



# WORKING PAPER

**2013 - 4**

## Stirring the Pot and Adding Some Spice: Workers Education at the University of California, 1921-1962

**Tobias Higbie**

University of California, Los Angeles

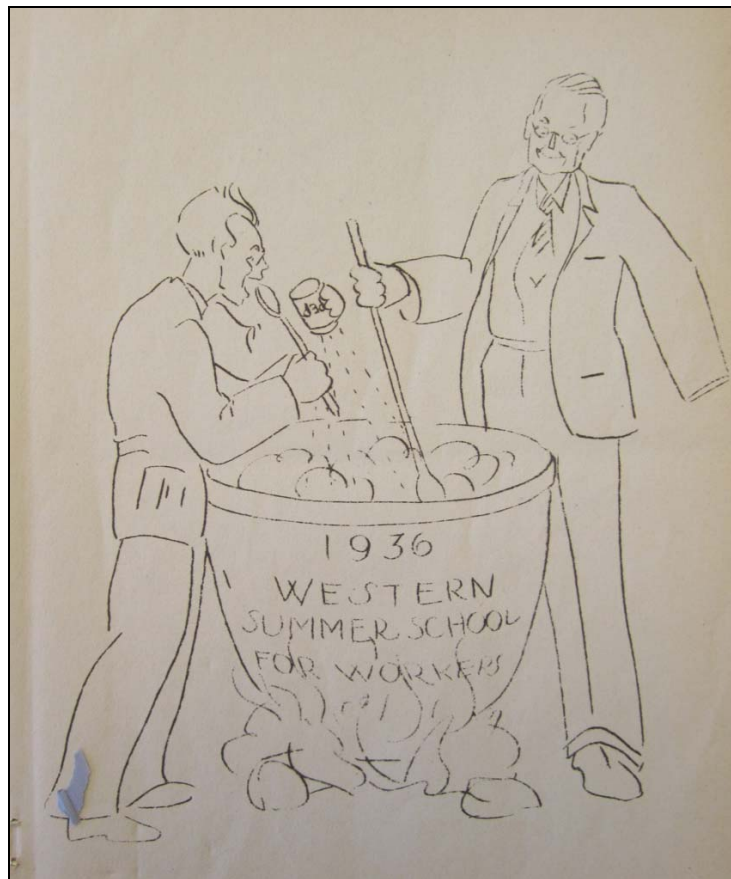
**June 2013**

The views expressed in this paper are not the views of The Regents of the University of California or any of its facilities, including UCLA, the UCLA College of Letters and Science, and the IRLE, and represent the views of the authors only. University affiliations of the authors are for identification purposes only, and should not be construed as University approval.



**Stirring the Pot and Adding Some Spice:  
Workers Education at the University of California, 1921-1962**

Tobias Higbie  
UCLA History Department  
Institute for Research on Labor & Employment  
higbie@history.ucla.edu



Stirring the pot and adding spice. From the *Student Worker*, yearbook of the 1936 Western Summer School for Workers. Papers of the University President, CU-5, Series 2, 1936, folder 140. University of California Archives, Bancroft Library.

At the end of World War II California created a new academic institution devoted to the study and influence of industrial relations. Along with similar initiatives in at least five other industrial states, the University of California's Institute of Industrial Relations (IIR) aimed to bring academic balance to the rancorous hand-to-hand combat typical of labor relations in the 1930s and 1940s. In the folklore of the university, this was uncharted territory upon which the visionary scholar Clark Kerr would make his name. The future Berkeley Chancellor and university president later recalled that the IIR was the brainchild of liberal Republican governor Earl Warren. Kerr told an interviewer that as he took over the IIR he tried in vain to learn whether the university "ever had any contact with the trade union movement at all," but could find only one person who had tried and given up the effort amidst Labor's factional split of the 1930s. "We came in as the very first effort of this big university to make contact with the trade unions," Kerr recalled. "It was Earl Warren's way of saying that the unions were recognized as an important part of California society."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, by 1945 the University of California had participated for more than 20 years in outreach to labor unions and working people. But these earlier programs differed from the IIR in their outlook toward unions and employers, and their status within the university. "Workers' education," as it was known in the years before World War II, was a wide-ranging movement that included trade unionists, political radicals, and middle class reformers. Taking place largely outside the mainstream university system, workers'

---

<sup>1</sup>Clark Kerr, "Fireside Chat," *Arbitration* 2000, p. 245. See also, Clark Kerr, "President Sproul's Last Six Years in Office," Interview conducted by Suzanne Riess, 1984, Robert Gordon Sproul Oral History Project, (Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley 1986), p. 601-602.

education served as training ground for the generation of activists that brought the labor movement into political power during the 1940s. Until the spectacular growth of unions during World War II, University of California administrators were uniformly wary, and often hostile to workers' education as a university enterprise. A small program of the University Extension during the 1920s, workers' education became an issue for administrators during the turbulent Depression years when worker-students gathered for summer institutes and turned to discussions of the epic strikes taking place around them. Conservative business leaders denounced the program, and the UC kept its distance. As university president Robert Sproul wrote to an angry businessman, the workers' education program had "no organic connection with the University."<sup>2</sup> Despite his stern denial, by the early 1940s Sproul was himself leading efforts within the UC to create organic connections to labor, this time on terms the university could better understand and control.

This essay traces the development of University of California workers' education programming, with an emphasis on the Pacific Coast School for Workers and its rocky relationship with university administrators. I then examine the University of California's response to legislative efforts to fund worker education and industrial relations programs, and the ultimate development of the Institute for Industrial Relations. I conclude with some thoughts about implications of this history for present-day labor programming within the university, and for the labor movement. Outreach to organized workers, and efforts to bring working class students into the university, reflected a contest over knowledge about work, unions, and political economy. With the development of Industrial Relations

---

<sup>2</sup>Robert Sproul to Carl McDowell, September 12, 1935.

programs, American universities positioned themselves as neutral arbiters able to stand above the dirty work of industrial conflict. But the university purchased this neutrality by foreclosing a deeper connection to workers-as-students and students-as-workers. For administrators, it was an easy choice. “Industrial Relations” sanctioned legitimate university interactions with unions and managers separate from the core liberal arts curriculum and the on-campus community. In the postwar expansion of higher education, working class youth would encounter the university as *students* rather than *workers*. But the development of Industrial Relations was also a boon to labor educators who gained new legitimacy and funding stability. In the years after 1945, outreach programs to labor expanded significantly, particularly at UCLA.

### **Background: Workers’ education & Adult Education**

Higher education was mostly a middle- and upper-class affair in the United States during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite a high schools building boom in the 1920s, U.S. Census figures show that graduating from high school only became the norm after World War II.<sup>3</sup> Before World War I, the children of working class families commonly left school by age 15 or earlier, joining the labor force and contributing to their families’ income. Many other wageworkers were adult immigrants from countries with even fewer educational opportunities. A smaller but important group of workers were educated in their home countries, but spoke little or no English and were cut off from American

---

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, “Educational Attainment by Sex” (Table HS-22), The 2012 Statistical Abstract, <http://www.census.gov/statab/hist/HS-22.pdf> (accessed December 12, 2012).

professional life. In this context of limited educational opportunity, an informal world of working class and ethnic educational institutions flourished. Rather than abandon their desire to learn when they went to work, workers in the US and in many industrializing nations pieced together an education through self-study, public forums, night schools, and other means.<sup>4</sup> To meet the demands of young workers, and to stimulate the minds of many others, educational activists from a broad spectrum of political, religious, and social perspectives developed a field of educational opportunities that paralleled the growing system of official schooling.

