

# ***DAVE BECK: Labor Merchant***

***By Eric Hass***



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## ***The Case History of a Labor Leader***

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# ***Dave Beck:***

## ***Labor Merchant***

*The Case History of a Labor Leader*

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ERIC HASS (1905–1980)

### **1. A Labor Merchandising Concern**

“Labor organization is a business; like any other business, it is run primarily to produce a living for those who make it their vocation.”

—*Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 1939.

To start a business, the first thing you must have is capital. If it is a factory, you need capital for machinery, plant space and raw material. If it is a mine, you need capital for mining equipment. If it is a store, you need capital for merchandise and rent. And, if it is any of these, or any other kind of business you can name—except one—you must have capital to lay out for labor as well as for other things.

The lone exception is a “union” business. A labor leader can go into the “union”—labor-merchandising—business with very little. He gets his stock-in-trade—workingmen and workingwomen, the human embodiment of labor power—free, gratis and for nothing.

If things go right, and enough employers are lined up and contracts signed, thereby giving the labor leader control of jobs, the money rolls in. The labor leader entrepreneur didn’t have capital to start with, but he has some now. With a swollen union treasury, carefully husbanded through strikes and depressions, he is ready to branch out into banking, insurance, real estate, mining and other lucrative lines. He builds beautiful marble palaces to house the union’s headquarters, complete

with private bars and recreational facilities.<sup>1</sup>

The business grows and grows as the labor leader, muscling out competitors, claims an ever-widening jurisdiction, thereby controlling more and more jobs. Then, new and fabulously lucrative sidelines are discovered—old-age pensions and health and welfare. Pension and welfare funds grow with spectacular rapidity, and before long the union finds itself the parent of a multimillion dollar subsidiary. Money like this takes our labor leader right into Wall Street and makes a “respected financier” out of him. Other businessmen—big exploiters of labor—seek loans from him and other favors. You might say our labor leader has arrived!

This is no fanciful picture. A score or more of unions—A.F. of L., C.I.O., railroad brotherhoods and independents—are in the “big business” category. Others are medium-size or small businesses. All, despite their pretenses of being workers’ organizations, are labor-merchandising concerns. In some unions, the rank and file still exercises a vestige of “democracy,” but the trend in all present-day unions is to concentrate power at the top in a union bureaucracy, a group of union leaders who are contemptuous of the rank and file and who look upon the union as their private property.

Of the big unions, this trend is most conspicuous in the A.F. of L. teamsters’ union (International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers), of which Dave Beck, the union’s general president, is the big boss. This 1,500,000—member union is described in the capitalist press as the nation’s biggest and most powerful. As we shall demonstrate, this power is exercised by Beck and his henchmen, not in the interests of the workers, but in the interests of Beck & Company, and of the employers with whom Beck does business.

We shall show, too, that Beck’s union is not only a business, selling a real commodity, but that it is also an employer-labor faker conspiracy for holding the

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<sup>1</sup> “Like to take a shower sitting down? Or ride a private elevator to your office to avoid mingling with crowds?

“Maybe you’d like a verdant roof garden above your office and a concealed bar below.

“If any of these emoluments appeals, one way to achieve them is to join Dave Beck’s Teamsters Union and get promoted high up. For such fringe benefits as a sit-down shower are only samples of the comforts offered by a \$5 million Teamster headquarters nearing completion in the shadow of the Capitol.

“Mr. Beck’s brilliant marble structure is just one of several that unions are erecting here. All told, about \$15 million worth of construction is under way for unions, and more is being planned.”—Washington dispatch in the *Wall Street Journal*, April 25, 1955.

The new headquarters was occupied July 5, 1955.

workers down. We shall prove that it is invaluable to the capitalists as a strikebreaking agency, a kind of super-goon squad for keeping the duespayers tamed and subjugated.

The time has come when the American workers must make a crucial choice. They must either accept the role of voiceless duespayers—mere stock-in-trade for the labor bosses—or they must reappraise these so-called “unions” and through united, classconscious action, dismantle them and put them, and the labor fakers, out of business once and for all.

This is not an “anti-union program.” It is an essential step in the creation of a union worthy of the name, a union capable of mobilizing labor’s strength in labor’s collective interests.

The mission of unionism is not to furnish a lush living for a gang of labor bosses—much as Mr. Beck and his breed may think that it is. Nor is it the mission of unionism to ride herd on the workers, or, in the name of the supposedly “sacred” contract, to use one section of “organized” labor to break the strikes of embattled workers in other unions.

