Bloodless Victories

The Rise and Fall of the Open Shop in the Philadelphia Metal Trades, 1890–1940

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Introduction

1.1 WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

This is a book about power. It is an examination of how and why American employers were so successful for so long in their campaign to construct and maintain a system of industrial relations in which unions would play no part. The creation, persistence, and sudden collapse of the resulting Open Shop order define the chronological limits of this work, c. 1890–1940. This periodization allows us to study the vicissitudes of organized class relations through successive booms and depressions, the systemic crises of the First World War and New Deal, and across two generations of change in the structures of industrial enterprises themselves and, to a lesser extent, in the ideologies of those who controlled them.

This book is therefore about some of the main industrial relations issues confronting American employers and their workers, the public, and the state, through five decades. It aims to illuminate these large national realities, but does so from a particular local standpoint. It is rooted in the experiences and behavior of one self-selected group of employers, in one industry, in one city. The city is Philadelphia; the industry is secondary metal manufacturing, the heart of the Open Shop movement there and elsewhere;[1] and the group is the Metal Manufacturers' Association of Philadelphia (MMA), set up in December 1903 to fight the good fight against organized labor, and doing so with considerable success throughout the next thirty years. The focus will be on the association, on the employers' collective endeavor to remain non-union, rather than on the individual firms that made it up.

[1] That is, the production and fabrication of a variety of goods from a range of metals, rather than the refining of those materials from ores and scrap. See esp. Grace H. Stimson, *Rise of the Labor Movement in Los Angeles* (Berkeley, 1955) and sources cited in note 3 for this industry's leading role among anti-union manufacturers.

1.2 WHERE THE BOOK CAME FROM

By the early 1980s it was clear that the New Deal Order of relatively strong and legitimate unions was a historical anomaly in the development of organized class relations in the United States. That system was falling apart, shattered by politico-legal assaults, industrial restructuring, ideological change, and other fatal blows. American employers were confidently shaping and taking advantage of these circumstances to rebuild the union-free environment that they had almost always preferred. The Open Shop order that flourished from the 1900s until the 1930s began to seem well worth a fresh examination. It was a set of ideas and relationships whose time had come again. Employers' structural strength, what Selig Perlman called their " 'effective will to power,' " their determination and ability to exercize unilateral authority relatively unfettered by outside intervention from unions and the state, was evidently the great continuing explanation in the history of U.S. industrial relations. This was the heart of the matter. This was the foundation of "American exceptionalism." This was what deserved scrutiny.[2]

There was much to be done, and not enough to build on. Although we had several serviceable monographs on the "peak associations" of the business community that claimed to speak for it in national politics, we had hardly any worthwhile studies of the industry- and community-based employers' organizations through which the Open Shop war was prosecuted at the grass roots.[3] And while we had some excellent studies of large-

[2] See Steve Fraser, "The Labor Question," in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930–1980* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 55–84; Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (London, 1988). For the literature of "employer exceptionalism" see Larry G. Gerber, "Shifting Perspectives on American Exceptionalism: Recent Literature on American Labor Relations and Labor Politics," *Journal of American Studies* 32 (1997): 253–74, esp. pp. 265–71; Sanford M. Jacoby, ed., *Masters to Managers: Historical and Comparative Perspectives on American Employers* (New York, 1991), pp. 1–15, 173–200; Selig Perlman, *A Theory of the Labor Movement* (New York, 1949 ed., first published 1928), p. 4 [quote] and Ch. 5, esp. Sec. 1; Steven Tolliday and Jonathan Zeitlin, eds., *The Power to Manage? Employers and Industrial Relations in Comparative-Historical Perspective* (London, 1991), pp. 273–343.

