
“Outsiders” and “Strangers”

For close to four decades Endicott Johnson's labor policies had been tied to a firm conviction that managers and workers could resolve their differences without the involvement of "outside" unions. The "Happy Family," the Johnsons believed, could settle its own affairs.¹ Yet in the late 1930s the corporation faced the first of a series of formidable challenges to its paternalistic, open shop regime. With the passage of the Wagner Act (National Labor Relations Act) in 1935 and the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the corporation found that to maintain an open shop would be an increasingly difficult task. That it succeeded suggests that even through the most difficult years of the Depression, corporate paternalism still remained a viable alternative to unionism for Endicott Johnson workers.

I

In April 1937, following several months of widespread sit-down strikes across the nation, George F. Johnson wrote James A. Farley, President Roosevelt's political adviser and then postmaster general, expressing his fears that Endicott Johnson's placid waters would be disturbed by sit-down strikes and labor organizers. He mentioned that he had already met with the president at Hyde Park "very early in the troublesome days between Labor and Capital" and that he wanted some assurances from the administration that Endicott Johnson would be protected from labor difficulties.

I expect I am getting to be a damn nuisance to you, but I do want to know whom I ought to contact, so that we can do immediately, whatever is possible, to prevent any "sit downs," "sit ins," or trouble in our business.

You know what we have. It has taken fifty years to build it. There must be some influence that can be brought to bear on these Labor Organizations, that will persuade them to let us entirely alone.²

Farley responded to Johnson's appeal by sending Edward McGrady, assistant secretary of labor, to call on him. McGrady did little more than give Johnson "encouragement to believe that perhaps" Endicott Johnson would be "unmolested." Such a vague assurance, all that was in McGrady's power to offer, apparently sufficed to give Johnson some comfort, although he continued to seek support from public officials.³ In June 1937 he wrote to Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York, appealing for permission to use some remarks of praise for the corporation's labor policies that Wagner had made in 1931.⁴

Johnson's need for continued assurances from public officials reflected a growing siege mentality not unfounded in reality. By the summer of 1937 he had already learned that "there are plenty of followers of the C.I.O and similar Labor Organizations" among his workers, although he was not certain of exactly how many.⁵ In September of that year, he wrote to a friend: "We know their organizers are in the Valley here, and creating more or less trouble with some of the manufacturers."⁶

Indeed, CIO organizers had arrived in the area in July 1937 to organize three stitchdown shoe firms in Binghamton: the Ramsey, Gotham, and Truitt shoe companies.⁷ Local 141 of the United Shoe Workers of America, CIO, was established in Binghamton soon afterward, and it was only a matter of months before union officials finally approached Endicott Johnson officers. On January 6, 1938, the director of the United Shoe Workers of America, Powers Hapgood, accompanied by another union representative, paid a visit to the firm's president, George W. Johnson:

They were very friendly, and came here in what they figured to be the interests of the whole Shoe Industry. . . . They had the bright idea that since we have handled our labor problems successfully, if we were to get our workers together and let them talk to them in a body about E.J. voluntarily accepting the C.I.O's labor policy, unionizing all of our plants, that other Shoe Industries would gladly follow our lead. Those who did not want to be identified with Labor Unions, could, through pressure they would supply with the funds received from our workers, amounting to approximately \$300,000 per year, be brought into line; thereby eliminating the severe competition of numerous plants throughout the Industry that are making it hard for everyone.⁸

Johnson was not persuaded, but the two union representatives persisted, offering to go down to Daytona, Florida, to speak to his father about their proposition. George F. Johnson, however, was in hearty concurrence with his son's response and never met with them. In correspondence with his son, he responded to their visit with sarcasm.⁹

Yet sarcasm was an ineffective weapon against the conditions that were making the prospect of unionization ever more real. Business was hurting in late 1937 and early 1938, as the economy entered the second trough of the Depression. Orders at Endicott Johnson were off, and again management

began cutting benefits and wages. By late March 1938 the firm completed a severe belt-tightening. It discontinued relief aid to workers. It cut back on medical services. Unnecessary hospitalization was restricted, and limits on hospital stays were imposed. On May 9, 1938, a 5 percent wage deduction for medical service was reinstated. And then came layoffs.¹⁰

More significant than these measures were the wage cuts that management instituted in early 1938. Already suffering from the contraction of the work week to two or three days due to curtailed production, the workers now faced horizontal pay cuts. On February 1, 1938, full-time salaried workers were asked to accept a 20 percent salary reduction. Two weeks later the firm slashed the wages of factory workers by 10 percent. Numerous spot rate reductions throughout the plants compounded the effects of the 10 percent wage cut.¹¹

Wage and welfare decreases were responses to the realities of a stagnant economy. Corporation sales and profits had begun to decline in 1936 and continued to do so in 1937. By the end of 1938, despite the firm's cost-cutting measures, the company would close the year with a net profit of only \$857,191, down from the \$2 million figures it generated in 1933 through 1935.¹² There was hardly any question about management's responsibilities to stockholders. This time George F. Johnson expressed few damning words about them. Wages had to be cut to sustain profits.

The presence of union organizers and management's growing anxieties about maintaining worker loyalty had helped delay such cuts. Long before February 1938, when the 10 percent wage reduction went into effect, George F. Johnson had begun encouraging his son and nephew to reduce wages to secure more orders. Their failure to do so greatly angered him: "I am giving you my honest opinion, that you are going to run into Labor troubles — not because you are not willing to pay fair wages, but because the Help are not willing to work for fair wages, and you weakly agree with them and let them run your business."¹³ Indeed, the workers, while certainly not "running" the business, were limiting management's prerogatives somewhat—a state of affairs that continued to arouse the elder Johnson's ire.

Some workers, recognizing management's heightened concern over the loss of labor loyalty, exploited that anxiety to limit pay cuts. Just after the 1938 wage reduction went into effect, petitions of loyalty were circulated throughout the factories. Loyalty petitions were a regular company ritual, a public expression of the Endicott Johnson consensus, frequently used during periods of anticipated worker discontent. They were encouraged by the Johnsons and generally initiated by management go-betweens: foremen and loyal workers who identified very closely with the corporation or who had received special favors from management.¹⁴ Most of the workers did not take these petitions very seriously. In fact, employees declaring their allegiance to management one day might join the union another.¹⁵ But even more significant than their casual attitude was the way in which they could exploit the petition process to

extract concessions from the company. In response to the 1938 wage reduction, several groups of workers withheld their "loyalty" until rates or grievances had been adjusted. Charles F. Johnson, Jr., reporting on the status of the petition drive, described the use of such tactics:

There was one group in the Fibre Counter Mill that did not sign the petition when it first came around. They had some grievance about their particular job. This was straightened out and they signed their names.

Leonard Steed has been meeting different groups of Tabernacle factory workers, making adjustments that seems [*sic*] necessary. He has now completed his work and the total adjustments made amount to about 2 percent. As far as he knows, all of the workers are now satisfied and we expect to get a renewal of loyalty from them in a day or two.¹⁶

Given the economic constraints under which the firm was operating and the power that conditions of labor surplus gave management, any adjustment of wage cuts to the workers' benefit constituted a significant victory indeed.

The severity of business retrenchment in 1938 was being borne unequally by the firm's employees. Some factories were running full while others were only on half time or less. The Pioneer and Binghamton Work Shoe factories were operating as little as two and a half days a week, due to the reduced demand for shoes manufactured in these plants; the Boys and Youths and the Infants' factories were running full time; the Sole Leather and Upper Leather tanneries were at less than half production.¹⁷ By March 1938 the corporation as a whole was operating at about 65 percent of its normal productive capacity.¹⁸ With conditions in the factories rapidly deteriorating and the prospect of a weakened paternalistic order increasing, it was no wonder that AFL organizers soon competed with the United Shoe Workers of America in an assault on Endicott Johnson.

II

The history of boot and shoe industry unions since the turn of the century had been one of extreme fragmentation and fratricide. Numerous local and regional unions, as well as several national unions, vied with one another for the allegiance of shoeworkers.¹⁹ By 1937, however, two unions had risen to dominance: the AFL Boot and Shoe Workers' Union (BSWU) and the CIO United Shoe Workers of America (USWA). The former organization had come into existence in 1895 and had been the parent organization of the local that Johnson destroyed in 1895 (see chap. 1). The USWA was of more recent vintage.

