

# Catholic Social Action at Work: A Brief History of the Labor Collections at The Catholic University of America

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## Abstract

The Catholic University of America (CUA) may seem like an unlikely home for important collections of archival records documenting the labor movement in the United States. By tapping into the sympathies of many priests for the labor movement as well as the devout Catholicism of many union organizers, however, the CUA managed to compile an impressive body of labor records at a time when very few archives were collecting such records. This article explores how different priests and bishops developed and maintained this collection over the years. The history of the collecting of labor records at CUA offers insight into the various internal and external factors that influence collection development practices and acquisition policies over time.

The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives (CUA Archives) may at first seem an odd place to hold important organizational and personal labor history manuscript collections such as the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) Records, the Philip Murray Papers, and the Terence V. Powderly Papers.<sup>1</sup> The housing of labor history manuscripts at the CUA Archives, however, is more fitting than it initially appears. During the first half of the twentieth century, a core of students and faculty at The Catholic University of America (CUA) developed an intellectual and activist social reform philosophy that embraced workers' organizations to counter the increasing power of big business in industrial America. The activist clerics supported organized labor in a number of ways, including assistance to strikes, political support of legislation, scholarly interest in labor history, and the creation of a labor archives at CUA. All of these activities

<sup>1</sup> The CUA Archives changed its name from the Department of Archives, Manuscripts, and Museum Collections to the American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives in 2002.

shed light on the many-sided relationship between Catholic clergy and the labor movement. This article examines the creation of a labor archives at CUA. It maintains that the development of a labor archives at CUA should be considered in the historiographical debates that address the Catholic clergy and organized labor.

### Catholic Clergy and the Labor Movement

There is a noteworthy historiography devoted to the relationship between Catholicism, Catholic clergy, and the labor movement.<sup>2</sup> Many historians have viewed the Catholic Church as hostile to the labor movement and a hindrance to union organization. Some have argued, for example, that the Catholic Church undermined the efforts of unions to gain the loyalty of Catholic workers. It was not until Catholic workers broke the bonds of the Church, the argument contends, that they supported workers' organizations and helped form industrial unions in the 1930s.<sup>3</sup> Others, such as historian Douglas Seaton, maintain that a single-minded anti-Communism motivated Catholic clerical activism in labor unions, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>4</sup> Still other historians argue that the purging of leftists from unions in the late 1940s and early 1950s, an action supported by the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU) and labor priests, resulted in conservative unions and permanently damaged the future prospects of the labor movement.<sup>5</sup> An underlying theme in

<sup>2</sup> For a representative sample of the literature on the Catholic Church and the labor movement, see Philip Taft, "The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 2 (January 1949): 210–18; Henry J. Browne, *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1949); Marc Karson, "The Roman Catholic Church and American Labor Unions," in *American Labor Unions and Politics, 1900–1918* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958), 212–84; Douglas P. Seaton, *Catholics and Radicals: The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and the American Labor Movement from Depression to Cold War* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1981); Michael Harrington, "Catholics in the Labor Movement," *Labor History* 1 (Fall 1960): 231–63; Steve Rosswurm, "The Catholic Church and the Left-Led Unions: Labor Priests, Labor Schools, and the ACTU," in *The CIO's Left-Led Unions*, ed. Steve Rosswurm, 119–37 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Monroe Billington and Cal Clark, "Catholic Clergymen, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the New Deal," *Catholic Historical Review* 79 (January 1993): 65–82; Joshua Freeman, "Catholics, Communists, and Republicans: Irish Workers and the Organization of the Transport Workers Union," in *Working-Class America: Essays on Labor, Community, and American Society*, ed. Michael Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz, 256–83 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); William Issel, "A Stern Struggle": Catholic Activism and San Francisco Labor, 1934–1958," in *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture*, ed. Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor, 154–76 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1916–1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Seaton, *Catholics and Radicals*.

<sup>5</sup> This theme underscores a good deal of labor history. For example, see Ronald L. Filippelli and Mark D. McCulloch, *Cold War in the Working Class: The Rise and Decline of the United Electrical Workers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 191–93; Ellen Schrecker, "The Legacy of Charles Owen Rice," *Labor History* 40 (February 1991): 66.

all these critiques is that Catholic clergy activism in the labor movement was defensive and limited, motivated primarily by the fear of the growing influence of radical organizations among Catholics.