[3] For literature on peak associations, see Richard W. Gable, "A Political Analaysis of an Employers' Association: The National Association of Manufacturers" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1950); Howard Gitelman, "Management's Crisis of Confidence and the Origins of the National Industrial Conference Board," *Business History Review* (hereafter *BHR*) 58 (1984): 153–77; Albert K. Steigerwalt, *The National Association of Manufacturers 1895–1914: A Study in Business Leadership* (Grand Rapids, 1964); Allen M. Wakstein, "The Open-Shop Movement, 1919–1933" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1961); Robert Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), esp. Chs. 2, 7. Daniel Ernst's *Lawyers Against Labor: From Individual Rights to Corporate Liberalism* (Urbana, 1995), is a splendid account of the American Anti-Boycott Association, closely allied with the NAM and other

scale, anti-union corporate employers, we knew and could know very little of the tactics and strategy of the smaller firms that made up the bulk of the recruits in the Open Shop cause.[4] For these firms, and the associations that they supported, were rarely represented in public archive collections – the firms, because of the usual problems afflicting the creation and preservation of the records of small, private organizations; the associations, for similar reasons and because much of their work was necessarily clandestine, and somewhat questionable if not actually illegal, so that it resulted in as few records, kept for as short a time, as possible. As the National Metal Trades Association's president explained on the retirement of the key staff officer responsible for its anti-union victories, "the greater part of his work, the more intimate, far-reaching and important part, has never been written, will never be written, can never be written."[5]

Open Shop organizations in fighting organized labor in the courts; and Sidney Fine's definitive *"Without Blare of Trumpets": Walter Drew, the National Erectors' Association, and the Open Shop Movement, 1903–57* (Ann Arbor, 1995) is the only, very welcome, study of a national metal trades employers' association. Apart from those recent additions to the literature, one has to rely on near-contemporary studies that had at least the advantage of being able to use many records and publications that have not survived, and interviews with association executives – William Franklin Willoughby, "Employers' Associations for Dealing With Labor in the United States," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (hereafter *QJE*) 20 (1905): 110–50; F. W. Hilbert, "Employers' Associations in the United States," in Jacob H. Hollander and George E. Barnett, eds., *Studies in American Trade Unionism* (London, 1906), Ch. 7; Margaret L. Stecker, "The National Founders Association," *QJE* 30 (1916): 352–86; and particularly Clarence E. Bonnett, *Employers' Associations in the United States: A Study of Typical Associations* (New York, 1922). Literature on state and local associations is even sparser – significant exceptions are Alfred H. Kelly, "A History of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1938); J. Roffe Wike, *The Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association* (Philadelphia, 1960); and Thomas Klug, "The Roots of the Open Shop: Employers, Trade Unions, and Craft Labor Markets in Detroit, 1859–1907" (Ph.D. diss., Wayne State University, 1993), which complements this work.

[4] Pioneering works in industrial relations history with a big-business focus include David Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Non-Union Era* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960) and Robert Ozanne, *A Century of Labor-Management Relations at McCormick and International Harvester* (Madison, 1967). Histories of personnel management have also tended to concentrate on the behavior of the larger and more prominent firms – see Daniel Nelson, *Managers and Workers: Origins of the New Factory System in the United States, 1880–1920* (Madison, 1975) and Sanford M. Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in American Industry, 1900–1945* (New York, 1985). The development of these literatures is discussed in Jonathan Zeitlin, "From Labour History to the History of Industrial Relations," *Economic History Review* 40 (1987): 159–84; by Jacoby himself in "Masters to Managers: An Introduction" in *idem*, ed., *Masters to Managers*, pp. 1–15, 201–5, and by Tolliday and Zeitlin in "Employers and Industrial Relations Between Theory and History" in their ed. *The Power to Manage?* pp. 1–31.

[5] NMTA, *Synopsis of Proceedings of the 15th Annual Convention* (New York, 1913), p. 4. The Wagner Act, National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), and La Follette Com-

No evidence = no history, so without a paper trail of primary sources the prospects of exploring the Open Shop seemed bleak indeed. But the MMA had survived into the 1980s; it had preserved many of its records rather than casually discarding them when they were no longer of use, or deliberately shredding them when they became an embarrassment; most unusually, it had been prepared to deposit them in a public archive. For these reasons, if for no others, it was worth careful examination.