In September 1933 several New York and New England unions amalgamated to form the United Shoe and Leather Workers Union (USLWU), with a membership of approximately 60,000.²⁰ With the formation of the Congress

of Industrial Organizations, the USLWU went through another amalgamation in 1937. It joined with the St. Louis branch of the Shoe Workers Protective Union as well as with several other local unions to form the United Shoe Workers of America, CIO. The new union began vigorous organizing work almost immediately. Although it made good progress for a while, a failed attempt to unionize shoe factories in Auburn, Maine, in 1937, both drained its resources and demoralized its organizers.²¹

The militant activism displayed by the USWA stood in sharp contrast to the business unionism of its rival, the BSWU. The BSWU had been a relatively conservative union since 1899, when its constitution was revised to increase dues and give broader powers to the executive board. In the decades that followed the constitution's revision, the union's leadership faced continuous internal and external challenges. While the BSWU maintained support and dominance in New England, it did not, however, experience vigorous growth. By the late 1930s its membership stood at a modest 31,000.²²

For both the USWA and the BSWU, the Endicott Johnson Corporation appeared a very desirable target for unionization in 1938. With over 16,000 workers concentrated in a relatively small area, and with a heavy commitment of capital locked into dozens of plants, it could not flee organizing efforts, as many other smaller shoe manufacturers had done in New England.²³ Furthermore, given the firm's good reputation, its management might be less willing to wage an intense battle against unionization. Like United States Steel, it might readily capitulate. For the USWA not only would the unionization of the firm's workers refill its "war" chest, it would also greatly enhance the prestige of the new union, thus aiding it in organizing other firms in New England and the Midwest. For the BSWU a triumph at Endicott Johnson would make up for the extensive losses of membership suffered during the early years of the Depression. It would also prevent the USWA from gaining overwhelming dominance in the shoe industry. With such thoughts in mind organizers from both unions began their work among Endicott Johnson workers.

On March 15, 1938, Ben Berk, a labor organizer from the BSWU, established a local headquarters in the offices of the AFL Binghamton Central Labor Union. With the aid of several other BSWU organizers and volunteers from the Binghamton Central Labor Union, Berk began to leaflet Endicott Johnson plants.²⁴ Soon afterward, Local 42 of the BSWU was reestablished, thus marking the return of Johnson's old nemesis. By the summer of 1938 both USWA and BSWU organizers were actively trying to unionize the factories, although the CIO union was committing far fewer resources to the effort at the time, concentrating instead on smaller shoe firms in Binghamton.

Ben Berk's initial strategy was to point out to workers the contradictions and hypocrisy inherent in the "Square Deal" that allowed dividends to con-

tinue while workers suffered wage cutbacks. A typical BSWU handout read as follows:

The Company claims it is in no condition to give any increases as they only made a mere \$1,250,000 profit last year [1937], this despite the fact they promised to return the reductions the workers so generously *GAVE* them. The workers know they can't feed their children Golf courses and swimming pools, they can't dress their kids with Dance Bands or house them in Recreation Parks. They must have more money in their envelopes to provide them with the necessities of life.²⁵

The union promised to pursue wage increases, job protection, overtime pay, and equalization of work. It also vowed to establish grievance committees and to "eliminate all slave-driving, price-cutting foremen." Such messages and promises were continually repeated to workers in handbills, speeches, and radio talks.²⁶

Reflecting the organizational strategy of the AFL in general, which emphasized craft units, Ben Berk concentrated his early efforts on the mechanical divisions of the company, particularly on the Johnson City and the Endicott machine shops. There, the craft consciousness of the men, Berk probably reasoned, would make them more responsive to union appeals. He was not disappointed. By October 1938 he notified George W. Johnson that he had collected pledge cards from a majority of the workers in these two units, enough to petition the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for certification as their bargaining agent.²⁷

Yet even as Berk was actively pursuing an offensive strategy against the corporation and winning converts in the machine shops, he was facing formidable opposition from both the firm and the local community. The company was issuing constant appeals urging its workers to ignore the "strangers" in their midst and to remain loyal to the corporation. Corporate officers and company propaganda emphasized the tradition of mutuality that existed at Endicott Johnson, a tradition that outsiders were now threatening. The compact between management and labor, the "Square Deal," rested on the premise that grievances and conflict would be resolved without the involvement of intermediaries. A union presence within the corporation, managers reminded the workers, threatened the very foundations of the "Happy Family": "You may be certain IT IS NOT FOR YOUR SAKE that strangers come into the community, circulate their 'vile Propaganda,' seeking to create discontent and unhappiness and THEN DISAPPEAR, to work in SOME OTHER FIELD. Pay no attention to EVIL TEACHERS, false doctrines and UNHEALTHY PROPAGANDA."²⁸ George F. Johnson spent the last two weeks of April 1938 circulating through the factories and speaking to the workers on the subject of loyalty.²⁹ Editorials appearing in the *Binghamton Sun*, owned

and controlled by Johnson and his nephew-in-law, persistently recalled to the workers their obligations to management.³⁰ Once again, in June 1938, loyalty petitions were circulated through the factories, "the substance of which stated that the workers were opposed to any organization."³¹

Ben Berk fought against the company's antiunion drive with all that he had, not the least of which was the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). He filed an unfair labor practices complaint with the NLRB in late June 1938, claiming that the firm had violated section 8(1) of the NLRA, which stipulated that employers should not interfere with employees exercising their rights to organize into collective bargaining units.³² In mid-summer of 1938 NLRB investigators arrived in the community and began to look into the accusations that Berk had made. Not surprisingly, many of his charges were corroborated: a small company union composed of maintenance workers had been initiated by a relative of the head of the firm's advertising department; management go-betweens in the machine shops had taken loyalty petitions around—they had not originated on the shop floor; threats and warnings of benefit retractions had been used to coerce workers to sign loyalty petitions; a local radio station had been pressured not to air BSWU broadcasts.³³ The NLRB finally issued a cease-and-desist order, and company officials agreed, in October 1938, to post notices throughout the plants stating that they would no longer interfere with the rights of workers to unionize.³⁴

The scrutiny of NLRB investigators could not but provoke the hostile reactions of corporate officers. Meetings with investigators were delayed, and a strategy of stalling was employed by Howard Swartwood, the corporation attorney. The NLRA, as company officers recognized, was a potentially subversive piece of legislation insofar as corporate welfarism was concerned. Having more bite than section 7a of the NIRA, it threatened to interject yet one more intermediary between corporate paternalists and workers, and thus undermine the personalist bonds that helped sustain welfare capitalism. When, on October 21, 1938, Johnson, his nephew, and Swartwood finally met with the regional director of the NLRB, Henry Winters, the elder Johnson took the opportunity to express his frustration and anger to Winters. He complained about the freedoms the Wagner Act gave to labor and the limitations it placed on management. According to an NLRB memorandum, "At this meeting Mr. Johnson stated that EJ ante-dated the Wagner Act, as well as the Roosevelt Administration. He pointed out to Mr. Winters that it was entirely wrong for Berk, an outsider, to come in and tear the work of fifty years building up of relationships between the company and its employees." He further accused Berk of lying to the workers in order to get them to sign pledge cards.³⁵ Several days later Johnson wrote Franklin Roosevelt about the NLRB cease-and-desist order, suggesting that an earlier verbal promise by the president contradicted the present behaviors of the NLRB: "The enclosed [a copy of the NLRB order] hardly agrees with the assurance you gave me . . .

[that I would] have nothing to worry about." Roosevelt answered that he wished to reply to Johnson's statements in person.³⁶ If such a meeting did occur between the two men, no record remains of what transpired. Certainly, as subsequent events would prove, Roosevelt did not influence either the organizational strategy of the BSWU or the deliberations of the congressionally mandated and independent NLRB.