The mission of unionism, its supreme mission, is to enable the working class, the only useful class in society, to abolish this crime- and contradiction-ridden capitalist system, and bring to birth a new social system, one that will give the workers a collective and democratic mastery of their tools and products.

The mission of unionism is twofold: First, to organize the whole working class on industrial lines, to back up with a mighty nonviolent force the fiat of the Socialist ballot; secondly, to provide the framework of the future Socialist Republic—the industrial constituencies in which the workers of a free society will exercise industrial self-rule.

## 2. The Labor Leaders' Power

The teamsters' union, like most of the other unions that function today as bulwarks of capitalism, did not begin as an employer-faker conspiracy. On the contrary, it was born of the class struggle between capital and labor. Among its early members there were some who had vague aspirations for freedom from the tyranny of capital.

But something happened to the teamsters' union—and to scores of other unions like it. These unions were born of the class struggle, but their members had no clear understanding of what the class struggle meant, what it implied. Before long they came under the influence of leaders who made a career of running unions. These leaders, while putting on a “militant” act when the occasion demanded, prided themselves on being “practical.” Perceiving that security for the workers under capitalism was an unobtainable goal, they sought security for themselves by consolidating their power as union bosses. The key to their power was control of the jobs. The greater the union's control of the jobs, the greater was the control of the labor leader *over the workers who were dependent on those jobs for a living*.

Now here is an ironic thing. To entrench themselves and gain control of the jobs, the labor leaders exploited the workers' own grievances, and their instinct for solidarity and sentiment for unionism. In many an industry, the workers have fought costly, often bloody, battles for such demands as the “closed shop,” the “union shop” and the “check-off”—and these are the very devices that enable the labor leader to assume dictatorial power and to make a mockery of trade union democracy.

To understand the labor leader's scorn for the rank and file, and contempt for the duespayers' rights, it is only necessary to examine Dave Beck's attitude toward the teamsters. Such examination will reveal how near to an absolute dictatorship the teamsters' union is.

As a matter of fact, Beck makes no bones about who runs the union. “I'm paid \$25,000 a year [now it's \$50,000 a year] to run this outfit,” he once said. “Unions are big business. Why should truck drivers and bottle washers be allowed to make big decisions affecting union, policy? Would any corporation allow it?” (*The New Republic*, August 1, 1949.)

To Beck, “labor” is merchandise—as, indeed, it is under capitalism. Other labor

leaders know this as well as Beck does, but they are cautious about admitting it. Not Beck. Beck brazenly boasts that he is in the labor-merchandising business. “Running a labor organization is like running a business,” the *Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 1954, quotes him as saying. “But you don’t manufacture; you sell only one thing—labor. . . .”

### ***The “Trusteeship” Device***

The teamsters’ union was a dictatorship even before Beck became its big boss. It has a long history of goon-rule. And, in 1940, Beck’s predecessor, Dan Tobin (who is now the union’s president emeritus at \$50,000-a-year plus expenses), persuaded a teamsters’ convention to vote him the power to remove local officers and appoint “trustees” whenever he deemed it “for the benefit of the membership.” It should be added that John L. Lewis had introduced the “trustee” trick to the United Mine Workers long before Tobin adopted it. Its purpose: To suppress local rebellion before it could spread. This is the way we described the Lewis method in *John L. Lewis Exposed*.<sup>2</sup>

Lewis has introduced a new governing rule in the union which is not sanctioned by the constitution, namely, “provisional government” and “provisional officers.” In case a district or sub-district opposes him, Lewis simply revokes the charters of these bodies and appoints provisional officers. The officials who have been removed do not lose their membership and can appeal. But here is the rub—if they appeal as members their cases are heard by the new provisional officials (Lewis’s lieutenants), and if they appeal as officials the decision rests with the international executive board, i.e., the Lewis machine. Thus Lewis can act as judge, jury and executioner. Matters are facilitated by the fact that there need be no formal charges, no trial, and, consequently, no need of defense.

Beck has made full use of the “trustee” device to check incipient rebellion in the teamsters’ union. “About 35 trusteeships now exist, according to Mr. Beck,” said the *Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 1954. “Some veteran teamster leaders claim the other thousand-odd locals are often kept in line by the threat of trusteeship.”

Recently, there have been signs of protest against Beck’s high-handedness. In

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<sup>2</sup> *John L. Lewis Exposed*, by Eric Hass.