Some scholars have interpreted the Catholic clergy's role in the labor movement in a positive light. Historian Kenneth Heineman, for example, argues that Catholic priests played a critical role in the creation of democratic industrial unions in Pittsburgh in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>6</sup> Bill Goode stridently asserts that ACTU's role in the factional battles between the left and right in the United Automobile Workers Union in the 1940s combated the influence of the Communist Party. ACTU, he holds, was critical in the creation of a strong independent auto worker union.<sup>7</sup> The foundation of these and other arguments that view the Catholic influence in the labor movement as positive was the Catholic clergy's earnest support of labor organizations.

There are two important explanations for the historical disagreements concerning the role of Catholic clergy in the labor movement. First, the different interpretations, not surprisingly, stem partly from the religious and political persuasions of the authors.<sup>8</sup> In many ways, the battles between the left and the right that beset organized labor in the 1930s and 1940s continue in today's historiographical debates, which are argued within a remarkably similar framework. Second, the Catholic Church's response to workers, their unions, and social problems more generally has been idiosyncratic and inconsistent. The Catholic Church in the United States never presented a unified response to workers' problems, their unions, or the political issues related to them. Certainly the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII (*Rerum Novarum*, 1891) and Pope Pius IX (*Quadregesimo Anno*, 1931) provided the religious and philosophical basis for support of workers' organizations and clergy activism.<sup>9</sup> Individual priests and diocesan leaders adhered to and interpreted these encyclicals differently. Historian David O'Brien correctly argued that the papal encyclicals "by no means led to uniform opinion of united action. Catholic social thought in the 1930s was characterized by unanimous acceptance of official Church teachings and wide and often bitter disagreement as to their meaning and application."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Heineman, *A Catholic New Deal: Religion and Reform in Depression Pittsburgh* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Bill Goode, *Infighting in the UAW: The 1946 Election and the Ascendancy of Walter Reuther* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Historian Steve Rosswurm correctly noted the often blatantly sectarian nature of the historiography. Rosswurm, "The Catholic Church and the Left-Led Unions," 119.

<sup>9</sup> These encyclicals were further supported by Pope John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* (1981). On the encyclicals, see Simon Larson and Bruce Nissen, eds., *Theories of the Labor Movement* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 258–81.

<sup>10</sup> David O'Brien, "American Catholics and Organized Labor in the 1930s," *The Catholic Historical Review* 52 (October 1966): 327.

According to another historian, Neil Bettan, “many bishops remained aloof . . . and parish priests frequently followed their own inclinations” on issues relating to union support in the 1930s.<sup>11</sup> The emergence of industrial unions in the 1930s further complicated Catholic clergy support of unions because the older, more conservative American Federation of Labor (AFL) craft unions competed with the new, more progressive, and politically active CIO industrial unions for members, driving labor priests into the middle of labor’s internal political battles.<sup>12</sup>

Disagreement over Catholic positions on social issues abounds. For example, in the 1920s, Monsignor John A. Ryan, the intellectual founder of the social activist tradition at CUA and the premier American Catholic economist during the first half of the twentieth century, supported a constitutional amendment to restrict child labor. Boston’s Cardinal William O’Connell vigorously opposed Ryan’s political position. O’Connell accused Ryan of supporting “Soviet legislation,” and O’Connell unsuccessfully attempted to get Ryan silenced on the issue.<sup>13</sup> These types of political and social disagreements were common in the Catholic Church.

The career of Father Charles Coughlin further illustrates the inconsistency of Catholic clergy positions related to unions, social problems, and politics.<sup>14</sup> Coughlin, known as the radio priest because of the popularity of his national radio program, initially supported the formation of industrial auto worker unions, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the New Deal from his Royal Oak Shrine of the Little Flower Parish in the early 1930s.<sup>15</sup> Just a couple of years later,

<sup>11</sup> Neil Bettan, “Charles Owen Rice: Pittsburgh Labor Priest, 1936–1940,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 44 (October 1970): 518.