But how much could its story matter? I was still operating under the common misapprehension that Philadelphia was, as the English visitor John Foster Fraser put it in 1903, "the joke-town of America," where nothing much ever happened, and then very slowly. It did not feature much in the bloody battle honors of American labor. It was not the center of any great industry, or so I thought – not a Pittsburgh, Akron, Detroit, or Chicago. In addition to being in the wrong place to be interesting, the MMA also seemed to have the wrong kind of members to weigh very much in the scales of history. Although I understood that smaller firms were the backbone of the Open Shop movement, I still shared the usual prejudices of American business historians of my generation, which led me to underestimate their collective importance. As Mira Wilkins summed up the conventional wisdom laid out by Alfred Chandler and those who followed in his wake, "In dealing with modern business history from the late nineteenth century . . . the significant actors are not the small, single product, single plant, single function, local market enterprises, but rather . . . the multiproduct, multiplant, multifunctional, multidivisional, multinational enterprises administered by a managerial hierarchy."[6]

Fortunately, the MMA papers, even at first reading, were sufficiently fascinating that I determined not to be put off the attempt to understand the reality that they described by the fear that this might end up as no more than a trivial pursuit. The decision was made easier by some fine and pioneering scholarship which showed me that, in business history as elsewhere, the conventional wisdom is rarely the whole truth, and that the provincial world of the proprietary capitalist was worth a closer look.[7]

mittee in the 1930s were also very bad for the survival of those records of the Open Shop movement that they did not manage to expose.

[6] Fraser, *America at Work* (London, 1903), pp. 76–77; Wilkins, "Business History as a Discipline," *Business and Economic History* 17 (1988): 4.

[7] See Mark Granovetter, "Small Is Bountiful: Labor Markets and Establishment Size,"*American Sociological Review* 49 (1984): 323–34; Charles Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin, "Historical Alternatives to Mass Production: Politics, Markets, and Technology in Nineteenth-Century Industrialization," *Past and Present* 108 (1985): 133–76 and, as eds., *Worlds of Possibility: Flexibility and Mass Production in Western Industrialization* (New York, 1997); Philip Scranton, *Proprietary Capitalism: The Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia* (New York, 1983), *Figured Tapestry: Production, Markets, and Power in Philadelphia Textiles, 1885–1940* (New York, 1989), and *Endless Novelty: Specialty Production and American Industrialization, 1865–1925* (Princeton, 1998).

1.3 HOW THE PROJECT GREW

The MMA papers, although quite extensive, only offered material for a thin institutional narrative, with many gaps.[8] Given that there was so little secondary literature on the kind of organization of which it was an example, it was hard to tell where it fitted, where its history was representative, where it was exceptional, and why. So one of the first tasks had to be to construct an account of the national institutional setting within which it was formed and functioned. This involved an exploration of the critical period in American industrial relations, particularly in the metal trades, which began about a century ago and saw rapid growth in the power of skilled workers' unions, followed by counter-organization by employer communities, including Philadelphia's.

The primary sources for retelling this story were participants' accounts – in trade union journals and the business press, publications and proceedings of the new employers' associations themselves, and testimony given before public tribunals investigating the labor problem. Out of the exploration of the complex interactions between skilled workers' unions and national and local employers' associations in the metal trades I emerged confident that the MMA was indeed a fairly typical member of a well-integrated family of businessmen's organizations, responding to a common challenge in commonplace ways. Its story was particular but not exceptional; it could serve as a basis for general observations on the dynamics of middle-sized, anti-labor employers' collective behavior in the Open Shop era.

One stage in contextualizing the MMA's institutional history was therefore relatively easily accomplished. The next stage was much harder. The MMA was a voluntary organization that existed to serve its members' needs; it did not have much of an independent existence. Those members were firms of a particular type – mostly proprietary in character, run by their controlling owners in person – and the entrepreneurs and senior managers who represented them in the association. Companies and individuals were therefore the principal historical actors, and the MMA was mostly an institutional reflection of their interests and priorities. But I had no idea about what and who those historical actors really were, and the MMA papers were not very helpful. There was no comprehensive list of association officers, or much information about which firms they came from, or what their status was in them. There was no consistent and continuous list of member firms either, nor data about what they made, how large they

[8] The only record series donated to Temple University's Urban Archives (hereafter TUUA) were those of the most obvious historical importance. A dumpster full of memorabilia and routine administrative material was discarded at about the same time – interview, John H. Shelsy (Senior Vice President, MidAtlantic Employers' Association), Valley Forge, 12 Sept. 1998.

were, where they were located, who owned and ran them, or what were the economic conditions of their industries.

