JOHN A. FITCH AND THE PITTSBURGH SURVEY

CHARLES HILL and STEVEN COHEN

The Pittsburgh Survey put the early twentieth-century Pittsburgh district under a microscope and presented a detailed report on its structure and imperfections. Although it began as a limited inquiry, it grew to encompass six books (a seventh bound together a series of magazine articles). The first major American sociological study of its kind, it served as a model for later work and had a major impact on its time. Given the survey’s scope and significance, it is surprising to note that it was largely undertaken and written not by the prominent social, political, and economic experts who filled much of its staff but rather by a few relatively inexperienced young men and women. John Fitch was one of these.

The Pittsburgh Survey began simply. The chief probation officer of the Allegheny County Court read a March 1906 issue of the journal Charities and the Commons dealing with the social, economic, and educational problems of Washington, D.C., and wrote the journal’s editor, Edward Devine, requesting a similar study in Pittsburgh. Devine, along with his assistant editor, Paul U. Kellogg, was trying to move the journal beyond the narrow confines of institutional charity work toward greater social concern and an attack on the causes of social problems. He saw this invitation as an opportunity to further his goal and sent Kellogg off to Pittsburgh in the spring of 1907 to make local arrangements for a limited study. Charities and the Commons would publish a special issue, as it had done with its Washington study, flood the city with copies, and distribute additional copies.

Charles Hill received his doctorate at Carnegie-Mellon University and is currently the social studies department head for the Wappingers Central School District in New York. Steven Cohen received his doctorate at Columbia University and is currently living in Sweden.—Editor
nationwide in an attempt to arouse public opinion concerning whatever recommendations the study made. After all, since this procedure had worked in the nation’s capital, why abandon a good thing?

But Kellogg had bigger things in mind. Pittsburgh, he felt, offered the chance to conduct a grand experiment, using an industrial American city as its setting. The Pittsburgh district had characteristics that would allow researchers to explore every aspect of life, from how people worked to how they spent their money, from sewers to city hall, from tax policies to health conditions. Their findings might help the public define what modern urban policy ought to be, given the effects of industrialization and the diversity of behavior cities seemed to nurture.

The Pittsburgh district in 1907 was one of the five largest American metropolitan areas, with a half million people in the city itself and that number again within a ten-mile radius. Its inhabitants included descendants of families who had settled where the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers met to form the Ohio, offspring of mid-nineteenth-century western European migrants, and those who had come in just the past few years from eastern Europe. Fully a fourth of the district’s residents were immigrants, and another fourth had at least one immigrant parent. Many had settled in ethnic neighborhoods throughout the district, the boundaries of which were often defined by natural barriers in the hilly terrain, and they had kept much of their customs, language, and institutions.

Pittsburgh’s reputation as an industrial center rested on the mills that stretched along its riverbanks. One out of every four inhabitants of the district worked in one mill industry or another, a majority of these in a metal-related industry, and the bulk of these for United States Steel, the holding company that had only recently bought out Andrew Carnegie’s massive iron and steel enterprise and became, in the process, the largest corporation in the United States. Pittsburgh led the nation in iron and steel production; its blast furnaces, which ran around the clock, set the sky aglow at night and, during the day, gave the city its seemingly perpetual smoky sky. Pittsburgh also ranked among the nation’s leaders in the production of such items as air brakes, electrical equipment, firebrick, and glass.

But Pittsburgh had a darker side. The pollution from its mills and the raw sewage pumped daily into its rivers put its mortality rate from typhoid first in the nation. Carnegie’s innovative technical and managerial techniques had created a model integrated industry but had also led to the infamous Homestead strike of 1892. And only recently
Lincoln Steffens had called Pittsburgh "A City Ashamed," as he detailed for *McClure's* readers how a select few men held a stranglehold on its political structure. Fortunately for Kellogg, the election of reform mayor George W. Guthrie had increased the chances that his study would not be hampered by political roadblocks.

Using his initial funds and a major supplement from the newly formed Russell Sage Foundation, Kellogg sent a team of experts — a "flying wedge," as he called it — into the city in September.² Little to his surprise, they supported his idea that the study should expand its scope. With his request for a broader inquiry approved, Kellogg moved the Pittsburgh Survey into high gear.