The educators that did try to reach working class adults had a variety of goals, each in their own way a response to changes in migration and industrial organization at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were the North American example of an international engagement with the ordinary people's minds and patterns of behavior. Whether they sought to radicalize workers and peasants, prepare them in modern modes of production, train trade union leaders, or conform workers' thoughts and actions toward consumerism and upward mobility, popular education was a fundamental preoccupation of modernizing

---

<sup>4</sup>Tobias Higbie, "Unschooling but Not Uneducated: Print, Public Speaking, and the Networks of Informal Working Class Education, 1900-1940," pp. 103-125 in Adam R. Nelson and John L. Rudolph, eds., Education and Print Culture in Modern America (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010); Richar Altenbaugh, Education for Struggle: the American Labor Colleges of the 1920s and 1930s (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Karyn Hollis, Liberating Voices: writing at the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004); Caroline Ware, Labor Education in Universities, a study of university programs (New York: American Labor Education Service, Inc., 1946); Joseph F. Kett, The Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties: from self-improvement to adult education in America, 1750-1990 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

societies in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

Between 1918 and 1921, when the American Federation of Labor (AFL) launched a Workers' education Bureau (WEB), trade unions, radicals, and reformers established at least twenty "colleges" and "institutes" for workers in the US. Most of these were local efforts like the Cleveland Workers University, the Seattle Workers College, and the St. Paul Labor College.<sup>6</sup> However, following the WEB's first national conference, delegates from the AFL took the more ambitious step of setting up a residential labor college with financial assistance from wealthy liberal donors. Brookwood Labor College, as it was known, would go on to train hundreds of union activists, and play an important role in the development of industrial unionism.<sup>7</sup> The same year, the YWCA and the Women's Trade

---

<sup>5</sup>Among the many studies of popular education in the period are: Marius Hansome, World Workers' Educational Movements: Their Social Significance (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931); Mary K. Vaughan, Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940. (Tucson, Ariz: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Alfred Fitzpatrick, The University in Overalls :a Plea for Part-time Study (Toronto: Frontier College Press, 1920); Alan L. Jones, "Gaining Self-Consciousness While Losing the Movement: The American Association for Adult Education, 1926-1941" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991); Joyce L. Kornbluh and Mary Frederickson, eds., Sisterhood and Solidarity: Workers' Education for Women, 1914-1984 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Joyce L. Kornbluh, A New Deal for Workers' Education: The Workers' Service Program, 1933-1942 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Tom Woodin, "Working-class Education and Social Change in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century Britain," History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society Volume 36, Issue 4-5, 2007; Tony Michels, A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005);

<sup>6</sup>Abraham Epstein, "The Replies to the Questionnaire on Workers Education in the United States," Workers' Education in the United States: Proceedings of the National Convention (New York: Workers' Education Bureau of America, 1921), p. 133-134.

<sup>7</sup>Altenbaugh, Education for Struggle; "Plans for Workers' College," New York Times, April 1, 1921, p. 23; "Aims of Workers' College," New York Times, June 16, 1921, p. 8; "Labor College Grafted on Tree of Knowledge," Chicago Daily Tribune, April

Union League (WTUL) helped organize the Summer School for Women in Industry on the campus of Bryn Mawr College, which became the model for a similar program at the University of Wisconsin beginning in 1925.<sup>8</sup> In the South, radical intellectuals launched Commonwealth College in rural Arkansas in 1923, and Highlander Folk School in Tennessee in 1932.<sup>9</sup> During the early 1930s, the Communist Party developed local John Reed Clubs that sponsored educational and cultural programming. Later in the decade these became thriving full-service educational institutions, best represented by the Abraham Lincoln School in Chicago, and the California Labor School in San Francisco and Los Angeles.<sup>10</sup> Non-Communist worker education programs usually welcomed rank-and-file Communists as students, although not as teachers. Similarly, only a small proportion of the students in the Communist Party schools were deeply involved in party politics. The typical student in both communist and noncommunist schools held broadly anti-capitalist sentiments, and hoped for fundamental changes to the American economic

---

2, 1921, p. 3; Walton H. Hamilton, "The Educational Policy of 'A Labor College'" The Journal of Social Forces 2(January 1924): 204-208.

<sup>8</sup>Hollis, Liberating Voices, 15-19; Ernest E. Schwarztrauber, The University of Wisconsin School for Workers: Its First Twenty-five years (Madison: University of Wisconsin School for Workers [1950]), p. 12. The Boston Trade Union College drew on university faculty, but located classes in the central labor union hall and rested control with the union, see Hodgen, Workers' Education, pp. 218-219.

<sup>9</sup>William Cobb, Radical Education in the Rural South: Commonwealth College, 1922-1940 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000). John M. Glen, Highlander: No Ordinary School, 1932-1962 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988).

<sup>10</sup>Jess Rigelhaupt, "'Education for Action' the California Labor School, Radical Unionism, Civil Rights and Progressive Coalition Building in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1934-1970," (Ph.D. Thesis, 2005); "Time Table of Critical Events in the Life of the California Labor School," [1957], 20<sup>th</sup> Century Organization Files, Southern California Library; Randi Storch, Red Chicago: American Communism at Its Grassroots, 1928-1935 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

system.

Labor and party schools trained only a small proportion of workers, but their leaders hoped students would return home to spark localized educational and union initiatives. As a YWCA official noted, “I have observed the Middle Western girls who worked a Bryn Mawr literally become ‘hot spots’ of contagion on their return to their native heath, and who are not only stimulated themselves to grasp more and more of the facts in question, but who really got a sense of social responsibility and became promoters of classes in their local Associations or other social units.”<sup>11</sup> By the early 1930s, Los Angeles would be another “hot spot” of workers’ education sparked by young women trained at Bryn Mawr and Brookwood.

### **Workers’ Education at the University of California, 1921-1941**

It is not too surprising that Clark Kerr thought IIR was “the very first effort of this big university to make contact with the trade unions” because the most active UC worker education program before 1945 was not directly controlled by the university and only once took place on a UC campus. Despite extensive federal funding for worker education under the New Deal, and a large state appropriation proposed in 1939, UC administrators kept their workers’ education program at arms length in hopes of mollifying antiradical sentiment on the Board of Regents and among faculty and campus administrators. Only during World War II, as public and private universities in other industrial states set up

---

<sup>11</sup>YWCA, The Young Women’s Christian Association and Industry, 24-25; Ernest E. Schwarztrauber, Workers’ Education: a Wisconsin Experiment (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1942), 60; quote from Anna M. Pyott (YWCA) to Don Lescohier, July 24, 1924, University of Wisconsin School for Workers, 18/5/37-2 Box 1.

Industrial Relations programs and unions gained a new legitimacy in American political life, did the UC embrace labor programs—but only under the protection of a Republican governor.