Joplin, Missouri, more than 200 members of the local are co-petitioners for a permanent court writ to keep Jimmy Hoffa's men (Jimmy Hoffa rules the teamsters' union in 12 states in Beck's name) from running the union. Despite the use of goons, threats of violence, bombs, and even attempts to have the rebellious workers fired by their employers, the embattled rank-and-filers are pressing their court fight. And in Philadelphia, a mass meeting of 7,500 members of Local 107, out of a total membership of 11,000, demanded that Beck terminate the trusteeship of their local which they denounced as "unfair, undemocratic and un-American." (*Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 1954)

Such protests, however, are not likely to make any significant impression on Beck. Nor will they, even if successful, make the teamsters' union a working-class organization. For behind them there is no real understanding of the wrong principles involved, hence no real revolt against the things Beck stands for. The protest of Local 107 appears to have grown out of a fight between two machines for control of the \$25,000 a-year job of secretary-treasurer.

### ***Who Owns the Union?***

Beck's proprietary attitude toward union property is by no means a unique characteristic. All the leading union bosses are strongly inclined to regard union property as *their* property. In some cases this has gotten the union bosses in trouble, as, for example, the ex-president of the International Longshoremen's Association, Joe "King" Ryan, who is under indictment for handling union funds with sticky fingers. Joe allegedly drew various sums out of the union treasury for such personal items as \$40 hats, golf club dues and life insurance premiums.<sup>3</sup>

Originally, union treasuries were accumulated to keep workers going during strikes. But when "practical" men got control of the unions—and their treasuries—union-building and treasury-building became a related end in itself. "What the teamsters want," *The Reporter* magazine quotes Beck as saying, "is peace and per capita. I hate paying strike benefits." (December 8, 1953)

Beck has other uses for the union's funds, as, for example, when, in January, 1954, he bought a million dollars' worth of common stock in the Fruehauf Trailer

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<sup>3</sup> Ryan was convicted in January, 1955, and sentenced to six months in jail, plus a \$2,500 fine.

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Company to help his friend Roy Fruehauf keep control of the corporation. About the same time he offered New York truck operators (exploiters of his own duespayers) a loan of \$2,000,000 to buy equipment to enable the trucking companies to take over the functions of public loaders on the waterfront.

But “investments” is a sideline with Beck, whose main concern is merchandising labor. Today Beck controls the labor power of 1,500,000 workers by controlling their jobs. But Beck’s business is still growing and in another few years he expects to double his stock of marketable wage slaves by doubling his control of jobs.

### **3. The Struggle for Jurisdiction**

Among his fellow union bosses, Dave Beck would take no prizes for popularity. Many hate and fear him. “Strikebreaker,” “business stooge” and “No. 1 traitor of the labor movement” are some of the epithets they hurl at him. But the reason for their hostility to Beck is not that he breaks strikes, stooges for business, or is a “traitor.” Strikebreaking, stooging and treacherous behavior are commonplace among union bureaucrats, so when they accuse Beck of these sins it is really a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

The real reason Beck’s rival union bosses hate and fear him is simply that the teamster boss is a powerful, aggressive and ruthless competitor who, in expanding his own labor-merchandising business, threatens theirs. Beck’s present stock-in-trade is about 1.5 million workers. His goal is to raise the figure to between three and four million, and he expects to get a substantial share of the increase by raiding other unions.

Beck, who flatly refuses to join in an A.F. of L.-C.I.O. “no-raiding pact,” bases his jurisdictional claims on the teamsters’ constitution, which lists a wide range of jurisdictions. The constitution then adds the words: “all others where the security of the bargaining positions of the above classifications requires the organization of such other workers.”

Under this assumed authorization, the powerful teamsters’ union is raiding right and left. Beck says “everything on wheels” must be in the teamsters’ union. The definition is broad and takes in auto salesmen as well as auto mechanics, dairy and cannery workers, vending machine operators, morticians, filling station attendants and egg candlers. “Dave will take anybody he can get his hands on,” says a labor leader quoted anonymously by *The Reporter*. “Then he’ll find some kind of justification for it. A ‘teamster’ to him is anybody who sleeps on a bed with movable casters.” (December 8, 1953)

#### ***“Jurisdictional Controversies Unavoidable”***

Beck didn’t initiate jurisdictional raiding. Disputes between union bosses over duespayers have been a feature of job-trust unionism from the beginning. It is the logical outgrowth of unionism that ignores labor’s class interests, and uses up the workers’ energies on advancing the interests of the labor fakers. Such unionism

inevitably adopts the doctrine of each craft (or plant) for itself and devil take the hindmost. Thus, instead of uniting, it divides labor into competing bodies. Samuel Gompers, one of the founders of the A.F. of L., and a defender and promoter of “pure and simple” unionism, once told a union convention:

Jurisdiction controversies are unavoidable. They are, though, only a phase in the struggle for the survival of the fittest. The craft in whose membership the greatest amount of efficiency is crystallized will finally win out in the fight for jurisdiction and control of the job. [My emphasis.]