After the NLRB silencing of the company, antiunion efforts shifted to the community. An all-out drive, encouraged by the corporation, was begun to defend the firm from the "attacks" of the union. Loyal workers, ministers, fraternal clubs, the American Legion, and local chambers of commerce all joined together to do battle with the "strangers" in their midst. For decades local churches, clubs, and the legion had been the recipients of countless contributions by the Johnsons. Now, they had an opportunity to repay their debts. Local businessmen's committees, determined to keep the community free of industrial unions, also came out in strong support of the corporation. A Triple Cities Council had been organized by the joint efforts of the Endicott Board of Trade, the Johnson City Board of Trade, and the Binghamton Chamber of Commerce in 1937, in anticipation of a union organizing drive in the shoe plants. In November 1938, right after the NLRB ruling that limited company antiunion activities was issued, a new antiunion organization was formed, the Triple Cities Civic and Workers' Committee (TCCWC). The TCCWC was composed of workers and local business and civic leaders who identified the community's interests with a union-free Endicott Johnson Corporation. Workers active on the committee began to organize employees on a plant-by-plant basis in order to fight the BSWU.³⁷ In leaflets and through the local press, the TCCWC maintained a constant barrage of propaganda. A typical sample follows:

Strangers have intruded the sacred rights of our people. They have called vile names and made false accusations against our outstanding citizens, people who have always been cherished and honored in our homes, in our churches and schools. We are asked to disbelieve these Gentlemen and to trample them under our feet. "By whom?" . . . By individuals we have never seen, have never known; and who would profit by gaining our adherence to their misleading and false promises.

"HOLD FAST TO THAT WHICH YOU KNOW TO BE GOOD," even if strangers make you fancy promises. . . . Let every red-blooded man worthy of the name, resent the false charges made against our friends and neighbors. . . . Let us show our appreciation through our determination and efforts to preserve "The Square Deal Policy."³⁸

In addition to the support of loyal workers and local businessmen, the TCCWC received the backing of community religious and ethnic associations. The St. Anthony of Padua Church, the Sons of Italy, the Holy Name Society, the St. Sebastian Club, and dozens of other associations became

involved in the committee's antiunion campaign.³⁹ In the months that followed the issuance of the NLRB cease-and-desist order, the community antiunion drive took on a crusading quality. As Ben Berk described it to fellow delegates at the eighteenth convention of the BSWU:

From October 14th to November 15th [1938] you could see the most anti-union fight you have ever seen. You couldn't go to church on Sunday without having some minister or priest get up on the pulpit and damn you. You couldn't have your kids go to Sunday School without having them hear about this terrible union that was coming in there to ruin Endicott Johnson. The children couldn't go to school without having the teachers and principals tell them this organization would ruin the cities. They had full page advertisements in the papers. They gave out thousands and thousands of circulars telling about Akron, the "Ghost City," and what the unions did to Akron.

Then started a whispering campaign, and for six weeks we sat and listened. They had speeches, they went on the radio, and for hour after hour you could hear how the union would ruin Endicott Johnson. After six weeks the people got tired of this. It was climaxed in a series of meetings that were held in the City of Endicott, Johnson City and Binghamton.⁴⁰

Berk was hardly exaggerating in his description of events. But there was another significant battle shaping up in the community, not one between company loyalists and the union but one between unionists.

Through early 1939 the BSWU was Endicott Johnson's major union antagonist. Although the CIO's USWA had begun organizing in some of the firm's factories before the arrival of the BSWU (as noted earlier), the CIO's main efforts were still being directed toward smaller shoe firms in Binghamton. By June 1938 it had managed to obtain preferential contracts with the Gotham, Truitt, and Ramsey shoe companies. In March and April 1939, closed shop contracts were finally negotiated with the three firms. This accomplished, USWA organizers were free to direct their full attention to Endicott Johnson. With a base of 600 members gathered from the three Binghamton shops, the USWA was in a position to utilize volunteers from the organized Binghamton factories in its Endicott Johnson drives. An Endicott Johnson Organizing Committee was formed soon afterward, and in the summer of 1939 the union notified the Johnsons of its desire to establish a unit for collective bargaining purposes.⁴¹ Once the USWA began to pursue a more vigorous organizing campaign at Endicott Johnson, a battle of major proportions began to take shape between it and the AFL union.

The relationship between the BSWU and the USWA was a predictably hostile one. Not only had the BSWU fought fratricidal wars in previous years against the unions that amalgamated to form the USWA, but it had always, since its birth in 1895, viewed itself as the proper representative of all shoe-

workers. In the union campaign that followed, the USWA and the BSWU cast each other in more diabolical roles than they did Endicott Johnson's management. In its journal the AFL union criticized the new CIO union as being unstable and doomed to failure. It attacked the USWA's radical militancy, displayed in the Auburn, Maine, strike, as irresponsible and detrimental to the better interest of the workers. It argued for "mutual agreement and arbitration" instead of strikes.⁴²

The USWA, with a larger membership than the BSWU, viewed the latter with reciprocal contempt, believing that the BSWU behaved as little more than a company union and shirked its responsibility of organizing the unorganized. Julius Crane, an organizer of the USWA who was sent into Binghamton to take charge of the Endicott Johnson unionizing in the winter of 1938-39, addressed the second convention of the USWA in October 1939, giving this version of the rival union's motives:

As you delegates undoubtedly know, the curse from which the Shoe Workers had been suffering all their lives whenever a militant progressive union gets into the field to organize the shoe workers, the Boot and Shoe Workers Union steps in to disrupt and split the ranks of the shoe workers. . . . It has, therefore, become the task, not only of our union, as an affiliate of the C.I.O., but of the national C.I.O. itself, to be involved in this campaign, in order to overcome the Boot and Shoe's poisonous propaganda, and to lead the Endicott Johnson shoe workers to victory for our union.⁴³

Another organizer reporting on the Endicott Johnson campaign expressed similar vitriolic condemnation of the BSWU: "My opinion is, the worst enemy there is, is the Boot and Shoe and I say in conclusion that this convention if it throws all resources back of E.-J., we will lick the Boot and Shoe so damn bad they will never come up again."⁴⁴ The USWA national paper, the *CIO News* (Shoe Workers' edition), continually charged the BSWU with being a company union and with disrupting sincere organizing attempts.⁴⁵ Locally, the USWA paper, the *E-J Union News*, was filled with equally hostile charges. Letters from workers contrasted the styles of the two unions: "The CIO does not do any name calling. Instead, it talks about getting back the wage cuts while the A.F. of L. throws mud and calls E.-J. all kinds of names."⁴⁶

Ben Berk similarly made it a point to propagandize against the CIO union, particularly harping on the theme of its association with communism. That several members of the national executive board of the USWA, as well as locally active organizers, were associated with the American Communist party provided fuel for Berk's propaganda.⁴⁷ When a delegation of BSWU workers attended a USWA meeting in Owego, New York, where Endicott Johnson operated two small shoe plants, they were surprised to find the meeting run in a democratic fashion—so thoroughly had they been convinced

by Berk that the latter organization was merely a manipulated arm of the Communist party.⁴⁸ Indeed, Berk exploited the "Red" issue to his benefit on every possible occasion. He wrote John J. Mara, president of the BSWU: "I am going to have [a meeting] at the Concordia Club in Endicott. This is the Italian Club the C.I.O. was hot after but they do not want to have anything to do with those damn Communists. We will pick up alot of votes there."⁴⁹ Berk's strategy seemed to pay off. In early October 1939 he wrote to Mara: "I am pounding away at the Red issue and so far it has worked alright. We have taken several of their good men from them because of it."⁵⁰

While the two unions kept up their internecine warfare, Endicott Johnson officers, prohibited by the NLRB from direct antiunion activities, encouraged the community antiunion drives undertaken on their behalf. The Johnsons believed that such efforts, since they were not under their direct control or initiative, would not come under the scrutiny of the NLRB. The NLRB, however, asked by Ben Berk to investigate the links between the TCCWC and the firm's management, soon decided that little distinction could be drawn between the company's antiunion activities and those of "independent" organizations. In September 1939 it ordered the corporation and the TCCWC to cease their continuing collaboration.⁵¹

The NLRB order put an end to the community crusade on the corporation's behalf and further restricted the firm's antiunion activities. Ironically, it proved a godsend to management since it gave the workers and the public the impression that the firm was being persecuted by the government. It cast management in the role of underdog and elicited considerable public sympathy, as this letter to the Johnsons illustrates:

For months we have chafed and seethed at the UnAmerican muzzling of the E.J. Corporation. Weekly, vicious propaganda on printed page[s] of letters and newspapers has been thrust into our homes. We read it not because of any items of interest contained therein, but because we wanted to see how far they would go with their malicious insinuations and deliberate falsehoods. And each time we read our hearts cried out in futile rebellion "Can *this* be America—that every act of benevolence of that great company—every thotful [*sic*] deed emanating from generous hearts can be so grossly distorted, so cruelly libeled, and no one can lift their pen or voice in protest?"⁵²

The antiunion campaigns of 1938 and early 1939 had recalled to the community and the workers their debt to the Endicott Johnson Corporation. For decades the corporation had built parks, paved streets, provided libraries, and funded numerous civic and charitable projects in Johnson City, Endicott, and Binghamton. For its workers the corporation had built up an elaborate welfare system, which, although somewhat scarred by the Depression, was still substantially intact. Now, "persecuted" by "outsiders"—a federal government

intent on protecting the right of hostile unions to challenge what had taken "50 years to build" and by two rival unions who owed no loyalty to the community—the Johnsons sat and waited, hoping that their workers, who would ultimately make the choice, would "hold on to that which is good."⁵³

III

There was no question that, by the summer of 1939, the company had won its battle against the unions—in the community. Community sentiment was overwhelmingly procompany. But the choice between the "Square Deal" and unionism was not one that the community as a whole would make. It was one left to the workers. Ultimately, the war between the company and the unions was waged on the shop floor. That was where the "Square Deal" was weakest and where the workers' sense of injustice and betrayal was strongest. That was where a victory for the unions could be won, if such a victory were possible.

