proposals for negotiation with GM. The anti-inflation policy of the Truman administration which attempted to control post-war inflation allowed a company to give its workers a wage increase if the company would not pass the cost of that wage increase on to consumers in price increases.⁸ This enabled Reuther to adopt the strategy of arguing

⁵Howe and Widick, UAW and Walter Reuther, p. 111 and 115.

⁶Howe and Widick, UAW and Walter Reuther, p. 116.

⁷Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 157.

⁸Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 157.

that GM could increase wages by 30 percent without subsequently increasing the prices of cars and without hurting GM's profits. GM rejected the UAW proposal and, instead, argued that the work week should be increased from 40 to 45 hours to help the U.S. attain a high level of peacetime production.⁹ GM officials refused to respond to Reuther's arguments that a wage increase without a price increase was possible with economic facts and statistics from GM's records. At no time during the strike did GM open its records to prove that the corporation could not afford a wage increase without a price increase.¹⁰

GM officials argued that the corporation was concerned with re-conversion of the wartime economy to a peacetime economy. GM's proposal of increasing the work week while maintaining the same weekly salary would increase production and produce a healthy economy. With this argument GM appeared to consider the economic health of the nation before its own profits. The UAW's proposal to increase wages by 30 percent, when compared with GM's proposal, would appear selfish to the American public. Consequently, UAW rhetors faced a hostile public audience. This was further compounded by the coercive appearance of the potential strike, i.e., that the striking union was not only forcing GM to give workers a wage increase but was also dictating company pricing policies.

⁹Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 158.

¹⁰Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 163-169.

II. The 1945-1946 Strike

The 1936-1937 strike was very different from the one in 1945-1946. The former was a strike for recognition so that a collective bargaining relationship could be established between the UAW and GM, while the latter strike was a strike to continue that relationship. In 1945-1946 there were no physical confrontations between the workers and representatives of GM; instead, there were verbal confrontations at the negotiating table and in newspapers.

Reuther encouraged the public to judge the positions of GM and the UAW during the negotiations and the strike. Stenographers made transcripts of negotiating sessions which UAW personnel read to reporters.¹¹ Reuther invited fifteen prominent citizens who were sympathetic to the UAW's position to read the transcripts and to recommend a settlement. Not surprisingly, the group's findings support the UAW proposal.¹²

President Truman also appointed a panel to investigate the positions of the UAW and GM and to propose a settlement for a strike. GM officials, however, walked out of the proceedings, when they were told they must present company records to prove their contention that GM could not raise wages without raising prices. GM's refusal to present private records to prove that it could not afford a wage increase without a price increase became a major issue during the strike.¹³ Based on

¹¹Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 159-162.

¹²Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 164.

¹³Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 165.

the facts available to it, Truman's panel announced that it recommended a 17.5 percent or 19.5 cents wage increase without a price increase. The UAW considered this decision a victory, but GM rejected it.¹⁴

The UAW members were on strike for 113 days, the longest UAW strike to that date. Strikers received little economic support from the union, although union officials tried to organize charity for the strikers.¹⁵

The strike ended, in part, because the Truman administration retreated from its policy of allowing wage increases which did not result in price increases. To end the steel strike which occurred during the GM strike, the administration allowed an 18.5 cent wage increase and allowed the steel companies to increase their prices to cover the cost of that increase. This wage settlement set a pattern for all subsequent settlements.¹⁶ The settlement pattern was further strengthened in the auto industry when the United Electrical Workers, representing 30,000 GM employees, settled for an 18.5 cent increase.¹⁷ Reuther, however continued to refuse GM's offer of 18.5 cents for a full month.

III. An Institutionalized Conflict

The 1945-1946 strike is an institutionalized strike, in contrast

¹⁴Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 166.

¹⁵W. Jean Gould and Loren Hickock, Walter Reuther: Labor's Rugged Individualist (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1972), p. 229-232.

¹⁶Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 167.

¹⁷Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 167.

to the 1936-1937 strike, for in 1945-1946 the conflict occurred at the negotiating table rather than on the streets. There was the recognition by both the UAW and GM that they were interdependent--employers needed workers to produce cars and workers needed employers to provide jobs. At the time of this strike, the UAW participated in a collective bargaining relationship with all three of the major auto manufacturers. Chrysler had recognized the UAW as the auto workers' bargaining agent in 1937, shortly after the sitdown strike against GM, while Ford put off recognition until 1941.¹⁸

One of the consequences of the institutionalization of industrial conflict through collective bargaining is that the limits of industrial order come to be institutionally determined. For any given conflict there is inevitably introduced a long-time perspective, a vista of continuing relations between company and union regardless of the outcome of the current controversy. This time perspective can have an important tempering influence toward limiting disorder. It is significant that in the U.S. strike violence has been inversely related to the permanence of unionism. As collective bargaining becomes an established feature of our society both sides come to recognize that each conflict-created disorder is inevitably succeeded by a re-established order and that permanently disruptive disorder may materially impede the resolution of the conflict. Thus collective bargaining tends to produce self-limiting boundaries that distinguished permissible from subversive industrial disorder.¹⁹

The ability of the union and of management to negotiate collective bargaining agreements is ". . . enhanced to the extent that both sides

¹⁸UAW Solidarity, May 13, 1977, p. 10, 15 and 16.

¹⁹Robert Dubin, "Constructive Aspects of Industrial Conflict," in Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin and Arthur M. Ross eds., Industrial Conflict (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954) p. 45.

are highly organized, united, and strongly led, with leaders able to enforce discipline down to the rank-and-file who man the front lines, since then the likelihood of injurious incidents poisoning the conduct of negotiations is low."²⁰

Because of the continuous nature of the collective bargaining relationship and because of the advantage in negotiations of having a well disciplined and controlled organization, union leaders are concerned about organizational maintenance. They search for devices which will provide the union with stability, permanency and the capability to control the behavior of union members. Bureaucratic structure is a device which has enabled unions to achieve these goals. A rhetorical critic should be able to observe bureaucratic tendencies in the union "myth of concern" as the relationship between the union and the company becomes institutionalized. Peter M. Blau has identified four characteristics of bureaucratic organization, which he derived from Max Weber's classic discussion of bureaucracy--specialization, a hierarchy of authority, a system of rules and impersonality.²¹ Another important characteristic of bureaucratic organization is the concentration of power in the leadership.²² A critic should discern the existence of some of these characteristics in the "myth of concern" if institutional-

²⁰Anthony Oberschall, Social Conflict and Social Movements (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973) p. 264.

²¹Peter M. Blau, Bureaucracy in America (New York: Random House, 1956) p. 19.

²²Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Free Press, 1962) p. 70.

ization does occur, because the "myth of concern" is a dramatic explanation of reality. For example, the existence of rules of behavior are evident in the role of union members. The role enacts these rules and provides a model of appropriate behavior for a union member.

At the same time that the union tries to maintain itself as a permanent and well disciplined organization, it must maintain the source of its power, the collective action of union members. If union officials encourage loyalty and commitment to the union and its goals among the entire union membership, then union members would want to remain in the union and, thus, provide a stable source of negotiating power for the union.

However, because of the factionalism in the UAW, to consider the 1945-1946 strike an institutionalized strike in which the union functions as a bureaucracy would be inaccurate. The UAW was not completely united on policy during 1945 and 1946. The UAW's actions were unpredictable because a factional dispute or a change in the relative political power of one faction could result in unexpected action. Factionalism prevented the UAW from becoming a bureaucratic organization. Thus, a rhetorical critic should expect to discover evidence of tendencies toward institutionalization (the use of qualifications in the union description of GM and the strike) as well as evidence of tendencies toward unrestricted conflict in the discourse (the use of imagery of battles, death and blood and of characterizations of GM as the UAW's mortal enemy).

IV. The Home-front War--Public Rhetoric

By 1945 the rhetorical situation had changed from the scene in 1936-1937 in which UAW rhetors spoke to workers to encourage union membership to a scene in which union rhetors speak to two different audiences, the public and union members. I call discourse addressed to the general audience "public rhetoric" and discourse addressed to union members "intra-union rhetoric." Because there are two audiences, which union rhetors address with two different purposes--to convince the public to support the UAW proposal and to maintain commitment of union members to the union and to the strike--two slightly different scenarios appear.

In the UAW rhetoric directed toward the general public, the rhetors emphasized the actions of the UAW and of GM in negotiations before and during the strike. This emphasis on action indicates that a dramatic scenario exists in the public rhetoric which argues for public support of the strike. The following is the scenario which I recreated from the public discourse.

The UAW was the first to initiate negotiations immediately after the end of World War II, by demanding that GM give its workers a thirty percent wage increase without passing the cost of that increase on to consumers.²³ The UAW presented this proposal in an economic brief which used "published facts about the auto industry, about General Motors' past performance, about costs, prices, profits and

²³Walter Reuther, "This is Your Fight!" The Nation, 12 January 1946, p. 35-36.

the certainty of a market for capacity production for the next three years, . . ."24 UAW rhetors argued that this proposal was necessary if consumers were to increase their consumption above pre-war levels, which was the goal of government policy.²⁵

GM's response at the beginning of negotiations was to state that there must be a price increase if there is a wage increase; however, GM did not present a counterproposal for negotiating purposes.²⁶ GM went so far as to say that the corporation's prices, costs and profits were none of the union's nor of the public's business.²⁷ By rejecting the UAW's wage proposal without basing the rejection on facts available to the union or to the public, GM refused to support the government policy of increasing the purchasing power of consumers and, instead, chose to cut consumer purchasing power by increasing prices.

After GM's refusal to negotiate, the UAW proposed that their differences be arbitrated by a third party. The arbitration proposal sent to the president of GM by Walter Reuther is an interesting rhetorical document, for it is an ultimatum in the form of a proposal. The UAW proposed that the board of arbitration have full access to

²⁴Walter Reuther, "GM v. The Rest of Us," The New Republic, 14 January 1946, p. 41.

²⁵Reuther, "This is Your Fight" Nation, p. 36 and Reuther, "GM v. Rest of Us," New Republic, p. 42.

²⁶Reuther, "This is Your Fight!" Nation, p. 35-36; Reuther, "GM v. Rest of Us," New Republic, p. 41-42; New York Times, 20 November 1945 p. 14 and New York Times, 21 November 1945, p. 13.

²⁷New York Times, 20 November 1945, p. 14.

GM's books and records. This is the very point on which GM refused to compromise throughout the strike. In the arbitration proposal, Reuther questioned GM's motives, "[w]e prefer the conference table and the hearing room to the picket line. Do you?" He characterized GM's actions as anti-government, "[t]he position taken by the corporation flies in the face of and contravenes the President's statement of national wage-price-profit policy," and anti-American, "[t]his proposal would slam the door of job opportunity in the faces of millions of returning war veterans and millions of war workers at a time when we are faced with rising mass unemployment." In contrast, "[w]e, [the UAW] refuse to join you [GM] in sandbagging the American consumer."²⁸ The fact that GM refused to arbitrate its differences with the UAW, Reuther argues, indicated that GM did not want to resolve these differences with rational discussion but rather with force.

We have presented our case to the public and we believe that never before has it been so clear in the minds of the public that an arrogant corporation, which has now refused to bargain collectively, refused public negotiations, refused conciliation and has not refused arbitration, is solely and exclusively responsible for the strike which is about to occur.²⁹

GM refused to act according to the principles of collective bargaining, the principles of institutionalized conflict, by its refusal to present a counterproposal or to attempt to resolve differences in arbitration based on facts. By its refusal to negotiate, GM questioned

²⁸New York Times, 20 November 1945, p. 14.

²⁹New York Times, 21 November 1945, p. 13.

the very existence of the union and of collective bargaining. According to the union rhetoric, the strike for GM was a "war to break the back of organized labor, both craft and industrial unions; to turn the clock back to the days of tame plant or company unions, helpless against the strength of great employing groups, to bring back a longer work week in the face of rising unemployment."³⁰ GM was not simply fighting organized labor, but was also fighting the American public through the union: "General Motors workers and their families are the front-line troops in a home-front war . . ."³¹ Union members recognized that they must fight GM because they "are part of the community" and "intend to make progress with the community and not at the expense of the community."³² This latter argument is made more frequently than the former argument in the public discourse.³³ In contrast to the UAW, GM refused to recognize that it is part of the community and is responsible to the community.³⁴

³⁰New York Times, 25 November 1945, p. 3.

³¹Reuther, "This is Your Fight!" Nation, p. 36.

³²Reuther, "GM v. The Rest of Us," New Republic, p. 42.