Beck fits perfectly into this jungle concept of “unionism.” His goon-ridden teamsters’ union is the most “efficient” in the business, and the most predatory and aggressive. No union is safe from his marauding excursions.

More significant than the range and variety of Beck’s jurisdictional claims is the complete contempt they imply for the wishes of the workers involved. Beck demands of rival labor leaders that they “turn over” certain specified groups of workers to the teamsters’ union as if these workers were so many sheep. This attitude is not confined to the teamster leaders, however. All the union bureaucrats, from the inter. national presidents down to the business agents, tend to regard the workers’ wishes in the matter of union membership as inconsequential.

Once, a long time ago, unions recruited new members by persuading the workers that the union would battle for them and get them better wages, improved working conditions and shorter hours. Except when they are competing with another union in a National Labor Relations Board election, what union goes to this trouble today? Probably a majority of the nation’s fifteen million “organized” workers joined a union because they were compelled to (under “closed shop” and “union shop” conditions) as a condition of employment. Not infrequently, the employer himself facilitates matters by handing the new employee an application blank for membership in the union that controls the job.

Many of America’s union members were “persuaded” to join by means of coercion ranging from a series of “accidents” to a “roughing up” by goons. “Roughing up” is a favorite “organizing” technique of the teamsters’ union. Beck says with tongue in cheek: “We advocate against bashing people on the head to organize them. We’re a hundred per cent against it.” But no teamster-goon feels restrained by such remarks.

A Kansas City grand jury, referring to the teamsters' union, recently complained that a "most reprehensible practice on the part of some union officials is the carrying of guns, blackjacks and other weapons. . . . It cited evidence "that at one time or another almost every assistant business agent of Teamster Local 541 carried a concealed weapon." (*Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 1954.)

Another interesting teamster union "organizing" technique is that of coercing capitalists into enrolling their employees in the union. Today the labor leader doesn't find it necessary to resort to this practice as frequently as in the past, since most capitalists recognize the value of the present-day job-trust unions. This method of "union building" was described in the following testimony recently given before a subcommittee of the House Operations Committee holding hearings in Minneapolis, and reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, April 12, 1954:

REP. KARSTEN [Frank M. Karsten, Dem. of Mo.]: How do you get in your union? Can any employer put me in there without my knowledge?

MR. SCHULLO [Tony Schullo, secretary-treasurer of Teamster Local 648]: Oh, yes, if your employer wants to carry a book for you and calls up and says, "I want a book for so and so, here is the money," why . . .

KARSTEN: But do I have to sign some sort of authorization to get in the union myself or not?

SCHULLO: Not especially, in 99 per cent of the cases, yes, but in this case why—

KARSTEN: In this case did the employees sign?

SCHULLO: That I cannot tell truthfully.

And a little later:

REP. OSMERS [Frank C. Osmers Jr., Rep. of N.J]: Mr. Schullo, as I understand it from your reply to Mr. Karsten, it is possible for an employee within the jurisdiction of your union to be a member of your union without even knowing it, isn't that right? . . .

SCHULLO: That's possible.

OSMERS: In other words, it is possible that you have a number of members in your union who are members of your union against their own will, possibly you wouldn't know until you asked them?

SCHULLO: That's right.

This is not unionism! This is a caricature of unionism! This is what Dave Beck privately admits that it is—a business. It is a business moreover that is infested

with racketeering and that invites racketeering. Beck may eliminate some or all of the gangsters, but only because he wants to reorganize the union in such a way as to reduce the authority of local teamster czars and centralize it in his own hands. *Life*, in a story on Beck, April 19, 1954, quoted one of Beck's lieutenants as saying:

It's always been a free enterprise union. A guy got a local charter, he was in business. There was a sort of no-raiding agreement between Tobin and the local leaders. Now they see Beck moving in on them, centralizing, taking their authority away from them, and they don't like it. He can't move too fast or he'd get a revolution on his hands.

If or when Beck "cleans house," it will make precious little difference to the faceless duespayers of the teamsters' union. They are ciphers today, and they will be ciphers then. They will be ciphers until, enlightened on the principles of Socialist Industrial Unionism and the class struggle, they assert themselves and reorganize with the rest of the workers on class lines. We shall discuss these principles in greater detail later.

## 4. Organized Scabbery

“In the old days, with minor exceptions, only scabs crossed a picket line. These days, the best way to break one union’s strike is to call in another union.”—Murray Kempton in the *New York Post*, October 15, 1951.