Paul Kellogg faced an immense managerial and editorial task as the survey neared completion in 1908. Some seventy-four "experts" were taking part in the study — many only part time. He had to oversee what they did and then read and edit what they wrote. The whole process was complicated because much of what he wanted done simply could not be accomplished due to time restrictions — both on the time some experts had available to work and on the time during which Kellogg could operate the survey. The unintended result of this complication was that only five people ended up being responsible for the bulk of the Pittsburgh Survey's final report. Kellogg, of course, was one. The other four were John Fitch, Elizabeth Beardsley Butler, Margaret F. Byington, and Crystal Eastman.

With the possible exception of Elizabeth Butler, who came to the survey from her job as secretary of the New Jersey Consumers' League, these four had little prior experience in the fields they studied. They were young — in their middle to late twenties — and were either still in or just out of college. And they were single. These conditions meant that, unlike many of their fellow researchers, they had the time, academic training, and lack of obligation to jobs or kin to spend in Pittsburgh. Kellogg, himself unmarried and close to their age, could hardly have known ahead of time that he would find himself at the survey's end with just this mix of researchers. But he did, and because he did the survey had a vitality and freshness that it might not have had if he had had to rely on the reports prepared by researchers who stayed in Pittsburgh only a short time. Each of the four produced a landmark book: John Fitch wrote *The Steel Workers*, Elizabeth Butler, *Women and the Trades*, Margaret Byington, 

---

Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town, and Crystal Eastman, Work-Accidents and the Law. But the quality of their work should not obscure the fact that other important topics received considerably less attention than did these four.

Taken as a whole, the components of the Pittsburgh Survey made up the most extensive social survey ever undertaken when, before, and even for a number of years after it was conducted. Though many studies of industrial life — exposes, muckraking articles, novels, and the like — reached print in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, no one had ever before attempted to set forth the views of common people and the complexity of industrial conditions in the context of a community study. Some states had collected and published statistical data; the federal government had gathered some of its own; and unions and union newspapers had printed reports describing conditions of labor. But none of these bodies had ever attempted to provide general or systematized information about the lives of workers or to relate systematically what information they had to other aspects of the industrial city. The Pittsburgh Survey pioneered complex community studies and had, out of necessity, to pioneer many of the ways researchers went about gathering data for those studies.

Kellogg read through each report as it came in and used his editorial powers to suggest ways his team could follow up on important leads. When his year in Pittsburgh drew to a close, he found it hard to leave the investigation behind and to turn simply to organizing its results. Too many things, he felt, had received too little treatment. He asked his backers for the mandate and funds to keep the investigation going for at least part of another year. But thousands of dollars and a large amount of time had already been spent on an enterprise that thus far had produced few printed words and little actual reform. They told him no, and Kellogg accepted their decision. He returned to New York, taking a few of the researchers with him, and turned to the task of getting the reports into shape.

The major findings of the Pittsburgh Survey appeared in three issues of Charities and the Commons published early in 1909. Thirty-three articles dealt with the city's workers, working conditions, housing, immigrants, black community, civic organizations, economic and political problems, health care, and ways of bringing about change. Almost a third of the articles were by the survey's four main researchers. A year later, the three issues were put in hard-cover and published as a book called The Pittsburgh Survey. Kellogg still had
other reports that he thought deserved special attention. In 1914 he edited and published two other volumes — *The Pittsburgh District: Civic Frontage* and *Wage-Earning Pittsburgh*—containing twenty-five articles, some of which had appeared in *Charities and the Commons* earlier.

The resulting product — the four main books and the other articles — is a stinging indictment of industrial life, an indictment that washed waves of evidence — numbers and quotes — over its readers as it tried to convince them that something had to be done about a tangle of problems. Edward Devine summarized the Pittsburgh Survey's most important findings as the discovery of:

I. An altogether incredible amount of overwork by everybody, reaching its extreme in the twelve-hour shift for seven days in the week in the steel mills and the railway switchyards.

II. Low wages for the great majority of the laborers employed by the mills.

III. Still lower wages for women.

IV. An absentee capitalism, with bad effects strikingly analogous to those of absentee landlordism.

V. A continuous inflow of immigrants with low standards [of living].

VI. The destruction of family life . . . by the demands of the day's work, and by the very demonstrable and material method of typhoid fever and industrial accidents.