UC labor programs began in 1921 when the director of University Extension Leon Richardson hired John L. Kerchen, an Oakland schoolteacher, to survey the needs of labor unions and deliver courses in economics, labor history, and public speaking.<sup>12</sup> Richardson, a Berkeley classics professor, and Kerchen, a member of the American Federation of Teachers, would define the ideological boundaries of workers' education in fairly narrow terms. The program was officially guided by a governing board with participation from the UC and the California Federation of Labor, which qualified it as "labor controlled" and therefore eligible for affiliation with the Workers' education Bureau (WEB). This was a badge of honor for Kerchen, and also a symbol of the program's anticommunist bona fides for the university. In 1923 Kerchen applied for affiliation with at the WEB Conference in New York along with representatives of the Rand School and the Bryn Mawr summer school. Only Kerchen was allowed to address the conference because he had approval from the state labor body; the others were sent packing as insufficiently under "labor control." The New York Call reported that WEB delegates were evenly split on the question, but AFL conservatives were ultimately successful in using the "labor control" provision to enforce ideological discipline on affiliated programs. In 1924, the UC

---

<sup>12</sup>Hodgen, Workers' Education, pp. 219-221; J.L. Kerchen, "First Annual Report to the Director, University of California Extension Division, Department of Labor Education," (July 26, 1922), p. 3; J. L. Kerchen, "Annual Report of the Department of Workers' Education of the University of California Extension Division for the School Year 1930-1931," (June 1, 1931) CU-18, Box 20, Folder 84.

Extension adopted a “cooperative agreement” with the California Federation of Labor “in which the direction of the work is placed in the hands of a Joint Committee of Workers’ Education composed of nine members five of whom represent labor and four the University Extension Division.” It became the only university-based labor education program directly affiliated with the WEB.<sup>13</sup>

Lectures and courses in union halls were the core activities for the UC workers’ education program during the early 1920s, with topics shifting from vocational in the early years to a focus on employment relations and organizing by the late 1920s. In 1928 Kerchen began to organize short-term “institutes” on pressing topics like unemployment and labor law, as well as developing month-long summer retreats in northern and southern California. But as these promising initiatives took shape, the Great Depression took its toll and Kerchen was hard-pressed to justify the financial burden of his program on the Extension Division. In his report for 1931, he noted that unions and individual workers could not be expected to pay fees in support of programs except for technical classes like blue-print reading and mechanical drawing, which the program had dropped as overly vocational. Conferences and institutes addressing pressing social and economic issues, while bringing in little in the way of revenue, were more valuable for generating interest in extension programs. They also helped to cool “the extremely radical tendencies in the labor movement” brought to the surface by the Depression, according to Kerchen. Reminding his superior of the social control aspects of their enterprise, he noted that

---

<sup>13</sup> Kerchen to Richardson, April 17, 1923; “Education Not Run By Unions is Condemned,” New York Call [n.d., clipping]; Kerchen, “Annual Report, 1930-1931,” p. 4-5, University of California Archives, CU-18, Box 20 Folder 84.

“unless workers' education under the auspices of a university extension division can participate in the vital, every-day concerns of labor it will eventually exercise little control in the direction of educational thought in the labor movement.”<sup>14</sup>

Kerchen was never up to the task, however, and filled his reports with laments. Upon his retirement in 1941, Kerchen noted that the end of federal support for workers' education that accompanied the de-funding of the WPA in 1939 had taken the crippled his programs. There was no organic interest in the UC Extension's worker education programs among ordinary union members, he wrote, nor were American workers academically prepared or intellectually predisposed to systematic study. Worse yet, the factional division in the labor movement between the AFL and the CIO was too difficult to balance. “Water cannot be carried on both shoulders,” Kerchen reported, “It is impossible to be both fish and fowl. It is necessary to be one or the other.” He sided with the AFL, and CIO unions stayed away. The one bright spot in an otherwise gloomy assessment was the Pacific Coast Labor School, California's summer residential school for workers. The students, Kerchen thought, were “loyal, enthusiastic, affirmative, talented, determined, and carefully selected.” Most importantly, they had gone on to “important positions in the ranks of organized labor.”<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>J. L. Kerchen, "Annual Report of the Department of Workers' Education of the University of California Extension Division for the School Year 1930-1931," (June 1, 1931), pp. 3-4: CU-18, Box 20, Folder 84

<sup>15</sup>John Kerchen, “Final Report of J.L. Kerchen on Workers' Education of the Extension Division of the University of California in cooperation with the State Federation of Labor of the State of California,” (1941), p. 7-8, CU-18, Box 20, Folder 85; See also, “What They're Doing Now,” [PCLS annual for 1939?], pp. 70-77, CU-18, Box 59, Folder 4.

### **The Pacific Coast Labor School: “No Organic Connection with the University”**

Ironically, the Pacific Coast Labor School was one program that the university extension had almost no control over, nor had it been instrumental in its development. Kerchen organized summer schools with the California Federation of Labor between 1928 and 1932, however, no records of these events remain beyond his annual reports.<sup>16</sup> At the same time a group of Los Angeles garment workers involved in the YWCA industrial club raised money to send members to the Bryn Mawr summer program for women workers. The group’s organizer was Sadie Goodman, a garment worker and member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers union. Goodman had attended the first Bryn Mawr summer school, and appears to have been an active YWCA speaker before coming to Los Angeles.<sup>17</sup> The weekly study group raised money to send some of its members to Bryn Mawr, but eventually “one of the girls returned and said that they were spending too much money for railroad fares and that we needed a school for workers here on the coast.”<sup>18</sup> Goodman and two other activists began the process, likely through contacts in the YWCA,

---

<sup>16</sup>John L. Kerchen, “Historically Speaking,” Solidarity (Student publication of the Western Summer School for Workers (1937).

<sup>17</sup>Sadie Goodman, “Students Who Work and Workers Who Study,” (A talk given at the Student-Industrial Luncheon at Sacramento, California, the YWCA Biennial Convention, 1928), appeared in Spring Magazine, Affiliated Summer Schools for Women Workers in Industry, April 1929, University of Wisconsin School for Workers Papers.

<sup>18</sup>Sadie Goodman, “The Birth of the Western Summer School for Workers,” The Crusader, (1935), [no pagination]. Memeographed magazine produced by students in the Western School For Workers. Cu-5, Series 2, 1935, folder 308. The ILGWU organizer Rose Pesotta was probably involved at this early stage, see “Questionnaires for Short History of Brookwood’s contribution to the labor movement,” Box 14, folder 11, Brookwood Labor College Collection, Walter Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

and enlisted the support of faculty at Scripps and Occidental Colleges. The progressive President of Occidental, Remsen Bird, took a personal interest in the project, and became chairman of the governing board. Lucy Wilcox Adams, Director of the California Association for Adult Education became the coordinator for the project, which also drew the support of the office of the California Department of Education, the YWCA, the ILGWU, and the Unemployed Cooperative Relief Association. Only after the program was mostly set did these organizers invite the UC Extension Division's worker education department to become a partner.<sup>19</sup> The first Western Summer School for Industrial Workers took place on the campus of Occidental College in Los Angeles in August 1933 with 29 southern California students (23 women, 6 men), and a meager budget of \$700. Faculty volunteered their labor, Occidental donated the facilities, and the students agreed to clean their own rooms and work in the dining hall. Faculty included Lucy Wilcox Adams, her husband UCLA History professor William F. Adams, four instructors from Occidental College, and future Democratic Congressman Jerry Voorhis. The school returned to Occidental in 1934, then moved to UC Berkeley in 1935. After UCLA declined to host the 1936 summer school in the face of faculty hostility, the program found a stable home at the Pacific School of Religion near the UCB campus from 1936-41.