³³See for example, New York Times, 20 November 1945, p. 14; New York Times, 25 November 1945, p. 36; "Letter to the Editor," New York Times, 5 December 1945, p. 24; Reuther, "This is Your Fight!" Nation, January 12, 1946, p. 35-36 and Reuther, "GM v. The Rest of Us," New Republic, January 14, 1946, p. 41-42.

³⁴New York Times, 20 November 1945, p. 14.

Walter Reuther's proposal for arbitration is representative in some respects of UAW discourse addressed to the public during this strike. In the letter Reuther attempts to structure the audience's perceptions of the strike so that only one course of action available to GM was acceptable to the public--acquiescing to the UAW proposal of a wage increase without a resulting price increase. In this sense the proposal for arbitration actually was an ultimatum. Reuther identified two standards of behavior--responsibility to the public and government and reasonableness in negotiation. After presenting one standard of behavior, Reuther describes the actions of the UAW and of GM which indicate whether or not each was responsible and reasonable. For example, after identifying that both parties recognize the "heavy responsibility the public lays on both parties," Reuther describes how the UAW has met its responsibilities--"In addition to our responsibility to the public, we have responsibility also to the more than 300,000 General Motors workers covered by our agreement, and to their families. As the union has demonstrated in its economic brief, our responsibilities to the GM workers and to the public are in harmony." Much of the remainder of the letter describes how GM avoided its responsibility to the public and to government and to its workers in its disregard of governmental policy and its unreasonable positions in negotiations. For example, "The position taken by corporation representatives flies in the face of and contravenes the President's statement of national wage-price-profit policy. . . ." The UAW presents proposals in negotiations to which representatives of GM refuse

to respond--" [Q]ur wage negotiations are deadlocked because of the continual refusal of the corporation to discuss basic economic facts."

The following is Reuther's pointed characterization of GM's unreasonable negotiating position.

Corporation representatives have told us in negotiations that:

1. The Corporation cannot and will not pay even 1 per cent higher wage rates without a compensating increase in prices.
2. Corporation prices are none of the union's or the public's business.
3. Corporation costs are none of the union's or the public's business.
4. Corporation profits are none of the union's or the public's business.
5. The corporation books will not be opened to the union in wage negotiations.
6. The union should cease concerning itself with prices, limiting our negotiations solely to wages.
7. The union should join the corporation in persuading Congress to amend the Wage-Hour Act to lengthen the normal work-week from forty hours to forty-five hours.
8. The corporation offers the union a 10 per cent wage increase tied to higher prices for consumers.

The only way GM could be as responsible and as reasonable as the UAW was to agree to the arbitration proposal in the letter. Agreement to the proposal, however, would grant the arbitration board full access to GM's books, records and the like and would make the decision of the board final and binding for both parties. These were the points on which GM refused to compromise. Acceptance of the arbitration proposal would have required repudiating GM's previous position on the strike, wages and prices. Yet, because of the standards of behavior which Reuther established in the letter, GM's refusal to arbitrate confirmed Reuther's descriptions of GM's irresponsibility and unrea-

sonableness.³⁵

Aristotle identifies three genres of rhetoric--deliberative, forensic and epideictic--all of which urge the audience to make a decision about action.³⁶ Analyzing the rhetoric directed towards the general public from a perspective of Aristotelian genres allows one to see how union rhetors use a dramatic scenario to encourage public support of the strike. The discourse argues about the appropriateness of action, which requires the audience to make a forensic decision, rather than the expediency of proposed action, which requires a deliberative decision.³⁷ Union rhetors ask the public to make a decision about the justice or injustice of the conduct of GM and of the UAW before and during the strike. Because of this focus on past action rather than on future action, the ethos or characterizations of GM and of the UAW are particularly important to the audience in its decision about who acted most justly.

Aristotle identifies three elements of ethos: good sense (phronesis), good moral character (arete) and good will (eunoia).³⁸ Conceivably, different audiences have different standards for good

³⁵New York Times, 20 November 1945, p. 14.

³⁶Aristotle, Rhetoric, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, The Modern Library edn. (New York: Random House, 1954) 1358b 11.21-29.

³⁷For examples, see New York Times, 20 November 1945, p. 14, New York Times, 25 November 1945, p. 36 and Reuther, "GM v. The Rest of Us," New Republic, p. 41-42.

³⁸Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1378a 11. 8-9.

will and the like. I contend that in UAW rhetoric of the 1945-1946 strike, the union has an ethos which is attractive to the American public because the union is characterized as more American than is GM. In short, the UAW and the American public share values, while GM and the American public did not. Henry McGuckin made a similar argument in his analysis of Richard Nixon's Checkers Speech. Accordingly to McGuckin, the speech was effective because Nixon identified himself with representative American values.³⁹

It was crucial for the UAW to be seen as part of the American public, because it was easy to interpret the UAW position as unpatriotic. By striking so close to the end of World War II, the UAW appeared to be jeopardizing the country's ability to reconvert to a peacetime economy, while GM appeared to be trying to speed this reconversion by returning to pre-war policies. UAW rhetors overcame this negative characterization by identifying the union with the American values, as characterized by FDR, for which the war was fought. These values are the "Four Freedoms"--freedom of speech and expression, freedom to worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.⁴⁰ After fighting a war in Europe and

³⁹Henry E. McGuckin, Jr., "A Value Analysis of Richard Nixon's 1952 Campaign-Fund Speech," Southern Speech Journal, 33(Summer 1968)4, p. 259-269.

⁴⁰Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Four Freedoms," from a message to the 77th Congress 6 January 1941 in Readings for Citizens at War, ed. Theodore Morrison (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943) p. 196-197.

the Pacific to preserve freedom of speech, of religion and from fear for all Americans, the UAW is fighting a battle for freedom from want for all Americans at home against GM. The appeal to freedom from want is equivalent to an appeal for economic security for all Americans.

Today, with the strike in its second month, and with the G.M. attitude being copied by other employers across the whole country, General Motors workers and their families are the front-line troops in a home-front war to win the very peace that, only five months ago, it was generally agreed we must have if the war aims of the Four Freedoms were to be more than a sour phrase on the lips of apple-selling veterans of World War II.⁴¹

Here, the vivid image of apple-selling veterans suggest that this war means nothing if America returns to the pre-war economic conditions of the Depression.

In this battle, the UAW and its members are characterized as American fighting for Americans. The UAW has the positive attributes of the audience--Americans concerned for the welfare of the country and willing to fight for its welfare at home or abroad, reasonable in negotiation and, finally, willing to assume responsibility for its actions. In contrast, GM is characterized as fighting against Americans to prevent their attainment of economic security.

The grim fact is that if free enterprise in America is to survive, it has got to work; it must demonstrate more than an ability to create earnings for investors; it must master the technique for providing full employment at a high standard of living, rising year by year to keep pace with the annual increase in technological efficiency. Incidentally, this increment, estimated at more than 2.5 percent a year normally, may amount to

⁴¹ Reuther, "This is Your Fight!" Nation, p. 36.

more than 30 percent in the first three post-war years according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Free enterprise has got to demonstrate a willingness to adjust itself to national policies such as the present wage-price policy, not being appealed by GM from President Truman to Congress. Good will must be substituted for the obstructionism, arrogance and refusal to cooperate--the latter Mr. Truman's phrase--that have marked GM's conduct in this dispute.⁴²

A scenario which emphasizes characterization and present action is an appropriate rhetorical device for the union rhetor, because a debate about the feasibility of a 30 percent wage increase without a price increase never develops. The debate never occurs, because GM argues without evidence that the proposal for a thirty percent wage increase without a price increase is not possible. The UAW's requests for evidence are ignored by GM. Since UAW rhetors cannot urge the public to deliberate about future action without arguments and evidence, the rhetors turn to present conduct as the evidence for making a decision. GM cannot hide the evidence of its own conduct. If the public considered the explanations made by UAW rhetors plausible, the public would accept the scenario found in the discourse as a valid chronicle and support the strike.

V. The Fight of All Organized Labor

The scenario created in intra-union rhetoric is similar to the scenario created in public discourse; however, union rhetors make assumptions about the audience's knowledge of events. For example, the pre-strike maneuvering, described in detail in public discourse,

⁴² Reuther, "GM v. The Rest of Us," New Republic, p. 42.

is dealt with rather lightly in intra-union discourse.⁴³ Similarly, characterizing the union as reasonable and responsible, which is emphasized in public discourse, is omitted here; it is assumed that the intra-union audience perceives the union in this way. The union's desire to negotiate with the facts proves that it is reasonable and responsible.⁴⁴ Both public and intra-union rhetoric characterizes union members as Americans fighting for "full production, full employment and full consumption in our nation and the world."⁴⁵ For the individual union member, this means fighting for economic security and assured employment.

The way in which union members and the nature of the relationship between the UAW and GM were characterized in the intra-union scenario are the important differences from the public scenario. According to the intra-union scenario, the GM workers unanimously voted for the strike.⁴⁶ These union members possessed the courage, sense of

⁴³"Highlight of General Motors Strike: GM Forces Strike," United Automobile Worker, December 1945, p. 4-5.

⁴⁴"Highlight," United Automobile Worker, p. 4-5 and "Letter to all UAW-CIO Local Unions," United Automobile Worker, December 1945, p. 1 and 8.

⁴⁵"Letter," United Automobile Worker, p. 1. See also Walter P. Reuther, Letter to All GM Local Unions, 24 January 1946, George Lyons Local 174 Collection, Box 2, Folder: Misc. Strikes, 1945-46, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs; and "NLRB Charges GM Corporation with Precipitating and Prolonging the Strike," United Automobile Worker, January 1946, p. 1 and 8.

⁴⁶"Highlights," United Automobile Worker, p. 1 and 8.

sacrifice and determination which gives strength to the union during this fight. "The courage and willingness to sacrifice which the GM workers are showing in order to establish the beachhead that will win greater security and a higher standard of living for all workers has won the respect and gratitude of men of good will everywhere."⁴⁷ More importantly, union members realized that they must work and fight together, as a union, to win this strike.⁴⁸

The importance of these attributes for the union member was underscored by the nature of the conflict between GM and the UAW, for it was not simply a strike over a wage increase, but a fight for the survival of the union. GM, the "giant octopus of the automotive industry"⁴⁹ and one of the "barons of industry,"⁵⁰ was part of "a conspiracy by Big Industry to destroy organized labor and wipe out every social and economic gain we have made since the first Roosevelt administration."⁵¹ GM's refusal to bargain with the union questioned the validity of the union and the validity of collective bargaining.

⁴⁷"Highlights," United Automobile Worker, p. 1 and 8.

⁴⁸George F. Addes, "Secretary Addes Says: A Union's Greatest Asset is Solidarity," United Automobile Worker, February 1946, p. 7.

⁴⁹"Strategy Board Outlines Strike Donations Policy," United Automobile Worker, December 1945, p. 2.

⁵⁰George F. Addes, "DuPont Interests Block Settlement of GM Strike." United Automobile Worker, March 1946, p. 7.

⁵¹Reuther, Letter to All GM Local Unions, 24 January 1946. See also "GM Yearns for Old Days of No Union, Open Shop," United Automobile Worker, December 1945, p. 3, "Letter," United Automobile Worker, p. 1 and 8; "Highlights," United Automobile Worker, p. 4-5 and Walter P. Reuther, Letter to All Organized Labor, 30 January 1946, R. J. Thomas Collection, Box 8, Folder: GM Dispute 1945-46, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

GM's refusal to negotiate with the facts and its decision to withstand the union's strike "proved" that GM preferred industrial warfare to collective bargaining, because the only alternative to negotiation was force. Thus, the union was in a battle for its survival, a battle in which the sacrifices and solidarity of its members became even more important. References to battle and battle imagery are frequent in this scenario. For example, GM strikers were in the "front-lines in the fight of all organized labor . . ." ⁵² and were fighting an "anti-labor offensive." ⁵³

The conflict between the UAW and GM as depicted in the intra-union rhetoric was never fully resolved. The end of the strike was not discussed in the official magazine, the United Automobile Worker. Newly elected president Walter Reuther only referred to the strike as a "bitter struggle." ⁵⁴ Even public statements made by the union leaders do not resolve this conflict between the UAW and GM.

The scenario created by intra-union discourse continues the "myth of concern" created in 1936. The discourse, however, does not focus on the transformation of an auto worker into a union member, but rather on encouraging the union member's continuous commitment to the union during the strike. The worker in this scenario already has the positive characteristics of union membership, such as pride, self-

⁵²"Strike Donations Policy," United Automobile Worker, p. 2.

⁵³Reuther, Letter to All Organized Labor, 30 January 1946.