And even if such information about member firms and association activists had been readily available, it would only have provided part of the picture. The MMA was merely a self-selected minority of the large and very diverse Philadelphia metal-manufacturing community. To know how it fitted into its immediate context, to understand where and why it gathered its strength, and to appreciate the changing relationships between the MMA's sample and its local universe, required exhaustive research into the socio-economic fabric of the whole of Philadelphia's metal trades.

Fortunately, rapid advances in the power, usability, and affordability of personal computers and their software over the last decade have made it quite easy for the artisan historian to gain some command over the masses of scraps of data that are the essential ingredients in any community-based case study. These have been collected from city directories, state surveys, and federal censuses, as well as from archival sources. They have been related to one another, and have been used to reconstruct a reasonably solid basis for this book.

Once the bug bites, gathering, linking, and interpreting quantifiable data can become dangerously addictive. The process and the results may fascinate the researcher, but they may have little appeal for anybody else. In this book, this type of data is usually kept in the background, and I have avoided extensive discussion of data-gathering and analytical techniques in the interests of economy and accessibility. What remains, as well as a trace of the data itself, is the confidence that that which can be measured has been, and that the innumerate historian's usual resort to implicit quantification, in the desperate attempt to claim that what s/he has come across is typical or important, has been minimized. When quantitative data are included in the text, they are reported using data graphics rather than tables, wherever appropriate, following the wisdom of William Playfair, that "Information, that is imperfectly acquired, is generally as imperfectly retained; and a man who has carefully investigated a printed table, finds, when done, that he has only a very faint and partial idea of what he has read; and that like a figure imprinted on sand, is soon totally erased or defaced."[9]

[9] The resulting databases will be referred to in footnotes in CAPITALS. Full descriptions and sources are given in the Appendix. Playfair quote from Edward Tufte's bible of style, *The Visual Display of Quantitaive Information* (Cheshire, Conn., 1983), p. 32, which I have attempted to follow. Data graphics are also used to provide some visual variety, in preference to photographs of dead white males and dirty old machines. They offer concrete information that the latter often don't. Readers with a hankering for good pictures and revealing text should look at Philip Scranton and Walter Licht's excellent *Work Sights: Industrial Philadelphia, 1890–1950* (Philadelphia, 1986).

On this half-submerged empirical foundation I have erected a description of the changing Philadelphia metal-manufacturing community through four decades, of the men and the firms composing it, and of these employers' culture and practices. Satisfying my and, I hope, readers' interest in these aspects of the MMA's membership, and placing them in context, also required a considerable amount of qualitative research – in local histories, company histories, biographical compendia, local magazines, and, to a small and disappointing extent, in archives. Hardly any of the MMA's member firms or their executives have been so considerate as to leave collections of their papers. Even so, it has proved possible to reach some conclusions about the character of the firms, and the values of their proprietor-managers, which help explain the determination and methods with which they prosecuted the anti-labor struggle.

The third stage in the effort to broaden the research base of this study required moving outside the semiprivate world of Philadelphia employers, their employees, and their everyday affairs, to find out what trace their interactions left on the public record – particularly when their relations broke down and conflict spilled onto the streets. The local and labor press were some help here. Much more useful were the records of federal dispute-settlement and investigative agencies that became involved in metal trades labor relations during the two great systemic crises of 1916–21 and 1933–38 that tested, and then destroyed, the Open Shop. The richness of these official sources makes up for the absence of surviving documentary evidence from almost all of the companies and unions that were parties to the disputes.

1.4 THE FINAL STRUCTURE

Chapter 2 begins with a description of the metal-manufacturing community in the 1900s in terms of the industries and firms that made it up. It explores the nature of these firms – almost all locally owned and controlled, regardless of size, prime examples of proprietary capitalism and hands-on management. It examines, principally by means of short biographical sketches, distinctive features of the local entrepreneurial class – how and where they were recruited, the ways in which they pursued their careers, and their strategies for ensuring the survival and growth of their companies. The purpose of the chapter is to introduce the setting and the historical actors, and to explain something of the challenge that labor unions would pose when they tried to organize and bargain within an intensely competitive business community such as this. The chapter attempts to get inside these firms, and inside the heads of the men who owned and ran them. It explores the reasons for their belief in the necessity of simple, direct, personal management and unfettered control over their subordinates. Most

of the source material is drawn from the 1900s and 1910s, but there is little evidence that the original, uncomplicated set of anti-labor convictions that prevailed at the outset of the Open Shop era altered much through succeeding decades. There was change in the ideology and practices of some Philadelphia metal manufacturers toward their employees – some movement toward more sophisticated forms of personnel management and welfare capitalism – but this is best thought of as supplementing more traditional attitudes and behavior, not displacing them.