The curriculum of the school, which was never particularly radical, became a recurring focus for conservative ire in California. The 1933 session did not attract attention despite potential hot-button issues. For instance, one instructor led a discussion

---

<sup>19</sup>“History,” Class Record, Summer School for Industrial Workers, Occidental College, August 1933, pp. 1-3, Presidential Papers of Remsen Bird, Occidental College Library Special Collections Department.

on “Class consciousness,” a Russian language professor gave an illustrated talk based on his trips to the Soviet Union (half of the students were Russian immigrants), and students attended a debate on economic planning between a Communist and a Socialist sponsored by the League for Industrial Democracy.<sup>20</sup> The 1934 and 1935 sessions would garner much more negative attention from anti-radical forces, and much more concern from university administrators. The Los Angeles Times charged that faculty at the 1934 session “spread distinctly Communistic ideas among the students.” One of the instructors, Miriam Bonner a UC graduate and former Bryn Mawr instructor, was at the center of the controversy. She had over-emphasized “the economic subjects in the curriculum,” as an Occidental College review of the program put it, alienating a few conservative students. Also shocking to the Times, she sang the “Internationale” in the dining hall (other students responded by singing the “Star Spangled Banner”). Seeking to downplay the significance of the reports, UC Extension director Leon Richardson wrote to UC President Robert Sproul that Bonner “had recently made a trip to Russia, and, being captivated with a new idea, talked about the subject too much in her classes.”<sup>21</sup> In the wake of the controversy

---

<sup>20</sup>“The Log,” Class Record, pp. 7-15.

<sup>21</sup>“Federal-Aided Schools Spread Red Doctrines,” Los Angeles Times, August 9, 1934, p. 1; “Preliminary Report, Western Summer School for Industrial Workers,” President’s Records, 1921-1945, Folder: Adult Education—Pacific Coast School for Workers #1, Occidental College Library; Leon Richardson to Robert Sproul, January 30, 1935, CU-5 Series 2, 1935, Folder 308. The student newsletter listed Miriam Bonner as the Director of the Los Angeles Workers’ School, see What’s Next? Weekly Newspaper of the Western Industrial Summer School, (July 28, 1934), p. 4, Occidental College Library. The class of 1934 included 36 industrial workers (nearly evenly divided between men and women), a handful of teachers funded by the federal government to receive training in workers’ education, and a group of undergraduate students from UCLA, Berkeley, Stanford, Scrips, Occidental and USC.

and mounting expenses, the school's position at Occidental was untenable, and the organizers looked to move the program to the University of California in 1935.<sup>22</sup>

The problem for administrators, however, was less the curriculum than the students. As the report to Occidental's Remsen Bird indicated, school administrators guessed that there were at least seven students aligned with various left factions among the 36 industrial workers in the program, apparently not counting the six who described themselves as Socialists in the school's yearbook. The San Francisco General Strike took place in the midst of the school session, causing "a wave of emotionalism, induced by a sense of power, of unity and common purpose, and there was a good deal of excited talk," according to the report. Long-term unemployment had sapped their confidence in "the present economic system, and [they] want to see some change; but by far the majority believe in using peaceful means."<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, a few of the teachers attending the school for training in workers' education techniques were politically conservative, and strongly objected to any economic critiques. The Occidental report concluded, however, that the salient conflict was not ideological but generational. The failure of the National Recovery Act, and the fear that it might be an "instrument of fascism" gripped the industrial students. "The younger group," the report noted of those under 30 years, "is

---

<sup>22</sup>Memo to Dr. Sproul on Western Summer School, January 8, 1935, CU-5 Series 2 1935, folder 308.

<sup>23</sup>"Preliminary Report, Western Summer School for Industrial Workers, 1934" p. 3, Pacific Coast Labor School Collection, Occidental College Library Special Collections Department. See Mignon Beck, "The General Strike in San Francisco," What Now? Weekly Newspaper of the Western Industrial Summer School, (July 28, 1934), pp. 2, 4, Presidential Papers of Remsen Bird, Occidental College Library Special Collections Department.

dissatisfied with leadership in the existing labor organizations, and desires either to force the American Federation of Labor into a political philosophy, or to see the formation of an American Labor Party.”<sup>24</sup>

An assessment of students in the 1936 summer school likewise noted a leftist, although not Communist, orientation among students. Only a few of the industrial students had attended high school. The school’s director, George Hedley, described the political orientation as ranging “probably from extreme leftist to mild new-dealist philosophies. There are few or no advocates of the more conservative trains of thought. The faculty on the other hand may be said to incline toward a middle-of-the-road socialism.”<sup>25</sup>

University of California administrators were more concerned than their colleagues at Occidental. During 1934, the Los Angeles campus had been rocked by student protests against mandatory military training. The zealously anticommunist Chancellor Ernest Moore expelled several student leaders, and President Sproul became personally involved in mediating an end to the controversy.<sup>26</sup> In this context Adams and Kerchen were careful to focus on the uplifting cultural aspects of the workers education program. The purpose of the summer school, they told Sproul in the winter of 1935, was to provide "an

---

<sup>24</sup>“Preliminary Report, Western Summer School for Industrial Workers, 1934” p. 4, Pacific Coast Labor School Collection, Occidental College Library Special Collections Department; “The NRA Builds Company Unions,” What Now? (July 21, 1934), p. 1, Presidential Papers of Remsen Bird, Occidental College Library Special Collections Department.

<sup>25</sup>Notes on the Discussion at the Committee on Adult Education, March 5, 1937, Pacific Coast School for Workers, p. 27, Box 2, Pacific Coast Labor School Collection, Occidental College Library Special Collections Department.

<sup>26</sup> Robby Cohen, When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America’s First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

opportunity for industrial workers to glimpse for once in their lives the significance of a higher educational institution" as well as take classes relevant to their emerging roles in the labor movement.<sup>27</sup> After reviewing the curriculum, UC administrator Paul Cadman told Sproul that "the program itself is interesting, in fact, inspiring, and I hope it can be carried on in connection with our regular Summer Session offerings." However, he advised closer supervision to tamp down on workers' radicalism. The students' 1934 annual, "The Crusader" according to Cadman "contains abundant evidence of the extreme difficulty of controlling the radical tendencies which inevitably appear when groups of this kind convene."<sup>28</sup> Reviewing the same document a year later, Monroe Deutsch cautioned that "The Crusader" made it "perfectly clear that the entire slant is propaganda from the Labor point of view. Propaganda from any point of view is out of harmony with the spirit of the University."<sup>29</sup> But Kerchen emphasized that "It is the aim of those in charge of this school to keep it free from all 'isms' and extremely biased points of view.... The point of view of labor presented in this school is that of the American Federation of Labor though, of course, critical comment is not excluded on controversial labor subjects."<sup>30</sup>

Reassured by these internal reports and the support of Occidental College's

---

<sup>27</sup>Lucy Adams and John Kerchen to Robert Sproul, February 11, 1935, p. 1, CU-5, Series 2, 1935, Folder 308.