The firm's wage cuts in 1938 and the continuing decline in shoe sales had reduced workers' earnings from the twenty-three to twenty-four dollars a week averages of 1935 and 1936 to about eighteen and nineteen dollars a week in 1938 and 1939.⁵⁴ Many workers were taking home less than ten dollars a week. Such meager earnings fostered a great deal of resentment among workers. Shop committees, with and without union encouragement, were established in many factory departments that had not previously shown a proclivity toward collective action. Incidents of shop floor rebellions increased: cutters in the Binghamton Busy Boys' Factory demanded the removal of a hated foreman; maintenance workers, organized by Ben Berk, threatened to strike if their pay demands were not met; cutters in the Work Shoe Factory in Binghamton sent a committee to Charles F. Johnson, Jr., to negotiate piece rate adjustments; Paracord workers struck for a pay increase.⁵⁵ Conditions in the factories had degenerated to such an extent that even the loyalty and respect that George F. Johnson normally commanded seemed to be eroding. In 1939, upon approaching striking Men's McKay Factory workers in Johnson City, who had left their jobs over a pay dispute, the aging and sickly patriarch was greeted by a mass of workers totally unresponsive to his appeals to return to work. As one CIO organizer (who would later come to regret his involvement with the union) recalled: "We was out there in the street in a body, and he went down and he parked his car in the parking lot. And he had other officials in the car with him. He tried to talk to us on the loudspeaker. Their hollerin', it was above it. It really just put him out. He drove away in tears. I really felt sorry for him that time."⁵⁶

Both the USWA and the BSWU exploited shop floor discontent, working closely with employee committees. Ben Berk's efforts were most effective in the mechanical divisions of the firm, where he had begun his organizing

work. His accounts of his relationship with shop committees suggest why, by the fall of 1939, he had managed to win over a majority of the workers in these units:

For several weeks now the whole Die Shop has been trying to get an increase. They were tossed around and Wed. the boys just got sore and came up here for a meeting. They decided to go in the next morning and present a list of demands to the Company with the ultimatum that they get it by Thursday night or they go out on strike Friday morning. They were in the office all morning Thursday. The comm. of six men headed by [James] McCloskey made the officials sweat. They finally got Uncle George to come down and he demanded to know if Berk told them to do this. McCloskey told him I didn't tell them to do it but I did tell them the Union would back us up if they walked out and they weren't going to take anymore of his crap. He said boys for God's sake don't do anything you might be sorry for and ended up with nothing like this ever happened here before. The boys said good-bye and walked out. I went there at twelve and called a meeting in Johnson City that night. They were even more determined. The Company sent word in for the committee to have another conference Friday morning and for the men to report for work. The Comm. had another session Friday morning and when they came out without a settlement, the whole shop walked out. We had a meeting in Johnson City all Friday afternoon and while the meeting was in progress the Company sent over and asked to see the Committee. They went over about 4 o'clock and were back at 4:20 with a report that the Great E.J. had given in to their demands.⁵⁷

While the union did not initiate this show of militancy on the part of the workers, it did lend it support. Workers who had not yet signed with the union, witnessing the success of the committee and the union, were soon won over. "There were a few men who were not signed and now we have 100%," wrote Berk to the president of the BSWU.⁵⁸ In the Johnson City Machine Shop, similar displays of militancy also surfaced.

A committee from the J.C. machine shop under the direction of Harold Miller was pounding away at the Company for more money. They got an offer which they promptly turned down. Weds., right after work, I had a meeting with them and now there are only two men in that shop who haven't signed. All the rest did. They had their committee meet here in the office this morning and finished their counter-proposal which they will submit on Monday. They either get more money or they strike.⁵⁹

Berk continued to "keep pushing one unit after another," while at the same time attempting to unite their disparate efforts under the umbrella of the union. He was able to convince all of his organized units to agree that "they would go out together if any one of them couldn't settle." Such an agreement undoubtedly made the company more amenable to granting concessions.⁶⁰

By the summer of 1939 company officers, BSWU officials, and the USWA had pretty much settled the issue of an acceptable bargaining unit for a future NLRB election, an issue that had been contested and debated for months. With both the corporation and the USWA advocating a single unit, Berk gave in and abandoned his plans for either a six or a twenty-seven bargaining unit division of the corporation.⁶¹

From March 1938 through the summer of 1939, Berk had devoted his greatest energies toward organizing the mechanical workers. Now, faced with an election covering all 18,000 employees of the firm and with a CIO union starting to channel increasing resources to organizing the production workers, the AFL representative began to work ever harder in the factories and tanneries. He had already made some progress in these realms. In March 1939 the BSWU had opened up an office in Endicott, in order to be closer to the Endicott and Owego factory and tannery workers. Although it still drew mainly mechanical division workers to its meetings, the union was starting to make inroads into the tanneries. In fact, Berk had been attracting tannery workers, as well as Rubber Mill workers, into the union since the summer of 1938. In August of that year he filed a complaint with the United States Labor Department on behalf of both groups of workers against the company for violations of the Walsh-Healy Act, which stipulated that time-and-a-half pay should be given for overtime work on government contract jobs.⁶² His efforts among the rubber and tannery workers seemed to pay off. By the summer of 1939 Berk had managed to obtain pledge cards from at least a fifth of the firm's tannery and Rubber Mill workers. In some departments such as the pressroom of the Rubber Mill, large numbers of workers had flocked into the BSWU.⁶³ But when Berk turned his efforts to the shoeworkers, he made far less progress. Only among small pockets of the more skilled workers, particularly cutters and lasters, was he successful—perhaps because he was able to tap their strong craft consciousness.⁶⁴

The USWA cast a wider net than the BSWU, concentrating its organizing work mainly on the shoe factories, and waging vigorous campaigns in the firm's Owego plants, the Men's McKay and Victory factories in Johnson City, and the Endicott and West Endicott shoe factories. The union encouraged already existing worker committees and attempted to help workers create new ones. Its publication, the *E-J Union News*, contained articles in Italian, Polish, and Slovak. It brought in Italian and Slavic organizers and broadcast radio programs in various languages. Although the BSWU, in the last weeks of the union drive, followed suit and began to direct propaganda at the ethnic workers, the USWA did this as a matter of course throughout its campaign, showing a special sensitivity to the cultural obstacles that might stand in the way of organizing ethnic workers.⁶⁵

Wherever workers rebelled against particular shop conditions or wage cuts, the USWA made it a point to step in quickly with support and publicity, a

strategy also adopted by the BSWU. Numerous complaints came from the Owego plants, where the CIO union had active organizers. When lasters at the Owego No. 1 Factory demanded an increase in rates for an added operation, the *E-J Union News* publicized their demands.⁶⁶ The union also pointed out unfair practices in the cutting rooms. The following conditions were typical of those recounted in the union paper:

During the latter part of August, two of the boys were given jobs to cut out of colored suede and it seems that they refused to cut it without first showing the foreman the condition of the stock. The condition of the stock was such that the foreman immediately took it to the superintendent. The superintendent, after looking it over, told the boys to go ahead and cut it. The boys had no alternative but to do as they were ordered. Three weeks later the foreman of the cutting room very gracefully approached the boys and sadly told them that they had some shoes to "buy"—which they had cut from this same stock.⁶⁷

Continued difficulties in this cutting room ultimately led to a work stoppage, which the *E-J Union News* again publicized, noting the admission by Charles F. Johnson, Jr., that the factory was the "least paid factory" at Endicott Johnson.⁶⁸

Variations in prices commonly provoked complaints throughout the factories, grievances that the USWA took pains to point out:

The heel scourers in the Men's McKay factory get 4 cents for low heels and 5 cents for high heels. The same job in the Comfort factory pays one cent more for the same type of work, that is, 5 cents for low and 6 cents for high. In explaining to the workers this difference in prices for the same type of work, the boss over at McKay's says it is due to the difference in the grade of shoes. But the workers know that it takes the same time to scour a heel, high or low in McKay as it does in Comfort.⁶⁹

When workers complained about low prices on jobs, the firm often transferred the work to another factory, where less resistance was expected.