Chapter 3 moves away from describing the composition and character of the business community among whom the MMA would recruit, toward a narrative account of the association's origins. This requires attention to both the local and national contexts. Philadelphia sustained dense networks of informal contacts among like-minded businessmen with shared interests and traditions of self-organization for common ends. These were some of the ties that bound together a group of possessive-individualistic entrepreneurs into a working community, and provided resources and models on which the MMA would be able to draw.

But the decision to mobilize these resources and build on these and other organizational experiences required some external stimulus. Between 1897 and 1904 there was a crisis in relations between employers and their skilled workers that affected metal-manufacturing communities like Philadelphia's right across the U.S. industrial belt. Craft unions were making the running; proprietary capitalists were forced to respond, and to decide how to meet this new challenge. Chapter 3 goes on to explain what courses they took, and why. It draws the connections between local employers' uncertain route through an unhappy experiment in collective bargaining with the most strongly organized of their skilled men – which ended in a decision to join forces to confront them – and the wider national developments that Philadelphia mirrored.

The chapter is almost as much about what happened outside the city as what went on within it. Philadelphia employers acted as members of national associations, their skilled workers were members of nationwide unions, and the strategies of both parties were largely determined by these outside affiliations rather than by local circumstances. Toward the end of 1903, local activists within the National Founders' and National Metal Trades Associations decided both to implement the Open Shop program developed at the national level since 1901 and to build a permanent local association complementing the national organizations' work and borrowing tactics as well as strategy from their brethren elsewhere.

Chapter 4 brings the focus back to the local level, and offers a straightforward narrative of the opening engagements in the long Open Shop war, c. 1904–15. Philadelphia metal manufacturing was convulsed by large strikes involving hundreds, and eventually thousands, of skilled workers, particularly in 1904–5, 1906–7, and 1910–11. The MMA and its members

were in the thick of these conflicts, many of which they provoked and almost all of which they won. The chapter is an examination of the methodology of union-busting in the critical period when the Open Shop became securely established. It is a picture of tactical innovation in the service of a staunchly reactionary strategy. The chapter argues that coordinated labor replacement and the employers' ability to exploit the recurrent depressions of the prewar decade were central to the success of the Open Shop. Labor was weak and divided, serious violence was rare, and the employers' victories were quite easy and cheap to achieve and, as the book's title suggests, almost bloodless. The active support of the forces of order – particularly the judiciary, whose anti-labor decisions have received so much recent scholarly attention – was of secondary importance. Indeed, by the late prewar years, Open Shop employers regarded elected politicians as being almost as much of a threat to their freedom to manage as were the whipped trade unions. So the MMA extended its field of operations beyond the effective, economical deployment of resources for industrial conflict to include the political representation of the employers' interests against unwelcome intrusions from progressive state and federal governments.

Chapter 5 interrupts the flow of the narrative to describe the MMA as an institution and explain some of the internal reasons for its rapid attainment of stability and success. It analyzes the MMA in terms of its membership – which kinds of firms joined, which did not, and why; its political culture and financing – how this voluntary association reconciled the conflicting imperatives of the collective discipline required for the prosecution of the Open Shop war with the tight-fisted egoism that motivated its members; and of the routine functions it performed, which helped explain members' commitment as well as its overall achievement. The perspective of Chapter 5 is that employers' collective action, particularly in a culture that is as strongly individualistic as that of the United States, and one where interest groups enjoyed such feeble institutional endorsement by the state, was almost as complicated a project as the efforts of successive generations of industrial workers to transform their kind of class-consciousness into durable organization. The means that the MMA adopted to build its own culture of commitment, to construct a consensus in support of the evolving strategy of a stable leadership group, and to deliver demonstrably useful services to its members add to our understanding of the ways in which comparable voluntary organizations coped with these universal problems.