⁵⁴"New President Urges Unity in First Speech," United Automobile Worker, April 1946, p. 3.

respect and the ability to act. Instead, the discourse emphasizes the economic security which workers will have because of their union membership.⁵⁵ The standards of economic security frequently change, for they are measured by wages on an incremental scale and may increase or decrease depending upon economic conditions; therefore, the UAW must guard against proposals which would weaken a union member's economic security. The relationship between GM and UAW also has changed somewhat, for they were no longer battling for the establishment of industrial democracy, but were battling over its continuation. The references to physical violence, blood and death that were common in the rhetoric of the 1936-1937 strike did not appear, except in one isolated instance.⁵⁶

Maintaining commitment of UAW members to the strike and to the union was very important because the morale of the members was a problem; GM strikers and their families received no money from the union for support and depended upon charity and welfare for their livelihood.⁵⁷ For union members willingly to make the sacrifices necessary to continue the strike, members must be committed to the

⁵⁵"The Fact-Finding Trend of 'No' Price Increases Can Mean Bright Future," United Automobile Worker, January 1946, p. 2. See also Addes, "DuPont Interests," United Automobile Worker, p. 7 and Reuther, Letter to All GM Local Unions, 24 January 1946.

⁵⁶Addes, "DuPont Interests," United Automobile Worker, p. 7.

⁵⁷W. Jean Gould and Lorena Hickock, Walter Reuther: Labor's Rugged Individualist (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1972) p. 204-232.

union and to the goal of economic security.

The factionalism which divided the UAW until 1947 also increased the importance of encouraging commitment. Some union members may have felt more loyalty to the Communist Party than to the union. Antagonism toward Walter Reuther, who was the principal union decision-maker during this strike, could have prevented unified action. If the union had not been able to unify itself for this strike, it would have indicated that the union was unstable. Such instability would weaken the collective bargaining relationship with GM.

Union rhetors used elements of the union "myth of concern" to encourage commitment to the union and its goals and also to augment organizational stability. Roles and relationships, if used to elicit particular responses from union members, encourage commitment to the union.

There are practical and theoretical bases for the use of these devices such as those described by Kanter⁵⁸ to encourage a particular behavior. For example, identification of an enemy is one means of distinguishing an organization from the rest of the world. Everyone either supports the organization or is its enemy. Identification of an enemy remains one of the best methods for galvanizing unity within

⁵⁸Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Commitment and Social Organization: A Study of Commitment Mechanisms in Utopian Communities," American Sociological Review, 33 (August 1968)4, p. 510-516.

a divided organization.⁵⁹ During the strike, GM is the UAW's enemy. However, union rhetors needed to distinguish the issues of this strike from the day to day conflicts between the UAW and GM since the strike of 1936-1937, in order to justify the extra sacrifices which union members had to make during the strike and to counteract the political factionalism within the UAW. Union rhetors chose to make this strike a battle for the survival of the UAW, for all organized labor and for New Deal policies in general. The UAW was battling reactionary forces which wished to return America to the politics which led to the Depression. This characterization of the union's immediate relationship with GM explained and justified the sacrifices of the union members and identifies a common goal for which all union members can work-- survival.

Cognitive dissonance theory helps to explain how the norm of sacrifice may intensify a union member's commitment to the UAW. The union member already has made the initial commitment to the union, because it provides a means for attaining a positive identity as well as future job and economic security. However, when the union goes on strike, the union member's immediate job and economic security is threatened, because the member sacrifices her or his wages for the duration of the strike and works for the union without pay. Striking is in a dissonant relationship with the member's goal of economic

⁵⁹Lewis Coser, The Functions of Social Conflict (New York: The Free Press, 1956) p. 140.

security. Cognitive dissonance theorist Leon Festinger argues that "[t]he existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance. . . . [I]n addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance."⁶⁰

Cognitive dissonance theory describes the internal conflict which a person experiences after he or she makes a decision. In this particular instance, it is a conflict which occurs after the worker is a union member and when he or she is required to go on strike, which is inconsistent with an important motivation for joining the union--economic security. There are four possible ways a union member might rationalize this conflict and resolve the dissonance. 1) The union member may experience an increase in the perceived attractiveness of union membership which decreases the importance of the dissonance. 2) The union member may experience a decrease in the perceived attractiveness of not being a union member which also decreases the importance of dissonance. 3) The union member may choose to become a non-union worker which is a behavior change to reduce dissonance. 4) The union member may perceive no difference in being or not being a union member, which is the discovery of new information which reconciles the dissonance, such as realizing that union picket lines would prevent her or him from working anyway.⁶¹

⁶⁰Leon Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson and Co., 1957) p. 3.

⁶¹Festinger, Cognitive Dissonance, p. 19-23.

Obviously responses 1 and 2 are the ones which union rhetors desire members to make. If a member selects one of these responses, he or she is resolving the dissonance by intensifying her or his commitment to the union (I will support the strike for increased wages and go without wages for as long as it is necessary, because without the Union I would have no future job or economic security). This is similar to the process Festinger describes in his study of a movement which predicted the destruction of the world.

If one really believes a prediction (the first condition), for example, that on a given date the world will be destroyed by fire, with sinners being destroyed and the good being saved, one does things about it and makes certain preparations as a matter of course. These actions may range all the way from simple public declarations to the neglect of worldly things and the disposal of earthly possessions. Through such actions and through the mocking and scoffing of nonbelievers there is usually established a heavy commitment on the part of believers. What they do by way of preparation is difficult to undo, and the jeering of nonbelievers simply makes it far more difficult for the adherents to withdraw from the movement and admit that they were wrong.⁶²

If a union member believes that unions are necessary for workers, then he or she also must believe in the use of strikes to gain negotiating power for unions. Strikes, however, require sacrifices, lost wages which are never regained. The union member resolves this dissonance by rationalizing that the employer will not grant a wage increase which would be as high as the wage increase that the union would win. This logic increases the member's commitment to the union.

⁶²Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Schachter, When Prophecy Fails, Harper Torchbooks edn. (New York: Harper and Row, 1956) p. 5.

When a larger sacrifice is requested by the union, members who make that sacrifice will rationalize making it be increasing the importance of the union in their lives (without the union I would become a wage slave, with management increasing my hours and cutting my wages); however, some union members will choose alternatives 3 or 4, which would decrease the member's commitment to the union.

Sacrifice is the often unstated norm which underlies much of the imagery and arguments of the rhetoric of the 1945-1946 strike. The strike itself requires an immediate sacrifice for future wage increases and economic security. "It is a long time to go without a payday and all credit due these workers and their families for the spirit and determination with which they fight on."⁶³ The strike itself is a device for encouraging sacrifice and, hence, commitment. However, this particular strike requires even greater sacrifice, and thus results in greater commitment, because UAW members are fighting for all Americans for "an economy of full production, full employment and full consumption. . ." ⁶⁴ and for all organized labor by "fighting against a conspiracy by Big Industry to destroy organized labor and wipe out every social and economic gain we have made since the first Roosevelt

⁶³ Addes, "A Union's Greatest Asset," United Automobile Worker, p. 1; "Highlights," United Automobile Worker, p. 4-5 and Reuther, Letter to All GM Local Unions, 24 January 1946.

⁶⁴ "Letter to All UAW-CIO Local Unions," United Automobile Worker, p. 1; "Highlights," United Automobile Worker, p. 4-5 and Reuther, Letter to All GM Local Unions, 24 January 1946.

administration."⁶⁵ These great sacrifices are necessary because of GM's attack on the American public and organized labor and because the UAW is the only union which can stand up to and defeat GM; hence, the UAW deserves its members' loyalty and support.

By using Mead's notions about the development of self to analyze this rhetoric, one can deduce that union rhetors are developing and expanding the role of union member or the "me" aspect of a union member's self. The discourse emphasizes characteristics a union member should have which aid the union's fight against GM. Union members are American, loyal to the union and willing to sacrifice. The union member has the courage to fight for all Americans and for all of organized labor, despite the strength and power of GM, and is determined enough and tough enough to win this strike.⁶⁶

Mead recognizes that the "me" functions as a form of social control over an individual's behavior, by limiting the alternatives for behavior in a given situation.⁶⁷ When a union rhetor describes the union member

⁶⁵Reuther, Letter to All GM Local Unions, 24 January 1946. See also "Strike Strategy Board," United Automobile Worker, p. 4-5 and R. J. Thomas, "President's Column: Any Decision Important," United Automobile Worker, January 1946, p. 4.

⁶⁶See for examples: Addes, "Union's Greatest Asset," United Automobile Worker, p. 7; "Letter to All UAW-CIO Local Unions," United Automobile Worker, p. 1 and 8; "Strike Strategy Board," United Automobile Worker, p. 2 and "NLRB Charges," United Automobile Worker, p. 1 and 8.

⁶⁷George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society, Vol. 1 of Works of George Herbert Mead, Charles W. Morris ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934) p. 210-211.

as courageous, loyal to the union and sacrificing, these are the acceptable behaviors for the union member. Social control is accomplished through a process of self-criticism in which the individual critically compares her or his behavior to the group's standards of behavior.⁶⁸

The social control function of the "me" aspect of self, however, does not result in every union member behaving in exactly the same manner. The uniqueness of individual response is still asserted through the "I." For example, an individual union member recognizes the importance of the norm of sacrifice, because the member has internalized the attitudes of the union community about what a good union member should do. The individual union member compares her or his behavior to that of the community's model of behavior, the role of union member, and discovers that her or his conduct does not meet the norm of sacrifice. This is the internal process of self-criticism. How an individual chooses to operationalize this norm is determined by the creative aspect of self, the "I." The normal situation, however, is one which involves a reaction of the individual in a situation which is socially determined, but to which he brings his own responses as an 'I.' The response is, in the experience of the individual, an expression with which the self is identified."⁶⁹ An individual union member may choose to sacrifice by making a special contribution to the union or by volunteering for extra strike duty.

⁶⁸ Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 255.

⁶⁹ Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 211.

In Mead's terminology, an institution has arisen for the union members, "an organization of attitudes which we all carry in us, the organized attitudes of others that control and determine conduct."⁷⁰ This institution has advantages for union members, for leaders and even for GM. For the union member her or his experience is explained by a "myth of concern" in a sensible and reasonable manner. An individual finds a goal for her or his behavior or at least a satisfying justification for behavior. For leaders of the union and for GM the advantage of this institution is predictability and stability. The role of union member makes the union membership's behavior predictable, by limiting the alternatives of acceptable behavior. This is important to the union leader, because he or she is an elected official who is dependent on the support of rank and file union members to keep her or his position.⁷¹ If the union leader makes a decision which is unpopular among the membership, her or his leadership position may be threatened as the rank and file withdraw their support. The beliefs and expectations which are part of the role of union member provide the union leader with a guide to what the membership will support. In short, the role of union member limits the behavior of others who want the loyalty and support of the union member and, thus, stabilizes the relationship between the membership and the leaders. The union leader may not like to make the decisions which the membership expects a leader to make, but at least

⁷⁰Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 211.

⁷¹C. Wright Mills, "The Labor Leaders and the Power Elite," in Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin and Arthur M. Ross eds., Industrial Conflict (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954) p. 148.

the union leader has an indication of what the response of the membership will be when he or she makes a decision.

This predictability and stability also is advantageous to GM. GM officials can expect a particular type of behavior in a certain situation, but more important to the corporation is the fact that all union members behave in a similar manner. GM does not have to negotiate with several small groups of workers, each with a different idea of what a union should be and how a union member should act. Because the UAW "myth of concern" limits acceptable behavior and because most auto workers are members of the union, GM can focus its efforts on a stable relationship with one union, rather than scattering its efforts among several different groups of workers, all of which want something slightly different from GM. Since less corporate time and money is spent on union-management relations, GM officials can put them to use elsewhere.

By analyzing the role of union member and by identifying the logical outcome of that role, the social control of the union member through rules of behavior, one can begin to see that the role of union member can become as rigid and as limiting as the role of wage slave, which the former role replaced in 1936. This is implied when Mead equates "me," the role of union member, with an institution.⁷² The "I" functions to prevent this rigidity by slowing changing the "me."

Robert Merton discusses a similar process of change in his theory of structural functionalism, when he discusses bureaucratic structure.

⁷²Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 211.