<sup>12</sup> For an introduction to this battle, see James Oliver Morris, *Conflict within the AFL* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1958); Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935–1941* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960); Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years, A History of the American Worker, 1933–1941* (Boston: Houghlin Mifflin, 1969). The most complete history of the CIO is Robert Zieger, *The CIO, 1935–1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Quote from Cardinal William O’Connell to Archbishop Michael Curley, 2 November 1924, folder 24, box 39, John A. Ryan Papers, American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter, ACUA). For more on this, see Bishop Joseph Schrembs to Cardinal William O’Connell, 17 October 1924; Bishop Joseph Schrembs to Father John J. Burke, 17 October 1924; Bishop Edmund F. Gibbons to Father John A. Ryan, 23 October 1924; Cardinal William O’Connell to Archbishop Michael Curley, 24 October 1924; Cardinal William O’Connell to Archbishop Michael Curley, 2 November 1924, folder 24, box 39, John A. Ryan Papers, ACUA. See also, Douglas J. Slawson, *The Foundation and First Decade of the National Catholic Welfare Council* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 219–27; Francis L. Broderick, *Right Reverend New Dealer: John A. Ryan* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 156–59.

<sup>14</sup> A large historiography focuses on the controversial life of Coughlin. For a recent biography, see Donald I. Warren, *Radio Priest: Charles Coughlin, Father of Hate Radio* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 140–42; George Q. Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency, 1932–1936* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 20, 202.

Coughlin opposed both industrial unions and the New Deal politics of Roosevelt.<sup>16</sup> During the 1936 presidential election, Coughlin campaigned vociferously against Roosevelt and urged Catholic voters to abandon the New Deal at the voting booth.<sup>17</sup> The Democratic Party enlisted the support of Monsignor Ryan to counter Coughlin's influence among Catholic voters. A resolute Ryan took to the airwaves in a national broadcast—funded by the Democratic Party—to urge Catholics to repudiate Father Coughlin, support the New Deal, and vote for Roosevelt.<sup>18</sup> Some Catholic priests supported unions and took political positions that assisted unions, and others did not.

The collecting of labor history records at the Catholic University of America takes on a surprising historical importance when it is considered within the contentious historiographical arguments and the inconsistent response of the Catholic Church to social problems and the labor movement. Why, how, and when CUA came to acquire labor history records are important historical questions that shed light on the intentions, motivations, and sincerity of one element of the Catholic Church. The development of the CUA Archives demonstrates a remarkable intellectual and philosophical commitment of one segment of the Catholic Church to the cause of organized labor. It also illustrates the importance of the connections between Catholic labor leaders and Catholic priests active in the labor movement.

The interest in labor history and labor relations at CUA emerged as one part of the social reform tradition found at the university that dates back to the Progressive Era and the work of Monsignor John A. Ryan. Charles Curran described Ryan as the “foremost official Catholic spokesman for progressive social reform.”<sup>19</sup> His two major monographs, *A Living Wage* (1906) and *Distributive Justice* (1916), argue for a moral capitalism in which economic transactions occur within a range of appropriate profit exchanges.<sup>20</sup> Put simply,

<sup>16</sup> Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 199–202.

<sup>17</sup> Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 246; Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency*, 202–6.

<sup>18</sup> The Democratic Party published the speech, titled, “Roosevelt Safeguards America,” and distributed it widely. For a copy of the speech and the wide range of responses from Catholics and others to Ryan's position, see folders 12–22, box 41; folders 1–9, box 42, John A. Ryan Papers, ACUA. For more on the 1936 election and the conflict with Coughlin, see Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 260; Broderick, *Right Reverend New Dealer*, 222–29; Philip Grant, “John A. Ryan and the Presidential Election of 1936,” in *Religion and Public Life: The Legacy of John A. Ryan*, ed. Robert G. Kennedy, Mary Christine Athans, Bernard V. Brady, William C. McDonough, and Michael J. Naughton, 23–30 (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2001); Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency*, 225–28.

<sup>19</sup> Charles E. Curran, *American Catholic Social Ethics: Twentieth-Century Approaches* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 26.

<sup>20</sup> John Augustine Ryan, *A Living Wage* (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1906); John Augustine Ryan, *Distributive Justice* (New York: Arno Press, 1978; orig. published 1916).

according to Ryan, people should not make too much, nor too little money. To achieve this comparatively equal distribution of wealth within a competitive capitalist system still grounded in private property, Ryan supported redistributive legislation, minimum wage, progressive politics, independent employee organizations, and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Moreover, he thought that Catholics, including clergy, had a moral duty to achieve a more just economic distribution of wealth. Ryan's steadfast backing of Roosevelt and the New Deal garnered him the title of "the Right Reverend New Dealer."<sup>21</sup>