At the heart of the services that the MMA routinely delivered was an institution neglected by historians, but key to employers' success in the metal trades' Open Shop war – the Labor Bureau, a central office serving the specialized recruitment needs of a group of cooperating firms, of which dozens were created in the major manufacturing cities of the 1900s and 1910s, and which flourished until the 1930s. Since the late 1970s, labor historians have explored and debated employer–employee conflicts in terms

of contests for control of the labor process within the enterprise. The intention of Chapter 5 is, in part, to refocus our attention onto contests for control of the labor markets on which both employers and employees depended.

The narrative resumes with Chapters 6 and 7, which deal with the MMA's greatest crisis before the 1930s – the years of overfull employment, workers' insurgency, and federal intervention unprecedented in terms of its potential power and pro-labor intentions, which characterized the war boom of 1915–18; and then the years of uncertainty, turmoil, chronic and acute unemployment, and a renewed conservatism, that followed. The Open Shop was challenged more than it ever had been; and it emerged triumphant.

In these chapters, the MMA does not always take center stage. Labor relations changed from an uneven but relatively straightforward contest between employers and workers, which was decided at the local level, into a more complicated but still unequal conversation between the traditional protagonists and the federal government. The lines connecting local developments with national organizations and tendencies were much more tightly drawn than ever before. Both chapters accordingly pay more attention to the world of labor and to the political economy of industrial relations than the story of the Open Shop's initial victories required. In addition, the MMA was spared the worst of the conflicts in war and postwar Philadelphia by the simple fact of its earlier success. The most important new developments in metalworkers' power and ambitions took place among other local employers' workforces. But it was the ability of those large firms to crush the workers' insurgency that allowed the MMA to continue to enjoy its relatively undramatic existence. For this reason, Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the city's metalworking industries as a whole rather than just on the MMA itself.

Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the Open Shop at its zenith, between the success of local and national employers' anti-union offensives, the recovery from the postwar recession, and the collapse of prosperity and Republican hegemony during Herbert Hoover's troubled presidency. During these years there was a near-total absence of labor unionism and overt industrial conflict among the Philadelphia metal trades, and the MMA faced the paradoxical consequences of victory: What else was there left to do, once the craft unions had been defeated, and state and federal governments no longer represented the threats to employer interests that they sometimes had in the Progressive Era? The answer to this question was offered by new leaders, members, and their associates from outside of the business community, who remade the MMA in the mid- to late 1920s. The rational, systematic development and use of industry's human resources offered a large new field for constructive activity. Personnel management and welfare capitalism – employer-initiated measures designed to provide workers with an increased

measure of dignity and security in their lives – became the MMA's new program. The association grew to its interwar peak in terms of membership, employment, influence, and prestige on this basis.

The new model MMA of the 1920s was at the forefront of managerial progressivism. Its leaders were tied into a variety of national corporate, academic, reformist, and governmental networks. Their program represented the local implementation of the advanced agenda of socially conscious, quite self-confident élites. It met with limited support and some resistance from the local business community, and there was – as with managerial progressivism in general – a large gap between intention and achievement. But it is hard not to be impressed by the leaders' vision and sincerity, and their sense of the possibilities and the necessity for change within the capitalist employment relationship even during a period when they faced no external threat from labor and the state or internal challenge from their employees. It is difficult not to share their feelings of shock and despair when their dreams of reason collapsed in 1931–33.

The story of the MMA in the 1920s and early Depression has a heroic and tragic dimension. It represents in microcosm the flawed promise and the fate of even the most enlightened business leadership in the last traditional Republican era. It also has one unique feature. The men who were the principal architects of the MMA's liberal capitalism were no ordinary entrepreneurs. They were a small, tight group of Orthodox Quakers – committed pacifists, opponents of war in 1917–18, founding members and lifelong supporters of the American Friends Service Committee. Encountering them was one of the bonuses of engaging in a historical case study focused on Philadelphia, one of whose names for itself was, after all, the Quaker City. Their work allows us to appreciate the blurred boundaries between secular and religiously inspired reformism in early twentieth-century America, and to understand business decision making in such a value-laden area as industrial relations in all its human complexity.