From the functional analysis of bureaucratic structure, it is clear, that, under determinate conditions, conformity to regulations can be dysfunctional both for realizing the objectives of the structure and for various groups in the society which the bureaucracy is intended to serve. Regulations are in such cases applied even when the circumstances which initially made them functional and effective have so materially changed that conformity to the rule defeats its purpose.⁷³

A bureaucratic structure may be so dysfunctional that an individual or group may seek to change it through rebellion, but implicit in that rebellion is a new bureaucratic structure and future rebellion.⁷⁴

Similarly, a role may be so dysfunctional that the "I" in an individual's self cannot be expressed. The individual rebels by creating a new role in a new "myth of concern;" yet implicit in that new role is the rigidity of the old one. When a rhetor creates a new role, the rhetor also creates a role which will not fit the needs of the group at some future time. A pattern of continually changing roles and "myths of concern" appears. Mead recognized that this change exists and considered it crucial to the improvement of the human condition, but also considered it a means for human degradation.⁷⁵

If the role of union member in the union "myth of concern" becomes so rigid that the "I" in a member's self cannot act comfortably within the limitations set by the "me," then the entire "myth of concern"

⁷³Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, revised and enlarged edn. (New York: The Free Press, 1957) p. 123-124.

⁷⁴Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 140n.

⁷⁵Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p. 216-218.

loses its validity for the union member, because it no longer sensibly explains reality and no longer provides effective models for conduct. The union member may become willing to believe a new "myth of concern" if the roles of union member restricts behavior too severely.

VI. Summary

Tendencies toward institutionalization of conflict are not very obvious at this stage of the UAW-GM relationship. Symbolically, the strike is a battle to UAW members. The strike is not seen as less intense than the 1936-1937 strike, for the issue remains union survival. Internal factionalism in the UAW prevented the development of a bureaucratic organization which is a sign of institutionalization and, thus, could not be detected in the discourse.

The rhetoric of the 1945-1946 strike, however, did show some signs of institutionalization. Union rhetors tried to encourage the commitment of average union members to the union, to aid organizational stability and permanency. It is evident that the devices which encourage and maintain commitment are interdependent. Norms which encourage commitment and limit the alternatives for appropriate behavior are part of the role of union member. Norms of behavior such as sacrifice, which help create loyalty to the union can be encouraged when rhetors place the union in a conflict for its survival against GM. This conflict intensifies the differences between the UAW and GM and demonstrates the necessity of union membership for the average auto worker in the industrial community. A rhetor may use a dramatic scenario to synthesize these elements and to make them memorable and

realistic for the union audience. This "myth of concern" dramatically explains the reality of industrial experience for the auto worker.

The roles and norms of the union "myth of concern" limit a member's alternatives for behavior. This social control function is an important sign of the process of institutionalization. Because the conflict between the UAW and GM is symbolically as intense as it was in 1936-1937 and because there is little or no evidence of bureaucracy in the UAW's organizational structure, the social control function of the rhetoric is an important indication of the institutionalization of industrial conflict.

Chapter Six

QUIET DETERMINATION AND THE BATTLE OF PRINCIPLE

THE 1970 STRIKE

In 1970 the UAW was a different organization than it had been in 1945. The factionalism which hindered the union's development into a bureaucratic organization was gone. When Walter Reuther was re-elected president of the UAW in 1947 and when his coalition's candidates also were elected to the remaining union offices, the UAW was united internally for the first time.¹ Reuther removed any organized opposition to his policies within the UAW by removing all Communists from their appointed offices.² The result was to make the UAW a one-party union.³ The removal of organized opposition is indicative of bureaucratic tendencies that exist in all unions.⁴ The UAW is considered

¹Victor Reuther, The Brothers Reuther and the Story of the UAW/ A Memoir (Boston. Houghton Mifflin, 1976) p. 266.

²William Serrin, The Company and the Union: The "Civilized Relationship" of the General Motors Corporation and the United Automobile Workers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973) p. 141 and Irving Howe and B. J. Widick, UAW and Walter Reuther (New York. Random house, 1949) p. 79.

³Paul Jacobs, Old Before Its Time Collective Bargaining at 28 (Santa Barbara, CA: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1963) p. 9-16 and 45-46 in Max S. Wortman, Jr. ed., Critical Issues in Labor (New York: MacMillan, 1969) p. 62.

⁴See Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Political Process in Trade Unions: A Theoretical Statement," in Monroe Berger, Theodore Abel and Charles H. Page, eds. Freedom and Control in Modern Society (New York: Octagon Books, 1964) p. 82-124.

one of the most democratic unions in the U.S.; yet, it also exhibits bureaucratic and oligarchic tendencies. For example, the international union convention is the most powerful decision-maker in the UAW.⁵

Through delegates, rank and file union members have an opportunity to reject or to accept proposals made by the International Executive Board Officers (president, vice-presidents and secretary-treasurer) and general staff. When a convention is not in session, the International Executive Board is the most powerful decision-maker. In 1951, the Reuther administration succeeded in passing a proposal which required that conventions be held biennially instead of annually which made rank and file control of the executive board more difficult.⁶

This change also produced greater stability in the union administration and greater control by the union administration over the rank and file.

Bureaucratic organization fulfilled the need for union permanency and discipline as the conflict between management and unions became institutionalized. The resources of the union are used to maintain the organization--i.e., retain members, insure a stable administration and insure efficient administration of the collective bargaining contract. The bureaucratic structure of unions exhibits Robert Michels' "iron law of oligarchy," which states that organizations evolve a structure in which there is a minority of directors and a majority of followers. Democratic as well as totalitarian organizations evolve

⁵Jack Stieber, Governing the UAW (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1962) p. 16.

⁶Stieber, Governing the UAW, p. 34-37.

according to this pattern.⁷

There are both external and internal pressures for bureaucratic organization in unions. The nature of the corporation with which the union negotiates is the major source of external pressure. The UAW negotiates with three major American corporations. In 1970 GM was ranked the second largest industrial corporation by its assets in the U.S., Ford was ranked fourth and Chrysler was ranked fourteenth.⁸ To administer a contract for the employees of corporations of this size, the UAW must become a large organization which is as permanent and stable as the automobile corporations.

The management of a corporation also may demand "responsible" union leadership in return for concessions at the negotiating table. This pressure for union responsibility encourages oligarchy. To be responsible, union leaders must make sure that all union members abide by the contract and especially make sure that production is not interrupted, except when allowed by the contract. To accomplish this, union leaders centralize the political power and control of the union. For example, the rank and file members' and union locals' right to strike is limited by the union leadership. Unless the strike is approved by the union bureaucracy and/or leadership, union members or the union local will not receive financial support to pay for the

⁷Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Free Press, 1962) p. 70.

⁸Thomas R. Dye, "Who's Running America? Institutional Leadership in the United States" (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976) p. 20.

strike.⁹ In the UAW all strikes must be approved by both the national negotiating committee for the particular corporation and by the International Executive Board.¹⁰ Rank and file union members cannot act unless the union leadership and bureaucracy say they can.

. . . [T]here is a basic conflict between the value of democratic unionism and "responsible" unionism which many conservatives and business leaders do not recognize at least in their public pronouncements. The dictatorial mechanisms found in many unions may be regarded as a functional adaptation to management's demand that their yielding on union security issues must be followed by union responsibility.¹¹

Efficiency and stability are the internal pressures for bureaucratic organization. The union is an administrative organization, for it administers a contract. In industries of the size and complexity of the auto industry, the problem of administration is aggravated to a point that only a small, elite staff has the knowledge and experience to accomplish the administrative tasks.¹²

The shift of control from the rank and file members to the leaders results in a decrease in the participation of the former in union activities.

⁹Sumner H. Slichter, James Healy and E. Robert Livernash, The Impact of Collective Bargaining on Management (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1960), p. 920.

¹⁰Stieber, Governing the UAW, p. 101.

¹¹Lipset, "Political Process in Trade Unions," Freedom and Control, p. 84.

¹²Lipset, "Political Process in Trade Unions," Freedom and Control, p. 84.

As control over decisions shift away from the local levels, there is a decrease of membership participation, and interest in local affairs as they lose importance. Similarly, disagreements over policy are increasingly limited to conflicts over national policies, knowledge about which is limited to members of the bureaucracy itself. Thus, conflicts occur more and more as administrative fights at international headquarters and less as political struggles between groups in the locals. The implications of this shift were once graphically expressed to a friend of this writer's by a steelworker when he said, in explaining his lack of interest in the local union: "We don't have a union anymore, we have a contract. The economists and statisticians negotiate contracts--all we can do is vote yes or no to them."¹³

I. The UAW from 1946 to 1970

The 1950s and 1960s were a time of recruiting new members to the union and of expanding the wages and benefits of the average members. The UAW expanded to include workers in the agricultural implement and aircraft industries, as well as white collar workers at Chrysler.¹⁴ In the 1948 negotiations with GM, GM president C. E. Wilson proposed that an unlimited cost of living allowance be included in the contract to help stabilize autoworkers' wages. The UAW accepted the proposal.¹⁵ First at Ford and later at Chrysler and GM, the UAW negotiated the supplemental employment benefit (SUB) program, which assured auto workers of a substantial portion of their regular wages during periods of slow production and layoffs for model changes. The SUB payment was

¹³Lipset, "Political Process in Trade Unions," Freedom and Control, p. 86-87.

¹⁴UAW Solidarity, 13 May 1977 p. 33 and Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 35-36.

¹⁵Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 20.

combined with an unemployment compensation payment to provide workers with enough money to maintain their standard of living during periods when they could not work.¹⁶ In 1961, the UAW successfully negotiated that the employer would pay the entire health and medical insurance premium to auto workers. In 1964, the union negotiated an early retirement program.¹⁷ In 1967, the union negotiated an increase for the SUB program so that combined SUB payments and unemployment compensation equaled 95 percent of a worker's take-home pay. Skilled tradesmen in the auto plants also received a wage increase which was higher than the increase for production workers; however, in exchange for these gains the UAW gave up its unlimited cost of living allowance.¹⁸

What is interesting to note is that none of these new programs or benefits, with the exception of the cost of living allowance which GM gave to the UAW, was first negotiated at GM. "In 1955, the union and the companies had entered into a gentlemen's agreement in which the companies that were not struck matched the agreement worked out at the target company."¹⁹ When the UAW would win a strike at Ford

¹⁶Reuther, Brothers Reuther, p. 316-318.

¹⁷UAW Solidarity, 13 May 1977, p. 34.

¹⁸UAW Solidarity, 13 May 1977, p. 34 and Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 7.

¹⁹Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 18.

or Chrysler, GM signed a contract similar to the contract with Ford or Chrysler. This arrangement was to the UAW's benefit, because in the 1945-1946 strike the UAW learned that it was very difficult to win their proposals by striking GM and that it was easier to strike Ford or Chrysler to force concessions at the negotiating table. As one UAW official, Emil Mazey, put it, "It is better to make the most possible progress with the least suffering. . . . That is, if you can push around a Chrysler Corporation, that is the thing you ought to do, instead of tackling a GM, which may not give you as much and may result in a long struggle."²⁰

At first glance the events leading up to the 1970 strike appear similar to those leading up to the 1945-1946 strike. "Both times the country had been waging war for several years. Both times price increases had raced past wage gains."²¹ The 1970 strike, however, was different. First, forty percent of the UAW's members were under thirty in 1970. The values of these young union members were very different from those of the older members. The latter remembered the Depression and what it was like without a union, while the former had always had the benefits of union membership while they worked.²² Unions were losing their image of fighting for the average worker against management. A survey taken in 1968 indicated that the attitudes of "lower-

²⁰Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 18.

²¹Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 157.

²²Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 13.

middle-class blue collar" white workers toward unions and business were almost identical. Fifty-five percent of those surveyed had a favorable attitude towards unions, 52 percent were favorable to business, 27 percent were neutral to unions, 31 percent were neutral to business, 14 percent were unfavorable to union, 15 percent were unfavorable to business with the remainder comprising "other responses."²³ Black auto workers' attitudes toward the unions and business probably were more unfavorable to both. Blacks worked primarily on the assembly line, often in the least desirable and lowest paid jobs. In 1970 few blacks were foremen or skilled tradesmen.²⁴ Second, the UAW had not called a national strike against GM since 1945. There was growing pressure among rank and file union members to strike GM, because it appeared that the UAW was afraid of GM. If the UAW leadership did not support a strike against GM, rank and file members could retaliate by withdrawing their support from the leadership's proposals or by voting the leaders out of office. Third, the rank and file wanted the UAW to win back the cost of living allowance which Walter Reuther, president of the UAW, negotiated away in exchange for higher wages for skilled tradesmen during the 1967 negotiations with Ford. Union members wanted to win this escalator back, and they wanted to win it back from GM.²⁵ Reuther endorsed the union demands to be negotiated. The 1970 demands for negotiations contained the greatest number of

²³Howard L. Reiter, "Blue-collar Workers and the Future of American Politics," in Blue-Collar Workers: A Symposium on Middle America, Sar. A. Levitan ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971) p. 106-107.

²⁴Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 234-235.