Ryan's social reform political outlook flourished at Catholic University. He taught there between 1915 and 1939 and headed the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) from its formation in 1919 until his death in 1945.<sup>22</sup> Ryan and a group of like-minded professors, such as sociologist Father William Kerby and industrial relations expert Father Raymond McGowan, created a milieu at CUA that encouraged academic study and activism on a variety of social issues, including support for the labor movement.<sup>23</sup> They assembled, trained, and mentored graduate students, for example, who produced labor-related dissertations at a time when very few

<sup>21</sup> For example, the most important biography of Ryan is Francis L. Broderick, *Right Reverend New Dealer: John A. Ryan* (New York: Macmillan, 1963). Both Roosevelt and CUA encouraged the connection between the New Deal and Catholics. For instance, CUA presented FDR with an honorary doctorate in 1933, and Ryan gave the invocation at Roosevelt's 1937 inauguration. He was the first Catholic to provide the invocation at a presidential inauguration. C. Joseph Nuesse, *The Catholic University of America, A Centennial History* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University Press, 1999), 245.

<sup>22</sup> CUA formed the National Catholic War Council in 1917. In 1919, the Catholic Church transformed it into a permanent organization and renamed it the National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC). The NCWC offices were located in Washington, D.C., near CUA. Although the archbishops took control of the NCWC and placed it within the Catholic Church hierarchy, the organization remained very close to CUA and some departments, particularly the Social Action Department, were often staffed and headed by CUA faculty. The NCWC provided the opinion of progressive Catholics on a wide range of social and economic issues and often had a strong connection to organized labor. In 1966, the NCWC changed its name to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) and the United States Catholic Conference (USCC). For more on the NCWC, see Douglas Slawson, *The Foundation and the First Ten Years of the National Catholic Welfare Council* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1992); Thomas R. Greene, "Catholic Views of Post World War II Labor Legislation," *Journal of Church and State* 33 (1991): 301–26. For more on the NCCB/USCC, see F. Maniscalco, "The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops" entry in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 310–16.

<sup>23</sup> Kerby and McGowan were among a number of lesser-known faculty members and administrators who created the social reform environment at CUA. Kerby was motivated by his concern for a number of social ills, most prominently poverty, and how society could solve these problems. McGowan made a number of important contributions to the social reform environment at CUA. For example, he organized the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems in the 1920s and headed the Social Action Department of the NCWC from 1945 to 1954. On Kerby see, John J. Burke, "The Right Reverend William J. Kerby—An Appreciation, 1870–1936," *The Ecclesiastical Review* 90 (September 1936): 225–33. On McGowan, see A. McPadden, "Raymond Augustine McGowan," entry in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 398–99.



academic institutions encouraged the study of unions and labor-related issues in the academy.<sup>24</sup> Several CUA alumni influenced by Ryan as graduate students, such as Bishop Francis J. Haas, returned to CUA as professors. They further infused a social activist tradition that encouraged support of the labor movement as well as serious academic study of labor history.<sup>25</sup>

### Origins of the CUA Labor History Archives

The collection of labor history manuscripts at the CUA Archives emerged from this intellectual social reform environment as one part of its commitment to building an intellectual and religious foundation for support of the labor movement and social activism among Catholic clergy and lay people. The creation of a labor-related archival collection complemented and encouraged the research interests of CUA faculty and students in labor relations and history. The Catholic social activists at CUA considered their intellectual pursuits and their activism as two sides of the same coin.

CUA began collecting labor records before it had established a formal archives department. Some have argued that taking in important archival records without the appropriate resources to care for them and make them available to researchers is unethical.<sup>26</sup> But at the time CUA accepted legal custody of its first manuscript collection—the papers of Knights of Labor Grand

<sup>24</sup> For just a few of the many labor history and labor relations dissertations written at CUA in the first half of the twentieth century, see Reverend Vincent McQuade, “The American Catholic Attitude on Child Labor Since 1891” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1938); John J. O’Connor, “The Supreme Court and Labor” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1932); Reverend Paul Stroh, “The Catholic Clergy and American Labor Disputes, 1900–1937” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1939). The most notable exception to the lack of labor history in the academy was the University of Wisconsin’s Economics Department. Under the direction of John Commons and later Selig Perlman, the Economics Department at Wisconsin produced a prodigious number of union and labor-related industrial relations studies, many that were historically based. On labor history at the University of Wisconsin, see Maurice Isserman, “God Bless Our Institutions: The Labor History of John R. Commons,” *Labor History* 17 (1976): 309–28; David Montgomery, “To Study the People: The American Working Class History,” *Labor History* 10 (1980): 498–501.