<sup>28</sup>Paul F. Cadman, Memorandum to President Sproul, March 11, 1935, CU-5, Series 2, 1935, Folder 308.

<sup>29</sup>Monroe Deutsch, Memorandum to the President, March 10, 1936, CU-5, Series 2, 1936, Folder 140.

<sup>30</sup>Memorandum from John Kerchen to Dr. Sproul, January 8, 1935, p. 2, CU-5 Series 2, 1935, folder 308.

Remsen Bird and liberal philanthropist John R. Haynes<sup>31</sup>, Sproul gave the go-ahead for the Western Summer School for Workers to take place on the Berkeley campus in 1935. The program enrolled about 90 students including industrial, agricultural, clerical and domestic workers. The faculty included Kerchen teaching labor economics, William Adams (who died suddenly during the program) teaching European social movements, as well as instructors from the UC Extension, an English teacher from the Los Angeles schools, and art and dramatics instructors.<sup>32</sup>

After the summer school, employers, wealthy donors, and the American Legion complained bitterly that the UC was supporting communistic training school. In response, administrators strived to distance the University from the labor school and keep it away from campuses in future years. As Paul Cadman wrote to Alan Lowry of E.F. Hutton, "The University did not participate in the Western Summer School for Workers and had no organic connection with it."<sup>33</sup> Sproul sounded a similar note. The program in question was simply "the new name for the Summer school in which Mr. John L. Kerchen, our man in charge of labor education, has for some years been interested." He emphasized that it took place during the summer when campus was empty, and catered only to adult students. "No organic connection with the University was at any time requested or

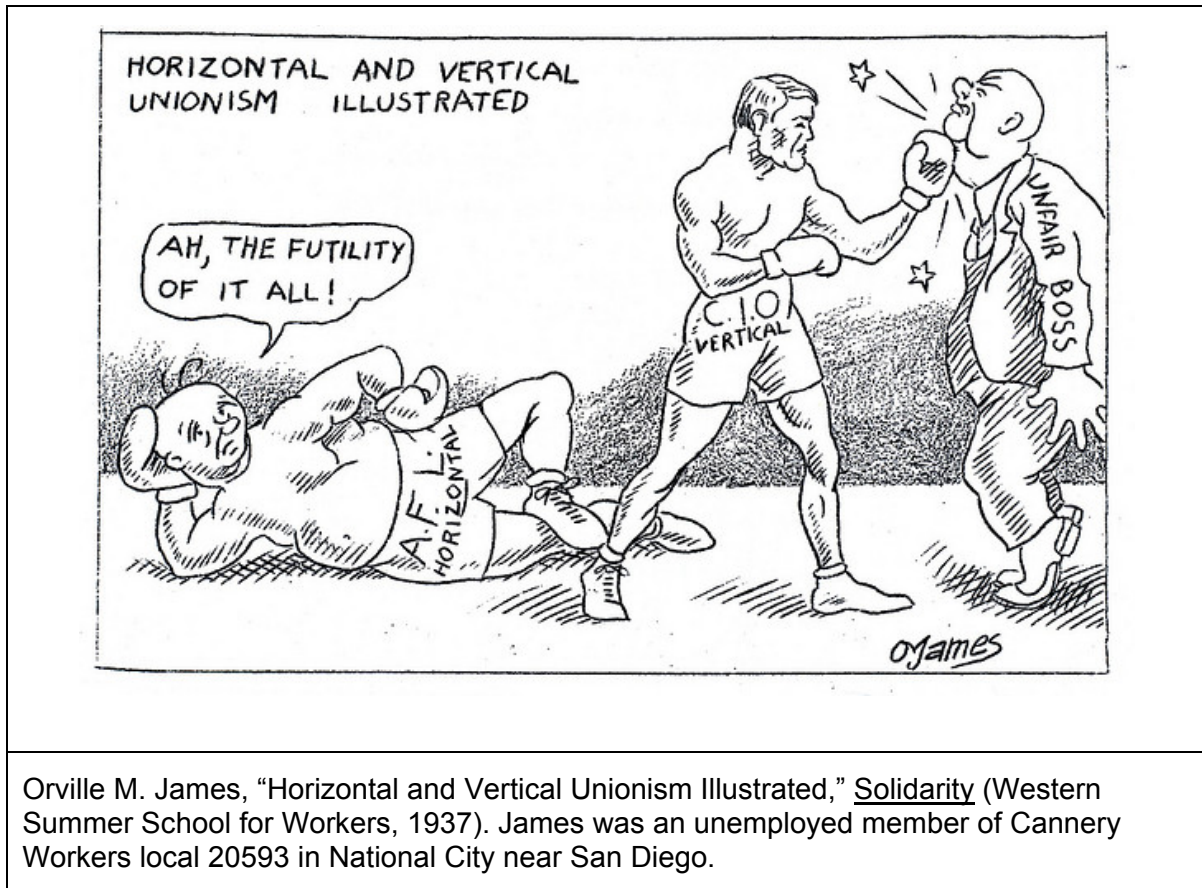
---

<sup>31</sup>Bird remained on the School's advisor board and Haynes personally donated \$100 to support the school. See John R. Haynes to Robert Sproul, May 6 1935, CU-5, Series 2, 1935, folder 308.

<sup>32</sup>Kerchen to Sproul, October 3, 1935, CU-5, Series 2, 1935, folder 308; Adams and Kerchen to Dean Gettel [n.d.] CU-5, Series 2, 1935, folder 308.

<sup>33</sup>Paul F. Cadman to Alan J. Lowry, September 14, 1935, CU-5, Series 2, 1935, folder 308.

granted."<sup>34</sup>



During the late 1930s, as the summer program developed a more stable institutional structure, however, the University kept it at arms length. Administrators and faculty were loath to invite the workers back to campus in any formal way. Faculty at UCLA thought it "unwise" to host the School for Workers on their campus in 1937. Reporting faculty opinion on the matter to President Sproul, political science professor Charles Titus wrote, "before we consider the problem again, they should have been a guest of each of the other institutions of higher learning in the West. Fifty years from now we may consider the

<sup>34</sup>Robert Sproul to John Francis Neylan, September 4, 1935, CU-5, Series 2, 1935, folder 308.

problem of their request for an invitation.”<sup>35</sup> Instead, the summer school found a home near the Berkeley campus at the Pacific School of Religion. This off-campus venue did little to cool the ire of conservatives. In 1937, the American Legion, the Industrial Association of San Francisco, and the Western Fruit Growers, Inc. wrote to President Sproul demanding the University cut all ties with the summer school. Their demand filtered down through the university bureaucracy and generated a palliative report from Leon Richardson to the effect that “out-and-out trouble makers” had been excluded from the student body and the content of the curriculum was “in every way sound from the viewpoint of university scholarship.”<sup>36</sup> University officials had nothing to worry about in this regard since the leadership of the Western Summer School was definitely anticommunist, and exercised careful filter on which students would attend. Kerchen toed the line of conservatives on the Workers’ education Bureau, and an admissions committee vetted potential students to make sure they had sufficient working and educational experience, but also to see if their reading habits suggested Communist leanings. Kerchen noted that not all Communist students were bad, and “a few have been first rate students.” Often they were “taking their first fling at radicalism” and had only read “a few ten-cent communist pamphlets.” During 1935 a group of communists and “near-communists” were in the summer school, but met with opposition from the student body, according to Kerchen. A few radical students left the school after lodging a protest against its

---

<sup>35</sup>Charles H. Titus, “Memorandum to President Sproul, 17 October 1936” CU-5 Series 2, 1936, Folder 140. On the UCLA crack down on student radicals see Robert Cohen, When the Old Left Was Young (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), chapter 5.