²⁵Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 19 and 7.

demands ever proposed by the UAW. This left the union with little flexibility in negotiations that year.²⁶

GM put the UAW on notice early in 1970 that the corporation was going to be tough in negotiations that year, tougher than ever before.²⁷ It looked as if there would be a strike as long and as bitter as that of 1945-1946. The sudden death of Reuther in a plane crash six weeks before negotiations began changed the climate for negotiations. Reuther's death was a crisis for the union because he had been president for 25 years. To some workers Reuther not only represented the UAW, he was the UAW. "With Reuther dead, there was no one with the clout to go to the workers--as slim as the possibilities for approval would have been even had Reuther been alive--and say, 'This is a fine settlement; let us accept it. There is no need for a strike.'"²⁸

This was the situation which Leonard Woodcock faced when he was elected president of the UAW by a 13 to 12 vote of the executive board. Woodcock was left with little room to maneuver in negotiations, because of the absence of unanimous support within the union administration as well as his lack of credibility with the rank and file union members. A strike against GM would solve many of his problems. First, a strike would unify the older and younger members, because they would be striking together against a common enemy who threatened their

²⁶Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 22.

²⁷Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 10-12.

²⁸Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 22.

economic security. The younger members also would be taught that sacrifices must be made to enable the union to win economic security. Second, a strike against GM would prove that the union was not afraid of GM. Third, winning the cost of living allowance back from GM would be proof of the UAW's strength. Woodcock realized that he had to prove himself to the membership to create a strong constituency to support him. "Woodcock became president, and he felt pressure--pressure from the rank and file, pressure to create an image of the union as a strong institution, pressure to prove himself, to purge the memory of Reuther and at the same time honor it--to strike General Motors."²⁹

II. The 1970 Strike

The strike itself lasted 67 days, from September 15 to November 20.³⁰ It ended just before the union's strike fund ran out of money. The strike fund was used to provide strikers and their families with small amounts of cash, \$30 to \$40 a week, to buy food.³¹ The UAW did have a special convention on October 24 in Detroit, to vote on an increase in dues so the union could continue paying strike benefits, if the strike should last until sometime in December.³²

²⁹Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 22.

³⁰Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 285.

³¹Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 202 and 187.

³²Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 201-202 and 297.

During the strike one can see evidence of an institutionalized conflict and of bureaucratic organization. For example, the closing of GM plants during the strike cost the corporation approximately \$1 billion or more in profits;³³ although not all GM plants were closed during the strike. Fifteen plants which manufactured parts sold to Ford, Chrysler and American Motors remained open.³⁴ In contrast, during the 1945-1946 strike, when UAW president R. J. Thomas suggested that GM keep its parts plants open so that companies using GM parts could continue operation, the rank and file opposition to the suggestion caused Thomas to deny that he ever made it.³⁵

Most of the activity during the strike occurred at the negotiating table, where bureaucratic and oligarchic relationships between negotiators are evident. The UAW negotiating team is composed of 30 persons, twelve of whom are elected from regions to represent the workers directly at the negotiating table.³⁶ After the special convention on October 24, Woodcock and Irving Bluestone, the head of the GM Department in the UAW, suggested that the size of the bargaining committee be reduced to only the top union officers and union staff

³³Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 296.

³⁴Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 186.

³⁵New York Times, 2 December 1945, p. 1; New York Times, 3 December 1945, p. 1 and New York Times, 4 December 1945, p. 1.

³⁶Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 211.

to speed up negotiations. One observer of the UAW argues that the elected negotiators are used only as sounding boards of rank and file sentiment by top union officials and union staff and to give the appearance of democracy.³⁷ What is apparent is that when crucial decisions are made, the representatives of the rank and file union members are excluded.

A labor scholar says that when negotiations enter the critical phase, the committee members are excluded because "nobody wants them around, and I mean nobody, nobody on either side. You could never close the door and say 'This is important' and 'This isn't important.' Or 'We want this but we don't want this.' The elected guys would kick and raise hell. Why, if the committee knew what went on in these sessions, they'd be surprised as hell. They'd say, 'Who the hell gave you guys the right to drop anything?' If the committee was there, Oh, God, they'd die."³⁸

III. Non-offers and Private Negotiations--The Public Rhetoric

The rhetoric addressed to the Public in 1970 both before and during the strike generally is addressed to a small, select group of people--journalists. This results in a two-step process of communication. Statements are addressed to journalists, who function as intermediaries between UAW rhetors and the public. Journalists provided the public with their descriptions of the UAW positions during the strike and with descriptions of the participants--i.e. Leonard Woodcock and "typical" auto workers. UAW officials did not write articles for national magazines which presented the UAW positions

³⁷Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 212.

³⁸Serrin, Company and the Union, p. 213-214.

to the public, as Walter Reuther did with his articles in The Nation and the New Republic during the 1945-1946 strike. To analyze the public rhetoric of the UAW during the 1970 strike, one must turn to transcripts of press conferences and of one broadcast of "Meet The Press," a television program on which Leonard Woodcock was questioned by journalists.³⁹ No speeches and pamphlets were found for analysis.⁴⁰ However, if a scenario does exist from which UAW rhetors draw their imagery, a critic should be able to discern it in the available discourse. I shall argue that such a matrix of roles and relationships does exist in the public UAW rhetoric. The following is the scenario which I have recreated from the discourse.

Because the "monstrous monopoly" GM dominates the automobile industry, it also dominates negotiations of all auto manufacturers with the UAW.⁴¹ GM presented the UAW with an offer that actually is

³⁹See for examples of the journalists' perspective of the strike "Issues of Strike at G.M." New York Times, 16 September 1970, p. 26; William Serrin "The Unknown Who Leads 'The Walter P. Reuther Memorial Strike,'" The New York Times Magazine, 27 September 1970, p. 28-29, 104-109 and "GM's Strike Is Not Just a GE Rerun," Business Week, 24 October 1970, p. 31.

⁴⁰The Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, which holds the official library of the UAW, does not allow public inspection of internal union papers until twenty years after the fact. It is possible that a copy of a speech or pamphlet is in a closed file.

⁴¹Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference at Veterans Memorial Bldg., 2 September 1970, p. 1 and Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference Announcing General Motors as Strike Target for 1970, 13 September 1970, p. 1.

a "fraud" or a "non offer,"⁴² while the UAW presented concrete proposals. These proposals include the re-establishment of the cost of living allowance, early retirement for workers who had worked for GM for thirty or more years, known as "Thirty and Out," and improvement in the financing of the SUB program.⁴³ The UAW was willing to strike to make these gains, even if it took an "old fashioned strike" without the union paying strike benefits to strikers;⁴⁴ however, a strike was not inevitable if GM was willing to negotiate.⁴⁵ The negotiations were private, with no public discussion of proposals made by either party.⁴⁶ Because of GM's unwillingness to negotiate and despite its legal and moral obligation to do so, a strike became inevitable.⁴⁷

Union members were "disciplined" and expected to sacrifice during

⁴²Meet The Press, Moderator Bill Monroe, Prod. Lawrence E. Spivak, 6 September 1970, p. 3.

⁴³Meet The Press, p. 7-8; Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, 13 September 1970, p. 1 and 3.

⁴⁴Meet The Press, p. 8 and Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, 2 September 1970, p. 2.

⁴⁵Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, 2 September 1970, p. 9.

⁴⁶Meet The Press, pp. 3-5 and 9.

⁴⁷Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, 13 September 1970, p. 1-2.

this strike,⁴⁸ because the strike was a battle to gain principles.⁴⁹ Throughout the strike, union leaders were realistic about the problems which they faced, such as the strike fund running out of money.⁵⁰

The final settlement which ended the strike was "substantial progress" for the union.⁵¹ The union was a better union for going through this strike. There was "no animosity in the hearts of this leadership against the General Motors Corporation" at the end of the strike.⁵²

Like the rhetoric of the 1945-1946 strike, the public discourse emphasizes the characterizations of GM and of the UAW rather than the issues involved, but there is an important difference. In 1945, the UAW asked the public to make a forensic decision based on past conduct rather than make a deliberative decision based on the expediency of future conduct, because GM refused to support its arguments against the UAW proposal with economic facts. The UAW rhetors tried to increase the public's awareness of the issues of the strike by making statements in newspapers and magazines. In 1970, however, the public's judgment must be based on past conduct because negotiations are

⁴⁸Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference , 13 September 1970, p. 4 and Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, UAW Special Convention, Cobo Hall, Detroit Michigan, 24 October 1970, p. 1.

⁴⁹Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference after GM Council Approval of Settlement, 12 November 1970, p. 9.

⁵⁰Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, 24 October 1970, p. 4.

⁵¹Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, 12 November 1970, p. 1.

⁵²Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, 12 November 1970, p. 9.

private and, more importantly, because both parties want private negotiations. "We do not want to bargain in the press and we are not going to make these negotiations public, so that there can be a free interchange."⁵³ When Woodcock was asked what the UAW's position was during negotiations, his response was--"My job and the job of my associates is to bargain with the General Motors Corporation and the Chrysler Corporation and the Ford Motor Company and not with this very estimable panel. You can't settle our problems."⁵⁴ Neither GM nor the UAW wanted public involvement in the negotiations.

The language used for the resolution of an institutionalized conflict is the language of bargaining, as described by Murray Edelman.

The bargainer . . . offers a deal, not an appeal. A public reaction is to be avoided, not sought. A decision is to be made through an exchange of quid pro quos, not through a rational structuring of premises so as to maximize, or sacrifice sic values. It is a prerequisite to bargaining that values be incompatible, not shared.⁵⁵

The privacy of negotiations promotes the free interchange of proposals which Woodcock wished to preserve and restricts the bargaining to those parties with bargaining power. If for some reason the collective bar-

⁵³ Meet The Press, p. 9.

⁵⁴ Meet The Press, p. 11.

⁵⁵ Robert A. Dahl and Charles E. Lindblom, Politics, Economics and Welfare (New York, 1953, Chaps. 10 and 11) cited in Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (1964; rpt. Urbana, Ill." University of Illinois Press, 1976) p. 146.

gaining process breaks down, as it did in 1945 when GM refused to respond to the UAW's arguments, GM or UAW rhetors would use discourse to encourage public acceptance and support for their respective positions. For Edelman this requires the use of "horatory" language which is addressed to the general public. Rhetors would encourage public participation in the conflict. "The key meanings are popular participation and rationality. Regardless of the specific issue discussed, the employment of this language style is accepted as evidence that the public has an important stake and role in political discussions and that reason and the citing of relevant information is the road to discovering the nature of the stake."⁵⁶ As the conflict becomes more institutionalized and, consequently, less disruptive for the society, the language actually used to resolved the conflict is not addressed to a public audience, but is addressed to private bargainers.

The 1970 scenario is much less memorable and dramatic than the 1945-1946 scenario. The lines of conflict between GM and the UAW are not as neatly drawn as they were in 1945. Gone are the battles for the American consumer and for all organized labor. In 1970, GM refused to negotiate by presenting "non offers," which did not contain the programs which the UAW wanted in the new contract, while in 1945 GM essentially withdrew from negotiations. The 1970 strike is a private dispute in which the public is not really involved and to which it is not welcome.

⁵⁶ Edelman, Symbolic Uses of Politics, p. 135.

The changes in the characterization of the UAW are interesting. For the first time the rhetoric distinguishes between the feelings of the leadership and of the rank and file towards GM. For example, according to Leonard Woodcock, GM workers have more reason to dislike their employer than do Ford or Chrysler workers.

I suppose the reason really was that the GM delegates would like to 'have at them'--they don't like the General Motors Corp. and they have good reason not to like the GM Corp.--and that dislike can very readily be translated into a long and bitter struggle . . .⁵⁷

Woodcock: Well, I think it's a fair thing to say that GM workers dislike their employer far more than Chrysler workers dislike their employer or Ford workers dislike their employer.

Question: Why is that?

Woodcock: Because they're so goddam arrogant--that's why.⁵⁸

In contrast, Woodcock characterizes the UAW leadership as not feeling animosity towards GM.

There is no animosity in the hearts of this leadership against the General Motors Corporation. There is certainly no animosity in us personally against any of the executives of the General Motors Corporation. I have a high regard for them but there are times when the policies that are followed we have to fight and we have to resist.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, 2 September 1970, p. 4.

⁵⁸ Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, 2 September 1970, p. 6.

⁵⁹ Leonard Woodcock, Press Conference, 12 November 1970, p. 9.

The changes between the 1945-1946 and 1970 scenario indicate that the conflict between the UAW and GM has become institutionalized. This institutionalization withdraws the conflict from the public view, so that the two parties may resolve it between themselves. The conflict is limited because both parties recognize that for their own survival, they must rise above their differences and find a common ground for periodic resolution of those differences. They must consider objectively what they will win or lose during a strike.