We know of the differences in prices that exist for the same shoe and the same type of work among the various factories. Work is taken from the Pioneer factory and is transferred to the Scout factory. Does the same price remain on the tags. No. Immediately without even consulting the workers, the prices are changed. The work from the Scout factory is transferred into the Workshoe factory. Again the same procedure takes place.⁷⁰

Sometimes committees of workers successfully halted such practices. McKay Factory cutters did so in early November 1939, when an order of 1,000 cases of work was transferred to another factory. They contacted local leaders of the BSWU and the USWA, and, in a rare demonstration of unity, the two

labor organizations formed a joint committee with the workers to fight this transfer. The committee confronted Charles F. Johnson, Jr., and convinced him to return the cases.⁷¹

Worker dissatisfaction with supervisors was the cause of a great deal of discord in the factories. In the cutting room of the Owego No. 1 Factory, tensions between workers and their foreman had reached an intense level. After a conference between the cutters and Charles F. Johnson, Jr., the latter decided to remove the hated supervisor and allow the cutters to select a foreman "of their own choosing."⁷² Again and again the USWA focused on instances of shop conflict, publicized them, and encouraged the workers to unite to oppose company injustices.

Shop unity had not been a noted feature of the various stitching departments of the company, where many women were employed. The USWA understood that organizing the women shoeworkers would be a particularly difficult task. Although organizers recognized that women shoeworkers received lower wages and were "taken advantage of by the employers much more than the men workers," they found it difficult to convince many of the corporation's women of this, much less that they would be successful in getting "equal opportunities and equal pay" through organization.⁷³ The USWA tried hard to recruit women organizers to participate in its union drive. And indeed some women workers played active roles in the union campaign. One male organizer, working in the Men's McKay Factory in Johnson City, recalled that women and men were represented equally at USWA organizers' meetings.⁷⁴ Yet, when approached in the factory, women workers were more hostile to unionization than male workers: "Well, the women, no, they weren't quite so interested for the simple reason that the woman is not the breadwinner. . . . We got more pledge cards from the men than the women." If one looks at the number of women that the USWA's rival, the BSWU, was able to sign up, it becomes apparent that this difficulty of recruiting women characterized both unions' efforts. Of more than 2,000 surviving Local 42 pledge cards, only about 10 percent were filled out by women, although they constituted over one-third of the labor force.⁷⁵

The USWA nevertheless did what it could. Following the same strategy it used in organizing the male departments, the USWA focused on areas of discontent and encouraged the formation of room committees, believing that a strong foundation for future union support could be built. It thus pointed out speedups in the paint-spraying department of the Sheepskin Tannery (where women were employed), unequal division of work among women employees in the treeing room of the Comfort Factory, supervisor favoritism in the fitting room of the Owego No. 1 Factory, and layoffs in the New Scout Factory.⁷⁶ The USWA brought in Frieda Casso, a member of its National Executive Board, in the hope that she might be able to appeal to the firm's women employees. In a

radio speech aired in early October 1939, she tried to address the particular concerns that she believed were on the minds of the corporation's women workers:

We are the first to feel what it means not to have enough in our pay envelope to pay the rent, the grocery bills, to dress our families and ourselves. It is of first concern to us women to raise our income and the income of the men in our family to meet the rising cost of the necessities of life. . . . Only if the income of the head of the family is raised, will mothers and wives be able to stay at home and manage their family affairs. . . . Every one of us knows that we would prefer to stay at home and have our men folks bring enough to pay our pressing bills. How many working mothers would sooner remain home to take care of their little children, who by the way, need so badly their mother, than be forced to go to work in order to make ends meet. And what kind of a fair deal and paradise forces mothers to go to work while their children need them. We women work because we must help our men folks carry the burdens of our family.⁷⁷

Such an appeal was clearly aimed at the women the union felt would be most difficult to reach, married women with dependent families. These were women who relied on and utilized most fully the corporation's welfare services—the ones who feared most the possible retraction of these services if a union organized the corporation.

Where women organized shop committees, the union quickly stepped in with support and publicized their courage and "spunk." When the women of the Pioneer stitching room ceased work twice in protest over a change in shop procedure that resulted in lower piece rates, the union heartily praised them.⁷⁸ Effective collective protest by women stitchers in the Men's McKay Factory received similar accolades. There, a committee formed about late October or early November 1939 forced a change in the procedure of work distribution, putting an end to a capricious system that fostered favoritism, jealousy, and resentment.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, such shows of collective unity remained rare.

IV

Although both the BSWU and the USWA focused much of their attention on shop floor grievances (the most vulnerable side of the "Square Deal"), their ultimate enemy was the firm's paternalistic ethos itself. The USWA, more than the BSWU, recognized that it would take time to tear down the walls of paternalism constructed over four decades. When company and BSWU officers agreed on a speedy election in the fall of 1939, the USWA attacked the decision:

We are not surprised that the E.-J. Corporation wants to "get it over with," for every day, larger numbers of workers, slowly but surely, begin

to realize that the so-called paternalism and charitable attitude of the firm have not advanced the interests of the E.-J. workers. Every day E.-J. workers learn that the corporation's "sweet talk" and "good-will blessings" did not prevent wage cuts to follow wage cuts, while the bondholders get their dividends; do not prevent work from being transferred from one factory to another with reduction in their prices; do not prevent them from telling a worker that his services are no longer needed, regardless of how many years he or she has put in; do not prevent the medical service from being insufficient, in spite of the fact that the workers are paying a high price for it. . . . Forty-six years or more of company domination and company influence is not wiped out over night.⁸⁰

In its conclusion the editorial was on the mark.

The days immediately preceding the union election were tense indeed. George F. Johnson, already suffering from a heart condition, had taken ill with pneumonia in late December, and daily reports on his health appeared in local papers.⁸¹ Last-minute appeals by the CIO to delay the scheduled January 9 election, because of the probable impact of Johnson's illness on the outcome, were rejected by the NLRB.⁸² Dignitaries from the BSWU and the AFL came into town to launch one last attack on their rival, the USWA. William Green, the president of the AFL, scathingly attacked the USWA on the evening of January 5, at a mass meeting attended by workers, organizers, and senior union officers. Green charged the CIO union with being a "failure, a dictatorship, and a communist-controlled group more interested in promoting a revolution and destroying American ideals than in obtaining better wages and better working conditions."⁸³ The CIO rebutted Green's red-baiting charges.⁸⁴ Yet the battle remained, as it had been from the first day, not essentially one between unions but one between paternalism and unionism. While the two unions got in their last-minute feuding, local clergymen preached antiunionism from their pulpits as they prayed for the health of George F. Johnson.⁸⁵

On the evening before the election, a huge antiunion rally attended by some 8,000 workers was held in Johnson City. The *New York Times* called it a "Strike" against Unions." Union organizers viewed it as merely another staged display of unity "encouraged by E.J. executives."⁸⁶ Whether or not the events of that night were orchestrated, on the following day the workers had an opportunity to express their true sentiments in a secret ballot. Twenty polling places in Binghamton, Johnson City, Endicott, and Owego were opened, and the "Square Deal" was put through yet another test. In the mind of one cutting room foreman, that day would always be remembered:

So the day came for the election. . . . What a time it was, oh boy. After they voted, everybody must have known what happened. I didn't know. But they all wanted to party. They went over here, and they took over the

market. There was about three different factories over there in that market. And everybody got drunker than a hoot owl. That was a wild—wildest day I ever saw in my life. Women and men: Women who never took a drink in their life, they all got tight too. They had one hell of a time. There were some sorry lookin' people who came into work the next day. When it came out. They walloped the union over. . . . Well, I was surprised. I really was. I thought the best we could hope for was close, see.⁸⁷