<sup>36</sup>Leon Richardson to Monroe Deutsch, 28 July 1937, CU-5, Series 2, 1937.

conservative orientation, but others stayed.<sup>37</sup>

Kerchen and Leon Richardson, who had been the main personal connections between the university and the school became less involved as they edged toward retirement. In 1937, the joint administrative board hired George Hedley as the Director of the Western Summer School For Workers. Hedley was a classics and religion scholar who taught for the University Extension. In the words of a letter of recommendation, “he gave up his Old Testament teaching and became interested in social problems” during the Depression.<sup>38</sup> In 1938, the school changed its name to Pacific Coast School for Workers, and in 1940 there was another name change, the Pacific Coast Labor School. By that time Hedley had been hired as faculty at Mills College, but continued to serve as the school’s director during the summer months.<sup>39</sup> The University Extension had a representative on the administrative board, and therefore remained a joint sponsor, but the relationship was one of mutually agreeable distance. In a 1938 letter to the director of the University of Wisconsin School for Workers, Hedley noted that the western school’s relationship with the University was problematic also due to “the tension existing between a President who wants to be liberal and a Board of Regents which is almost violently reactionary.” To ask for more than the “formal blessing” of the UC “would seriously jeopardize what we

---

<sup>37</sup>Kerchen to Sproul October 3rd, 1935.

<sup>38</sup>Elizabeth Bade to Bernice Hubbard, January 18, 1936, CU-18, Box 18, Folder 47.

<sup>39</sup>Pacific Coast Labor School. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Joint Administrative Board, San Francisco, California, September 28, 1940, p. 3, CU-18, Box 59, Folder 4.

have.”<sup>40</sup>

### **From Labor Extension to Industrial Relations**

During the mid-1930s, the political winds shifted in California, ultimately changing the political calculus of university administrators and opening the door for more formal university labor programming. Upton Sinclair’s insurgent run for the governorship in 1934 ended in defeat, but many of the progressive Democrats who ran with him won their seats California legislature. In 1938 Culbert Olson, a progressive state senator from Los Angeles, took the governorship. The following year the University administration faced the prospect of a budget windfall when Democratic legislators introduced a bill to provide \$400,000 (more than \$6.5 million in 2012 dollars) annually for a statewide program of education for labor leaders and wage earners through the University of California Extension. Sponsored by a number of labor-friendly Democrats including Ralph Dills and Augustus Hawkins, the bill would have funded extensive courses in the “social and economic problems of present day society,” communication, and parliamentary procedure. It also specified that courses should be, “as practical as possible and shall be designed to be immediately applicable to the immediate practical problems of labor leaders, union organizers, laborers and persons engaged in trades.”<sup>41</sup> The bill may have had its origins in a 1938 report on Labor Education by American Federation of Teachers Local 430 in Los

---

<sup>40</sup>George Hedley to Ernest Schwarztrauber, 2 May 1938, Papers of the University of Wisconsin School for Workers, 18/5/37-3 Box 9, University of Wisconsin Archives.

<sup>41</sup>Assembly Bill No. 878, Introduced by Messrs. Dills, Tenney, King, Reaves, Doyle, Bennett, Hawkins, Atkinson, Pelletier, Massion and Richie, January 18, 1939; news clipping, January 18, 1939, CU-18, Box 55, Labor Extension Bill.

Angeles. Couched in the language of antifascism common in the labor movement of the late 1930s, the report urged an more active role in worker education on the part of the University of California so that “the leadership of labor should be equipped with sound knowledge and actuated by a sense of social responsibility” lest they be won over by a “fanatically-led popular movement.” The report also noted that the University could benefit from the support of working people, chiding that due to its “enthusiastic acceptance of spectacular private endowments, [the UC] may sometimes fail to give due recognition to the less publicized but more regular support of an education-conscious democracy.”<sup>42</sup>

The University, and particularly the Extension, reacted defensively to the proposed legislation. Extension Assistant Director Boyd Rakestraw noted with some pique that the Labor Extension bill was unnecessary because the Extension already had a worker education program, and that “practically all Extension students now are wage earners.” Moreover, the demand for specialized labor courses “does not apparently exist.”<sup>43</sup> The proposal for courses specifically for laborers, wage earners and labor leaders came in for special criticism. Extension manager Margaret Wotton wrote, “Frankly I cannot see the justice of class legislation. Just where would the line be drawn relative to wage earners? Would that include professional people and teachers, or what?” What of the unemployed,

---

<sup>42</sup>Preliminary Report of the Committee on Labor Education, AFT College Section, Los Angeles, Eric Beecroft, Chairman, March 25, 1938, (cover letter and pp. 4, 5) (CU-18, Box 55). A decade later, the AFT dissolved Local 430 on charges of Communist influence. See Lynn Roger Clancy, “The history of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969” (Ph.D. diss.: UCLA, 1971), pp. 90-95.

<sup>43</sup>Boyd Rakestraw (Assistant Director [Extension]) to Professor F.L. Paxson (Univ. Extension Advisory Board Chair), 8 February 1939

the dependents of wage earners?"<sup>44</sup> Rakestraw's review of the proposed bill also noted that the University of Wisconsin only appropriated \$30,000 for its labor education program (he didn't mention that unions often contributed student tuition costs).

Correspondence between Rakestraw and Ernest Schwartztrauber, director of the University of Wisconsin's School for Workers, highlighted the pedagogical differences between university extension teaching and workers' education. Like Kerchen, by the late 1930s Schwartztrauber had been involved in workers' education for almost two decades, but he was a more active leader and more willing to seek balance between labor's competing factions. Schwartztrauber believed that regular extension courses, with their lecture-oriented pedagogy, could not hold the attention of adult wage earners. Workers' education instructors required specialized training that boiled down to spending time with workers "such that the teacher can talk the workers language." The School for Workers avoided "the formal lecture method of teaching" because "it will not work among adult workers." He doubted that regular extension staff could adjust their style to the needs of workers. Rakestraw asked whether it would make sense to expand the scope of the bill to include salaried employees as well as "wage earners"? Schwartztrauber equated the limit to participation by actual wageworkers as a prerequisite, one of the basic concepts of academic course design. Requiring students to have significant experience in the wage labor force was no different than requiring mastery of preliminary mathematics to take more advanced classes. This formulation suggested that workers' experiences and working class organizations formed a legitimate field of knowledge on par with mathematics.