As the strike has become "institutionalized" in recent decades, most of the violence and much of the excitement have disappeared. The strike is no longer an improvident emotional outburst nor a pitched battle between opposing armies intent on gaining unconditional surrender but rather a cold-blooded and hardheaded bargaining maneuver conducted by professional negotiators.⁶⁰

IV. The Leaders and the Followers--The Intra-Union Rhetoric

The distinction made between union leaders and rank and file union members in the UAW rhetoric directed towards the public becomes more pronounced in intra-union discourse, which is directed toward two different audiences, union leaders and rank and file members. The rhetoric directed toward union leaders is found around moments in which decisions for the entire UAW are made--the special convention on October 24 when delegates voted to raise dues to fund the strike and after temporary ratification of the new contract by the GM Council. Leonard Woodcock makes both of these speeches to the middle and upper

⁶⁰Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin and Arthur M. Ross eds., Industrial Conflict (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954) p. 12.

levels of UAW leadership. These people administer the contract, organize union activities and run the union at its various organizational levels. In contrast, the rhetoric directed to the rank and file union members is found in UAW Solidarity, the official magazine of the UAW. All dues-paying members of the UAW receive a copy of the magazine, whether or not they are active in the union.⁶¹ The rhetoric directed towards union leaders contains a scenario which is slightly different from the scenario found in the rhetoric directed towards the rank and file. I shall describe the scenarios and follow with an analysis which compares the roles and relationships of union leaders and of rank and file members depicted in each.

In the scenario found in rhetoric addressed to rank and file union members, the giant GM gives the UAW no choice but to call a strike in 1970, because the union and GM are "far apart on economic matters" in negotiations.⁶² The UAW leadership tried to avoid the strike, but the inadequacy of GM's economic offer prevented this.⁶³ Before and during the strike GM tried to weaken a possible agreement by

⁶¹Stieber, Governing the UAW, p. 119.

⁶²"Entire UAW Rises in Support of GM Strikers," UAW Solidarity October 1970, p. 3.

⁶³"Analysis of GM's Latest Economic Offer," UAW Solidarity, October 1970, p. 4.

negotiating for a system of "take-aways"⁶⁴ which would "raid" benefits from workers⁶⁵ and force the workers to pay for the cost of some benefits, such as insurance premiums, which GM previously paid.⁶⁶

The UAW leadership participated in intense negotiations almost every day throughout the strike,⁶⁷ trying to resolve the differences in a minimum amount of time.⁶⁸ This work of the leadership, combined with the "solidarity and dedication of GM workers and their families, their willingness to endure the hardship and sacrifice to gain an honorable settlement," enabled the UAW to make "solid and substantial progress at the bargaining table."⁶⁹ Rank and file members were determined to win equity and justice in the new contract⁷⁰ and knew they they might fight to achieve these goals.⁷¹ Rank and file

⁶⁴"GM Seeks to Take Away Worker Gains," UAW Solidarity, October 1970, p. 4 and "Pace Quickens in UAW-GM Bargaining," UAW Solidarity, November 1970, p. 5.

⁶⁵"Pace Quickens," Solidarity, p. 5.

⁶⁶"Pace Quickens," Solidarity, p. 5.

⁶⁷"UAW Support of GM Strikers," UAW Solidarity, October 1970, p. 3 and "Pace Quickens," Solidarity, p. 5.

⁶⁸"UAW Rises in Support of GM Strikers," Solidarity, p. 3.

⁶⁹Howard Lipton, "GM Strikers Blaze Victory Trail," UAW Solidarity, December 1970, p. 2.

⁷⁰"UAW Support of GM Strikers," Solidarity, p. 3; Bobbie Barbee and Karl Mantyla, "Thoughts on the Picket Lines," UAW Solidarity, October 1970, p. 8, and "Delegates Speak Out on Dues," UAW Solidarity, December 1970 p. 7.

⁷¹Barbee and Mantyla, "Thought on Picket Lines," Solidarity, p. 8.

members also participated in a mass education program, because they had an obligation to know the issues in this strike.⁷²

In the scenario found in the rhetoric addressed to the union leadership, the 1970 strike was part of a continuous fight for which Walter Reuther laid the foundation,⁷³ in which the union fights for its members and for the defenseless.⁷⁴ The union was fighting so that "we will have protection and security for years into the future."⁷⁵ Striking members were "soldiers in battle"⁷⁶ who were fighting the "monster" GM, who acted "almost as a sovereign government"⁷⁷ and who had completely abandoned any social responsibility.⁷⁸ The UAW was striking so that there will be "sanity and reason in the setting of wages so that we do not have ever-rising and escalating costs. . ."⁷⁹ and to win principles.⁸⁰ All union members were sacrificing and

⁷²Bobbie Barbee, "We're Made Aware of Union Spirit," UAW Solidarity, November 1970, p. 2.

⁷³Leonard Woodcock, Speech to UAW Special Convention at Cobo Hall in Detroit, Michigan, 24 October 1970, in Leonard Woodcock presidential speech series in process, p. 1.

⁷⁴Leonard Woodcock, speech before GM Council in Veterans Memorial Bldg. 12 November 1970, in Leonard Woodcock presidential speech series in process, p. 6.

⁷⁵Woodcock, Speech to Special Convention, p. 11-12.

⁷⁶Woodcock, Speech to GM Council, p. 1.

⁷⁷Woodcock, Speech to Special Convention, p. 1 and 5.

⁷⁸Woodcock, Speech to Special Convention, p. 11

⁷⁹Woodcock, Speech to Special Convention, p. 1.

⁸⁰Woodcock, Speech to Special Convention, p. 11 and Woodcock, Speech to GM Council, p. 1.

giving their "solid support" to this strike.⁸¹

The final settlement which GM and UAW reached, which ended this strike, was a victory of principles⁸² and a "solid achievement for this union;"⁸³ however, the union was not satisfied with the agreement, but will accept it because of the gains it did contain.⁸⁴

The appearance of the separate roles of union leader and of rank and file union member, in contrast to the earlier role of union member, indicates that there is a difference in the importance of these roles to the union. Union leaders are decision-makers, while rank and file members are followers. Insofar as the union is an agent, the leaders constitute the union because they are actors. This becomes apparent in the depiction of negotiations in the rank and file scenario. Negotiations "intensify," "stall," "step-up" and "quicken," while the union negotiators make "full-scale good-faith efforts to avoid a strike," "propose," "offer" and "demand."⁸⁵ Local union leaders vote to raise dues temporarily to cover the costs of the strike so

⁸¹Woodcock, Speech to GM Council, p. 2, 3 and 8.

⁸²Woodcock, Speech to GM, p. 4-5.

⁸³Woodcock, Speech to GM Council, p. 7.

⁸⁴Woodcock, Speech to GM Council, p. 1 and 9.

⁸⁵"UAW Support of GM Strikers," Solidarity, p. 3; "Pace Quickens," Solidarity, p. 5 and "It Is Regrettable that a Strike Had To Be Called," UAW Solidarity, October 1970, p. 7.

the union will not go bankrupt.⁸⁶ Without the negotiators protecting the interests of the rank and file members, GM would succeed in "raid[ing] present benefits and weaken[ing] the working agreement."⁸⁷ In contrast, rank and file members support the union leaders' decisions with their determination, strong spirit, sense of sacrifice and dedication, so that the UAW may win the strike.⁸⁸ The contrast between the two roles was made very explicit once the strike was over and rhetors assessed the strike's gains.

Solid and substantial progress at the bargaining table doesn't just happen. It's the result of long hours, weeks and months of technical study and preparation, of countless bargaining table sessions.

Breathing vigor into all this, giving it heightened meaning and significance was the solidarity and dedication of GM workers and their families, their willingness to endure the hardship and sacrifice of a long strike to gain an honorable settlement.⁸⁹

The solidarity of rank and file members is crucial for creating the collective power of the union, but union leaders at the bargaining table wield that power, not the rank and file members.

⁸⁶"Delegates Speak Out on Dues," Solidarity, p. 7.

⁸⁷"Pace Quickens," Solidarity, p. 5. See also "It Is Regrettable," Solidarity, p. 7.

⁸⁸Howard Lipton, "Retiree Rings Doorbells to Boost Union Cause," UAW Solidarity, September 1970, p. 11; "Entire UAW Supports Strikers," Solidarity, p.3 and Howard Lipton, "Billy Bond's Family Shares His Strike," UAW Solidarity, November 1970, p. 7.

⁸⁹Howard Lipton, "Strikers Blaze Victory Trail," UAW Solidarity, December 1970, p. 2.

The role of a rank and file member requires that a worker acquiesce to the decisions of the union, for this role is limited to determination, solidarity, possessing a strong spirit and sacrifice. It is interesting to note that models for the behavior of members are made explicit in the rhetoric directed to rank and file union members. There is Billy Bond who is modest, who possesses quite determination, who recognizes the need for sacrifice and who realizes that you must work to gain what you want.⁹⁰ Retired UAW worker Ed Partaka continued to work for the union with dedication, spirit and sincerity. Union rhetors used Ed to remind young union members that there was a time when the UAW did not exist, when "workers were constantly beset by frightening insecurity engendered by their bosses." The union was what enabled these workers to "feel like men again."⁹¹ James and Ed Power are members of a model union family where father, son and grandparents all were or are members of the UAW.

Ed notes: "We've always had a strong union family. I remember my father and grandma sitting around the kitchen table when I was eight or ten years old, discussing the sitdown strike. The biggest idea I got out of the discussions was the determination: anything worthwhile is worth fighting for."⁹²

The norm of sacrifice is important to the role of rank and file member. The strike requires sacrifice for economic security. "You know you're sacrificing when you have to cut back from take-home pay

⁹⁰Lipton, "Billy Bond's Family," Solidarity, p. 7.

⁹¹Lipton, "Retiree," Solidarity, p. 11.

⁹²Barbee and Mantyla, "Thoughts," Solidarity, p. 8.

of about \$120 a week to strike benefits of \$40 a week,' he [Billy Bond] said. 'But I'm willing to give up things rather than have the same kind of contract we had before. Or take what the company has offered so far.'"⁹³

In rhetoric directed towards union leaders, the scenario depicts the union leaders as actors and the rank and file members as passive followers. Union leaders made decisions which rank and file members follow.

But at all times during a strike there have to be continuing decisions made in which one must weigh the additional gains that might be possible against the sacrifices that are required of the soldiers in the battle who are carrying on the strike.

We have constantly to ask ourselves: can sufficient progress be made in vital areas and can the battle of principle be won.⁹⁴

Local union leaders make decisions about local problems and negotiate in local collective bargaining sessions.⁹⁵ The strikers, the soldiers in this battle, must sacrifice their wages during the strike. Union leaders, however, also make some sacrifices, such as reducing their salaries from the union or eliminating them altogether for the duration of the strike.⁹⁶ This attempt by leaders to make a sacrifice equiva-

⁹³Lipton, "Billy Bond's Family," Solidarity, p. 7.

⁹⁴Woodcock, Speech to GM Council, p. 1

⁹⁵Woodcock, Speech to Special Convention, p. 5.

⁹⁶Woodcock, Speech to Special Convention, p. 12.

lent to that made by workers attempts to lessen the growing inequality between leaders and members.

This comparison of the roles of union leaders and of rank and file members indicates that the leaders are the union. When the leaders act, the UAW acts; however, when the rank and file acts, it only supports the leaders' actions. There is no joint participation in decision-making between leaders and rank and file members in this scenario. This concentration of decision-making power in the leadership is a sign of the increasing institutionalization of the strike and the concomitant bureaucratization of the union which Michels identified. The leadership assumes a sense of superiority over the rank and file members--the union leaders fight and make decisions for their members and for the defenseless.

Bureaucratic decision-making . . . may, and occasionally does, involve disregard for the constitutional rights of formal democracy but more often it involves a "non-responsible leadership" that assumes a considerable degree of omniscience as to what is best and attainable for the members, that restricts access of its opponents to the members, and that perpetuates a particular system of superordination and subordination through the development of a relatively closed status system.⁹⁷

Limitations which were implied in the role of the union member in the 1945-1946 strike rhetoric have become explicit in rhetoric of the 1970 strike in the role of rank and file union member. In the earlier

⁹⁷John R. Coleman, "The Compulsive Pressure of Democracy in Unionism," from The American Journal of Sociology, 61(May 1956)6, p. 5-19, reprinted in Walter Galenson and Seymour Martin Lipset, Labor and Trade Unionism: An Interdisciplinary Reader (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1960) p. 207-208.

strike, union members were fighting and battling GM. Although the role of union member included sacrifice, loyalty and courage, decision-making was never excluded from that role, as it is from the role of rank and file union member in 1970. In their role, rank and file union members become passive followers of the union leaders.