VII. Archaic social institutions.

VIII. The contrast . . . between the prosperity on the one hand of the most prosperous of all the communities of our western civilizations . . . and, on the other, the neglect of life, of health, of physical vigor, even of the industrial efficiency of the individual.3

Both unsympathetic and sympathetic press greeted the publication of the survey. Unsympathetic reviews came either from some academic economists who believed the work to be "unscientific" or from certain local voices which disliked the reformist bent of the work and disagreed with its findings. According to one resident writing in the *Pittsburgh Daily Dispatch*, "The Pittsburgh Survey is returning an indictment on insufficient evidence." The *Gazette-Times* went so far as to run a counter survey to show that the Pittsburgh Survey had misrepresented conditions in the Pittsburgh district. Even one local source favorable to the survey — the *National Labor Tribune* — criticized the survey for suggesting that industrial conditions were worse in Pittsburgh than elsewhere. Sympathetic responses were more numerous. From reviews in popular magazines like *Collier's, Outlook*, and *Everybody's Magazine*, to those of academic sociologists and political economists in scholarly journals like the *American Journal of Sociology, Yale Review*, and even the German academic

publication, Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, the judgment was that the Pittsburgh Survey had broken new ground.  

The publicity that accompanied publication had some of the effects Kellogg had hoped for. A number of Pittsburgh’s political leaders took steps to build a filtration plant that would cut back the city’s high typhoid rate. The city’s tax system was revamped, political ward lines were redrawn and election practices altered, and several city commissions were created that recommended other changes the city could make. Perhaps the most impressive immediate change, though, occurred with the demolition of one of Pittsburgh’s slums as a result of publicity generated through a Pittsburgh Survey article.

The survey had longer-term effects as well, and perhaps these are more significant, for Pittsburgh did not really change to any considerable extent despite the few reforms just mentioned. Crystal Eastman left the survey staff and helped write a New York State workmen’s compensation law. Other states drew on her findings as they prepared their own laws. Charities and the Commons changed its name to the Survey, expanded its circulation, and became one of the nation’s best sources of information about social conditions and one of its leading advocates of rational change. Paul Kellogg joined Jane Addams in writing part of Theodore Roosevelt’s Progressive party platform. And many of the other survey participants, including John Fitch, became heavily involved in political and social reform ventures that, while they produced few significant changes in their early years, eventually helped create laws and regulations dealing with child labor, social security, minimum wages, factory inspections, and housing reform.

John Fitch came to Pittsburgh with John Commons as the survey was just getting started. Commons was Kellogg’s labor expert and a member of the “flying wedge” whose report gave him the justification for expanding the Pittsburgh Survey’s scope. But Commons was a busy man. In addition to his duties at the University of Wisconsin, he advised the state’s governor, Robert LaFollette, and worked on important pieces of state legislation. He replied to Kellogg’s invitation

---

4 Cohen, “Reconciling Industrial Conflict and Democracy,” 47-78.
to participate by agreeing to do so only if he could do his work during school breaks. This meant that others would have to do most of the actual investigative work for him. Commons was used to that. As he openly admitted in his autobiography, he was a planner. He came up with the great ideas, and then turned his graduate students and assistants loose on them. He was also a firm believer in requiring that his students gain practical experience in industry by working there before they ever presumed to teach about labor economics themselves.

These two practices help explain why Commons asked three students to stay with him in Pittsburgh. They were to watch how he did things and then to conduct their own investigations—which he would coordinate. One turned the opportunity down, but the other two, William M. Leiserson, an undergraduate, and John Fitch, a graduate student, did not.

John Andrews Fitch was born in rural Wisconsin in 1881, the son of a Civil War veteran who had transplanted his family from a farm in Maine not long before. Later the family moved to a sod hut in South Dakota. Although Fitch grew up on the farm, he was far from unschooled. His family placed a high value on education. He learned to read, upside down, as he listened to his mother read the Bible. His father had taught school in Maine before answering Lincoln's first call for volunteers in 1861. And the family sent Fitch off to college rather than keep him on the farm.

After a 1904 graduation from Yankton College in South Dakota, Fitch took a job teaching at a Nebraska academy. Two years later, the stimulating atmosphere of the University of Wisconsin drew him away for master's level work in economics. "The place was buzzing with the progressivism and courage and forward-looking policies that the vigorous campaigns of the preceding years had inevitably developed," he later wrote. Commons, of course, was in the thick of all this activity, and Fitch spent a year studying with him before going to Pittsburgh.