---

<sup>44</sup>Margaret Wotton to Boyd Rakestraw, January 27, 1939

Successful workers' education required its own pedagogy, teachers trained to communicate in specific ways, and students who had the necessary personal experience of working for wages, or at the very least being "sympathetic" to labor. Unlike California, Wisconsin and a few other universities around the country were willing to consider and experiment with such ideas, if not enthusiastically embrace them. As the Dean of the University of Wisconsin Extension noted in a letter to Leon Richardson, some considered the Wisconsin School for Workers "a school of propaganda rather than a school of education," but because it was "an experimental and pioneer venture" he was willing to suspend judgment.<sup>45</sup>

The following year a report on the Pacific Coast School for Workers to Sproul again highlighted the tangential relationship between the university and the school. The school was "directly an enterprise" of Richardson and Kerchen, and University Extension staff "were on the whole uninformed" about it and oversight was "rather weak and tending to the extra liberal." As such, the program was trending away from the best interests of the University, the report claimed. The program had at first been for "workers while they were on vacation," and was "cultural in nature." But the 1939 program was primarily training for trade unionists. The report concluded rather coolly that, "the School for Workers is losing its educational aspect and becoming an instrument of propaganda for certain ideas."<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup>Schwartztrauber to Rakestraw March 24, 1939; Schwartztrauber to Rakestraw April 8, 1939. F. O. Holt (Dean of Extension, University of Wisconsin) to Leon Richardson, March 7, 1939 all in CU-18, Box 55.

<sup>46</sup>Memorandum: Pacific Coast School for Workers, 29 March 1940, CU-18, Box 59, Folder 4.

Evidently, the Labor Extension Bill and the growing power of Labor in California had gotten President Sproul's attention. By the fall of 1941, the tone of correspondence from the UC Extension changed. Looking for a new director of workers' education to replace Headley, Rakestraw heard from at least one candidate that the very expansion of programming he helped scuttle was the best path forward.<sup>47</sup> He lamented to the PCLS's board chair that the UC "should never have given up control of the School."<sup>48</sup> By the spring of 1942, UC had appointed new leaders of the workers' education division, and Rakestraw reported that Sproul was "taking a personal interest" in the development of the program.<sup>49</sup> In any event, there was relatively less activity for the Pacific Coast Labor School during World War II, with periodic one-day institutes being the norm. However, the university no longer shunned its connection and even UCLA hosted a conference on Labor and the War sponsored by the PCLS in 1942.<sup>50</sup>

The final transition from the workers' education era to Institute of Industrial Relations remains a bit obscure. UCLA labor economist Paul Dodd appears to have been the moving force on the faculty. An expert on health insurance and the aircraft industry, and occasional labor arbitrator before the war, Dodd served as a West Coast mediator for

---

<sup>47</sup>Will French to Rakestraw, November 18, 1941 in CU-18 Box 59, folder 5.

<sup>48</sup>Heineman to Hedley, October 17, 1941, PCLS Collection, Box 5, Occidental College Library Special Collections.

<sup>49</sup>Rakestraw to Heineman, April 16, 1942, PCLS Collection, Box 5, Occidental College Library Special Collections.

<sup>50</sup>"To All Labor in California," May 11, 1942, CU-18, Box 59, Folder 6 (signed by Max Radin, Paul A. Dodd, Frank Kidner, Boyd Rakestraw, and Gordon Watkins). PCLS leaders viewed this conference as a sign the UC was embracing the school, although some Extension staff continued to be nervous about working with unions. Heineman to Rakestraw, 12 June 1942; Wotton to Rakestraw, 10 June 1942, CU-18, Box 59, Folder 5.

the War Labor Board. During the war, Dodd conducted a tour of eastern and midwestern universities that were setting up industrial relations programs, reporting back to Sproul that this was the wave of the future.<sup>51</sup> Then in 1945 as the war wound down, the General Assembly appropriated \$100,000 (over \$1.25 million in 2012 dollars) for the biennium to establish Institutes for Industrial Relations (IIR) on Berkeley and Los Angeles campuses, to develop Industrial Relations courses on campus, and to reach workers through extension services. Initially, the Assembly proposed double the appropriation, but it was halved to overcome opposition from farm bloc Senators and assurances were made that the programs would be controlled academically by the university and would not become vehicles of radical propaganda.<sup>52</sup> The Institutes were formally launched in 1946 with Paul Dodd directing at UCLA. Berkeley hired Dodd's former War Labor Board subordinate Clark Kerr as an Economics professor and director of the northern branch of the IIR. The worker education programs in the University Extension were folded into the new IIRs along with,

---

<sup>51</sup>Paul A. Dodd: Looking from Los Angeles at President Sproul, An Interview conducted by Suzanne Riess in 1984; "A Ten-Year Report of the Institute of Industrial Relations on the Los Angeles Campus, 1946-1956," Records of the IRLE: "The proposal to create an institute on the Los Angeles campus seems to have originated with Dean Paul A. Dodd, in a letter to President Sproul under date of February 16, 1944. This led in the Spring of 1945 to a measure introduced in the State Assembly by M. Philip Davis, with the support of Governor Earl Warren."

<sup>52</sup>P.A.D. [Paul A. Dodd] "Memorandum to Provost Dykstra Re: Institute of Industrial Relations," July 3, 1945 and text of Chapter 1416 Statutes of California, 1945; Tentative Proposals for the Establishment of an Institute of Industrial Relations on the Berkeley and Los Angeles Campuses of the University of California (Pursuant to the obligation placed upon the University in the enactment of Assembly Bill No. 391 as amended)" [4 July 1945]; "Institute of Industrial Relations at UCLA Announces New Additions to Staff, Press Release, September 23, 1946, all in Papers of the UCLA IRLE.

it seems, the Pacific Coast Labor School.<sup>53</sup> Marking a break with the long-standing squeamishness of the UCLA campus toward worker programs, Dodd suggested a summer residential “Labor Institute” on campus—this time, “under the guidance of the University.”<sup>54</sup> However, even as the IIRs were gearing up the Extension division continued programming, at one point collaborating with the California Labor School (CLS) to put on an institute on labor and world peace.<sup>55</sup> The CLS would later be the target of anticommunist agitation, closing its doors in the mid-1950s after the federal government withdrew its tax-exempt status.<sup>56</sup>

The IIRs at Berkeley and UCLA were part of a national constellation of industrial relations schools aimed at professionalizing the relationship between labor and management, and cooling the heated rhetoric of class conflict so common at the time. As one of its organizing documents make clear:

“The orientation of the work of the Institute of Industrial Relations should be toward the public interest rather than toward the special interests of either labor or industry. This approach does not imply the selection of a ‘middle ground’ on every issue, but rather requires the appraisal of programs and policies in terms of the

---

<sup>53</sup>Abbott Kaplan, “Summary of Extension Services, Institute of Industrial Relations, UCLA, August 1947, CU-18, Box 54, Folder 30; “A Ten-Year Report of the Institute of Industrial Relations on the Los Angeles Campus, 1946-1956,” p. 59-60, IRLE Records.