<sup>25</sup> Haas, who is discussed below, returned to CUA as the first director of the National School of Social Science. The creation of the School of Social Science in 1937 encouraged the social reform impulse and interest in labor history and activism in the labor movement at the university and its connections with the New Deal. See Nuesse, *The Catholic University of America*, 310–11.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Lynn McCree, “Good Sense and Good Judgment: Defining Collections and Collecting,” in *A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice*, ed. Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch, 107 (National Archives and Records Administration: Washington, D.C., 2002).

Master Workman Terence V. Powderly—near the end of 1939, archival institutions had scant interest in collecting labor-related records.<sup>27</sup>

CUA sociologist Father William Kerby had been a close friend of Terence Powderly. His students regularly used Powderly's extensive library on social problems in their studies.<sup>28</sup> Kerby initiated talks with Mary Powderly, the late labor leader's niece, after Powderly's widow had signed over possession of her late husband's papers. After Kerby died in 1936, Bishop Francis Haas excitedly pursued and arranged for the transfer of the Terence V. Powderly Papers to CUA.<sup>29</sup>

Haas demonstrated a resolute interest in labor relations and history throughout his life. He was deeply influenced by John Ryan and the social reform impulse he encountered as a graduate student at CUA in the late 1910s and early 1920s.<sup>30</sup> His published dissertation, *Shop Collective Bargaining: A Study in Wage Determination in the Men's Garment Industry*, examined labor relations in the clothing industry.<sup>31</sup> Known as "Red Haas" to some because of his red hair, and to others because of his left-leaning politics, he was best known for his work as a

<sup>27</sup> Only two institutions—the Rand School for Social Science and the John R. Commons Memorial Library at the University of Wisconsin—collected labor records when CUA became interested in the mid-1930s. The Rand School is now part of the Tamiment Institute/Ben Josephson Library at New York University, and the John R. Commons Library is now part of the labor collections at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Moreover, both of these institutions appear to have been interested primarily in collecting official published sources documenting labor history, such as union newspapers, convention proceedings, and constitutions, as opposed to manuscript materials. A third institution, the Martin Catherwood Library at Cornell University, became interested in creating a facility to document labor history during roughly the same period. Cornell economics professor Sumner Slichter began collecting labor union publications in the late 1920s. These eventually served as the core materials of the Martin P. Catherwood Library at the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, which was founded in 1945 at Cornell University. For more on the background of these institutions and the early history of labor history archives in the United States, see Thomas Connors, "The Labor Archivist and the 'Labor Question': Two Steps Forward, One Step Back," *Midwestern Archivist* 12 (1987): 65–67; Philip Mason, "Labor Archives and Collections in the United States," in *Labor History Archives in the United States*, ed. Daniel J. Leab and Philip P. Mason, 12–17 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992). On the Historical Society of Wisconsin, see Harold L. Miller, "The American Bureau of Industrial Research and the Origins of the Wisconsin School of Labor History," *Labor History* 25 (1984): 166–84; James P. Dancy and Harold Miller, "Sources for Study of the Labor Movement at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin," in *Labor History Archives in the United States*, 203–11. On the Tamiment Institute/Ben Josephson Library, see Dorothy Swanson, "Labor History Resources at New York University: The Tamiment Institute/Ben Josephson Library," in *Labor Archives in the United States*, 50–56. On the development of the Catherwood Library, see J. G. Miller, "Labor Resources in the Cornell University Libraries," *Labor History* 1 (Fall 1960): 318; Richard Strassberg, "Sources on Labor History in the Martin P. Catherwood Library," in *Labor History Archives in the United States*, 67.

<sup>28</sup> Henry J. Browne, "The Record of American Labor," *CUA Bulletin*, April 1956, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Mary Powderly's position as Bishop McNamera's secretary was an important consideration in the selection of the CUA Archives, especially since Powderly's widow, who owned the papers prior to Mary Powderly, was anti-Catholic. Mary Powderly to Monsignor Corrigan, 2 October 1939; Monsignor Haas to Monsignor Corrigan, 3 October 1939, John W. Hayes Accession Files, ACUA.