John Commons was knowledgeable about labor in general and taught his students a great deal, but he got his Pittsburgh work off to an inauspicious start. Arriving there on Labor Day, he decided to take his students to a labor picnic up the Monongahela River so they could meet some of the steelworkers they were to study. As they moved up the river, they passed by the mighty mills, the roaring fur-
naces, and the site of the famous Homestead strike until they arrived at the picnic grounds. Only then did they discover that steelworkers worked just about every day, and that none had the time or energy to attend the celebration.8

Undeterred by this rough beginning, Commons and his students quickly settled down to serious work. Commons told Leiserson and Fitch to follow him around and absorb his interviewing technique for the first month as he talked to workers in and around the mills. He then turned them loose, Leiserson to study unskilled workers and Fitch to examine the skilled and semiskilled. Soon after getting Fitch and Leiserson started, Commons had to return to his classroom chores. Leiserson apparently decided to go back with him and finish the courses he needed for his bachelor's degree. As a result, the unskilled workers did not receive the attention that Fitch was to give to the skilled workers.

By Commons's account, Fitch began his work with great naiveté. He was from the "prairies of South Dakota and thought that labor leaders had the horns which he had known in action on the farm," Commons later wrote.9 Fitch was appalled at the remark, for he felt the situation was much different. His work in Pittsburgh, he commented, allowed him to get "acquainted with working men as I never had had an opportunity to do before. I found them intelligent, high-minded, — perfectly corking chaps, — those skilled steel workers. . . . I had not known that working men were like that. In upbrining, in intelligence, and in a general attitude toward life they were so much like the farmers that I had grown up among. . . ."10

During the ensuing months, Fitch interviewed over one hundred people in and around Pittsburgh. He wrote notes after he finished each interview, kept one of three copies and sent the others to Kellogg and Commons. He took official tours of plants, visited company officials and mill workers on the job, and met with community officials. Often these talks and visits led to further contacts with other workers. Some men volunteered their time. Others suggested men he should talk with. During the seven months Fitch spent interviewing, he conversed with men in the mills and in their homes, with men who had worked for decades and men who had started more recently, with union leaders and workers who hated the union, with the employed and the unemployed, and with men who praised Theodore Roosevelt or

8 John A. Fitch, Social Responsibilities of Organized Labor (New York, 1924), xi.
9 Commons, Myself, 141.
10 Fitch to Cook, Oct. 26, 1924.
the Republican party and with others who swore the revolution would come and the workers would overthrow their oppressors.

Since Fitch met the men he interviewed in a variety of ways, it is unlikely that the workers quoted in these notes made up a true random sample of all skilled workers in the Pittsburgh region. Fitch felt confident that at least the men he chose to quote in *The Steel Workers* were fairly representative. "These are the steel workers," he wrote. "I have not chosen extreme cases; on the contrary, it has been my aim to select men who are typical of a class, — the serious, clear-headed men, rather than the irresponsibles. . . ." 11 (By "irresponsibles" he meant those men who spoke without knowing what they were really talking about.) Nonetheless, his steelworkers did differ in some ways from the Pittsburgh district's skilled workers as a whole. His sample, for instance, overrepresents native-born workers and those born in the British Isles and may overrepresent older workers as well.

All the workers Fitch interviewed were male and had skilled or semiskilled positions they had worked a number of years to acquire. All but one were white and about seven in ten were native born. About one in four had been born in the British Isles; one man was from Germany while one other was a Slav. The workers tended to be in their middle to late forties — two-thirds of those whose ages are known were between thirty-three and fifty-two — and had worked an average of twenty-six years apiece. About half had entered the mills before 1892, the date of the Homestead strike which had signaled the decline of the skilled workers' union. Most had little formal education. Instead of staying in school, they had followed their fathers, brothers, other kin, or friends into the mills and had learned their work from the bottom up. Many took pride in their rise to the ranks of the skilled workers. And some looked scornfully on men in a younger generation who were developing newer attitudes toward work.

Most of the notes contain an impressive amount of detail about the personal characteristics and feelings of individual steelworkers. A typical set of note cards on one interview tells when the interview took place, where the man worked, his age, his occupation, how long he had worked, his wages, and his attitudes about subjects ranging from the union to company policies. Some notes cover only a card or two while others cover ten or more. Fitch left most names off the cards. Workers feared retaliation if their companies found out they had made critical comments, and Fitch probably assumed, quite rea-

---

sonably, that any man guaranteed anonymity was more likely to speak the truth during the interview.