Chapters 10 and 11 complete this account of the birth, early struggles, and enlightened maturity of the Open Shop in the Philadelphia metal trades, by attending to its death and transfiguration. The story of economic collapse, political upheaval, state intervention, and workers' self-organization in the 1930s is full of drama, but essentially familiar. What happened in Philadelphia happened in most mid- to large-sized manufacturing centers in the United States, at about the same time, in much the same way, and for many of the same reasons. The Philadelphia metal trades, almost free of trade unionism at Franklin Roosevelt's accession, although home to small, powerless groups of isolated Communists, Socialists, and other radicals, became a site of wholly unanticipated battles. A tradition of working-class Republicanism collapsed. City, state, and federal governments turned hostile to the Open Shop. Businesses proved increasingly unable, or unwilling, to resist. Eventually, in 1936–37, the new unions that joined the

Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO), fortified by success at the polls, confident of their political backing, officered by battle-hardened veterans and younger militants, overwhelmed the MMA. It did not give up without a fight; but it did give up.

Philadelphia metal trades labor relations in the 1930s were undeniably turbulent, but they were not particularly violent – whether compared with the city's strife-torn, strongly unionized textile industry or with the bloody martyrdoms still occurring elsewhere in the nation. In the MMA's territory, at least, labor achieved the second almost bloodless victory in this book. Workers and their allies destroyed the social order of the Open Shop, but they were assisted in so doing by the fact that businessmen increasingly appreciated both that it had outlived its viability and usefulness, and that by conceding they could help create a tolerable new order on the rubble of the old. By the end of the 1930s the MMA and most of its members had navigated the rapids of the transition. Labor's moment of insurgency had passed. In the new world of formalized collective bargaining and state regulation, the MMA would find growing reasons to persuade its members that there were many things it could do for them – that their businesses had many needs for expertise, information, and advice in the management of human resources, which they could satisfy best, or most easily, or most efficiently, if they continued to act together.

This book closes almost sixty years ago. The MMA – in the shape of its successor organization, the MidAtlantic Employers' Association – has not closed its doors yet. It has adapted to the suburbanization of industry, and then to regional de-industrialization, by abandoning the city and moving beyond its roots in manufacturing; it has outlived its union opponents, and it has been far more successful in adjusting to changes in members' needs and the composition of their workforces. When this book is published, it and many of its fellow associations in other cities and regions, most of them also rooted in the metal trades' Open Shop war, but now moved far beyond it, will be poised confidently at the threshhold of their second century.[10]

1.5 WHAT THIS BOOK IS NOT ABOUT

Reducing the results of a dozen years' research and writing to fit within the confines of a publishable book took much effort, and some sacrifices. This surgery was in the interest of emphasizing and clarifying the institutional narrative. But there will doubtless be readers, particularly from a labor or social history background, who are struck by what is not included in the following analysis, not because it was taken out, but because it never was

[10] See http://www.maea.org for a description of current services.

there in the first place. The second half of this introduction is designed to alert them to what they will not find, and to offer some explanations for why they will not find it.

A. Gender (that is, Women)

In 1900, Philadelphia's labor force was 26 percent, and its "manufacturing and mechanical" component 25 percent, female. The latter were mostly young – 59 percent of them under twenty-five, as against 26 percent for their male counterparts – and single: Only 15 percent of them were married, widowed, or divorced, as against 66 percent of male industrial workers. Their earnings were only 55 percent as high as men's.[11]

At the time there was nothing unusual about this pattern of women's industrial employment.[12] One further feature of it was also quite commonplace. Their world of work did not include the metal trades, save for a few low-wage, light manufacturing occupations – clock and watch making, engraving, jewelry, cutlery – often conducted on a workshop scale and under sweatshop conditions. Production areas of most factories were closed to them. They were not admitted to apprenticeships, so they had no regular route to adult skilled status, or supervisory positions, or executive and entrepreneurial opportunities. In 1900, more than 98 percent of all "manufacturers and officials" were male. The situation in the companies on which I focus was no different, and it did not change over time: Of the 1,045 proprietors, partners, and executive officeholders whose careers I have pursued through 250 companies and across four decades, 98.5 percent were men. The few exceptions were mostly partners' widows or younger family members in junior positions. None of these women is recorded as ever having taken part in any of the activities of the MMA, which was, among other things, a gentlemen's club.[13]