Of the 15,428 votes cast, the BSWU received 1,612, and the USWA received 1,079. The vote against any union representation was 12,693—80 percent of the work force.⁸⁸ In the wake of this tremendous union defeat, the workers took to the streets and celebrated.⁸⁹ The explosion of procompany sentiment seemed overwhelming indeed. Here and there, furthermore, it took on ugly features, as one pro-USWA woman worker recalled:

When we came in that day [the day after the election], this English general foreman said that I wasn't fit to work with decent people. He was talkin' right out loud, and I was gettin' scared. So then this girl came downstairs with a mob; they were comin' after me. Well, Grace—the girl that was workin' opposite me and was a friend of mine . . . her boyfriend came along and took both of us out of there ahead of the mob into his car and drove me home.⁹⁰

The *Binghamton Sun* called the union defeat a "Victory for America" and broke its long silence over the union drives by praising the workers for their wisdom and loyalty.⁹¹ The *Binghamton Press* claimed that the election results were a vindication of the Johnson "theory" that, "when employers go a little out of their way to aid and assist in the establishment and the maintenance of comfortable homes—to provide . . . recreation, hospitalization and medical attention at the lowest possible cost to the workman and his family—then employees in the mass and individually neither need nor desire unionization for their protection and advancement." Ultimately, concluded the *Press*, the workers were celebrating a victory of employer and employee "over doubt, cynicism, suspicion, hypothesis and formula which they demonstrated had nothing at all to do with their lives, their work and their relationships."⁹²

The BSWU and the USWA failed to transform the very real discontent that existed on the shop floor into prounion sentiment. True, here and there they succeeded. In the Johnson City and Endicott machine shops, in the Foundry and Die Shop, in several tannery and Paracord divisions, and in a number of departments within the shoe factories, where shop conditions and supervisors were particularly oppressive, and where craft consciousness or work cultures were strong, the bonds between management and workers *were* severed.⁹³ But overall, the workers had decided that they had too much to lose in abandoning

the "Square Deal," particularly when their alternatives were two unions whose motives and behavior were suspect from the start. The unions' criticism of the firm's welfarism reinforced fears, especially among the corporation's women, that company programs would be eliminated if the unions won, a possibility initially suggested by company supervisors. The feuding between the two labor organizations helped to create and sustain doubts that the unions' basic motives lay in furthering the interests of Endicott Johnson workers. It was evident, long before the election, that if the workers were losing faith in the Johnsons and the "Square Deal," they were not placing it in these two unions. According to one organizer, workers were saying, "My God, the CIO and the AF of L are both trying to get in here, and neither one of them has a good word for each other. We're rotten enough now. Why do we want to go ahead and connect ourselves with something else more rotten."⁹⁴

But the vast majority of the workers were not losing faith in the "Square Deal." For most, the issue was a simple one: would the unions provide them with substantially more than the company? And the answer was no. Already, company officers had hinted at the restoration of wage cuts and the possibility of bonuses.⁹⁵ For those who had doubts, there was always 1933 to look back on, when the firm had indeed restored many of the wage and benefit cuts it had made in 1931 and 1932. Could they not expect management to do so again? It seemed unlikely that the unions could achieve much for the workers or that they were sincerely concerned with the workers' fate specifically. The USWA had already confessed as much in 1938 when its officers first approached the president of the firm. And John L. Lewis, in kicking off the CIO's energetic drive in the factories in the summer of 1939, had admitted in a public letter that Endicott Johnson workers were relatively well-off (yet still needed a labor union to defend them from "low-paid competitive companies").⁹⁶ Even as the unions battled on behalf of and alongside shop floor committees fighting factory abuses and price-cutting, their asserted motives and commitment to the workers continued to be questioned. The closer the date of the election came, and the louder the charges and countercharges between unions grew, the more the workers came to believe that, as Powers Hapgood admitted to delegates at the 1939 USWA convention, the real issue was which union would "be the power in the shoe industry." That was why, Hapgood declared, "this question of organizing Endicott-Johnson is the most paramount and important question that is facing the United Shoe Workers of America."⁹⁷ That was *not* the relevant question for Endicott Johnson workers.

In celebrating the defeat of the unions on the day after the election, Endicott Johnson workers demonstrated not so much their loyalty as their determination to resolve their conflicts with management outside of the context that the unions had created. The unions were and remained "outsiders" in what most workers considered a family affair. That they were useful outsiders, whose

presence was exploited by the workers to extract concessions and compromises from management, is undeniable. This conclusion reemphasizes welfare capitalism's achievements and failures.

Corporate paternalism did succeed in sustaining a fundamentally personal and hermetic labor-management relationship through the Depression. Undeniably, abuses by line management and cutbacks in wages and welfare benefits eroded that relationship. The NLRB and the unions threatened to sever it. That they failed should not, however, be equated with a management "victory." As previous chapters argued, welfare capitalism entrapped both workers and managers in a relationship of mutual obligations and rights. In the depressed 1930s, to the extent that the underlying philosophy behind corporate paternalism remained alive, and it did, workers utilized external agencies—unions and federal bureaucracies—and the fear that they engendered in managers to insure that welfarism would be preserved. Where, and when, groups of workers faced major violations of the "Square Deal," mutuality was shattered and industrial conflict broke through the confines of paternalism.

Throughout the decade, but particularly in its last years, management had to walk a fine line between preserving worker loyalty and delivering profits. By invoking the legacy of the "Square Deal," and by continually branding the unions and the government as "outsiders," Endicott Johnson officers were able to preserve the idea and ideal of a "corporate family." But the price of worker "loyalty" would escalate in the 1940s, as new "outsiders" and "strangers" would pound on the walls of paternalism, and as war and a changing labor market further destabilized the corporation's paternalistic order.

NOTES

1. On George F. Johnson's view of unions and Endicott Johnson's open shop, see my dissertation, "Workers, Managers, and Welfare Capitalism: The Shoeworkers and Tanners of Endicott Johnson, 1880-1950" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1983), 329-32.
2. George F. Johnson to Hon. James A. Farley, Apr. 24, 1937, box 15, George F. Johnson Papers, George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. Johnson met with Roosevelt to discuss a boycott of Italian shoe orders in response to the invasion of Ethiopia; labor matters were also brought up. *Binghamton Press*, Nov. 28, 1948.
3. George F. Johnson to Hon. James A. Farley, May 22, 1937, box 15, George F. Johnson Papers.
4. George F. Johnson to Robert F. Wagner, June 9, July 6, 1937, box 15, George F. Johnson Papers. Wagner, after some hesitation, finally agreed.
5. George F. Johnson to Rev. James W. Connerton, Aug. 18, 1937, box 15, George F. Johnson Papers.

6. George F. Johnson to E. H. Ellison, Sept. 11, 1937, box 15, George F. Johnson Papers.
7. *CIO News* (Shoe Workers' Edition), July 24, 1939.
8. George W. Johnson to George F. Johnson, Jan. 7, 1938, box 13, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers, George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y.
9. George F. Johnson to George W. Johnson, Jan. 10, 1938, box 15, George F. Johnson Papers.
10. Charles F. Johnson, Jr., to C. Fred Johnson, Mar. 30, 1938, box 32, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers. "To the Workers" notice, Apr. 28, 1938, box 1, ser. 4, George W. Johnson Papers, George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. Welfare expenditures dropped from the \$1.4 million levels of 1936 and 1937 to about \$1 million in 1938. William Patrick Burns, "A Study of Personnel Policies, Employee Opinion and Labor Turnover (1930-1946) at the Endicott Johnson Corporation" (Master's thesis, New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1947), 51.
11. The 10 percent wage cut was made even more painful by management's decision to ask the workers to assume their share of the federal Social Security tax (amounting to another 1 percent reduction). Until then the firm had paid the workers' share. "To the Workers" notices, Jan. 31, Feb. 8, 1938, box 32, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers.
12. Endicott Johnson Corporation Yearly Reports, 1933-38, box 23, George F. Johnson Papers.
13. George F. Johnson to Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Jan. 24, 1938, box 12, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers.
14. In 1938 a National Labor Relations Board investigator confirmed these facts. See forthcoming discussion in text. Additional evidence on management's use of loyalty petitions may be found in Owen J. Ryall, interview by Gerald Zahavi, with the assistance of Deborah D. Maxwell, Apr. 30, 1982, tape recording (personal possession); and in "Transcript of Meeting, 1952" folder, box 2, ser. 2, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers.
15. A comparison of names of workers presenting loyalty petitions in Mar. 1937 with lists of workers who filled out pledge cards for the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union in 1938 and 1939 uncovered several overlaps. Local 42 Pledge Cards, BSWU Records, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The list of workers presenting loyalty petitions is in the printed notice "Workers Again Assure Leaders of Their Faith," in box 1, ser. 4, George W. Johnson Papers. For further evidence of the lack of seriousness with which workers viewed the petitions, see Amy King, interview by Gerald Zahavi, Nov. 30, 1979, tape recording (personal possession); and Sam Salvatore, interview by Gerald Zahavi, with the assistance of Deborah D. Maxwell, July 7, 1981, tape recording (personal possession).
16. Charles F. Johnson, Jr., to George F. Johnson, Feb. 24, 1938, box 32, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers.
17. George F. Johnson to Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Jan. 31, 1938, box 12; Charles F. Johnson, Jr., to George F. Johnson, Feb. 7, 1938, box 32, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers.