<sup>30</sup> On Ryan's influence, see Thomas E. Blantz, *A Priest in Public Service: Francis J. Haas and the New Deal* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 23–46; Franklyn Kennedy, "Bishop Haas and Monsignor Ryan," *America*, 12 September 1953, 573–74.

<sup>31</sup> Francis J. Haas, *Shop Collective Bargaining: A Study of Wage Determination in the Men's Garment Industry* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1922).





Bishop Francis J. Haas speaking at a UAW meeting in Detroit, Michigan, c. 1943. Bishop Haas remained close to the labor movement throughout his life, frequently speaking at union meetings, rallies, and Labor Day celebrations. (Photo courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.)

public representative on numerous New Deal agencies, including the National Recovery Administration, National Labor Board, and the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. One of the busiest and most well-respected labor arbitrators in the country in the late 1930s and 1940s, he mediated some of the most important and volatile strikes in American history.<sup>32</sup> His sympathies with organized labor were always clear. In a 1933 Uniontown, Pennsylvania, Labor Day address, Haas insisted that “every worker has a duty to himself and to his fellowmen to join his union and to be proud of his membership. Given two men of

<sup>32</sup> His work in labor relations and as a public representative in government agencies is described in Blantz, *A Priest in Public Service*. For a thoughtful recollection of Haas’s importance to the CUA social reform impulse, see Monsignor George G. Higgins (with William Bole), *Organized Labor and the Church: Reflections of a “Labor Priest”* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1993), 30–36. On his “Red Haas” nickname, see Blantz, 48; Higgins, 30. He served as an arbitrator during the Minneapolis Teamster Local #574 strike in 1934 and Allis-Chalmers strikes in Wisconsin in both 1939 and 1941. On the Allis-Chalmers 1939 strike, see Stephen Meyer, “Stalin Over Wisconsin”: *The Making and Unmaking of Militant Unionism, 1900–1950* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 78–104. On the Teamster strike, see Thomas Blantz, “Francis J. Haas and the Minneapolis Teamsters Strike of 1934,” *Minnesota History* 42 (Spring 1970): 5–15; Farrell Dobbs, *Teamster Rebellion* (New York: Monad Press, 1972), 144–50, 171–72.

equal ability, one a union man and the other non-union, unquestionably the union man is the better. He recognizes his obligations to himself, his family, and the community.”<sup>33</sup> Haas developed strong connections to the labor movement while in D.C. After the Church transferred him to St. Francis Seminary in Wisconsin in 1935, the sometimes gruff and often difficult United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) president and CIO founder, John L. Lewis, affectionately wrote: “I think of you often, Father, and we miss you much over here [D.C.].”<sup>34</sup>

Haas soon returned to D.C. and served as dean of CUA’s National School of Social Science from 1937 to 1943. His personal philosophy encouraged him to pick up after Kerby died and pursue the Powderly Papers and the creation of a labor archives at CUA. He enthusiastically explained to CUA president Joseph Corrigan that the Powderly Papers were an “almost priceless collection as it is the only original source on labor history for the period in question.”<sup>35</sup>

Haas maintained an interest in collecting labor records at CUA until promoted to bishop and transferred to Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1943. He made an agreement with the eighty-five-year-old John W. Hayes, the last Grand Workman of the Knights of Labor, to deposit his papers at CUA in the future.<sup>36</sup> Stored in a leaky shed, the Hayes Papers were slowly deteriorating prior to being deposited at CUA after Hayes died in 1942.<sup>37</sup> Haas persisted and acquired the personal papers of John Mitchell, UMWA president (1898–1908), in December 1943.<sup>38</sup> These three collections created the core of the archives at CUA and established the university as the premier holder of primary manuscript sources relating to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century labor history in the United States.

In 1948, CUA established an independent archival unit in its main library.<sup>39</sup> The new Catholic University of America Archives defined its collecting scope

<sup>33</sup> Francis J. Haas, “Labor Day, Yesterday and Today,” transcript, 6, September 4, 1933, Uniontown, Pa., folder 16, box 46, Francis J. Haas Papers, ACUA.

<sup>34</sup> John L. Lewis to Francis J. Haas, 18 March 1936, folder 25, box 27, Francis J. Haas Papers, ACUA.

<sup>35</sup> Francis J. Haas to Monsignor Corrigan, 3 October 1939, John W. Hayes Accession Files, ACUA.

<sup>36</sup> Francis J. Haas to Monsignor Corrigan, 3 October 1939, John W. Hayes Accession Files, ACUA.

