

# *A Catholic New Deal: Religion and Labor in 1930s Pittsburgh*

**L**ESLIE TENTLER, A STUDENT OF AMERICAN religious and labor history, observes that many scholars tend to misjudge the role Catholicism played in the 1930s union movement. Lizabeth Cohen, Gary Gerstle, and Douglas Seaton, among others, criticize the anti-Communist Catholic priests who supported the 1930s union movement. According to such labor historians, Catholic priests undermined the political power of American workers by purging their ranks of well-intentioned Communists. Cohen contends that Chicago workers could not have formed successful industrial unions without first severing their ties to their religious and ethnic communities. To Cohen, and to Gerstle as well, workers' religious and cultural associations interfered with the development of class consciousness and, therefore, of labor organization.<sup>1</sup>

Other scholars depict Catholic clergy and laity as foes of reform and as catalysts of America's anti-Communist foreign policy after World War II. Michael Heale argues that American Catholic anti-Communism in the 1930s "intertwined" with anti-Semitism. He also asserts that anti-Communist political activism was the way by which Catholics proved "their American identity." In the same vein, Stephen Whitfield concludes that anti-Communism secured Catholics' place in American society: "A

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (New York, 1989), Neil Betten, *Catholic Activism and the Industrial Worker* (Gainesville, Fla., 1976), Douglas P. Seaton, *Catholics and Radicals: The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and the American Labor Movement, from Depression to Cold War* (Lewisburg, Pa., 1981), Steve Ross-wurm, "The Catholic Church and the Left-Led Unions: Labor Priests, Labor Schools, and the ACTU," in Steve Ross-wurm, ed., *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1992), 119-37, Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York, 1990), Joshua B. Freeman, *In Transit: The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933-1966* (New York, 1989), Ronald Schatz, "Connecticut's Working Class in the 1950s: A Catholic Perspective," *Labor History* 25 (1980), 83-101, Leslie Tentler, "On the Margins: The State of American Catholic History," *American Quarterly* 45 (1993), 104-27

minority that had been subjected to a century of bigotry in Protestant America thus took out final citizenship papers." Even the otherwise sympathetic historian David O'Brien notes that in the 1930s "anti-Communism provided a device which could ease Catholic insecurity and allow for simultaneous assertion of loyalty to Church and nation."<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary actors were no less concerned with the political attitudes of American Catholics. Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes resented the church's opposition to Joseph Stalin and its support of Spanish rebel leader Francisco Franco. He also did not appreciate Catholics who argued that some New Deal programs dangerously enhanced state power. At various points in 1939, Ickes observed that, "The Roman Catholic Church has given its sympathy to the dictatorships because it feared Communism," while Pope Pius XII had undermined the Soviet Union's popular front against Hitler. In 1938 he accused the Catholic Church of pressuring Roosevelt to appoint former Michigan governor Frank Murphy to the Supreme Court: "It seems that the Catholics are after this appointment. They are not entitled to it, but the Roman Church is after all it can get." Ickes in 1937 recounted a conversation with the Episcopalian mayor of New York City, Fiorello La Guardia, who observed that criticism of liberal child labor legislation by several Catholic bishops reminded him of "the Spanish Inquisition."<sup>3</sup>

A great impetus to such sentiment among certain New Dealers was the fact that Catholics, although just 17 percent (20 million) of the population in the 1930s, had become a political force. While millions of southern and eastern European Catholic immigrants who came to the United States between 1890 and 1914 did not vote, their American-born children did. Once the Great Depression set in, and the Democrats

<sup>2</sup> M J Heale, *American Anti-Communism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore, 1990), 106, 116, 173, Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore, 1990), 91-92, 99, David J. O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years* (New York, 1968), 94-95, Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Sources of the 'Radical Right,'" in Daniel Bell, ed., *The Radical Right: The New American Right* (New York, 1964), 353, 355, Les K. Adler and Thomas G. Paterson, "Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s-1950s," *American Historical Review* 75 (1970), 1,046-64.

<sup>3</sup> Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 91, Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes* (3 vols., New York, 1953-54), Vol. 2 *The Inside Struggle, 1936-1939*, 86, 390, 423, 586, 650, 705, Alan Brinkley, "The New Deal and the Idea of the State," in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton, 1989), 85-121.

launched federal programs to assist unemployed workers, Catholics became key New Deal supporters. In 1936 and 1940 Catholics were far more likely to vote Democratic than Protestants. Roosevelt never received the majority of Protestant votes.<sup>4</sup>

Crucial to mobilizing Catholics on behalf of social reform were priests who exercised enormous spiritual influence with their parishioners. It was an influence New Dealers dared not discount. Additionally, the Catholic press, which in 1936 consisted of 134 newspapers and 198 magazines with a combined circulation of 6.9 million, backed many of Roosevelt's economic programs, including the creation of Social Security. At the same time, publications such as the *Catholic Sentinel* (Portland, Oregon), the *Catholic Telegraph-Register* (Cincinnati, Ohio), and the Jesuits' *America* castigated New Dealers who championed Stalin against Franco and criticized some liberal initiatives—notably the prohibition of child labor.<sup>5</sup>

Ickes and La Guardia decried Catholic political clout, but they recognized that without it the New Deal, as well as their government jobs, would be jeopardized. They wanted Catholic votes, not Catholic leadership. In part this explained their distaste for Catholic political activism. It was the strident denunciations of the New Deal and "international Jewry" by Michigan priest and radio personality Charles Coughlin, plus Franco's marriage of convenience with Nazi Germany that enabled

<sup>4</sup> Kristi Andersen, *The Creation of a Democratic Majority, 1928-1936* (Chicago, 1979), 29-30, 32, 41-42, John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington, 1985), 112, George Q. Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency, 1932-1936* (Lexington, 1968), 1-21, 36-60, George Q. Flynn, *Roosevelt and Romanism: Catholics and American Diplomacy, 1937-1945* (Westport, Conn., 1976), xviii-xx, Samuel Lubell, *The Future of American Politics* (New York, 1952), 28, Raymond E. Wolfinger, "The Development and Persistence of Ethnic Voting," in Lawrence H. Fuchs, ed., *American Ethnic Politics* (New York, 1968), 163-93, John J. Kane, "The Social Structure of American Catholics," *American Catholic Sociological Review* 16 (1955), 23-30.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews and Italians of New York City, 1929-1941* (Baltimore, 1978), 90, Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency*, xiv, 50-53, 109-13, 128-33, Flynn, *Roosevelt and Romanism*, 4-5, 29, 33-34, 37, Heale, *American Anti-Communism*, 116, John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York, 1972), 52-54, Allen Guttman, *The Wound in the Heart: America and the Spanish Civil War* (New York, 1962), 43, José M. Sanchez, *The Spanish Civil War as Religious Tragedy* (North Bend, Ind., 1987), 194, Charles H. Trout, *Boston, the Great Depression and the New Deal* (New York, 1977), 22-23, 259-62, *Catholic Sentinel* (Portland, Oreg.), Aug. 4, 14, 1938, *Catholic Telegraph-Register* (Cincinnati), Aug. 5, 12, 1938.

critics to disparage Catholicism.<sup>6</sup> Actually, Coughlin's influence with Catholics declined after 1936 when he became anti-Semitic and unreasonably critical of the New Deal. Moreover, many liberals failed to understand that a significant wing of the American Catholic Church was simultaneously anti-Communist, antifascist, and anti-laissez-faire capitalist. Imbued with the spirit of the papal encyclicals by Leo XIII (*The Condition of Labor*, 1891) and Pius XI (*Reconstructing the Social Order*, 1931, and *Atheistic Communism*, 1937) reform-minded clergy sought a political role in the 1930s. Having attained a position of influence within the Democratic Party and organized labor, such Catholics fought Communist unionists and sought to build "a just and moral society" that would provide *all* citizens with economic security.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, there were members of the American Catholic Church hierarchy who were hostile towards the New Deal and viewed all reform efforts as Communist-inspired. Boston's William Cardinal O'Connor, while no friend of Coughlin's, in 1934 had criticized New Dealers and ordered diocesan clergy not to promote lay instruction on *The Condition of Labor* and *Reconstructing the Social Order*. Similarly, Father Robert Gannon, the president of Fordham University, gave an unfavorable assessment of New Deal liberals after the 1936 presidential election:

<sup>6</sup> Flynn, *Roosevelt and Romanism*, 54, George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll Public Opinion, 1933-1971* (3 vols., New York, 1972), 1:100-101, John W. Jeffries, *Testing the Roosevelt Coalition Connecticut Society and Politics in the Era of World War II* (Knoxville, 1979), 157-58, Jordan A. Schwarz, *Liberal Adolf A. Berle and the Vision of an American Era* (New York, 1987), 175-215, Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945* (New York, 1970), Philip Gleason, "American Catholic Higher Education, 1940-1990: The Ideological Context," in George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, eds., *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York, 1992), 234-58, David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York, 1985), and *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941* (New York, 1985). Feingold underscored the fact that 22.7 percent of the Nazi storm troopers were Catholic, a seemingly large proportion until one recalls that the author had mentioned in passing that Catholics represented 43 percent of the German population. Catholics were underrepresented in the Nazi movement and, as Sanchez points out in *The Spanish Civil War as Religious Tragedy*, Pius XI condemned fascism long before the democracies did.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression* (New York, 1983), 86-87, 129-30, O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform, Five Great Encyclicals* (New York, 1939), Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency*, 22-35, John Leo LeBrun, "The Role of the Catholic Worker Movement in American Pacifism, 1933-1972," Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1973, Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America* (Philadelphia, 1982), John A. Ryan, "Catholics and Anti-Semitism," *Current History* 49 (1939), 25-26.