18. Charles F. Johnson, Jr., to George F. Johnson, Apr. 4, 1938, box 32, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers.
19. Among the organizations were the National Assembly of Boot and Shoe Cutters (1903-13), the United Shoe Workers of America (1909-23), the Allied Shoe Workers Union (1909-23), the Amalgamated Shoe Workers of America (1923-25), the Associated Slipper Workers of New York (1928-29), the United Shoe Workers of America (1929-30), the Independent Shoe Workers Union (1929-31), the Shoe and Leather Workers Industrial Union (1929-31), the National Shoe Workers Association (1932-33), the United Shoe and Leather Workers Union (1933-37), the Brotherhood of Shoe and Allied Craftsmen (1933-). Horace B. Davis, *Shoes: The Workers and the Industry* (New York, 1940), 177.
20. Members included the National Shoe Workers Association (22,000), the Shoe Workers Protective Union (30,000), and the Shoe and Leather Workers Industrial Union (6,000). Davis, *Shoes*, 183.
21. *Ibid.*, 183-84, 191-94.
22. *Ibid.*, 172. On the conservatism of the union and the internal and external challenges it faced, see *ibid.*, chap. 7; Augusta E. Galster, *The Labor Movement in the Shoe Industry, with Special Reference to Philadelphia* (New York, 1934), chaps. 7 and 9; John H. M. Laslett, *Labor and the Left: A Study of Socialist and Radical Influences in the American Labor Movement, 1881-1924* (New York, 1970), chap. 3.
23. Davis, *Shoes*, chap. 1.
24. "Calendar of Important Events," NLRB Investigation folder, Local 42 files, BSWU Records. See also Maurice J. Quain, interview by Gerald Zahavi, with the assistance of Deborah D. Maxwell, June 29, 1981, tape recording (personal possession); Charles F. Johnson, Jr., to George F. Johnson, Apr. 4, 1938, box 32, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers.
25. "George F. and His Industrial Democracy Crumbling," leaflet, [Oct. 5, 1938,] in box 4, ser. 2, George W. Johnson Papers. Another copy of the leaflet can be found in box 1, ser. 2, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers.
26. A sampling of union publications and speeches can be found in box 4, ser. 2, George W. Johnson Papers; and in the Local 42 files, BSWU Records.
27. Ben Berk to George W. Johnson, telegram, Oct. 18, 1938, box 1, ser. 1, George W. Johnson Papers. Indeed, surviving pledge cards located in the BSWU Records confirm the existence of substantial support for the BSWU within the firm's mechanical divisions. Local 42 Pledge Cards, BSWU Records.
28. "Endicott Johnson Workers Daily Page," *Binghamton Sun*, Apr. 8, 1938 (capitalized in original). This statement was initially issued in May 1931, when BSWU organizers were present in the community. "Endicott Johnson Workers Daily Page," *Binghamton Sun*, May 8, 1931.
29. See, for example, *Endicott Bulletin*, Apr. 18, 1938. Johnson wrote a friend: "I have talked with all our workers now, except one factory—nearly twenty thousand people, in groups. I tell them to be cheerful and courageous, and above all things, loyal." George F. Johnson to George H. Barlow, Apr. 26, 1938, box 15, George F. Johnson Papers. For workers' recollections of his talks, see Michael P. Jerome, interview by Gerald Zahavi, May 10, 1982, tape recording (personal possession);

- and Earl I. Birdsall, interview by Gerald Zahavi, May 5, 1982, tape recording (personal possession).
30. See, for example, "Loyal Hearts and Loyal Heads," *Binghamton Sun*, June 25, 1938; "Keeping the Faith," *Binghamton Sun*, July 9, 1938.
 31. "Calendar of Important Events," NLRB Investigation folder, Local 42 files, BSWU Records.
 32. *Ibid.*; Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933-1941* (Boston, 1971), 327.
 33. See memoranda in NLRB Investigation folder, Local 42 files, BSWU Records.
 34. Copies of the statement may be found in box 4, ser. 2, George W. Johnson Papers; and in Local 42 files, BSWU Records.
 35. NLRB memorandum, "Efforts to Secure Compliance," n.d., NLRB Investigation folder, BSWU Records.
 36. George F. Johnson to FDR, Nov. 1, 1938, box 15; FDR to George F. Johnson, Dec. 10, 1938, box 4, George F. Johnson Papers.
 37. William Polf, "George F. Johnson and His Welfare Capitalism" (Research paper, Syracuse University, 1970), 43-44; J. Kenard Johnson to George F. Johnson, Apr. 2, 1937, box 2, George F. Johnson Papers. Information on the TCCWC can be found in box 4, ser. 2, George W. Johnson Papers. See also *Endicott Bulletin* and *Binghamton Sun* of Nov. 5, 1938, and *Endicott Bulletin*, Nov. 14, 1938, on the community antiunion campaign. A sampling of local papers from Nov. 1938 will yield the reader considerable information about the committee. See also "Warn Endicott Labor," *Business Week* 379 (Nov. 5, 1938): 35.
 38. Broadside, "Are We a Bunch of Suckers?" [1938], box 3, ser. 7, George W. Johnson Papers.
 39. *Binghamton Sun*, Nov. 5, Nov. 19, Nov. 28, Dec. 2, Dec. 3, Dec. 7, Dec. 12, Dec. 13, 1938; *Binghamton Press*, Dec. 2, Dec. 3, Dec. 7, Dec. 8, 1938. Just about every day, meetings and rallies were held to voice opposition to unionization of Endicott Johnson.
 40. BSWU, *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Convention* (Toronto, 1939), 87-88.
 41. Davis, *Shoes*, 150-51; *E-J Union News*, Sept. 9, 1939; *CIO News* (Shoe Workers' Edition), July 24, 1939; USWA, *Proceedings of the Second Convention of the United Shoe Workers of America* (Rochester, 1939), 124-25.
 42. *Shoe Workers' Journal* 36 (Apr. 1937): 1; *ibid.* (June 1937): 2. Berk was to charge later that "there may have been some collusion . . . between representatives of the CIO group and others to defeat the aims and purposes of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union and the workers who wanted a union." *Shoe Workers' Journal* 37 (May 1941): 1. The conflicts between the BSWU and the USWA were replicated by other AFL and CIO unions. For an excellent account of these conflicts, see Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935-1941* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960).
 43. USWA, *Proceedings of the Second Convention*, 118
 44. *Ibid.*, 120.
 45. *CIO News* (Shoe Workers' Edition), Dec. 12, 1938, May 22, Sept. 4, 1939. This is just a small sampling. Dozens of articles and editorials repeated the charge.
 46. *E-J Union News*, Sept. 16, 1939. USWA officers visiting the community made it a