The technique for “organized scabbery”—strikebreaking in the name of “unionism”—was described vividly by Daniel De Leon, foremost American Socialist who discovered the principles of Socialist Industrial Unionism, in his epochal address of 1905, *Socialist Reconstruction of Society*. De Leon introduced one of the most important sections of his address with a fascinating and instructive dissertation on the meaning of contracts as agreements entered into by equals, peers or freemen, with neither party under duress. He then demonstrated that capital, since it controls the means of life, holds the whip of hunger over labor, and labor, therefore, is not a “freeman” or the equal and peer of capital, and the “contract” extorted from labor by capital is a fraud.

De Leon further demonstrated that the labor faker used the “contract” as a club to keep the workers’ noses to the grindstone, even forcing them into the despicable role of scabs on their fellow workers. De Leon then summed up:

It is a fact, deep with significance, though it seems to escape the observation of superficial observers, that it is not the unorganized scab who breaks strikes, but the organized craft that really does the dirty work; and thus each craft when itself involved in a strike fights heroically, when not involved demeans itself as arrant scabs; betrays its class—all in fatuous reverence to “contracts!”

### **“Go Through Those Picket Lines”**

Labor fakers have used the “sacred and inviolate contract” line for decades to force their duespayers to swallow the employers’ iniquities, and to cross picket lines and help to break strikes. So Dave Beck, who is hailed as a “new kind of labor leader,” is really not ii new” at all, but just an imitator of fakers before him. Actually, Beck’s predecessor, Dan Tobin, was one of the most brazen scabherders in the business. In *The International Teamster*, June, 1942, under the caption, “Go Through Those Picket Lines!” Tobin wrote:

Sometimes we are inclined to think that many of our members haven't the backbone to cross what we recognize as illegal picket lines.

"Illegal picket lines" were those that did not have Tobin's blessing.

Tobin returned to this favorite theme in the June, 1945, issue of *The International Teamster*, saying:

Most of those fellows who refused to go through picket lines are yellow. It takes a real man to go through a picket line when he is ordered to do so by his international union.

Such is the fruit of pro-capitalist, strikebreaking, devil-take-the-hindmost unionism.

Dave Beck plays the "sanctity of contracts" line for all it is worth. "You put your name to that contract," Beck is quoted by *Life* as saying, "and I don't give a good goddam how bad it turns out to be [for the workers!], you live up to it. Because your word is the most valuable thing you have got." (April 19, 1954)

This is an attitude praised to the skies by employers but disastrous for workers. Combined with Beck's "philosophy" about the employers' "right to a profit" and his concept of a union as a labor-merchandising business in competition with other similar businesses, it has made him the most notorious strikebreaker in the history of the labor movement.

Beck views the strike of another union as an opportunity to improve "public relations"—which is to say, an opportunity to increase the esteem in which he is held by employers. To this end he is ruthless in ordering his reluctant teamsters to cross picket lines. He describes such efforts as "instances of the clearer heads of labor making concrete contributions to the cause of free enterprise." (*The Reporter*, December 8, 1953.)

### ***Beck a Popular Man—With Capitalists***

The employers are duly appreciative. The *Los Angeles Times*, says *The Reporter*, "which battled 'Beckism' for years, now calls Beck 'a leading force for labor stability in southern California.'" *Business Week*, January 24, 1948, said the teamster boss's methods "have endeared Beck to an ever-widening circle of local

businessmen on the Pacific Coast. To them he is the businessman's labor leader." And *Time*, in a feature story on Beck, November 29, 1948, said "the great majority of employers [in the Northwest] think he is wonderful and applaud like happy seals when he speaks at the Chamber of Commerce."

However, scabherding offers another opportunity to Businessman Beck. It is that of shouldering out the striking union and taking over the labor-merchandising business for his union. An example of this was Beck's attempt to take over the labor-supply concession at Boeing Aircraft in Seattle, in 1948. Boeing's 15,000 employees, members of Lodge 751, Aero-Mechanics Division of the then independent International Association of Machinists, had been given a run-around on wages for fourteen months. Fed up, they called a strike on thirty-six hours' notice. Boeing retaliated by declaring that, by not giving a sixty-day strike notice for the "cooling-off" period provided for in the Taft-Hartley Act, the union had lost its bargaining rights.

Beck waited a few weeks, then made his play. He announced in his paper, the *Washington Teamster*, that his union would seek jurisdiction over Boeing employees. It was the beginning of a high-powered campaign—complete with teamster goon squads. But in this case Beck did not win. The workers at Boeing turned the teamsters' union down 2 to 1 in an N.L.R.B. election.