What [liberals] want is not so much our money as our children. They want our schools and colleges. They want key positions in the civil service. They want control of relief and all the social agencies and they are getting what they want. Later they hope, when they have the youth of the nation in their power, to eliminate all religion and all morality that does not conform to their peculiar ideology.<sup>8</sup>

Gannon and O'Connor exercised limited influence among Catholics, while in 1936 Coughlin's Union Party barely garnered 16 percent of Boston's ethnic Irish vote. Moreover, the majority of America's Catholic clergy, according to political scholars Monroe Billington and Cal Clark, endorsed most of the New Deal's economic agenda. The greatest shortcoming of Coughlin and a number of middle-class Irish laity in Boston and New York was their inability to understand the aspirations of working-class Catholics. This failure, and their fear that they were losing social position relative to Italians, Jews, and blacks, made most of the Irish political and religious leaders of the East Coast largely irrelevant to the Catholic reformers of America's industrial heartland. Catholic clergy, labor, and political activists from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, to Cleveland, Ohio, drew inspiration from their own local historical experiences and from the pronouncements of the Washington-based National Catholic Welfare Conference. The grievances that animated Boston and New York politics were of little concern to union and church activists in Pittsburgh. As one Italian coal miner from Johnstown argued, the Catholic Church had an obligation to administer to the social needs of working people. He wanted a Catholic New Deal for Johnstown. To him an American Catholic Church that failed to serve the needs of its working-class majority had no religious authority.<sup>9</sup>

This essay will focus on several activist priests from Pittsburgh, among them James Cox, Carl Hensler, and Charles Owen Rice, who championed

<sup>8</sup> Trout, *Boston, the Great Depression, and the New Deal*, 258-71, Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 104-5, 121-22, 176-78, 206, 254-61, Gerald H. Gamm, *The Making of New Deal Democrats Voting Behavior and Realignment in Boston, 1920-1940* (Chicago, 1989), 154-55, Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict*, 31, 40-41, 46, 88-91.

<sup>9</sup> Gamm, *The Making of New Deal Democrats*, 154-55, Steven P. Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985* (Berkeley, 1988), 114-15, Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 104-5, 176-78, Monroe Billington and Cal Clark, "Catholic Clergymen, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the New Deal," *Catholic Historical Review* 79 (1993), 65-82, Lawrence O'Rourke, *Geno: The Life and Mission of Geno Baroni* (New York, 1991), 203.

their Catholic vision of social justice. Their vision was anti-Communist but never anti-Semitic. Rice, whose political influence has been less apparent to many historians than Charles Coughlin's, played a great role within the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Catholics certainly did much to lay the groundwork for American opposition to Communism, but the Catholic clergy who embraced the cause of social justice were equally concerned with an "exploitative" capitalist economy. They believed that Communists as well as irresponsible capitalists were impediments to the creation of a better society.<sup>10</sup>

Catholic activists did not use anti-Communism in the 1930s as a way to become Americanized, nor was Catholic anti-Communism motivated by Nazi sympathies. Rather, reformist clergy sought to transform American society in line with their church teachings. They were utterly opposed to Nazism, Communism, and a capitalist system unresponsive to the needs of working-class citizens. Their mission was one of social reconstruction, not cultural assimilation. Indeed, it was the Communist rather than the Catholic labor organizers who expropriated the symbols of the secular political culture—the Pilgrims and Abraham Lincoln—to prove their "Americanism."<sup>11</sup>

The Catholic clergy who enlisted in the ranks of organized labor were often from working-class backgrounds. Considering the Communists who swarmed into the CIO to be just as opportunistic as many capitalists, albeit loyal to Moscow rather than Wall Street, Catholic reformers were determined to resist both. Historians who have written informed accounts of Catholic social activism in the 1930s, notably Francis Broderick and Patrick McGeever, frequently failed to give full credence to the labor priests' anti-capitalist stance. Certainly, the labor priests supported much of the New Deal, but they were highly selective in which federal programs they embraced, rejecting initiatives that appeared to enhance state power too greatly. As David O'Brien observed in comparing the American and European Catholic responses to the Great Depression:

In Europe, Catholic leaders were willing to use the power of the authoritarian

<sup>10</sup> Patrick J. McGeever, *Rev. Charles Owen Rice: Apostle of Contradiction* (Pittsburgh, 1989), Annemarie Drahm, "Unlikely Allies for Unionization: Homestead, Pennsylvania, 1933-1946," M.A. thesis, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1984, Liston Pope, "Religion and Class Structure," *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science* 256 (1948), 84-95.

<sup>11</sup> Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism*, 153-95.

state to impose moral values in the vain hope that, once society had been restored to its Christian basis, the need for state intervention in the social sphere would disappear. In countries where the Church was a minority, Catholics hesitated to give such power to the secular state and hoped instead for the development of autonomous groups by organization from below.<sup>12</sup>

This notion of organization from below, or, to use the terminology of Pius XI, "subsidiarity," would form an important component of the Catholic New Deal. Subsidiarity was the idea, as sociologist and Catholic priest Andrew Greeley wrote, that a democratic and moral society required "the maximization of participation in decision making in every sector of society." Management, labor, and consumers, Catholics, Jews, and Protestants, all should participate directly in shaping the kind of society that would serve the common good. If Catholic activists perceived that particular New Deal policies circumvented input by ordinary citizens, then they would express opposition to those programs. In this manner reformist Catholic clergy and laity in the 1930s created their own definition of what it meant to be American citizens, as well as to be members of a religious minority that had moved into the heart of the nation's political debates. They would neither abandon their Catholicism nor their notion of what constituted social justice to appease critics.<sup>13</sup>

In 1900 the Pittsburgh district produced 64 percent of America's structural steel. Needing enormous quantities of inexpensive labor, U.S. Steel and Jones and Laughlin imported tens of thousands of Catholic peasants from southern and eastern Europe prior to World War I. Consequently, the Pittsburgh diocese acquired the largest Croatian and Slovak populations outside Europe, as well as the nation's third greatest ethnic Polish community. By the 1930s Pittsburgh ranked fifth in the

<sup>12</sup> Francis L. Broderick, *John A. Ryan Right Reverend New Dealer* (New York, 1963), O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform*, 66-67, McGeever, *Rev Charles Owen Rice*

<sup>13</sup> Andrew M. Greeley, "What is Subsidiarity? A Voice from Sleepy Hollow," *America*, Nov 9, 1985, 292-95

United States in the percentage of its population that was Catholic (35 percent) and was the seventh largest diocese in the American church.<sup>14</sup>

With the arrival of the Great Depression, 32 percent of Pittsburgh's labor force was unemployed. In the Catholic mill wards and the Hill District ghetto, the unemployment rate reached as high as 56 percent. Once the New Deal established the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and other programs to aid the unemployed, the proportion of Democratic voters in Allegheny County (Pittsburgh) increased 67 percent. By 1938, with the bulk of second generation Catholic and Jewish ethnics having attained their majority, there were as many registered Democrats as there had been voters in 1930. With the allegiance of this voting bloc, Pittsburgh's Catholic political boss, David Lawrence, rose to state party chair. His organization, lubricated with federal funds, enabled him to add thousands of Democrats to the WPA rolls prior to every election. In 1939 Ickes privately denounced the Pennsylvania Democratic Party for being "too predominantly Catholic." What Ickes failed to note was that the Irish Catholic politicians of Pittsburgh and Cleveland were more willing to bring blacks, Italians, Jews, and Slavs into the Democratic coalition than their less tolerant counterparts in Boston and New York.<sup>15</sup>

Economic crisis also spurred industrial union organizing in Pittsburgh. The number of strikes rose from ten in 1932 to ninety-nine in 1937, a year in which 4,740 industrial disputes occurred nationally. Seeking control of the labor movement, Communist Party chief Earl Browder in 1936 set his sights on the Pittsburgh-based Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC). Within two years 60 of SWOC's 200 organizers

<sup>14</sup> John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Loves of Their Own: Blacks, Italians and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana, Ill., 1982), 20, Flynn, *Roosevelt and Romanism*, xviii-xx, June Granatir Alexander, "Staying Together: Chain Migration and Patterns of Slovak Settlement in Pittsburgh Prior to World War I," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 1 (1981), 56-83, Curtis Miner, *Homestead: The Story of a Steel Town* (Pittsburgh, 1989), Bruce M. Stave, *The New Deal and the Last Hurrah: Pittsburgh Machine Politics* (Pittsburgh, 1970), 40-42, Michael P. Weber, *Don't Call Me Boss: David L. Lawrence, Pittsburgh's Renaissance Mayor* (Pittsburgh, 1988), 51.