The UAW is known as one of the most democratic unions in the U.S. Many of the UAW's demands in the 1970 strike were considered by union leaders only because of rank and file pressure on them.⁹⁸ However, democracy in a union is limited, because collective action requires the discipline of following the commands of the group, as the group is represented by the group's leaders. The leader's opinions and decisions are more important than those of individual members, because the leaders represent the interests of the entire organization while individual members represent their individual interests. Although the role of rank and file union member is not as restrictive as the role of the wage slave in the rhetoric of the 1936-1937 strike, the former role severely limits the acceptable opportunities for participation in the union for the average member.

Differences between the roles of the union leader and of the rank and file member are even more pronounced when one compares the relationship between the UAW and GM and the justifications for the strike depicted in each scenario. The scenario addressed to the rank and file focuses on the immediate relationship between the UAW and GM,

⁹⁸Laurence G. O'Donnell, "The GM Strike--What Happened," Wall Street Journal, 20 November 1970, Verticle File: UAW-GM Dept., Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

in which GM tries to "take-away" what the union won for the workers in the past. GM proposals "drastically curtail," "weaken," "water down," "straightjacket," and "reduce" the benefits and protections won by the union over the years,⁹⁹ while the UAW is trying to negotiate with GM for an equitable contract.¹⁰⁰ However, this concern with equity seldom includes a concern for future equity. I found only two references to the future--" in this strike, we're laying the groundwork for the future"¹⁰¹ and "what we lose today, our sons will pick up tomorrow."¹⁰² Rank and file members, one could assume from the discourse, are concerned only with the immediate economic situation and not with long-range goals.

In contrast, for union leaders the strike is part of one long continuous fight. The union fights for the defenseless who "have no one else to fight for them except as this union fights for them."¹⁰³ One wonders if union leaders consider rank and file members defenseless without their leaders. The union also fights for principles which will govern its relationship with GM, ". . . the UAW entered this battle

⁹⁹Lipton, "Entire UAW Support GM Strikers," Solidarity, p. 3; "GM Seeks to Take Away Worker Gains," Solidarity, p. 4 and "Pace Quickens," Solidarity, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰For example see "GM Seeks to Take Away Worker Gains," Solidarity, p. 4.

¹⁰¹"Dues Raised Temporarily: To Win Contract Goals," UAW Solidarity, December 1970, p. 7.

¹⁰²Barbee and Mantyla, "Thoughts," Solidarity, p. 8.

¹⁰³Woodcock, Speech to GM Council, p. 6.

over principles and we could continue this battle no matter what it cost to win those principles."¹⁰⁴

Much of the language in the discourse directed towards the union leaders appears similar to the 1945-1946 intra-union rhetoric; however, there are subtle but rhetorically important differences. When language is considered symbolic action, the statement that the GM Corporation "is a sovereign state within the nation"¹⁰⁵ is an analogy which gives a critic an important clue to how UAW members perceive the world and, thus, provides an important explanation of the actions of UAW members. In 1945-1946, UAW members perceived GM as a sovereign state. However, in 1970 one discovered qualifiers in this statement--GM acts "almost as a sovereign government," which implies that GM no longer is the UAW's and American's mortal enemy. Similarly, in the rhetoric of the 1936-1937 and the 1945-1946 strikes, the UAW "battles" GM, but in 1970 it "fights" the corporation more often than it battles the corporation.¹⁰⁶ The appearance of these subtle qualifications in 1970 indicates that the UAW leadership does not want to polarize the union and the corporation during a strike, as it did in 1936-1937 and 1945-1946. Polarization would heighten their differences and result in more extensive conflict.

Obviously, the conflict between the UAW and GM is much less

¹⁰⁴Woodcock, Speech to GM Council, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵Woodcock, Speech to Special Convention, p. 1 and New York Times, 25 November 1945, p. 36.

¹⁰⁶Woodcock, Speech to GM Council, p. 1 and Woodcock, Speech to Special Convention, p. 1, 5, 10, 11 and 12.

intense than it was in 1945. There are no fights for union survival in 1970. The UAW rhetors still identify GM as an enemy, but as a less threatening one. While rhetors still utilize the concept that identification of an enemy promotes internal unity,¹⁰⁷ the image of GM "taking-away" some benefits inspires less unity and, indirectly, less commitment to the UAW, than does the image of GM battling to destroy the UAW. The muted imagery of the 1970 strike is a sign of the way in which conflict has been institutionalized in the relationship between the UAW and GM. Each behaves as a "loyal opponent" that is committed to the collective bargaining system which periodically resolves their conflict. The relationship has become predictable and less threatening. To call GM a sovereign state and to argue that it is trying to destroy the union would create unity within the UAW, but it also would affect the UAW-GM relationship after the strike, when both parties try to administer the contract to which they agreed. There would be hostility among union members toward GM, which could result in harassment of foreman or even wildcat strikes, for example. The hostility of the union members injects unpredictability into GM's relationship with its workers, which GM would prefer to avoid and so that it can produce cars without interruption.

Battle imagery is absent from the rhetoric directed to rank and file members; yet rhetoric directed to union leaders does contain references to battles and to GM acting "almost" like a sovereign state.

¹⁰⁷Lewis Coser, The Functions of Social Conflict (New York: Free Press, 1956) p. 140.

The battle, however, is no longer for union survival; it is a battle of principle--to provide for the future welfare of UAW members and their families and to fight for the defenseless. The battle is more generalized and may include others in the opposition, such as politicians or government. There also is no immediate threat to the union. This strike is just one in a succession of battles.

The differences between the roles of rank and file members and of union leaders becomes even more pronounced when one compares the respective scenarios found in the discourse as explanations of reality, as "myths of concern" crucial for the development of the self. The rank and file's "myth of concern" focused on immediate experience. Reality is the status of negotiations with GM, the benefits which GM proposed to take away and the demands of the union. The rhetoric describes the characteristics of a good union member in this situation--loyalty, solidarity, quiet determination and sacrifice. There are few references to the union's long-term goals, for members are concerned with the quality of this contract. In contrast, union members in 1945 wanted a future of full employment, full production and full consumption. The emphasis in 1970 on the immediate situation is further substantiated by the tone of journalistic detachment in the rhetoric. The discourse consists of reports on the status of negotiations¹⁰⁸ and interviews with union members.¹⁰⁹ This "myth of concern" does not provide a

¹⁰⁸For example, see "Pace Quickens," Solidarity, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹Lipton, "Billy Bond's Family," Solidarity, p. 7.

context for the role of rank and file union member outside of the strike. Once the strike is over, there is no reason to sacrifice and to have quiet determination.

The union leaders' "myth of concern." however, provides a broader context for the role of union leader. Union leaders are concerned with the future welfare of UAW members. This strike is just one of many battles in a war to protect the union members. The principles won in this strike will affect the future UAW-GM relationship. Union leaders also affect the future in their decision-making. The role of union leader continues after the strike is over, because there is a reason for its continuation, the future welfare of the union members.

The rhetoric of the 1970 strike encourages commitment among union leaders, but inadequately encourages commitment among rank and file union members. The rank and file's "myth of concern" is so limited that it is difficult to utilize it outside of a strike situation, so that any commitment which is encouraged is limited in a similar manner. Yet, what UAW rhetors exclude from the role of rank and file union member is exactly what needs to be included in it to promote commitment to the union and an understanding of and participation in the union's programs and decision-making. This is excluded from the role of union member, because of the potential threat to the leaders. Consequently, union leaders depend upon union security clauses and other control devices to maintain union membership.¹¹⁰ In short, to encourage participation successfully and, therefore to develop commit-

¹¹⁰Joel Seidman, "The Labor Union as an Organization," in Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin and Arthur M. Ross eds., Industrial Conflict (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954) p. 112.

ment, union rhetors should include elements of the union leader's "myth of concern" in discourse addressed to the rank and file.

V. Summary

The Rhetoric of the 1970 strike gives indications that an institutionalized relationship between GM and the UAW exists. The negotiations are private, because both parties want to negotiate without interference from the public, which prevents the public from knowing exactly what proposals GM or the UAW present. This lack of knowledge in the 1970 strike makes the rhetoric addressed to the public very similar to that of the 1945-1946 strike, in which the public was limited to making a forensic decision about the strike. Thus, the 1970 public rhetoric consists of characterizations of GM and the UAW, very general proposals and descriptions of action before and during the strike.

The intra-union rhetoric has changed since 1945-1946, reflecting the bureaucratic and oligarchic tendencies in the union organization. The union audience has been divided into leaders and rank and file members. The role of the leader involves actively engaging in decision making, while the average member only follows and supports those decisions. As noted earlier, roles must exist in a relationship, which, in turn, exists in a context, a "myth of concern." The distinction between the roles of union leaders and of rank and file members widens, as one analyzes the roles in terms of the relationship to GM and in the context of the "myth of concern." In the union leader's "myth of concern" the strike against GM is part of an ongoing battle for the

future welfare of UAW members. This battle, however, is generalized so that GM does not necessarily have to be the UAW's only enemy. Because the "myth of concern" places the immediate conflict in the context of an ongoing battle, the role of union leader provides a guide for behavior outside of the strike situation. Thus, the leader's role and the "myth of concern" continuously encourage commitment to the union.

In contrast, the role of rank and file members and their "myth of concern" is limited to a strike situation and provides little guidance for behavior apart from that context. The "myth of concern" developed for the rank and file does not explain social or political reality, as does the "myth of concern" of the union leaders; thus, the rank and file's "myth of concern" cannot be used for explanations of industrial or economic reality. Because the union has no relevance for the rank and file union member apart from a strike in the "myth of concern," the role of rank and file member and the "myth of concern" only encourages commitment to the union during a strike.

Chapter Seven

THE ROLE OF RHETORIC IN THE PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION

I. Conflict and Institutionalization

In the study of movements rhetorical critics recognize that social debate and conflict over issues are important social processes; however, they do not acknowledge the existence of a second, complementary social process--institutionalization--and the role of rhetoric in that process. In this thesis I have attempted to analyze and criticize the role of rhetoric in the process of institutionalization. It is now appropriate to pause and evaluate this analysis, and, specifically, to draw conclusions about the role of rhetoric in this process.

Social conflict changes the social order, while institutionalization solidifies the changes made by conflict.¹ A movement attempts to change the social order by engaging representatives of that order in a "dialectical conflict in the moral arena."² For the movement to have an enduring impact on society, it must make those changes permanent, by creating a new social order. In some instances, however, the new social order may not adequately protect the interests of the movement's members, because the conflict between the movement and the original

¹Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford Union Press, 1947) p. 364 and Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, Second edition (1949; rpt., New York: The Free Press, 1957) p. 140n.

²Robert Cathcart, "New Approaches to the Study of Movements: Defining Movements Rhetorically," Western Speech, 36(Spring 1972) p. 87.

social order never was entirely resolved. Because this conflict cannot be eliminated, a new social order is established which incorporates the unresolved conflict between the two parties. The conflict is institutionalized, limited and regulated by the parties involved. Political campaigns, law suits, and collective bargaining are examples of institutionalized conflict.

The institutionalization of conflict is a turning point for a movement, for its goal no longer is conflict and change, but one of protecting the interests of participants in the institutionalized conflict. To accomplish this, the movement must become a permanent organization; it must formalize the structure of the movement into a permanent organization and retain its members. Once a movement is a permanent organization, sociologists Max Weber and Robert Michels argue, it naturally becomes bureaucratic and oligarchic.³ Attempts by the members of the movement to circumvent bureaucratic and oligarchic tendencies may not succeed.⁴

As the movement becomes institutionalized, leaders of the organization and representatives of the opposition jointly limit conflict, because both parties recognize that they will not benefit from unlimited conflict, which could destroy or permanently damage either party. Yet,

³Weber, Social and Economic Organizations, p. 364-369 and Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Free Press, 1962) p. 70.

⁴Jo Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and its Relation to the Policy Process (New York: David McKay Co., 1975) p. 119-146.

the suppression of all conflict is unworkable, especially by leaders of the movement's organization, since rank and file members want to express their dissatisfaction with the policies of the opposition. Because the movement's leaders are dependent on the rank and file's support to retain their leadership positions, the leaders must articulate some of this dissatisfaction and acknowledge the potential for conflict.