John Fitch finished interviewing in April 1908 and turned to making sense of what he had heard and seen. He did some of his writing in Pittsburgh rather than return immediately to the University of Wisconsin. The drafts of his articles passed through a number of hands. Kellogg edited them, as he edited everything that crossed his desk. But the articles were also shown to people who represented some of the organizations Fitch criticized. According to Shelby Harrison, a friend and fellow survey participant, Kellogg and Fitch “spent the best part of several days in conference with Taylor Allderdice, one of the leading executives of the United States Steel Corporation, in this fact-auditing process.” 12 His writings also passed through the hands of John M. Glenn, conservative lawyer and head of the Russell Sage Foundation, who put aside his fears that Fitch, possibly radicalized by his year at Wisconsin, would turn out a polemic. Although Fitch made forceful statements about conditions in the mills, Glenn concluded that his work had “all the earmarks of a careful, conscientious, well-balanced study, limiting itself to a statement of facts, pro and con, with no ill-considered theorizing.”

John Fitch drew on a tremendous amount of data as he wrote *The Steel Workers*. Using the interview notes as well as newspaper clippings, books, government documents, and corporate records, his book describes the steel production and finishing processes, working conditions, the rise, fall, and status of iron and steel unions, corporate labor policies, and the effects of each of these on families, the local community, political behavior, and society as a whole. It is at once an economic inquiry, sociological study, historical work, and statistical survey. Anyone wishing to learn about the development of the steel industry ought to start with this work.

While the book deals with many aspects of the steel industry, it takes its major theme — the human side of production — from the interviews. “The purpose of this study,” he wrote, “is other than to paint word pictures of steel making, or to describe processes for engineer or metallurgist; the purpose is rather to discuss iron and steel, not in terms of ore, and tonnage, and machinery, but in terms of the working life.” 13

Fitch's close contact with the men he interviewed led him to

---

look at what they did from their perspective. His book, as a result, depicts workers in quite different terms from those one might expect a member of the middle class of his day to have used. Workers are described sympathetically and without condescension. Strikers at Homestead in 1892 are pictured as solid members of the community, not ne'er-do-wells. And, as Fitch presented it, the time workers took for a drink during the day and their stops on the way home at a local bar appeared perfectly logical and even necessary parts of the lives of men who worked under the conditions they did.

A coherent if relatively sketchy model of industrial society underlies *The Steel Workers* and its thesis that the human side of production was considerably less than what it should be. Not surprisingly, his view owed a debt to John Commons, not only in its use of classical and institutional economics to explain the development of the steel industry and the nature of its labor relations, but also in its critical acceptance of the value of a market economy and the modern notion that industrialization could improve the quality of life in society as a whole.

Fitch's model, however, went beyond classical economics in two important ways. First, his experience with Pittsburgh's mill workers led him to modify classical economics by including a third set of actors (other than capital and labor) in the model: the public. Second, he drew on his midwestern upbringing (and possibly on his stay at Wisconsin) to include a set of ethical standards against which he judged economic behavior.

The most important concept Fitch borrowed from classical economics was the idea that people pursue their self-interest and try to maximize returns to themselves. Workers seek high wages and, if they can get them, other benefits such as the ability to control working conditions. Company managers, on the other hand, seek the highest return possible for capital expended. They try to keep wages low, introduce more efficient production techniques, and speed the production process in pursuit of this goal.

He argued that this pursuit of such goals by labor and capital put the two groups in fundamental and inevitable conflict. However compatible their concerns might have been, such as recognizing the need to increase productivity in order to secure a greater total return on investment, they were in conflict because they both sought as much of that return as possible at each other's expense. Furthermore, their pursuit of self-interest was unlimited. So long as both held relatively equal amounts of power during a bargaining process, the curves repre-
senting their willingness to supply or demand labor at specified rates of return would intersect at a point each would accept as equitable. But if one side gained sufficient power to dictate conditions of employment, it would abuse that power.

Much of *The Steel Workers* is devoted to showing that this theoretical conflict was historical fact in the iron and steel industry. Fitch's examination of the union movement, and in particular of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, highlighted what had happened when skilled workers held the slightly stronger hand. In addition to making what Fitch regarded as legitimate employment demands, locals had made excessive wage demands, broken contracts, and forced companies to retain incompetent workers. These abuses of power contributed to the feeling among many employers that they should destroy the unions and helped lead to the Homestead strike of 1892.