<sup>15</sup> Andersen, *The Creation of a Democratic Majority, 1928-1936*, 34, 42, Flynn, *Roosevelt and Romanism*, xviii-xx, Stanley High, "The WPA: Politicians' Playground," *Current History* 50 (1939), 23, 25, Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, 694-95, Stave, *The New Deal and the Last Hurrah*, 41-49, Steven P. Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985* (Berkeley, 1988).

were members of the Communist Party, including Western Pennsylvania Communist District secretary Morris Poberski. The Communists appeared in strength at the CIO's first constitutional convention, held in Pittsburgh in 1938, and assumed leadership positions in 40 percent of the CIO's member unions. Indeed, they dominated the Pittsburgh-based United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers' Union (UE).<sup>16</sup>

Prior to the formation of SWOC, several leading Catholic clergy had entered the political arena. During the 1919 steel strike, the administrative committee of the National Catholic War Council issued the "Bishops' Program of Social Reconstruction." The bishops argued that workers had the legal right to form labor unions and should expect "a living wage." They also advocated that industry and the federal government provide for "insurance against illness, invalidity, unemployment, and old age." Once workers received better wages and access to education, they could assume more responsibility for providing for their own health insurance and retirement. Finally, the bishops admonished both labor and capital that

The laborer must come to realize that he owes his employer and society an honest day's work in return for a fair wage, and that conditions cannot be substantially improved until he roots out the desire to get a maximum return for a minimum of service. The capitalist must likewise get a new viewpoint. He needs to learn the long-forgotten truth that wealth is a stewardship, that profit-making is not the basic justification of business enterprise, and that there are such things as fair profits, fair interest, and fair prices. Above and before all, he must cultivate and strengthen within his mind the truth which many of his class have begun to grasp for the first time during the present war, namely, that the laborer is a human being, not merely an instrument of production; and that the laborer's right to a decent livelihood is the first moral charge upon industry. The employer has a right to get a reasonable living out of his business, but he has no right to interest on his investment until his employees have obtained at

<sup>16</sup> Jacob Feldman, *The Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania A History, 1755-1945* (Pittsburgh, 1986), 248-50, Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism The Depression Decade* (New York, 1984), 162, 229-30, 232, 238, 251, 331, Trout, *Boston, the Great Depression and the New Deal*, 221-22, Ronald W. Schatz, *The Electrical Workers A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1923-1960* (Urbana, Ill., 1983), 82-85, 140-41, 196, 200, 215, Draham, "Unlikely Allies Fight for Unionization", George Powers, *Cradle of Steel Unionism Monongahela Valley, Pennsylvania* (East Chicago, Ind., 1972)

least living wages. This is human and Christian, in contrast to the purely commercial and pagan, ethics of industry.<sup>17</sup>

Slovak Catholic leaders embraced the bishops' contentions and supported their efforts to establish the National Catholic Welfare Conference as an agency for social change. In Homestead Father Clement Hrtanek of Saint Anne's Church dismissed the garish claims of the mill owners and newspaper publishers that the 1919 steel strike had its origins in Russia. Born in 1889 to Slovak immigrant laborers, Hrtanek knew his people well. The Slavic steelworkers who made up the majority of strikers in 1919 wanted decent wages, not Bolshevik revolution. As Thomas Bell (Belejcek) of Braddock put it in his 1941 novel, *Out of This Furnace*, Slovaks sought to secure their rights as citizens of the United States.

It wasn't where you were born or how you spelled your name or where your father had come from. It was the way you thought and felt about certain things. About freedom of speech and the equality of men and the importance of having one law—for rich and poor, for the people you liked and the people you didn't like. About the right of every man to live his life as he thought best, his right to defend it if anyone tried to change it and his right to change it himself if he decided he liked some other way of living better. About the uses to which wealth and power could honorably be put, and about honor itself, honor integrity, self-respect, the whatever-you-wanted-to-call-it that determined for a man which things he couldn't say or do under any circumstances, not for all the money there was, not even to help his side win. About human dignity, which helped a man live proudly and distinguished his death from an animal's; and, finally, about the value to be put on a human life, one's enemy no less than one's own.<sup>18</sup>

Other Pennsylvania Catholics viewed church teachings as blueprints to construct a just society. United Mine Workers (UMW) insurgent John Brophy, driven from the Pennsylvania coal fields by union president John L. Lewis, came to Pittsburgh in 1927. Once there, Brophy discovered Leo XIII's encyclical *The Condition of Labor*. The miner felt that

<sup>17</sup> "Bishops' Program of Social Reconstruction," in Raphael M. Huber, ed., *Our Bishops Speak: National Pastorals and Annual Statements of the Hierarchy of the United States, 1919-1951*, 243-60, Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, 109-10, Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 130

<sup>18</sup> Miner, *Homestead, The Story of a Steel Town*, 42-43, Thomas Bell, *Out of This Furnace: A Novel of Immigrant Labor in America* (Pittsburgh, 1992), 411, Clement J. Hrtanek, Record of Priests, Diocese of Pittsburgh, Clement Hrtanek Papers, Historical Archives of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Draham, "Unlikely Allies Fight for Unionization"

he had found church support for his ideas on “democratic economic and social planning.” He joined Father James Cox, the pastor of Old Saint Patrick’s Church, in establishing a labor school. Brophy and Cox introduced workers to the “Bishops’ Program of Social Reconstruction” and *The Condition of Labor*.<sup>19</sup>

Pat Fagan, who became president of UMW District 5 (Pittsburgh) in 1922 when Phil Murray rose to national office in the miners’ union, was no less inspired by Catholic social instruction. A friend of John Brophy, Fagan recalled that he drew strength from Leo XIII:

One of the greatest things that ever happened to labor and management was the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII. To me it was one of the finest social documents that I’ve ever seen for social justice, for protecting the worker and management. . . . I became aware of it because of my father’s knowledge of the encyclical. It was called *Rerum Novarum* [*The Condition of Labor*]. My father used to read all the encyclicals and talk to us about them. It was a result of going into the mine at the age that I did [12] and after starting to do a little more thinking than I did at first. I thought, “Is this all life means—to work, eat, and sleep? Have no recreation, no leisure, no time to spend with your family?” I said, “This really is a tough world.”

Then, of course, I thought that the Pope to me was somebody I was responsible to. He was the vicar of Christ on Earth, and he was interested in not only the spiritual and moral, but the material welfare of people that have to work for a living.<sup>20</sup>

As the reminiscences of Fagan and Brophy attest, the Pittsburgh diocese did not lack Catholics who were prepared to bring their religious beliefs to bear on the transformation of labor-management relations. Pittsburgh Bishop Hugh Boyle nurtured this spirit of Catholic social activism. A man with deep roots in Western Pennsylvania, Boyle had, since his installation as bishop in 1921, concerned himself with improving the conditions of working people. Joining Cleveland, Ohio, Bishop Joseph Schrembs, an author of the 1919 “Program on Social Reconstruction,” Boyle assumed an influential position on the administrative committee of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. In 1933 Boyle helped to

<sup>19</sup> John Brophy, *A Miner’s Life* (Madison, 1964), 9, 100, 127, 223

<sup>20</sup> Pat Fagan, interviews by Alice M. Hoffman, Sept 24, Oct 1, 1968, Aug 8, 1972, Historical Collections and Labor Archives, Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pa

write the American bishops' statement on "The Present Crisis," a rousing condemnation of greed, as well as a call for all Catholics to heed the lessons of Pius XI's encyclical of 1931, *Reconstructing the Social Order*.<sup>21</sup>

One priest who readily responded to Pius XI's call to action was Father James Cox. A native of Pittsburgh and born into abject poverty in 1886, Cox had worked as a mill hand before graduating from Duquesne University and Saint Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. Ordained in 1911, Cox had served as a chaplain on the Western Front in World War I. When the Great Depression hit Pittsburgh, Cox opened a soup kitchen on the grounds of Old Saint Patrick's. Between 1930 and 1934, Cox served more than two million free meals and erected shelters that housed 250 people. In 1931 he helped striking taxicab drivers keep body and soul together in a labor war that killed one person and wounded 175 others. Seeking Cox's political support, Governor Gifford Pinchot appointed him to the State Commission for the Unemployed.<sup>22</sup>

Convinced by January 1932 that Hoover would not act to alleviate Americans' suffering unless pressured, Cox led 20,000 Pennsylvanians on a protest march to Washington, D.C. Working closely with Henry Ellenbogen, a Lawrence advisor and future Pittsburgh congressman, the Catholic priest and the Jewish politician led a caravan of unemployed flag-waving steelworkers to Washington. March organizer and Brackenridge, Pennsylvania, priest Casimir Orlemanski admonished Hoover: "A system which can in the span of a few days add ten billions of dollars to the worth of securities on Wall Street, when in the same time thousands of men are thrown out of work and the industry as a whole added not one bit to the appreciation of the values of securities is a system which cannot long endure." Likewise, Cox condemned "an economic order out of joint" and demanded that Congress appropriate \$5 billion for public works projects to employ the idled, while adding to the nation's infrastructure.