To maintain the organization and their positions of leadership, leaders try to encourage feelings of loyalty and commitment to the organization among the rank and file members. The process of institutionalization places the rank and file members in a position subservient to the leadership, because the leaders are the experts in dealing with the opposition.⁵ If the membership does feel that a fundamental conflict exists between the opposition and the organization, attempts by the leaders to limit conflict may appear to betray the organization. Some members may believe that the leaders have become a part of the opposition. Because the rank and file have lost decision-making power in the organization, it is difficult for them to regain control of the organization. The members may either withdraw their support of the leadership or withdraw from the organization to create a new organization to engage in conflict with the established order. The possibility of conflict is present throughout the process of

⁵Michels, Political Parties, p. 70.

institutionalization.

To the public, it appears that the conflict between the two parties is disappearing as the relationship between the two parties is institutionalized. The former enemies appear to be partners who desire public support for their decisions. What actually has happened is that the process of resolving the institutionalized conflict has been withdrawn from public view. Only when attempts to resolve the conflict privately do not succeed, do the two parties appeal to the public for support.⁶

II. The Role of Rhetoric in the Process of Institutionalization

Rhetoric is important for the success of conflict and of institutionalization. The rhetoric of a movement attempts to persuade potential members to become actual members, by presenting an explanation of reality in a "sensible" manner. The rhetoric of the movement provides potential members with roles possessing admirable virtues lacking in their existing roles.⁷ A role, however, cannot exist in isolation; it must exist in a relationship with other roles and in a context.⁸ A potential member joins a movement because the role of member is appealing and because the movement's explanation of reality "makes sense."

⁶Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (1964; rpt. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1976) p. 55.

⁷Richard B. Gregg, "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 4(Spring 1971)2 p. 73-84.

⁸George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society, Vol. I of Works of George Herbert Mead, Charles W. Morris Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) p. 169, 175 and 270.

The rhetors of a movement dramatically enact their explanation of reality in the discourse of a movement. This dramatic enactment of reality is the movement's "myth of concern," all of the stories, beliefs, characterizations of the opposition, roles for movement members and rules of conduct which together explain reality.⁹ The non-discursive nature of the "myth of concern" enables members to reconfirm their belief in the ideology and commitment to the movement or organization. The poetic, aesthetic and ritualistic elements of non-discursive rhetoric enable members to experience the image or act depicted in the discourse. This experience reconfirms the belief, rule of conduct or role. A member of a movement identifies with the character of a model member who sacrifices for the organization and follows the leadership's decisions. The actual member may see herself or himself as a model member or may try to emulate the model member depicted in the discourse.¹⁰ If rhetors of the organization included virtues such as sacrifice and loyalty in the role of member, the rhetoric could encourage actual members to practice those virtues.

⁹Northrup Frye, The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism, Midland Book edn. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1971) p. 36.

¹⁰S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (1911, rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1951) p. 257-261. For an excellent example of discourse performing this function see Eliezer Ben Yisreal, "A Letter to the World From Jerusalem," Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1972) p. 188-191.

A critic may analyze both the ideology and the "myth of concern" of a movement. When a critic studies the rhetoric of a movement as it becomes institutionalized, the "myth of concern" will reflect the bureaucratic and oligarchic tendencies which accompany that process. The discourse addressed to the public should de-emphasize the conflict between the two parties. Discourse addressed to members of the organization would emphasize the importance of loyalty and commitment to the organization as members lose decision-making power.

III. The Rhetoric of the UAW During GM Strikes

The relationship between the UAW and GM exemplifies the social processes of conflict and institutionalization. The UAW was part of the industrial union movement of the 1930s which was in conflict with the industrial social order.¹¹ During the 1930s, confrontations between management and unions during strikes and lockouts became increasingly violent. Union proposals threatened the traditional rights to property ownership of management. The process of collective bargaining was the means used to institutionalize industrial conflict and to stabilize industrial relations. In this process conflict is confined to the bargaining table. Management and the union are legally bound to a negotiated contract, until it expires. Although conflict is limited to the negotiating table in collective bargaining, both parties retain the right to resort to economic force, a strike or a lockout,

¹¹Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail, Vintage Books Edn. (New York: Random House, 1977) p. 96-180.

to compel the second party to accede to a proposal.¹² In short, within the institutionalized relationship either party has the right to engage the other party in a conflict which could become unlimited. In this institutionalized relationship, strikes and lockouts are points of tension between the desire of the leadership for permanency and stability and the desire of the rank and file to defeat the opposition. Any strike or lock-out may escalate into an unlimited conflict. One would expect union leaders to try to keep the conflict within the boundaries of the relationship, yet try to encourage loyalty and commitment to the organization among the rank and file members.

The rhetoric of the UAW during national strikes against GM reflect the process of institutionalization and provides an opportunity to study the role of rhetoric in different stages in this process. The first strike occurred in 1936, when conflict was unlimited and the institutionalized relationship between the two was not established. The second strike in 1945-1946 occurred within the institutionalized relationship, which the rhetoric of the strike reflects. The third strike in 1970 occurred twenty-five years later, when the process of institutionalization was almost complete.

The "myths of concern" in the rhetoric of each strike reflect the process of institutionalization. The rhetoric of the 1936-1937 strike was addressed to potential members. It depicted an unlimited

¹²Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin and Arthur M. Ross eds. Industrial Conflict (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954) p. 12.

conflict between the UAW and GM. Union members were characterized as proud, loyal, and willing to sacrifice and to follow their elected leaders.¹³ In the rhetoric of the 1945-1946 strike which was addressed to union members, the conflict was depicted as more limited than it was in the 1936-1937 strike.¹⁴ The union members were characterized as possessing solidarity. Their willingness to fight GM to the finish was evidence of their loyalty to the union and their willingness to sacrifice.¹⁵ In 1970, one finds a dramatic change in the UAW rhetoric addressed to union members. One discovers a distinction between union leaders and rank and file members and two separate "myths of concern," one directed toward the leadership and one toward the rank and file members. In both "myths of concern" the leaders were characterized as actors making decisions about negotiations with GM, while rank and file members were characterized as passive followers possessing quiet determination and sacrifice.¹⁶

¹³For example see "To Non-Union Men," Punch Press: Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, #5, p. 1. Van Kleeck Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 13, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs and "Give us 5 Minutes," Punch Press: Official Strike Bulletin of Local #156, unnumbered, p. 3 Van Kleeck Papers, Series II Subseries 31, Folder: 14, A-1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

¹⁴Walter P. Reuther, Letter to All GM Local Unions, 24 January 1946, George Lyons Local 174 Collection, Box 2, Folder: Misc. Strikes 1945-1946, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, "GM Yearns for Old Days of No Union, Open Shop," United Automobile Worker, December 1946, p. 3, "Letter to All UAW-CIO Local Unions," United Automobile Worker, December 1945, p. 1 and 8 and "Highlight of General Motors Strike: GM Forces Strike," United Automobile Worker, December 1945, p. 4-5.

¹⁵"Highlights," United Automobile Workers, p. 1 and 8.

¹⁶Howard Lipton, "Billy Bond's Family Shares His Strike," UAW Solidarity, November 1970, p. 7.

Another important difference between the two "myths of concern" in 1970 is their respective capacity to explain reality. The "myth of concern" of the union leaders provides a broad context for action, for this strike is just one in a series of battles for human dignity. In contrast, the rhetoric addressed to the rank and file provides a narrow context for action, since it focuses on the immediate situation--the status of negotiations, GM proposals and UAW demands.

The "myth of concerns" of each strike provide evidence that bureaucratic and oligarchic tendencies existed. There is evidence of rules of conduct such as loyalty, solidarity and sacrifice. The characterization of union leaders as active decision-makers and rank and file members as passive followers is vivid evidence of the iron law of oligarchy. These conclusions, however, only confirm historical evidence and sociological theory and indicate that rhetoric does reflect reality. This is not the significance of this analysis. Its significance is that bureaucratic and oligarchic tendencies can be detected in the rhetoric of the 1936-1937 strike, before the institutionalized relationship between the UAW and GM was established. The role of union member in the UAW "myth of concern" illustrates this. In 1936 the role of union member liberated the auto worker from the passive role of wage slave. The auto worker exchanged one explanation of reality (worker as wage slave) for another (worker as union member). In 1936 the role of union member contained rules of conduct which would limit future participation of union members in UAW decision-making, such as loyalty to the union, sacrificing to win the strike and allowing representatives to negotiate the contract. Although the

union member is not described as a follower, he or she is depicted as one. By 1970, the rhetoric of the UAW both describes and depicts the union members as passive followers and even provides explicit models for sacrifice and "quiet determination."

Through a criticism of the rhetoric of these three strikes I discovered that the words which liberated the auto workers in 1936 were also the words which constrained their participation in decision-making during the 1945-1946 and 1970 strikes. The role of union member actually changed very little between 1936 and 1970. Evidence of bureaucratic and oligarchic tendencies can be found in the rhetoric of the union movement before the onset of institutionalization. It appears that the rhetoric of institutionalization is implicit in the rhetoric of conflict.

The fact that the constraints found in institutionalization are implicit in the changes resulting from conflict has an important implication for the study of rhetorical movements. A movement may be part of a continuous cycle of conflict and institutionalization. An understanding of the rhetoric of institutionalization would be helpful in understanding why a conflict re-emerges. In turn, the rhetoric of a movement in conflict would be helpful in understanding the rhetoric of institutionalization.

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Appendix A

Appendix A

Characterizations Found in the Union "Myth of Concern"

The 1936-1937 Strike

<u>UAW</u>	<u>GM</u>
provides economic security	tyrannical
has the power to negotiate with GM	autocratic
democratic	dishonest
fighting for job security	uses violence and industrial espionage
responsible	abuses workers with speed-ups and low wages
a rank and file organization in which leaders respond to members	
fighting for workers	
<u>Auto Workers</u>	<u>Union Members</u>
Supporting the union, eventhough they are not members	tough, winners and actors.
not assured of a job	men, not wage slaves dependent on GM.
builders	proud of and loyal to the union
passive against the company	willing to fight for a decent American life
	smart, not pushovers
	above using GM's methods
	willing to sacrifice so that the union will win the strike
	willing to follow their elected leaders

The 1945-1946 Strike

Intra-union DiscourseUAW

fighting an anti-union conspiracy
 willing to negotiate
 willing to compromise
 winners
 willing to stick to its guns
 has only one weapon, the strike
 cares for the strikers
 fighting reactionary tendencies

Union Members

possessing solidarity
 tough, militant, determined,
 winners, united and
 responsible
 prepared to fight to the finish
 fighting an anti-union conspiracy
 sacrificing

GM

a sovereign state
 rebelling against the American
 government
 part of a group of conspirators
 arrogant

Public DiscourseUAW

using facts
 willing to negotiate
 responsible to the public
 American
 responsible to its members
 using the strike as a legitimate
 alternative to negotiation
 patient

Union Members

responsible
 American
 patient

GM

wanting industrial war
 challenging government policies
 lacking responsibility
 arrogant

GM continued

part of an anti-labor offensive

ruthless and reactionary

GM continued

Obstructing negotiations by refusing
to present economic facts

The 1970 Strike

Public DiscourseUAW

concerned with the needs of workers
 striking to win principles, not to
 teach GM a lesson

GM

a monstrous monopoly
 having a moral obligation to
 negotiate
 acts almost like a sovereign
 government
 dominates the auto industry
 is cruel and backward

Rank and File Members

do not like GM
 not anxious to strike
 expecting to sacrifice
 disciplined
 learning through economic struggle
 supporting the strike
 wanting economic security

Union Leaders

responsible
 having no animosity toward GM
 making hard decisions
 participating in long meetings
 realistic
 sacrificing
 participating in private
 negotiations

The 1970 Strike

Intra-union: Rank and FileUAW

having no choice but to strike
economists
insisting, asking and demanding
during negotiations

UAW Leaders

responsible for progress
pressing for better offers
participating in intense
negotiations
working long hours
tough and determined
looking toward the future
concerned for members
proud

Rank and File

possessing quiet determination
sacrificing
possessing solidarity
against GM "take-aways"
united, sincere and modest

Intra-union: LeadershipUAW

fighting
possessing solidarity
a brotherhood
reasonable
seeking a settlement with honor
battling over principles

UAW Leaders

sacrificing
made a mistake in 1967
negotiations
realistic
representing the workers
negotiating a sound and
honorable settlement

Rank and File

sacrificing
pressuring GM to negotiate by
striking
soldiers in battle

The 1970 Strike

Intra-union: Rank and FileGM

giant and mammoth

treating the workers with less
respect than before

wiping out protections for workers

watering down protections

taking-away benefits

Ignores the needs of members and
their familiesIntra-union: LeadershipGMraping the sub-employment
benefit fund

a demagogue, monster

dragging its feet

does "lousy" arithmetic

abandons social responsibility