Fitch knew that these abuses were more than figments of corporate imagination, for his interview notes reveal workers admitting that they took place. His notes and book also reveal how the pursuit of worker self-interest seriously impaired the ability of workers to present a united front. Locals that gained power used that power for themselves and at the expense of other workers. Different trades and different ethnic groups pursued different interests, and skilled workers in general excluded unskilled and most semiskilled workers altogether. The result was frequent disarray and infighting among workers and the failure to attain worker solidarity.

The Homestead strike of 1892 effectively reduced the Amalgamated to a shell and put employers in control. Fitch found that employers then proceeded to abuse this control, just as the unions had done. In their pursuit of increased efficiency and greater profits they drove wage rates down, institutionalized the twelve-hour day and the seven-day work week, speeded up work to oppressive degrees, established spy networks to ferret out dissent, and denied workers their legitimate political rights. Fitch concluded that corporate repression of labor permeated the early twentieth-century steel industry and that the repression was inevitable, given his theoretical framework. What then, he asked, should be done? He had concluded from his research in Pittsburgh that the market economy worked imperfectly. One reason why capital dominated labor was that it presented an organized front while labor did not. Hence, one solution to the problem of inequities was to guarantee labor the right to organize unions and bargain collectively with management.
Fitch never argued this solution explicitly in The Steel Workers. It came later in articles and in his 1924 book called The Causes of Industrial Unrest. What he did instead was write in a way that led readers to the conclusion that either workers must have the right to organize or that something else had to be done to restore the balance of power within the steel industry. He concluded ominously that continued repression would lead to one of three ends: the return of unions, the turn of workers to political action, or revolution.

Given Fitch's theoretical model, the idea of violent conflict between labor and capital was not farfetched, though revolutionary violence might be far off. So long as the two sides maintained a balance of power, each was presumably satisfied with short-term results. But let one side dominate the other and an abuse of power was sure to result. If the strong side subjected the weaker to extreme abuse, the logical conclusion was that the latter would itself turn to extreme measures. With economic and political avenues cut off, those measures would be violent. The actions both sides took during the Homestead strike of 1892 simply provided a foretaste of what might come in the future.

In theory, it would appear the weaker side had no avenues of redress other than extreme action. The alternative was capitulation. Fitch argued, however — much as many progressive reformers came to argue — that the public could dictate a solution. Fitch's reasoning on this point went well beyond classical economics. Nearly a half century later he wrote that what he saw in Pittsburgh clash with the values he had learned in the Midwest. He found the steelworkers to be like the farmers in many ways, but unlike in some. While the latter had the right to express themselves freely, to share in the democratic process, and to expect to receive from and give fair treatment to others, the steel industry deprived workers of those same rights. These were fundamental human rights, and not some components of an economic model. Thus no one had the right to bargain them away nor the right to take them away from others.

They were also social rights, reflecting society's need to protect itself. Fitch argued that society had the obligation to intervene in the bargaining process, for that process involved "a question of how much energy an employer has a right to demand." Who, he went on, could answer such a question? Not capital, for it sought answers that furthered its own self-interest; not labor, for that matter, for the same

14 Fitch, Social Responsibilities, xii.
15 Fitch, The Steel Workers, 76.
reason. In the case where the employer demanded and the worker gave too much of his energy, "there would be nothing left for family or society; with manhood and citizenship both taken away, only a brute would remain." Clearly, only from a societal perspective could one begin to answer questions like these.

That solution offered a way out of the dilemma that arose when labor and capital, each following its own set of values, came into conflict. Because society encompassed both groups, its values had a higher priority; and since, at least theoretically, its values were uniform while those of labor and capital were not, adherence to those values would secure resolution to industrial problems. Similarly, the public had an obligation to intervene when either side abused its power. Thus a solution to Pittsburgh's problems was to get the government to legislate the right of unions to organize and bargain collectively and to pass laws establishing minimum industrial standards.

Fitch did not come right out and say this, nor, considering the reality as he found it, did he bring out the obvious corollary that the public had a right to regulate unions. He left these conclusions for later works. Quite probably he shied away from making too many controversial political statements in The Steel Workers (recall John Glenn's concern about his possible radicalism). Equally probably he held back because he was still thinking his conceptual model of industrial relations through at this point and examining the directions along which it led him. His more mature book, The Causes of Industrial Unrest, contains a much more complete statement of his philosophy, reveals how carefully he tried to stay clear of dogma, and shows how clearly he recognized the complexity of modern society and the difficulty one had adapting a theoretical perspective to fit that complexity.