<sup>21</sup> "The Present Crisis," in *Our Bishops Speak*, 272-300

<sup>22</sup> Thomas H Coode and John D Petrarulo, "The Odyssey of Pittsburgh's Father Cox," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 55 (1972), 217-38, "Father Cox Dies Suddenly at 65," *Sun-Telegraph* (Pittsburgh), March 20, 1951, George Swetnam, "Flashback Father Cox," *Press* (Pittsburgh), Oct 28, 1973, Elmer Cope to A J Muste, Jan 12, 1932, Elmer Cope Papers, Box 8, Ohio Historical Society, Dr H H Sullivan, letter and medical report to James Cox, May 6, 1927, and James Cox, Record of Priests, Diocese of Pittsburgh, James Cox Papers, Historical Archives of the Diocese of Pittsburgh (hereafter, CP, DP)

Alternatively contemptuous of, and frightened by, what was then the largest protest march on Washington in the nation's history, Hoover met with Cox. Put off by Hoover, Cox subsequently rallied 60,000 unemployed workers in the University of Pittsburgh football stadium and announced that he would run for president on the third party Jobless ticket.<sup>23</sup>

Determined to compel the Republican and Democratic parties to address the issue of unemployment, Cox made a speaking tour of the United States. Attracting crowds numbering in the thousands, which at first were Catholic but increasingly made up of working-class Protestants, Cox acquired the endorsement of Massillon, Ohio, farmer Jacob Coxey who in 1894 had led his own army of the unemployed to Washington. On the campaign trail as the presidential candidate of the quixotic Jobless Party, Cox gave laissez-faire capitalism its last rites:

Justice will have the bandage removed from her eyes, and America will be happy again if decentralization should be the order of the day; if we provide for our own protection and keep in mind that while the largest and most powerful nation on earth, we may become an easy victim to the avarice and cupidity of greedy enemies. Every attempt at monopoly or unfair trade practices should be, in the interests of fair trade, strictly prohibited and punished. We have come to the end of an economic era. As a nation we are groping in the dark, awaiting the dawn of a new day. When that dawn comes, it must bring a better era than that which has passed. It must provide equal opportunities to all men, regardless of wealth.

Encouraged by Democratic Party operatives, Cox withdrew from the race and endorsed Roosevelt. Subsequently, he served on the Pennsylvania board of the National Recovery Administration.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Coode and Petrarulo, "The Odyssey of Pittsburgh's Father Cox," 217-38, "Caravan Moves for Capital on Tuesday," *Sun-Telegraph* (Pittsburgh), Dec 30, 1931, James Cox, "Father Cox's Own Story of Jobless March to Capitol," 1932, CP, DP, Feldman, *The Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania*, 248-49, James Cox, "Resolution of the Jobless," 1932, CP, DP, Casimir Orlemanski to Herbert Hoover, Feb 18, 1932, CP, DP, H P McInerney, memorandum to executive assistant to President Herbert Hoover, Jan 7, 1932, CP, DP, The Orlemanski letter and the McInerney memorandum were originally found in James R. Cox file, Secretary's Files, Herbert Hoover Papers, Box 510, Hoover Library, Stanford University

<sup>24</sup> Coode and Petrarulo, "The Odyssey of Pittsburgh's Father Cox," 217-38, Andrew J. Krupnick, Campaign Diary of Father James Cox, 1932, CP, DP, "Priest Lead Unemployed," *Christian Century*, Feb 17, 1932, 235, John Jay Ewers, "Father Cox's Blue Shirts," *Christian Century*, June 22, 1932, 795-97, "Father Cox's Army at St. Louis" and "Father Cox's Hosts Hold Convention," *Christian Century*, Aug 31, 1932, 1,044, 1,060-61

While Cox formulated strategies to end unemployment, Charles Owen Rice, a priest whose uncle Joseph became a CIO organizer, took a position as assistant pastor of Saint Agnes Parish. Visiting New York in 1933, Rice met writer and political activist Dorothy Day. Inspired by the labor encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI, Day had recently founded the Catholic Worker Movement, an organization committed to the spiritual uplift of the downtrodden. Rice joined the movement, convinced that social justice required the fusion of religion and politics. "Religion belongs in politics and is needed there. It alone can curb the unbridled greed that lies at the root of political corruption. Laws and systems of reform cannot stem the passions of men. Without religion every attempt at reform is doomed to failure." By 1937 the young priest, a graduate of Duquesne University and Saint Vincent's, was executive-secretary of the Pittsburgh Catholic Worker School, wrote a regular column on politics for the diocesan newspaper, the Pittsburgh *Catholic*, and had acquired radio programs on local stations KDKA, WCAE, and WWSW.<sup>25</sup>

Rice joined forces with Father Carl Hensler of Saint Lawrence Church to establish the Saint Joseph House of Hospitality, one of thirty Catholic Worker Movement houses in America. Located in the Hill District, Saint Joseph House provided shelter to 400 men and 1,000 meals a day to the unemployed. The monthly budget of \$150 was raised by sales of the Pittsburgh *Catholic* and through the repair and resale of items collected from area trash heaps. The priests never failed to assist the needy, regardless of race or religion.<sup>26</sup>

In contrast to Rice, Hensler was less the frantic organizer and more the reflective intellectual of Catholic social activism in Pittsburgh. Hensler had helped to establish the Catholic University in Peking, was an alumnus of the prestigious North American College in Rome, and in 1934 and 1935 had written an extended series of essays on Christian ethics and capitalism for the Pittsburgh *Catholic*. Born in 1898 in Carnegie, Pennsylvania, Hensler's father had been a coal mine foreman. His parents' early

<sup>25</sup> Charles Owen Rice, interview by Bud and Ruth Schultz, summer 1982, Pittsburgh, Pa., Rice Papers, Box 13, Archives of an Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh (hereafter, RP, AIS), *Bulletin Index* (Pittsburgh), July 8, 1937, *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), Sept 28, 1933

<sup>26</sup> Charles Owen Rice, "St Joseph House of Hospitality," radio address, Oct 28, 1939, WWSW, Pittsburgh, RP, Box 27, AIS, Rice, "St Joseph House of Hospitality," radio address, Jan 18, 1939, WCAE, Pittsburgh, RP, Box 27, AIS, Rice, "St Joseph House of Hospitality," radio address, June 4, 1939, WWSW, Pittsburgh, RP, Box 27, AIS

deaths left the priest responsible for his younger siblings' support. Having personally seen how quickly people could fall from financial security to economic hardship, Hensler devoted himself to improving the lot of workers. His brother embraced the same goal, becoming an organizer for the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU).<sup>27</sup>

As Hensler and Rice set up Saint Joseph House, they founded the Catholic Radical Alliance (CRA) "for the purpose of DOING something about the present social and economic mess." With Father Orlemanski, the CRA joined SWOC picket lines and fed strikers and their families. Most of the CRA's membership was Irish, though the organization attracted a few Polish ethnics such as future UMW rebel Jock Yablonski. The ill-fated Yablonski was not the only union leader to graduate from the CRA's labor school. Notable alumni included Alan Kistler, later AFL-CIO vice-president for organization, and James Carey, the embattled anti-Communist UE president.<sup>28</sup>

Broadcasting a homily in 1937, Rice argued that workers had "the right of being treated not like a slave or a machine, but like a human being," while "business is not free from moral control . . . low wages, exorbitant prices and sharp practices are forms of stealing and cheating." Rice also criticized Catholics and Communists:

There are Catholics . . . who act, not like followers of Christ, but like followers of the devil in their dealings with, and attitude toward, the problem of social justice, toward the workers and the poor. They are children not of the Church but of the unjust economic and social system that has warped their minds and their conduct. . . .

There are many other Catholics who impede the advance of the truth by their blundering. . . . They rant and rave against the menace of Communism, against its Godlessness; with never a word about the menace and Godlessness of finance capitalism. They let hatred of Communism, which is proper, blind them into breaking Christ's law against hatred of persons.

<sup>27</sup> Carl P. Hensler, Record of Priests, Diocese of Pittsburgh, Carl Hensler Papers, Historical Archives of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Carl Hensler to Hugh Boyle, June 28, 1930, *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), Sept 13, 20, 27, Oct 4, 11, 18, 25, Nov 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, Dec 6, 13, 1934, Oct 24, 31, Nov 7, 14, 21, 28, Dec 5, 12, 19, 26, 1935, and "Msgr. Carl P. Hensler," Nov 30, 1984, McGeever, *Rev. Charles Owen Rice*, 42-49.

<sup>28</sup> Catholic Radical Alliance, untitled leaflet, 1937, RP, Box 3, AIS, Catholic Radical Alliance, "Catholic Radical Forum," pamphlet, 1937, RP, Box 6, AIS, *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), Sept 9, 1937, McGeever, *Rev. Charles Owen Rice*, 42, 105, 235-36.