That same year Beck broke a strike of A.F. of L. grocery clerks in Oakland, California, by offering employers a teamsters' contract.

Beck is completely impervious to arguments concerning the justice of the strikers' case. In May, 1951, for example, the A.F. of L. National Farm Labor Union called a strike in California's Imperial Valley. It was a popular strike because the Associated Farmers had a well-earned reputation for being slave-drivers who starved their workers. Nevertheless, on orders of Beck's lieutenants, the teamsters hauled everything that was picked in the valley, and Beck himself wired the California State Legislature pledging that every scab-picked melon would be moved "regardless of any labor interference or other alibis which would attempt to enlist unauthorized teamsters' support." (Quoted by Murray Kempton in the *New York Post*, June 22, 1951.)

Most teamsters who allow themselves to be used as scabs do so reluctantly, and only because their faker leaders threaten them with the loss of their jobs as penalty

for refusal. Some simply refuse to degrade themselves and they pay the penalty. In New York City, a truck driver who lost his job because he refused to drive through a picket line, and who had been a member of Local 807 for thirty years, walked into the union headquarters and tried to shoot the union's president and secretary-treasurer. (*New York Times*, April 22, 1954.)

That Beck is a traitor to the working class, a capitalist labor lieutenant who unhesitatingly throws workers to the wolves to promote his own interests, is a fact that brooks no denial. But who is to bring him before the bar for his treachery? His competitors in the labor-merchandising business? But they are all traitors to the working class—*every single one of them!* All of them preach the false and injurious doctrine of the “sacred” contract, and use it as a cloak for strikebreaking. All of them uphold capitalism under which labor is mere merchandise. And although they hate and fear Dave Beck, they envy him too.

### ***How to End Sellouts***

No, it is not his competitors who must bring Beck before the bar, but an awakened, classconscious, militant working class—among them the 1.5 million duespayers in the teamsters' union. The sellouts and betrayals will end only when the workers understand the correct principles of organization, take matters in their own hands, and build a new union based on their class interests and democratically controlled by the workers themselves. But before we discuss the necessary new union, a few observations on Dave Beck's views and status as a capitalist are in order.

## 5. A Faker's Rewards

Dave Beck is a millionaire, possibly a multi-millionaire. “With his right hand,” said the *Wall Street Journal*, February 9, 1954, “he runs America’s largest labor union, the Teamsters, and is currently doubling its size. With his left he guides a tidy, diversified business kingdom in the Pacific Northwest, and it has been growing too.”

One of Beck’s enterprises is the Northwest Securities Corporation, Inc., which handles better than \$2 million a year in auto finance and insurance. Another is the Kellerblock Corporation, which built and operates the fashionable \$3.5 million Grosvenor apartments in Seattle. The teamsters’ constitution states explicitly that “The General President shall devote his entire time to the service of the International Brotherhood,” and Beck is paid \$50,000 a year plus expenses to do just that. Nevertheless, he finds time to act as board chairman of these two enterprises and to keep an eye on other Beck properties.

Beck says his nest egg was a \$25,000 libel-suit settlement paid him by the *Seattle Times* in 1936. The libel was an incident in the strike of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, which Beck supported. Beck’s position in the teamsters’ union also enabled him to borrow large sums for personal investment at advantageous rates. Shrewdly, he patronized institutions that were happy to do this favor for the man who controlled teamster union funds. The *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 9, 1955, in a study of “Businessman Beck,” notes that the teamster boss has a convenient credit arrangement at “extremely attractive” interest rates with the Occidental Life Insurance Company. The Occidental Life Insurance Company has 75 per cent of the vast health and welfare insurance coverage for teamster members on the West Coast.

The point is not simply that Beck is a capitalist, and a millionaire capitalist at that. It is not that Beck has used his strategic position in the labor movement to make lucrative deals for himself and various members of his family. It is not even that he lives opulently, like a kind of potentate, on a Lake Washington estate complete with heated swimming pool, greenhouse, guesthouse and movie theater. The point is that Beck *thinks* like a capitalist. His attitude toward labor is the attitude of a man who buys and exploits labor. What is more—and this is what distinguishes him from most of the fraternity of labor merchants—he doesn’t bother to conceal this attitude. This is one of the reasons why employers are so

enthusiastic about Beck. The John L. Lewises, Walter Reuthers and George Meanys also have their rooters in the capitalist camp, but the fact that these capitalist labor lieutenants “talk tough” on occasion (for the benefit of duespayer dupes) makes some employers nervous. Beck, on the other hand, is always reassuring. He thinks, talks and acts like a capitalist.