When The Steel Workers appeared in print in 1911, it stood as compelling evidence that long hours, low pay, a high rate of industrial accidents, efforts to speed production, political repression, and corporate antiunion policies stunted the Pittsburgh community. These policies weakened the community as they sapped its individual members of their strength and deprived them of the time or desire to assume active roles in society. In making this argument, Fitch wrote a book that presented an early and fairly simple version of a view of industrial society that matured over the coming years and that indicated the direction much progressive reform thought would take over the next decade.
When he finished with the Pittsburgh Survey, Fitch returned to the University of Wisconsin as a Fellow in economics. He expected to receive his master's degree and proposed using *The Steel Workers* as his dissertation. But despite backing from John Commons, the university refused to accept it. The only graduate degree he ever received was an honorary doctorate awarded by Yankton College a number of years later.

While Madison remained an exciting place to be, Fitch's perspective on the world had matured during his year on the survey. He became discontented with the ignorance he found around him and with his role as an uninvolved observer. Later he was to write of his year in Wisconsin:

I found that everywhere comfortable people in other walks of life, — my own farmers back home as well as others, — underestimated the caliber of the working people and did not care very much about their difficulties.

Going back to the University of Wisconsin, I used to go down to the state Capitol when labor bills were up for discussion, and hear the manufacturers oppose them. Some of the things they said before committees seemed to me so untrue and often so brutal that in my youthful enthusiasm I raged inwardly. In those days I was almost unable to talk with people who did not think of labor and trade unions as I did. I used to find myself stuttering when confronted with a smug, contented opposition that was blind to facts.¹⁶

When his year at Wisconsin was up, John Fitch married and moved east to take a position with the New York State Bureau of Labor Statistics. In the meantime, the *Survey* was branching out. Paul Kellogg, now fully in charge of operations on the journal, asked Fitch to come to New York City and establish an industry department — the only department that would have a full-time editor. Fitch accepted, and stayed with the *Survey* until 1919, when he left to teach at the New York School of Social Work at Columbia — a position he held until his retirement thirty years later.

During this time, Fitch was also involved in several other ventures that grew out of his work on the Pittsburgh Survey. Charles Cabot, a Boston stockholder in the United States Steel Corporation, had become upset with some of that corporation's housing and labor policies. With help from Kellogg, he forced the corporation to tear down a slum it owned. Kellogg then led him to what both he and Fitch thought was a central problem in working conditions: the twelve-hour working day.¹⁷ Cabot sponsored Fitch on a tour and

¹⁶ Fitch to Cook, Oct. 26, 1924.
study of other American iron and steel centers, and helped pay his way to England to look at conditions there. The results were printed in the *Survey* and helped end the seven-day work week in the steel industry, but not the long working day — at least not yet.

When Cabot died his will created a fund that Kellogg drew on in the wake of the 1919 Steel Strike to finance another Fitch investigation into labor problems in the steel industry.¹⁸ This investigation eventually helped move the American iron and steel industry to heed President Warren G. Harding’s 1923 request that they adopt an eight-hour day.

During his years at Columbia, Fitch remained involved in important social issues of his day. He wrote *The Causes of Industrial Unrest*, which tried to explain the nature of contemporary labor problems and suggest reasonable solutions. His evenhanded treatment of both sides in labor disputes led to a periodic role as a labor mediator. Recognizing his abilities as a mediator, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed him a member of the National Railway Labor Panel during World War II. In addition, Fitch was an early member of the American Civil Liberties Union (though he resigned his membership on a question of principle), a friend and supporter of Norman Thomas, and an active leader in the American Labor party during the 1930s. He also participated in a number of other industrial and social investigations besides the Pittsburgh Survey. John Fitch died in 1959 at the age of seventy-eight, just two years after the death of his longtime friend, Paul Kellogg.

¹⁸ This investigation yielded another set of interview notes. They have been used by Robert Asher in “Painful Memories: The Historical Consciousness of Steelworkers and the Steel Strike of 1919,” *Pennsylvania History* 45 (Jan. 1978): 61-86.