The Communists are . . . much like the finance capitalists. Neither can see beyond his nose. They both rule out God—the finance capitalist when he says business is business, I'm not running a charitable concern, what do I care if they are not getting enough wages, let them go elsewhere if they don't like it.

The best system in the world will go on the rocks if individualism and materialism are the ruling ideas. Individualism is, simply, the doctrine of every man for himself. Materialism is the doctrine that we are just animals; that there is no other life but this one, no other values but those we find on earth. These ideas have been in the saddle in modern life and they are what have made such a mess out of civilization. . . . They rule the present system; they rule business today, and they will rule in the Communist or fascist super-state, and don't fool yourself.<sup>29</sup>

The CRA endorsed the CIO, with Rice at one labor rally in 1937 rebutting charges by the Republican Pittsburgh *Press* and *Post-Gazette* that SWOC was Communistic. "It is not Godless, Communistic or un-American. It has its roots in Christianity and Americanism. It is taking a step on the road to the building of a new America that will be just, Christian and in accord with the noblest traditions of our faith and nation." Rice and Hensler found themselves arguing with Cox who charged that Communists had penetrated the CIO and who believed that the New Deal had become collectivist. To Cox, legislation that usurped private property rights and placed the state in authority over the family was wrong.<sup>30</sup>

Father Cox was not alone in his concerns with the relationship between families and the state. For example, although the Pittsburgh *Catholic* condemned the use of child labor, the diocesan newspaper warned that an amendment to the Constitution to ban the practice "would, in effect, give government officials almost complete control over every person in America under eighteen years of age." In any event, businessmen would

<sup>29</sup> Charles Owen Rice, "The Dynamite of the Encyclicals," radio address, May 15, 1937, WWSW, Pittsburgh, RP, Box 27, AIS

<sup>30</sup> Charles Owen Rice, Pittsburgh labor rally speech, 1937, RP, Box 6, AIS, *Bulletin Index*, July 8, 1937, Rice, "The Dynamite of the Encyclicals", J. Joseph Huthmacher, *Senator Robert F. Wagner and the Rise of Urban Liberalism* (New York, 1971), 231-55, Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency*, 109-13, 128-33, *Free Press* (Detroit), Nov 7, 1938, *Catholic Telegraph-Register*, July 29, Aug 12, 19, 26, Nov 18, 1938, *Catholic Sentinel*, Aug 4, 11, 18, Sept 1, 15, Nov 10, 1938

ignore the ban and continue to employ child labor. The best path to follow, according to the Pittsburgh *Catholic*, was to teach the public not to buy goods made in sweatshops that exploited children and women.<sup>31</sup>

The Pittsburgh *Catholic* was no less critical of other liberal legislation. As the pro-CIO editors contended, "the practice of charity, expressed as interest in the needy and concern for the welfare of our neighbor, is a personal virtue that cannot be turned over to the government." Elaborating upon the church's conception of subsidiarity, the Pittsburgh *Catholic* warned that if the state continued to centralize power within a small group of administrators, then the citizenry would lose its sense of democratic participation and responsibility to the community. Allowing the state to assume responsibility for decisions that resided properly within the community or the family, so the Pittsburgh *Catholic* and Cox believed, undermined the community and the family. Members of communities and families, having their opinions ignored and power usurped by an expansionist state, would become indifferent to the quest for social justice.<sup>32</sup>

In the long term, Pius XI and the National Catholic Welfare Conference cautioned, selfish individualism would prevail over all calls for increased public revenue to support a nation's disadvantaged. The administrators of the federal welfare bureaucracies would create a climate in which individuals disdained personal sacrifice and rejected programs to assist the powerless. At the same time, irresponsible individuals would demand state entitlements while seeking to make others pay for their benefits. If not in key with the church choir, at least WPA director Harry Hopkins realized from the outset of the New Deal that federal relief had the potential to destroy the human spirit. "Give a man a dole," Hopkins had warned, "and you save his body and destroy his spirit; give him a job and pay him an assured wage, and you save both the body and the spirit."<sup>33</sup>

Hensler and Rice concurred with Cox and the editors of the Pittsburgh

<sup>31</sup> *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), Jan 4, Feb 15, 1934

<sup>32</sup> *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), Aug 18, 1938, Greeley, "What is Subsidiarity?" 292-95

<sup>33</sup> Anthony Badger, *The New Deal The Depression Years, 1933-1940* (New York, 1989), 201, *Five Great Encyclicals*, 125-68, 177-206, O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform*, 44, 58-59, 64-65, 71, 101-2, Trout, *Boston, the Great Depression and the New Deal*, 22-23, Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency*, 109-13

*Catholic* that there was a great potential for many New Deal policies to lead to grief. The problem for Hensler was how to reconcile support for federal intervention in the economy with his opposition to increased state power. As Hensler explained this seeming paradox, the choice was not, as Harold Ickes believed, between the discredited individualism of capitalism and the totalitarian collectivism of Communism. Rather, Hensler contended, the best choice was a "partnership of capital and labor." In this "industrial democracy," as Hensler called it, Americans would witness "the regulation of industry by the organized industry itself." Moreover, this industrial democracy "allows any measure of governmental intervention that may be found necessary to safeguard the common good." In consequence, the state constructed the "framework of liberty and order within which capital and labor could run their own house and cooperate in furthering the public welfare."<sup>34</sup>

At CRA meetings and programs sponsored by the National Catholic Welfare Conference's Social Action Department, Hensler contended the best federal programs were those patterned after the spirit of the defunct National Recovery Administration. Government agencies informed by the encyclicals would bring workers and managers together to discuss their concerns and establish mutually acceptable codes of conduct. Federal officials would only play the role of referee, promoting a harmonious environment. The state would not coerce management or labor, as was the practice in fascist or Communist societies. Granted, management often expressed its unwillingness to regard its employees as equals, but, Hensler reasoned that once workers organized, corporations threatened with strikes and community censure would come to see the virtue of mediation. The role of the state was to ensure that workers could join labor unions without fear of corporate reprisals. In turn, workers had to reject the messages of class warfare and state fiat espoused by Communists.<sup>35</sup>

Given the complexity of Catholic economic teaching, the labor priests had to put forward enormous educational efforts to combat conservative businessmen and Communist organizers. Rice recognized that the Communists in particular were "zealous, self-sacrificing, tireless workers"

<sup>34</sup> *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), Jan 21, June 24, 1937, Jan 27, May 12, 1938, June 22, 1939, O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform*, 102

<sup>35</sup> *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), Jan 21, June 24, 1937, Jan 27, May 12, 1938, June 22, 1939

committed to "the success of their ideal " Consequently, he did not spare himself in combating Communism In August 1937, the CRA staged a counterdemonstration protesting a rally by the Communist-front American League Against War and Fascism A few months later, 5,000 delegates to the Peoples' Congress for Democracy and Peace (associated with the American League Against War and Fascism) met in Pittsburgh The CRA picketed the event While Peoples' Congress delegate Reinhold Niebuhr of the (Protestant) Union Theological Seminary castigated Franco and called for a Western-Soviet military alliance against fascism, the CRA distributed leaflets explaining their opposition to the convention

The Popular Front in the United States is a Communist device It started up after the "reds" got the life scared out of them by the way things turned out in Germany They switched overnight from an active contempt of the labor movement and all things not ultra-orthodox, Communistically speaking, to a sudden love for the labor movement and labor leaders Like silly fools, droves of "liberals" have fallen for this act

That sort of thing has brought a vaguely fascist reaction already Don't you people see that you are endangering every progressive movement, that you are risking the work of generations of sincere workers for liberty and social justice? The closer "liberalism" unites with Communism (and the stronger Communism, therefore, becomes) the stronger fascism grows

Communist and fascist dictators are making unhappy Spain a bloody testing ground For God's sake let us not pull America into it There is a deliberate effort being made by left-wing elements in this country to drag the United States into another European War<sup>36</sup>

Pittsburgh's labor priests sought to confront Communists and capitalists directly In 1938 Rice debated Communist *Daily Worker* editor Clarence Hathaway, insisting that Catholics could not "accept the outstretched hand of Communists" until they ceased "to be Communist" and repudiated "the doctrines and tactics that" placed them "beyond the pale of normality and ethics " Hensler and Rice accepted CIO invitations to speak in a number of cities, the latter providing encouragement in July 1938 to the Utica, New York, Textile Workers Organizing Committee

<sup>36</sup> Catholic Radical Alliance, "Workers Wise Up!" leaflet, 1937, RP, Box 8, AIS, Rice, Pittsburgh labor rally speech, 1937, *Sun-Telegraph* (Pittsburgh), Nov 27, 1937, *Post-Gazette* (Pittsburgh), Aug 2, 1937

Unionization is a perfectly normal, Christian thing. That it ever has been regarded otherwise is proof of the twisted viewpoint that has prevailed in our modern civilization. Why should not the worker organize? Why should he be compelled to go through his working life like a grain of sand and not like the social organism he is? Why does anyone want to keep the workers apart, disorganized? Why other than through the desire to keep them weak and easy to exploit?