It is little wonder then that Beck inspires such comments as this one from ultra-conservative Franklin McLaughlin, president of the Northwest’s largest private utility:

Beck is a top labor statesman and an outstanding civic leader. He’s absolutely tops. With him we’ve had peace when it might have been hell. (*The New Republic*, August 1, 1949.)

It may be asked—indeed, it *should* be asked—what’s Beck doing in the labor movement? The answer is plain. Beck’s feathering his nest. He’s building himself up with the capitalists for whom he acts as labor merchant. Like every other labor merchant in the business, he’s using the workers’ instinct for organization to promote his private interests, and the interests of the capitalist system that he supports and defends.

### ***Beck Vs. Socialism***

As might be assumed, Beck is an ardent champion of “free enterprise” (i.e., capitalism) and a vigorous foe of Socialism. True, he doesn’t have a very clear understanding of what Socialism is. To him, the most innocuous reform that is called “socialistic” by his capitalist friends is Socialism. He was horrified by proposals to introduce a federal health-insurance program. To the 100th annual convention of the American Medical Association in June, 1951, he said: “Any system which proposes such modifications in our way of living and doing things would lead to a dangerous socialistic trend and cannot be tolerated. Such a system would destroy our liberty.”

But Beck doesn’t have to know what Socialism is; he’s against it just the same. He’s against it because he senses instinctively that its aim is to abolish the capitalist system under which labor is merchandise, the system, that is, that enables Beck to operate as a labor merchant. He’s against it because it would put an

end to private ownership and capitalist privilege. This is what he means by “destroying liberty.”

There is a great deal more that could be said about Dave Beck and Dave Beck’s Business, but this is an indictment, not a history, and quite enough has been said to prove that Beck is an enemy and betrayer of labor, and that his “union” is a racket-ridden, scab-herding organization.

Now, the question is, what to do about it?

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*Apropos of the faker’s reward, Dave Beck has discovered a new angle for increasing his. On March 10, 1955, the teamsters’ union’s executive board voted unanimously to buy Beck’s lavish lake-front house in Seattle—complete with swimming pool, artificial waterfall and movie projection room—at a cost of \$163,000—and to turn it back to him to live in rent—free and tax-paid.*

*This expression of “gratitude” was so raw that it was cloaked in secrecy until the press got wind of it on July 24. Beck then offered the explanation that the union was doing for him what it had done for his predecessor, Dan Tobin. The union built a lavish house for Tobin in Miami and another in Marshfield, Mass. He also has a Cadillac and a chauffeur—at union expense.*

*But Beck still has the dubious distinction of being the only union bureaucrat to sell his own home to the union and have it handed back to him rent and tax free.*

## 6. Organize a Real Union!

This is not a question for the teamsters alone. We have shown that all present-day unions are based on the same general principles as the teamsters' union. And if they are not now as "bad" as the teamsters'—if their leaders are not yet as brazen in showing their contempt for the rank and file—they are moving in that direction. They all accept capitalism and the commodity status of labor. This is enough to condemn them as props of capitalism.

In saying this, the Socialist Labor Party is not antiunion. On the contrary, the S.L.P. has preached the importance of unionism from the very beginning. The kind of unions the S.L.P. is against are pro-capitalist unions that divide the workers into separate job trusts that scab on one another and war with one another over duespayer jurisdictions. These are the kind of unions that are represented today by the A.F. of L., C.I.O., and railroad brotherhoods. The "Independents" in existence—Lewis's U.M.W., and the so-called "Communist-dominated" unions ousted from the C.I.O.—are equally phony. One and all, they accept the premise that capitalism is the best of all possible systems and are determined to preserve it. One and all, although pretending to varying degrees of "militancy," they accept the role of labor-merchandising concerns.

So much for the kind of unions the S.L.P. is *against*. Now a word about the unionism it is for.

### ***Basis of True Unionism***

For more than sixty years the S.L.P. has recognized the existing class struggle as the only sound basis for a bona fide economic organization of labor. There is a class struggle. The capitalist class is on one side and the working class on the other. And the focal point of the struggle is the division of labor's product. The more the workers get in wages, the less is left for the capitalists' profits. Contrariwise, the more successful the capitalists are in pushing wages down, the greater will be the share of labor's product that goes into their pockets.

Once the workers recognize the existence of the class struggle, they will never again fall for the line that "capital and labor are brothers" or that there is it a community of interest" between employers and employees. Such a line, however plausibly it may be argued by the labor faker, is inevitably the prelude to a sellout

of labor's interest. And the union that falls for it, perhaps by taking a wage cut (as was recently done by the U.A.W. at Kaiser's) or otherwise helping one employer as against another, or one group of employers as against another group, invariably helps to divide the working class and weaken labor's resistance to increased exploitation.