- point to blast the AFL and the BSWU continually. Harry Sacher, chief counsel of the USWA, had this to say about the AFL and the president of the BSWU: "My experience with the American Federation of Labor has convinced me that democracy for the rank and file of workers who compose that organization is virtually dead. Government in that body does not rest upon the consent of the governed. Indeed, a handful of reactionaries in the executive council of the A.F. of L. virtually tyrannizes over the millions of workers who are to be found in the ranks of that organization. And this small handful is a source of inspiration to a number of petty tyrants who have so frequently set themselves up in the unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. One of these is John J. Mara, president of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union." *Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1939. On the BSWU response to Sacher's speech, see Ben Berk to John J. Mara, Sept. 29, 1939, Local 42 files, BSWU Records.
47. Arthur G. McDowell to Fred Shoemaker, Oct. 2, 1939, Local 42 files, BSWU Records.
 48. Jerome, interview. Jerome was a laster in the Owego No. 1 Factory and was active as an organizer for the USWA between 1938 and 1940.
 49. Ben Berk to John J. Mara, Sept. 29, 1939, Local 42 files, BSWU Records.
 50. Ben Berk to John J. Mara, Oct. 7, 1939, Local 42 files, BSWU Records.
 51. U.S. National Labor Relations Board, *Decisions and Orders of the National Labor Relations Board*, vol. 15 (Washington, D.C., 1939), 77-89. The decision was the culmination of numerous complaints brought before the NLRB by Berk. Copies of individual complaints are in Local 42 files, BSWU Records. On the ties between the Johnsons and the TCCWC, see Charles F. Johnson, Jr., to George F. Johnson, Jan. 31, 1939, box 32; George F. Johnson to Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Jan. 16, 1939, box 12, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers.
 52. Mrs. C—— et al. to George F. Johnson, George W. Johnson, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., June 10, 1940, box 4, ser. 2, George W. Johnson Papers.
 53. "Hold on to that which is good" was a common expression employed by management and its supporters throughout the Depression in combatting unionization attempts. See George F. Johnson's printed speech, "I Am Willing to Work for 18,000 People, but Not for Walking Delegates" [Oct. 1934], box 1, ser. 7, George W. Johnson Papers.
 54. "To the Workers" notice, Jan. 13, 1944, box 34, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers.
 55. "George F. and His Industrial Democracy Crumbling." See also various union circulars in box 32, ser. 1, Charles F. Johnson, Jr., Papers; and *Triple Cities Labor Herald*, July 29, 1938 (copy also in box 32).
 56. Elmer Knowles and Audrey Knowles, interview by Gerald Zahavi, May 10, 1982, tape recording (personal possession).
 57. Ben Berk to John J. Mara, Oct. 7, 1939, BSWU Records.
 58. *Ibid.*
 59. *Ibid.*
 60. *Ibid.*
 61. USWA, *Proceedings of the Second Convention*, 125-26. Correspondence relating to negotiations for an acceptable bargaining unit may be found in Local 42 files, BSWU Records.

62. Ben Berk to all tannery and rubber workers, Aug. 21, 1939, Local 42 files, BSWU Records; *Triple Cities Labor Herald*, Mar. 24, 1939 (in box 3, ser. 7, George W. Johnson Papers); Lee F. Springer, interview by Gerald Zahavi, with the assistance of Deborah D. Maxwell, July 15, 1981, tape recording (personal possession).
63. Local 42 Pledge Cards, BSWU Records. Information on the size of particular units came from factory lists in box 7, ser. 2, Frank A. Johnson Papers, George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. The 20 percent figure is a minimum, based on pledge cards located in the BSWU Records. If substantial numbers of cards were lost or missing, a real possibility, the proportion of workers who pledged for the union would have to be revised upward.
64. Local 42 Pledge Cards, BSWU Records. About 25 percent of the factory workers who filled out pledge cards were involved in cutting or lasting operations. In some cases the BSWU was able to sign up a substantial proportion of a particular department. In the Pioneer Factory cutting room, it obtained pledge cards from at least half of the cutters. See caveat in n. 63 above on the interpretation of the pledge cards.
65. Unfortunately, it is not possible to measure the relative appeal of the BSWU and the USWA to ethnic workers, since no membership data was available for the USWA as it was for the BSWU local. With respect to the BSWU, however, based on surnames appearing on BSWU pledge cards, one can tentatively conclude that ethnics with southern and eastern European surnames were as attracted or repelled by the BSWU as workers with Anglo- and northern European surnames. No significant patterns along ethnic lines were discernible. Local 42 Pledge Cards, BSWU Records.
66. *E-J Union News*, Sept. 25, 1939. Apparently, to the discouragement of the union, "the bed-lasters settled their differences and went back to the old way again." *Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1939.
67. *Ibid.*, Sept. 25, 1939. The term "buy" refers to the practice of forcing workers to purchase their poorly made shoes at a wholesale price. This practice appears to have been in force only in the Owego factories and not throughout the company.
68. *Ibid.*, Nov. 13, 1939.
69. *Ibid.*, Oct. 23, 1939.
70. *Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1939. See also King, interview; and Mary Seversky, interview by Gerald Zahavi, with the assistance of Deborah D. Maxwell, July 22, 1982, tape recording (personal possession), concerning this practice.
71. *E-J Union News*, Nov. 13, 1939.
72. *Ibid.*, Nov. 27, Dec. 4, 1939.
73. *Ibid.*, Nov. 20, 1939.
74. Knowles, interview. Knowles acknowledged, however, that no woman organizer was active in the Men's McKay Factory.
75. *Ibid.*; Local 42 Pledge Cards, BSWU Records. Another USWA organizer, active in the Owego No. 1 Factory, felt that attempting to get the women to fill out pledge cards was so futile, he did not even try: "I wouldn't ask them, to tell you the truth. They knew. So if it came to a vote, they would know how to vote." Jerome, interview.
76. *E-J Union News*, Oct. 23, Oct. 30, Nov. 20, Dec. 4, 1939.

77. *Ibid.*, Oct. 30, 1939. The address was delivered on Oct. 2, 1939.
78. *Ibid.*, Dec. 11, Nov. 20, 1939.
79. *Ibid.*, Nov. 13, Nov. 27, 1939. Another committee in the Fine Welt stitching room in Endicott accomplished the same change in the distribution of work. *Ibid.*, Nov. 20, 1939.
80. *Ibid.*, Oct. 30, 1939.
81. See *Endicott Bulletin* and the *Binghamton Sun* from Dec. 26, 1939, to Jan. 9, 1940.
82. *Binghamton Sun*, Jan. 5, 1940.
83. *Ibid.*, Jan. 6, 1940, 1. See also *Binghamton Press*, Jan. 6, 1940.
84. *Binghamton Press*, Jan. 8, 1940.
85. H—, interview by David Nielson, June 23, 1973, transcript, 11; Springer, interview.
86. *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 1940; *Binghamton Press*, Jan. 9, 1940. One worker who took part in the march later recalled: "I remember being on a parade one day against them [the unions]. They asked us to go out and parade against it, so out we went." F—, interview by David Nielson, Aug. 3, 1973, transcript, 105.
87. Thomas K. Chubbuck, interview by Gerald Zahavi, with the assistance of Deborah D. Maxwell, session 2, July 2, 1981, tape recording (personal possession).
88. On the election, see *Endicott Bulletin*, Jan. 9, 1940; *Binghamton Sun*, Jan. 10, 1940; *Binghamton Press*, Jan. 10, 1940. The defeat of the unions was widely carried in the national press. See *New York Times*, Jan. 10, 1940; *Time*, Jan. 22, 1940.
89. *Binghamton Press*, Jan. 10, 1940. See also *New York Times*, Jan. 11, 1940.
90. Margaret Azarin [pseud.], interview by Gerald Zahavi, Nov. 15, 1983, tape recording (personal possession).
91. *Binghamton Sun*, editorial, Jan. 11, 1940. The paper, because it was partially owned by George F. Johnson, had been told to keep silent about the unions by the E.J. Legal Department after the NLRB order of 1938.
92. *Binghamton Press*, Jan. 10, 1940.
93. Local 42 Pledge Cards, BSWU Records; Springer, interview; Jerome, interview; Knowles, interview; USWA, *Proceedings of the Second Convention*, 122.
94. Knowles, interview.
95. Internal memorandum, "Workers Vote against Any Union Affiliation," Local 42 files, BSWU Records. See also interviews with workers quoted in "George F. Built Shoes and Villages." *Sun-Bulletin*, Oct. 17, 1977.
96. John L. Lewis to the Shoe Workers of the Triple Cities, c/o Local 141, USWA, June 28, 1939; copy of letter is in *CIO News* (Shoe Workers' Edition), July 24, 1939. Another copy also appears in the *E-J Union News*, Sept. 9, 1939. Powers Hapgood, director of the USWA, in a radio address delivered on July 6, 1939, reiterated Lewis's point and assured Endicott Johnson employees that the cordial relations built up between workers and management would not be disturbed by the union—that cooperation could exist between the USWA and management. See text of Hapgood's speech in above issue of *CIO News* (Shoe Workers' Edition).
97. USWA, *Proceedings of the Second Convention*, 127.