What we need is not less CIO and less progressive legislation. We need more of both. I beg the workers to be loyal to their leaders and refuse to be shaken by hardship, calumnies, or campaigns of any kind. Labor is on the march. On the march to a goal that will bring justice and happiness to all classes of people. Labor's right is everyone's fight. It is a fight for decency, justice, and a Christian social order.

Subsequently, letters from Catholic unionists in the East and Canada poured into the Saint Agnes rectory, pleading for Rice's help against anti-CIO employers. When he entered the Ohio Valley, personally and through his radio broadcasts, the *Catholic Telegraph-Register* of Cincinnati, though favoring the AFL in its turf battles with the CIO, endorsed the CRA's efforts.<sup>37</sup>

SWOC leader Phil Murray, a Pittsburgher and devout Catholic, needed the labor priests as allies. Rice and Hensler's political activities countered the growing public perception that the CIO was Communist and encouraged those workers who respected the opinions of clergy to join the union. Fortunately for Murray, the priests came to him just as public opinion had turned against the CIO in the wake of violent strikes that rocked America. Following the 1937 strike wave, 57 percent of Americans favored the deployment of National Guardsmen to halt industrial disputes. Moreover, CIO president John L. Lewis had alienated everyone across the political spectrum. Worse, anti-New Deal congressmen in 1938 established the House Committee on Un-American Activities and held highly publicized hearings on Communist infiltration of the CIO. The issue of Communist influence within the CIO and the

<sup>37</sup> Charles Owen Rice, "Utica Textile Workers Organizing Committee," radio address, July 19, 1938, WIBX, Utica, New York, RP, Box 27, AIS, Religious News Service Press Release, "Priest Rejects 'Outstretched Hand' in Debate with Communist Editor," Oct 15, 1938, RP, Box 6, AIS Ralph MacIntire, Milltown, New Brunswick, to Charles Owen Rice, Aug 29, 1937, Feb 16, 1938, RP, Box 6, AIS, *Catholic Telegraph-Register*, Aug 5, 1938

continuing Depression proved lethal to the reelection bids of eighty pro-New Deal representatives and eight senators. Subsequently, an anti-CIO coalition of southern Democratic and western Republican congressmen emerged.<sup>38</sup>

Crucial to salvaging the CIO's fortunes, Murray believed, was the expulsion of Communists from the organization. As early as 1937, Murray and Rice had assisted in the founding of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. Murray's initial efforts to fight Communist infiltration were fruitless. In 1938 he attempted to remove Communist CIO organizers from the Mesabi Range, but to his chagrin one of the men received a promotion, becoming secretary-treasurer of the Minnesota CIO. A year later Murray and ally Walter Reuther vainly fought to prevent Communists from capturing the presidency of the United Automobile Workers union. Ironically, in 1938 the House Committee on Un-American Activities, as a result of a Communist disinformation campaign, accused Murray and John Brophy of being Communists. Rice sent a telegram to committee chair Martin Dies, a conservative Texas Democrat, informing him that he was mistaken. This incident also spurred Rice, at Murray and James Carey's behest, to form ACTU chapters within the Communist-dominated Aluminum Workers of America and the UE.<sup>39</sup>

The alliance between Rice and Murray grew stronger from 1938 onwards, their friendship sealed at Mass and the racetrack. Indeed, Rice gave the benediction for the CIO's first constitutional convention. When the ACTU held its inaugural national meeting in Pittsburgh in 1941, Rice served as chaplain. Rice later paid tribute to Murray, stating, "He typifies the best in Americanism and Catholicism," for "the things that count for him are his God, his country, and his union." In 1940, John L. Lewis resigned as CIO president because, in a fit of pique, he had

<sup>38</sup> Charles Owen Rice, "Feast of St Joseph, Patron of the Worker," radio address, March 19, 1938, KDKA, Pittsburgh, RP, Box 27, AIS, Gallup, *The Gallup Poll*, 62-63

<sup>39</sup> Heale, *American Anti-Communism*, 116, *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), Aug 18, 22, 1938, *Post-Gazette* (Pittsburgh), Dec 15, 1940, Ronald W Schatz, "Philip Murray and the Subordination of the Industrial Unions to the United States Government," in Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, eds, *Labor Leaders in America* (Urbana, Ill, 1987), 234-57, Nelson Lichtenstein, "Walter Reuther and the Rise of Labor Liberalism," in *ibid*, 280-302, Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*, 250-51, 262, Charles Owen Rice, "Statement Concerning Aluminum Workers of America," March 26, 1938, RP, Box 6, AIS, Rice, interview by Schultzes, McGeever, *Rev Charles Owen Rice*, 50, John C Cort, "ACTU and the Auto Workers," *US Catholic Historian* 9 (1990), 335-51

earlier vowed to deny reelection to Roosevelt or quit. Murray quickly assumed the CIO presidency and pushed through the union convention an anti-Communist resolution. The outbreak of World War II in 1939 helped Murray in this endeavor. Following Stalin's directives to aid Nazi Germany, Communist CIO members had engaged in work slowdowns and sabotage at plants that produced weapons marked for shipment to England. These actions convinced non-Communist union members that Murray and the ACTU had been extraordinarily perceptive. American Communists cared little for the well-being of the CIO's rank and file, regarding the labor movement as merely one of many devices to promote Soviet political and military ambitions.<sup>40</sup>

Rice and Murray's opposition to Communism was understandable. From its inception after World War I, the American Communist Party had viewed the Catholic Church as its chief rival for the affections of the working class. In 1932 its leadership denounced Cox as being part of the "national fascist tendencies lined up with Catholic religion," while the *Daily Worker* claimed that the church was "personally owned and controlled by the same class of multimillionaires who own and control industry." Similarly, Young Communist League leader Otto Kuusinen urged college students not to follow priests who, he warned, were the worker's enemies. John L. Lewis confidant and CIO publicity director Len DeCaux, a ranking member of the Communist Party, was no less hostile towards Catholics. Surveying the leadership of SWOC in 1937, which included Pat Fagan and Phil Murray, the Oxford-educated Communist dismissed the union as "a setup—a Catholic setup. . . . In national CIO and most other new unions, religion didn't stick out as it did in SWOC."<sup>41</sup>

Communist provocation notwithstanding, Murray's plans for the CIO embraced more than a purge of Stalinists. In 1935 he had been one of 131 Catholic labor, political, and clergy leaders to endorse an amendment to the United States Constitution that would regulate industry, promote "organized Social Justice," and reject the Communist economic model.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Owen Rice, "Philip Murray," radio address, June 3, 1945, WWSW, Pittsburgh, RP, Box 16, AIS, Schatz, "Philip Murray and the Subordination of the Industrial Unions," 234-57, *Bulletin Index*, Nov 24, 1938, Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*, 386-409

<sup>41</sup> Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*, 64, 221-22, 308, Len DeCaux, *Labor Radical From the Wobblies to CIO* (Boston, 1970), 280-81

Since then, Murray had studied Leo XIII and Pius XI's encyclicals on social justice. Given this background, Murray came to argue for the establishment of councils in every industry that would be composed in equal parts of union, management, and government representatives. The councils would give workers a voice in the operation of the corporations, ensuring their responsiveness to the economic, educational, and health needs of workers. At the same time, tensions between workers and managers would be lessened in an atmosphere of cooperation and shared social interests. Government officials would function as mediators until, eventually, the three groups merged into an industrial trinity.<sup>42</sup>

Unfortunately for the CIO and Catholic clergy activists, many corporate executives, like their conservative congressional counterparts, did not see the wisdom of applying *Reconstructing the Social Order* to American labor relations. Andrew Wells Robertson, an executive of the Pittsburgh-based Westinghouse Corporation, journeyed to Cincinnati in 1939 to warn other managers of the danger of "The Rule of Minorities." Obliquely, Robertson argued that Catholics and CIO members had encouraged Roosevelt to raise corporate taxes in order to redistribute the wealth to the undeserving. He concluded that such minorities should be deprived of the vote so that decent Americans—presumably affluent and Protestant—could regain the White House.<sup>43</sup>

If Robertson's sentiments appeared extreme, he was not alone. In 1934 the Pew family of Pittsburgh (Sun Oil Company) had cofounded the American Liberty League in order to combat the New Deal politically and move the national Republican Party further to the right. Four years later thirty corporate executives gathered at the Pittsburgh Athletic Association club to form a local branch of the anti-CIO, anti-Catholic Silver Shirts. The Silver Legion of America, or Silver Shirts, led by William Dudley Pelley, closely identified with the social and economic policies of Nazi Germany. Among the Pittsburgh Silver Shirts was Charles Bruce Swift, a Duquesne Light operator. According to Swift,

<sup>42</sup> Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 129-30, Schatz, "Philip Murray and the Subordination of the Industrial Unions," 234-57, *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), Dec 12, 1935, Morris L. Cook and Philip Murray, *Organized Labor and Production Next Steps in Industrial Democracy* (New York, 1940)

<sup>43</sup> *Bulletin Index*, March 30, 1939

"liberal priests" such as Cox, Hensler, and Rice gave aid and comfort to "damnable Reds." In Swift's eyes, Murray was a Communist Papist.<sup>44</sup>