First, therefore, the workers must understand, in De Leon's words, that

. . . . between the working class and the capitalist class there is an irrepressible conflict, a class struggle for life. No glib tongued politician can vault over it, no capitalist professor, or official statistician can argue it away; no capitalist parson can veil it; no labor faker can straddle it; no "reform" architect can bridge it over. It crops up in all manner of ways, as in this strike [a strike of New Bedford textile workers], in ways that disconcert all the plans and all the schemes of those who would deny or ignore it. It is a struggle that will not down, and must be ended only by either the total subjugation of the working class, or the abolition of the capitalist class. (*What Means This Strike?*)

Which is to say, *by the abolition of the capitalist system and the establishment of Socialism.*

A union worthy of the name must understand that this is the goal of the labor movement—the emancipation of labor from its commodity—wage status and the reconstruction of society on lines that will enable the workers, who produce collectively, to own their tools collectively and to enjoy the full social product of their labor.

Thanks to the theoretical genius of Daniel De Leon, a structural concept, tactical program and goal have already been worked out.

### ***Dual Role of the Industrial Union***

A bona fide union of the working class must take in all the workers, unemployed as well as employed, skilled and unskilled, without regard for sex, color or creed. Its form, or structure, must be *industrial* in accordance with the structure of modern industry. Thus the Automobile Workers Industrial Union would embrace all the workers in the automotive industry—including supervisory workers, technicians and office workers, as well as the men at the drill presses or on the

assembly lines—subdivided into local industrial unions and plant units, and further subdivided into shop organizations according to the tools that are used.

A real working class union *must* organize along industrial lines for two closely related reasons.

First, the Industrial Union has a key tactical role to play in the abolition of capitalist class rule. Theoretically, all that the working class has to do to bring about a social change is to vote capitalism out and Socialism in. The working class has the numbers to carry the day at the ballot box and, indeed, must use the peaceful and civilized method of the ballot for all that it is worth. But it must do so with the full consciousness that it is dealing with a ruling class that is determined to maintain its property and privileges at all costs, even at the cost of throwing the Constitution overboard and ruling through dictatorship. Therefore, the working class must be prepared to enforce a Socialist victory at the polls with an organization capable of taking, holding and operating the industries of the land. Only the Socialist Industrial Union, taking the form of the human machine that operates industry today, under capitalism, can perform this crucial role.

Secondly, the Industrial Union has a key role to play in the organization of Socialism.

### ***End of Political Parties and the Political State***

To understand this role one must grasp the fact that Socialism does not mean the election of a gang of “Socialist” politicians to take over and run the political State, supposedly for the benefit of the workers. This is the reformist or phony Socialist concept held by the Labor party of Great Britain and the Social Democratic party of Germany. It is a concept that leads only to a change of masters—the bureaucrat for the capitalist—and to frustration and disillusionment for the workers.

Nor does Socialism resemble the bureaucratic despotism that rules Soviet Russia. Russia represents a betrayal of Socialism. In the name of Marx its bureaucratic masters have violated every basic principle for which Marx stood. They have retained the political State, the existence of which, Marx said, “is inseparable from the existence of slavery.”

Socialism means the abolition of the political State. It means the end of political parties—including the workers' own party. The new government will be based on industry itself. And its framework will be the same industrial union organization with which the workers have taken over, and with which they run, the industries.

Here is the structure of a free society, a society in which the workers own their tools collectively and control them democratically. The workers will vote where they work, instead of where they live. They will elect their foremen, their superintendents in the plant, and their representatives to the various administrative councils up to and including the Socialist Industrial Union Congress, which will direct and correlate the nation's economy. In short, under the Socialist Industrial Union Administration of the future Industrial Republic of Labor, the worker will achieve at last the complete mastery of his tools and products that will make him truly free.

One of the obstacles in the way of the working class is the existing, faker-run unions. That obstacle must be swept aside by an aroused and enlightened working class. To this end, and to the speedy consolidation of labor's power in a bona fide, classconscious union, every thinking worker should devote time and energy without stint.

Join with the S.L.P. in exposing the Dave Becks and the whole faker tribe! Join with the S.L.P. in spreading the knowledge essential to the political unity of labor, and the early creation of a Socialist Industrial Union—the workers' power! Let the watchword be:

The workshops to the workers!

The products to the producers!

All power to the Socialist Industrial Union!

(THE END)