The industries that were at the center of the Open Shop movement, in Philadelphia as elsewhere, were the most male-dominated even among the metal trades. In 1902, for example, the fifty-seven companies that provided

[11] U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, *Special Reports: Occupations at the Twelfth Census* (Washington, 1904), pp. 672–78, lines 47, 75, 108, 112, 113, 118, 137–38, 144, for this and subsequent data on the 1900 workforce, unless separately noted; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Vol. 8: Manufactures, Part 2* (Washington, 1902), pp. 784–91, lines 1, 11, 15, 25, 30, 33, 37–38, 42, 45–47, 49, 52, 65, 69, 70–71, 76, 80, 89, for earnings information.

[12] Leslie W. Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900–1930* (New York, 1979), Chs. 1 and 2 esp.; Julie A. Matthaei, *An Economic History of Women in America: Women's Work, the Sexual Division of Labor, and the Development of Capitalism* (New York, 1982), esp. Chs. 7 and Ch. 9, pp. 209–18.

[13] PHILCHAP (*sic*) database.

the MMA with its early recruits employed 7,881 people, literally 99 percent of them male. In forty-two of those firms, there was not a single female employee; and even in the other fifteen, one cannot usually tell from surviving data whether their ninety-one women were actually engaged on production work. In most cases, probably they were not. George Vaux Cresson, founder in 1859 and chief executive until his death in 1908 of the power-transmission machinery builder that bore his name, employed the third-largest number – 10 women out of 410 workers. As he told the U.S. Industrial Commission in 1900, "we have a few young ladies in the office as clerks, stenographers, and typewriters." The small handfuls of women recorded elsewhere were probably similarly employed. Two manufacturers of plumbing fittings, whose workforces were more than 10 percent female (33 of 312), were probably the only significant exceptions to the rule of exclusion from the shop floor.[14]

The MMA did not even count women *as* workers until acute labor shortages in 1918 forced it, and more of its members, to take that desperate measure in their search for recruits. Until then, members paid no dues in respect of the few women in some production jobs, and the association took no official notice of them. Then the proportion of women workers roughly doubled (to 5 percent) within a few months, entering their factories as laborers, inspectors, plain core makers, small machine operators, and light assembly workers, and getting paid about 60 percent as much, on average, as males. (Revealingly, the highest paid women were paid less than all but the very lowest paid men, the watch-keepers – a job that was usually a disguised pension for old and/or disabled employees.)[15]

The small but lasting change in the makeup of MMA members' workforces that the war produced did not involve any detectable shift in their attitudes toward women's employment. At first, the MMA charged

[14] 1902FACT database; Cresson testimony in U.S. Industrial Commission (hereafter USIC), *Report of the Industrial Commission on the Relations and Conditions of Capital and Labor Employed in Manufactures and General Business* (Washington, 1900), Vol. 14, p. 266. Women made up about 4 percent of the workforce of Philadelphia metal manufacturing industries altogether, but less than 2 percent of those at the heart of the Open Shop movement – U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Vol. 8: Manufactures, Part 2*, pp. 784–91, lines 1, 11, 15, 33, 37, 42, 52, 65, 80, 89 (Open Shop core) and 25, 30, 38, 45–7, 49, 69–71, 76 (others).

[15] Earl Sparks, Report of the Secretary, Dec. 1917, pp. 1, 5. The secretaries' reports to the annual membership meetings are the most complete, and among the most rewarding, of record series in the MMA papers (hereafter MMAP), Series I, Box 1, Folders 12-25 (hereafter, e.g., I-1-12/25), Accession URB 44, TUUA, and are referred to hereafter as [Name], SEC [date]. Sparks, SEC 1918, pp. 2–5; Executive Committee Minutes (the other main continuous source run, MMAP I-2/3-26/56; hereafter ECM), 13 Feb., 13 March, 10 Apr., 7 May, 12 June, 19 Nov., 11 Dec. 1918; "General Wage Report: Philadelphia and Vicinity, Aug. 1918," MMAP II-4-42; employment figures from PID16-40 database.