While the Silver Shirts were an anti-CIO fringe group that Murray could safely ignore, labor leaders had to contend with much more influential conservatives who were riding a wave of anti-New Deal sentiment. In order to counteract the efforts of such anti-CIO politicians as Martin Dies and Ohio Republican Senator Robert Taft, Sidney Hillman urged Murray to set up a CIO Political Action Committee (PAC). By 1944 the head of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union had persuaded Murray to establish a CIO PAC. Hillman wished to ensure that labor elected politicians who would coerce corporations on its behalf.<sup>45</sup>

Murray, however, never abandoned his hope that labor and management could work together in the quest to build a just society. Committed to the labor encyclicals, Murray did not accept New Deal liberal pluralism—the belief that economics and politics were the affairs of competing social groups. He did not subscribe to the Communist view that labor and capital were enemies. Nor was Murray comfortable with the liberal notion that labor and capital should become, in effect, cooperative monopolies. If irreconcilable enemies, then labor and capital would be locked in a conflict that could only be resolved by a violent workers' revolution. On the other hand, there were serious problems with labor and capital becoming allied trusts. As historian David O'Brien explains it, in such a situation labor would join "with capital to secure benefits for the industry as a whole at the expense of the consumer and the common good." Given these considerations, Murray rejected class conflict and urged workers not to become materialistic. Instead, Murray believed that workers and employers were, in Hensler's words, indivisible parts of "the mystical body of Christ." That body must not be at war with itself for that would prevent Americans from achieving the common good.<sup>46</sup>

The struggle to graft Catholic philosophy onto the CIO structure and cast off Communist influence ensued against a backdrop of mounting

<sup>44</sup> *Bulletin Index*, Nov. 24, 1938, Michael W. Miles, *The Odyssey of the American Right* (New York, 1980), 32, 45, 77.

<sup>45</sup> Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York, 1991), 495-566, Herbert S. Parmet, *Richard Nixon and his America* (Boston, 1990), 134-39.

<sup>46</sup> Schatz, "Philip Murray and the Subordination of the Industrial Unions," 234-57, Greeley, "What is Subsidiarity?" 292-95, Raymond J. Campion, "The Economic Organization of Society and the Mystical Body of Christ," *Journal of Religious Instruction* 4 (1934), 608-25.

European anti-Semitism. American anti-Semitism, although far less significant, also registered some gain. Of great concern to Rice and the National Catholic Welfare Conference was Father Coughlin's anti-New Deal, anti-Semitic political activities. Even though Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli (later Pius XII) had rebuked Coughlin in 1936, the priest retained a vocal, albeit greatly diminished following. In 1938 Rice personally informed him that he was doing a disservice to America's Jews and Catholics. Moreover, Rice told Coughlin, he was providing radicals with a telling weapon, the charge of anti-Semitism, to attack the Catholic Church and to discredit Murray's anti-Communist efforts within SWOC and the CIO.<sup>47</sup>

Cox was no less critical of Coughlin and the leaders of other domestic and foreign fascist movements. In 1932 Cox had condemned Mussolini and warned of the threat Hitler posed to democracy. Seven years later Cox delivered a crushing indictment of Coughlin and anti-Semitism at the Dormont, Pennsylvania, Methodist Episcopal Church. His address, "Hitler's Hatchet Man!" was soon distributed nationally in pamphlet form:

WHILE AS CATHOLICS WE CANNOT DO ANYTHING to stop Father Coughlin, you may rest assured that all Catholic people and priests are not in sympathy or accord with him. In my humble opinion his attacks upon the Jews are abhorrent to everyone who believes in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. To my way of thinking, it is very bad taste for a priest, a man of God, who preaches love of God and love of neighbor to either directly or indirectly foster hate on the basis of race, color or religion. If Father Coughlin is right then the Ku Klux Klan is right and if the Ku Klux Klan is right about the Jews, it is also right about the Catholics and colored people and Father Coughlin thereby condemns himself and all that he represents. . . .

As a Catholic priest I am grieved and humiliated that another Catholic priest is in the vanguard of this Bigot Brigade. He is profaning his pulpit by preaching the pagan doctrine of anti-Semitism. For my part, I choose today to cry out against the sorry spectacle of the Detroit priest, ordained to teach the Love of God, engaged each Sunday over a radio hookup in

<sup>47</sup> Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue*, 334, William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York, 1963), 183, Schatz, "Philip Murray and the Subordination of the Industrial Unions," 234-57, Ruce, interview by Schultzes

parroting poisonous Nazi propaganda, and huckstering the heresies of Hitler. A Catholic priest become a Storm Trooper! A Coughlin become a Hitler hatchet man!<sup>48</sup>

Enraged Coughlin fired off angry letters to the Vatican's Apostolic Delegate in Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh Bishop Hugh Boyle. To Boyle, Coughlin charged Cox with receiving payments "for the work the Jew wanted him to do on Father Coughlin." The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, demanded that Boyle punish Cox. Boyle pleaded ignorance but assured Cicognani and Coughlin that he would look into the matter. The Pittsburgh bishop, however, never disciplined Cox for speaking ill of a fellow priest. Not only did Boyle detest Coughlin, he had, after all, given his blessing to Cox to run for president in 1932. Boyle also chaired a committee in 1939 that raised money to assist Jewish refugees who hoped to come to America.<sup>49</sup>

Boyle supported the CIO and opposed Coughlin's anti-New Deal conservatism and anti-Semitism. Joining forces with other prolabor members of the American Catholic hierarchy, including Bishop Karl Alter (Toledo), Bishop Joseph Schrembs (Cleveland), and Bishop Robert Lucey (Amarillo), Boyle championed Phil Murray at various national church forums throughout the 1930s. At the first National Catholic Social Action Conference, held in Milwaukee in 1938, Boyle chaired a panel session on the steel industry that expressed support for SWOC. The panelists included SWOC secretary-treasurer David McDonald, Hensler, and Garrett Connors, the vice-president for industrial relations at the Sharon (Pennsylvania) Steel Company. In Pittsburgh, Boyle consulted Hensler on a regular basis. Moreover, he gave financial support to Saint Joseph House and to the CRA's labor school. The bishop also kept lines of communication open with the Pennsylvania Democratic Party through his nephew who was the solicitor for the city controller of Pittsburgh. With Boyle's ties to the Lawrence political machine and the CIO, it is

<sup>48</sup> "Father Cox Has a Close-up View of Mussolini," *Christian Century* July 27, 1932, 925-26; James Cox, "Hitler's Hatchet Man!" address delivered before the Dormont Rotary Club in Dormont's Methodist Episcopal Church, 1939, CP, DP

<sup>49</sup> A G Cicognani to Hugh Boyle, June 16, 1939, CP, DP, Charles Coughlin to Hugh Boyle, Sept 6, 1939, CP, DP, Hugh Boyle to Charles Coughlin, Oct 26, 1939, CP, DP, *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), March 23, June 8, 1939

not surprising that the Pittsburgh *Catholic* praised Murray and despaired of "mised Catholics" who followed Coughlin.<sup>50</sup>

As Coughlin and Cox squared off, Rice took care that the CRA and ACTU's struggle against Communism did not become anti-Semitic and racist. This was difficult given that Jews were well represented in regional Communist Party ranks, as were blacks; Pittsburgh claimed the largest number of black Stalinists in the United States. Matters were not made easier by the practices of the local news media. The Pittsburgh *Sun-Telegraph*, an anti-New Deal Hearst publication, reported the original, often Jewish, surnames of suspected Communist CIO members. Similarly, the Pittsburgh *Bulletin Index*, the journal of Protestant high society, featured provocative photographs of Jewish female Communists dancing cheek to cheek with black male comrades. "Good Negro Communists kicked up their heels," the *Bulletin Index* commented on one Pittsburgh Communist social event, as "black boys dance with white girls."<sup>51</sup>

At the root of these cultural tensions was the fact that the newly empowered Jewish labor and political leadership had committed several blunders. Their first mistake was to sympathize with the Madrid government, perceiving it as a bulwark against Nazi foreign policy. Jews lost the moral high ground by discounting the war Stalin's operatives waged against the Catholic Church, a war in which the Communists murdered 6,832 priests and 283 nuns. Second, many American Jews viewed the Soviet Union favorably, contending that Stalin had eliminated anti-Semitism and unemployment. Again, numerous Jews refused to believe that Stalin was an anti-Semite who, by 1938, had exterminated 20 million people. Third, given the social democratic predilections of many Jews and their loathing of Hitler, thousands had joined the Communist Party, making it a predominately Jewish organization. Meanwhile, Jewish liberals championed the expansion of the secular state, a stance that clashed with the Catholic Church's proscription against powerful government bureaucracies. Finally, Democratic Congressman Samuel Dickstein of New York helped to found the House Committee on Un-American Activities, hoping it would expose ethnic Germans and Catholics he

<sup>50</sup> *Catholic* (Pittsburgh), Nov 24, 1938, Jan 18, 1940, April 24, June 26, 1941, McGeever, Rev Charles Owen Rice, 60, 72, 78-79, 90, 132, "The Steel Industry," *Proceedings, First National Catholic Social Action Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, May 1-4, 1938* (Milwaukee, 1938), 266-80

<sup>51</sup> *Bulletin Index*, July 8, 1937, Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*, 232, 331

suspected of harboring Nazi sympathies. Instead, the committee tended to be obsessed with Jewish New Dealers and Communists.<sup>52</sup>

Relieved that the American Catholic Church and press (with the exception of the Brooklyn *Tablet* and Coughlin's *Social Justice*) had not indulged in anti-Semitic behavior, but nonetheless concerned, Rice moved on two fronts to circumvent an anti-Semitic backlash among Catholics. First, he planted ACTU support behind anti-Communist Jewish CIO organizers, emphasizing that the battle within labor was between democracy and Communism, not Catholicism and Judaism. Second, Rice in August 1939 gave a special radio address on anti-Semitism:

Communism is a great stick to beat the Jews. I know from my own experience in labor that the strongest fighters against Communism are Jews. Yet these valiant fighters for Americanism are themselves accused of being Communists, because they have Jewish names. It is stupid and laughable but very dangerous and harmful. . . .