<sup>54</sup>P.A.D. [Paul A. Dodd], “To Members of the Departments of Economics and Business Administration,” September 24, 1945, Papers of the UCLA IRLE.

<sup>55</sup>Baldwin Woods to Sproul, 6 May 1946, CU-18, Box 49.

<sup>56</sup>Rigelhaupt, “Education for Action”; CLS correspondence at Southern California Library.

long-run national welfare.<sup>57</sup>

Even within the first year of its existence the IIR at UCLA seems to have had a robust outreach program to unions, management, and to adult education programs in the Los Angeles, Long Beach, and San Diego public schools. According to Paul Dodd's first annual report, the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor celebrated the IIR's program as the first attempt to offer free labor education courses through the schools, and it encouraged other unions and schools to cooperate with the Institute. The Institute also began developing its own library, which Dodd envisioned as having a strong archival component anchored by his own War Labor Board files.<sup>58</sup> According to a review of the UCLA IIR's first ten years, the "Community Relations Program" was very active. For instance, over three thousand people attended the certificate program in personnel management during 1955-56 academic year.<sup>59</sup> The Institute's programming for unions included union-hall lectures and workshops, as well as annual summer institutes for the Steelworkers, the ILGWU, central labor counsels, labor editors, labor educators and health plan officers. The Institute also sponsored one graduate research assistant each year to

---

<sup>57</sup>Report of the Coordinating Committee on the Institute of Industrial Relations [1946], IRLE Records.

<sup>58</sup>First Annual Report, Institute of Industrial Relations—Southern Division, July 1946-June 1947, IRLE Records; Abbott Kaplan, "Summary of Extension Services, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Los Angeles, August 1947," CU-18, Box 54, Folder 34.

<sup>59</sup>A Ten-Year Report of the Institute of Industrial Relations on the Los Angeles Campus, 1946-1956, p. 51, IRLE Records. The report is not a regular Senate review, but was prepared at the request of Chancellor Raymond Allen. The author was the IIR's Acting Director, I assume Ben Aaron.

work directly with unions.<sup>60</sup> These labor-oriented programs, however, continued to require special justification to university administrators. For instance, the Institute's participation in an effort to assist unions with collectively bargained health plans drew "adverse criticism" from local "medical groups." The report justified the program as aimed at promoting public health, and therefore "consistent with [the IIR's] public interest orientation." The future of labor programs, according to the report, required staff who "sincerely accept unionism and collective bargaining as essential to industrial relations in this country," as well as an understanding by unions that IIR staff must "maintain objectivity and intellectual integrity." The report gave no similar caveats or justifications for management programs.<sup>61</sup> In 1962 the UC and the California Federation of Labor negotiated an agreement to develop additional state funding for a more vigorous labor extension programs. In that agreement, the UC "recognized that its labor education and related research programs were not meeting the needs and interests of the labor community as fully as both the University and the labor movement would wish." Along with additional classes, seminars and institutes, the UC and the Federation also agreed to "a closely coordinated expansion of research services of a non-adversary character, more adequately reflecting the requirements of the labor community."<sup>62</sup> This expanded work would be coordinated by Centers for Labor Research and Education, dedicated programs operating "independently of other Institute programs, but with access to all the services

---

<sup>60</sup>Ten-Year Report, pp. 59-64, 104-107.

<sup>61</sup>Ten-Year Report, pp. 59-64.

<sup>62</sup>"Appendix A, Guidelines Developed by Representatives of the University of California and the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO for the Expansion of Labor Programs," IRLE Records.

and facilities of the Institutes, and under the over-all authority of the Institutes' directors and associate directors."<sup>63</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The history of workers education in the 1920s and 1930s offers a useful perspective on universities and the labor movement at a moment when both institutions are rethinking their own boundaries and practices. The pressure on the university from conservative political forces is certainly familiar to labor scholars who have lived through recent budget-gutting actions in California and other states. Meanwhile, the contemporary labor movement is back to historically low unionization rates similar to the late 1920s. Although this is cause for concern, it is also an opportunity to redefine our terms. The Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE) and the Labor Center no longer deal simply, or even primarily, with unions and unionized workers. As former IRLE director Ruth Milkman has argued, Los Angeles unions of the 1990s were unusually well prepared to address post-industrial labor relations because they emerged from an environment in which occupational unions, rather than industrial unions were the norm.<sup>64</sup> Los Angeles unions also have taken on innovative organizational profiles, allying with community organizations, sponsoring nonprofit auxiliary groups, and embracing immigrant rights.

---

<sup>63</sup>“Appendix A,” p. 4.

<sup>64</sup>Ruth Milkman, L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), pp. 4-5. See also the recent remarks of AFL-CIO leader Richard Trumka on opening the ranks of labor to unorthodox organizational forms, “Richard Trumka, AFL-CIO Chief, Reflects On Unions' Thinning Ranks, Calls For New Strategies,” Huffington Post, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/07/richard-trumka-afl-cio-speech\\_n\\_2828671.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/07/richard-trumka-afl-cio-speech_n_2828671.html) accessed on March 10, 2013.

These networks of organizations and relationships look quite a bit like the pre-New Deal labor movement—a movement that had unions at its core, but also included social justice organizations, immigrant community organizations, and heterodox political activists.

The diverse institutional matrix of the pre-1935 labor movement is a model for our own time for another reason as well. Before the Wagner Act—when trade unions, immigrants, and radicals all shared a quasi-outlaw status—collective bargaining was but one tactic in support of the broader goal of lessening or ending severe economic and social inequality. In this context, workers’ education was a vital impulse that forged networks of solidarity and disseminated new organizing tactics. As the immigrant labor activist Rose Pesotta told a 1926 conference at Brookwood Labor College, “To me, Workers’ Education is synonymous with the labor movement as a whole. There isn’t one working class. There are groups and conflicts” that workers’ education can help develop and bridge.<sup>65</sup> In our time, the economic churn of neoliberalism, mass incarceration and deportation tend to drive apart the potential constituents of such a movement. All the more reason to nurture and defend our spaces of collaboration, and to pull our public universities back toward a more democratic future.

---

<sup>65</sup>Discussion of Theresa Wolfson, “The Problem of Perpetuating Interest in Workers’ Education,” in The Promotion and Maintenance of Workers’ Education, Third Annual Conference of the Teachers in Workers’ Education at Brookwood, February 19-22, 1926 (Katonah, N.Y.: Brookwood Labor College, 1926), p. 15.

### **Archival Collections on the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment**

Paul Albert Dodd Papers, 1955-1965, Collection 541, UCLA Department of Special Collections <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/ft2x0nb0bv>

Presidential Records of Remsen Bird, 1921-1945, Occidental College Library Special Collections Department.

Pacific Coast Labor School Collection, 1935-1942, Occidental College Library Special Collections Department.

Records of the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, 1945-2002, in possession of UCLA IRLE.

University of California, Records of University Extension, 1913-1957, Collection CU-18, University Archives, UC Berkeley:  
<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt0n39p86q/>

University of California, Office of the President Records, 1914-1958, Collection CU-5, Series 2, University Archives, UC Berkeley:  
<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt0489p7t8/>