It is poppy-cock to prate of the Jews having killed Christ. We killed Christ, our sins did it. The Jew has no monopoly on sin and has no monopoly on the guilt for Christ's death. Of all the sins that tortured Christ on the cross, be it noted, among the most excruciating were the sins of hatred and intolerance perpetuated upon His people in His name.<sup>53</sup>

Rice and his fellow labor priests, however, had to place concern for the condition of American Catholic-Jewish relations on the back burner once Hitler and Stalin jointly launched World War II. Fearful that Roosevelt intended to involve the United States in the European conflict, which would further impede domestic social reconstruction, as well as kill thousands of American youths, Rice coordinated antiwar protests. The priest warned in radio broadcasts and at peace rallies that prowar American and British government propagandists, as well as "greedy" munitions makers, were trying to drag the nation into the conflict. With

<sup>52</sup> Sanchez, *The Spanish Civil War as Religious Tragedy*, 8-9, 12, 185, 194, Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*, 30-31, 66, 70-71, 131, 162-63, 165-66, 307, 381-84, Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict*, 92-93, Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940*, 280-81, Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties* (New York, 1985), 261-308, Lawrence H. Fuchs, "American Jews and the Presidential Vote," *American Political Science Review* 49 (1955), 385-401.

<sup>53</sup> Charles Owen Rice, "On Anti-Semitism," radio address, Aug. 17, 1939, WWSW, Pittsburgh, RP, Box 27, AIS, Rice, interview by Schultzes.

great passion, he publicized Pius XII's 1939 peace message that denounced Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism. Sadly, Rice recounted a conversation with several young unemployed men at Saint Joseph House who were going to Canada to enlist in the armed forces of the British Commonwealth. Godless capitalism, Rice grieved, had failed these men and now they were headed off to war so that they could be properly fed and clothed.<sup>54</sup>

Murray's vision of a Catholic New Deal would be lost amidst the carnage of World War II and the Cold War. Passions unleashed in the struggle against Nazism and, subsequently, Communism would distort Americans' view of politics. The public would adopt as its own the limited ideological perspectives of radicals, liberals, and conservatives. There would be little public (or academic) understanding of reformist Catholic social teaching that considered the concept of the Left, Center, and Right to be flawed. Nor would many Americans appreciate Hensler and Rice's approach to social justice, since it was not informed by secular political sensibilities. Thus to many Protestant, Jewish, and secularized liberals, Catholics would appear to have Nazi sympathies. Similarly, numerous Catholics would view many liberals as Communist supporters.

The 1930s, a decade in which democracy fell into disrepute, witnessed the rise of totalitarian ideologies that sparked a Catholic political movement committed to social reconstruction. In the United States, New Deal liberals such as Harold Ickes and Reinhold Niebuhr hailed the Soviet Union as an ally against Nazi Germany. Under the rubric of the Popular Front and New Deal progressivism, liberals of this stripe fostered an intellectual climate conducive to Communist infiltration of the industrial unions. Most Catholic clergy and laity of America's industrial centers embraced the New Deal's economic programs but balked at many aspects of its social agenda, as well as its friendliness towards domestic and international Communism. For their resistance to those aspects of New Deal liberalism, Catholic clergy, labor leaders, and politicians were branded anti-Semites, Nazis, and opponents of social reform. It was one of the ironies of the New Deal era that anti-Catholicism largely ceased

<sup>54</sup> Charles Owen Rice, "St. Joseph House," radio addresses, Aug 28, Sept 4, 11, 18, Nov 11, Dec 30, 1939, WWSW, Pittsburgh, RP, Box 27, AIS

to be the creature of right-wing Protestant fundamentalists and became a mainstay of the left-liberals. Consider the assessment of liberal reporter Richard Rovere who, in 1941, informed the readers of *The Nation*, a pro-New Deal magazine, that Catholic labor activists were implicitly un-American and Machiavellian:

Catholics, like Communists, are often controlled by forces beyond the vision of most Americans; Rome, like Moscow, has its own interests, and although its political control over its followers is less absolute than Moscow's, it is always difficult to tell which way it plans to jump, particularly in the midst of a world in crisis. Moreover, the approach of both Catholics and Communists to the labor movement is millennial. While most labor leaders look to the here and now or to a plainly visible future in determining strategy, Catholics and Communists look to goals far in the distance, and the ends of both are so grandiose that almost any means seem justified for their attainment.<sup>55</sup>

Important New Deal politicians and notable labor historians often have found it impossible to understand the working-class oriented and (to them) culturally alien idea of Catholic social justice. As Hensler and Rice explained, in *Reconstructing the Social Order* Pius XI viewed Communism, Nazism, and capitalism as interchangeable social philosophies. All three had their origins in an Enlightenment that had replaced a God-centered universe with a man-centered world. Godless individualism and materialism, they contended, had come to define human conduct. Without God, the Catholic reformers believed, man lost all moral inhibitions, for he was no longer accountable to a supreme being. Consequently, the realization of social justice required the creation of a God-informed economic system. In this way Catholic labor activists were theologically anti-capitalist, anti-Communist, and anti-Nazi without being in political contradiction.

Harold Ickes, as well as recent scholars, failed to understand Catholic opposition to liberal efforts to prohibit child labor, among other causes. They also misinterpreted Catholic isolationism and support for Franco. Anti-Semitism and political conservatism had nothing to do with the ideology of Murray and Rice's church. Opposed to Soviet collectivist

<sup>55</sup> Gleason, "American Catholic Higher Education, 1940-1990," 234-58, Richard H. Rovere, "Labor's Catholic Bloc," *The Nation* 152 (1941), 11-15.

policies, it was consistent to criticize liberal legislation that placed the state, rather than the father, at the head of the family. Cox, Hensler, Rice, and Murray wanted an interventionist government, particularly in the area of labor-management relations, but they conceived of the state as a benign intermediary, not as an all-powerful entity that inadvertently (perhaps) fomented class war and usurped the private property rights of socially responsible businessmen. Neither did they believe that the state should encourage labor and capital to join forces to increase their share of the wealth at the expense of consumers and the common good.

As far as United States foreign policy was concerned, American and European Catholic support for Franco, and reluctance to go to war with Hitler, were not expressions of support for Nazism. Pius XI and Pius XII explicitly condemned Hitler. Even though Pius XI and Benito Mussolini had agreed to tolerate one another ideologically, Italian fascism was not, like German Nazism, based upon anti-Semitism. Moreover, Franco's Spain gave sanctuary to thousands of Jews who had fled Hitler's armies. Of course, Pius XII could be taken to task for not offering more concrete resistance to Hitler's extermination of European Jews. In contrast to the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the Vatican did, when forced to choose between fascism and Communism, incline to the right. Nonetheless, that bias did not prevent Hitler from closing Germany's parochial schools and executing the bishop of Berlin early in his dictatorship.

On the American front it is clear that Coughlin was an anti-Semite and Nazi sympathizer. However, the National Catholic Welfare Conference and Pius XI repudiated Coughlin who thereafter lost whatever significant following he had enjoyed. In terms of Catholic clergy political activism of the late 1930s, Coughlin was an atypical, isolated cleric. Ignoring that fact, quite a few historians and New Deal liberals depicted Coughlin as being part of the mainstream, rather than the periphery, of the American Catholic Church in the New Deal-era.

Since the dominant political culture of the 1930s, as represented by its influential New Dealers, was liberal, it would have been expected that Catholic activists, who were supposedly desirous of assimilating into that society, would embrace all government policies. But the labor priests, as well as Catholic union and reformist political leaders, wished neither to embrace nor assimilate into that liberal culture. Indeed, their anti-Communism and conception of social justice placed them at odds with the dominant society, regardless of whether that secular society's policy

makers were conservative corporation executives or liberal government bureaucrats. Instead, the labor priests and laymen, such as Murray, were shaping a distinctly Catholic Americanism that was anti-Communist and anti-capitalist. They saw that there was a significant role for the state to play in everyday life, but they warned that government had to serve the common good, promote democratic participation by all members of society, and should not become an end unto itself.

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