<sup>37</sup> Browne, *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor*, 379.

<sup>38</sup> Haas acquired the Mitchell Papers with help from Reverend Thomas Darby, a New York labor priest who was friends with the Mitchell family. According to Darby, the sons of John Mitchell who maintained control of the Mitchell Papers were “excellent Catholics.” Henry J. Browne, “The Record of American Labor,” *CUA Bulletin*, April 1956, 3. Francis Haas to Rev. Joseph Hammond, 16 August 1943; Rev. Thomas Darby to Monsignor Francis Haas, 20 August 1943; Monsignor Francis Haas to Rev. Thomas Darby, 26 August 1943; Elizabeth C. F. Morris to James Magner, 21 December 1943, John Mitchell Accession Files, ACUA. Thomas Darby to Francis Haas, 27 August 1943; Thomas Darby to Francis Haas, 26 August, 1943; Thomas Darby to Francis Haas, 20 August 1943; Francis Haas to Thomas Darby, 16 August 1943; Thomas Darby to Francis Haas, 20 July 1942, folder 17, box 25, Francis J. Haas Papers, ACUA.

<sup>39</sup> Neusse, *The Catholic University of America*, 338.

as “non printed documents pertaining to the history of the Catholic Church, especially in the United States [including] the letters, diaries, notebooks, etc., of Catholic clerics or laymen whose papers pertain to the official records of no existing institution or one unable to care for them [or] the records of any Catholic organization presently defunct or willing to dispose of obsolete material.”<sup>40</sup> If narrowly defined, the newly stated collecting policy would have excluded the Powderly, Hayes, and Mitchell Papers that already formed the core of the manuscript collections and limited the collection of further labor union records.

Father Henry J. Browne served as the first archivist at the CUA Archives, a post he held from 1948 to 1956. He had studied at CUA under Reverend John Tracy Ellis, the pre-eminent American Catholic historian in the United States. Browne published his dissertation, *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor*, the year after the archives opened.<sup>41</sup> Browne’s own research and publications depended heavily on both the Powderly and Hayes Papers now housed in the CUA Archives.<sup>42</sup> The dissertation indicated Browne’s interest in both labor and Catholic history. Moreover, the social reform tradition at CUA had a strong influence on Browne, who later became active in a number of progressive social issues, particularly affordable housing and poverty.<sup>43</sup> Identified as the “housing priest” by the *New York Times*, Browne once called Nelson Rockefeller a “fink” because he did not have a housing program.<sup>44</sup> Considering Browne’s academic research interests and activist inclinations, it was no surprise that the new archivist broadly defined the CUA Archives collecting policy to include labor-related collections. He maintained that the archives should collect not only papers that documented institutional Catholic life and the university, but also those that documented “American Catholic life” in a more general way than traditional institutional Catholic records would. Browne maintained that the

<sup>40</sup> Timothy J. Meagher and William John Shepherd, “The Local Church from a National Perspective: Collecting American Catholic History at the Catholic University of America,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 16 (Winter 1998): 97.

<sup>41</sup> Browne, *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor*. George Higgins, who is discussed below, served on the dissertation committee.

<sup>42</sup> In addition to his book, see Henry J. Browne, “Terence V. Powderly and the Church-Labor Difficulties of the Early 1880s,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 32 (April 1946): 1–27.

<sup>43</sup> Browne’s role as a community leader and housing advocate is covered in Flavia Alaya, *Under the Rose, A Confession* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1999), 157–332. For other examples, see Fred Powlodge, “3,000 in Rights Protest March on Albany in Snow,” *New York Times*, 11 March 1964; Bennett M. Bolton, “Life Suspension, Priests Ask,” *Washington Post*, 27 March 1969; Isadore Barmash, “Project Dropped by Alexander’s,” *New York Times*, 2 July 1970; Murray Schumach, “How Vocal Minority Prevailed on Alexander’s,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1970; Murray Schumach, “Segregated Slum ‘Threat’ Fought on West Side,” *New York Times*, 21 July 1970; Murray Schumach, “Neighborhoods: Alexander’s Divides West Side,” *New York Times*, 31 January 1971.

<sup>44</sup> Alaya, *Under the Rose*, 286; Wolfgang Saxon, “Henry Browne, 61, Rutgers Professor,” *New York Times*, 30 November 1980.

Mitchell, Powderly, and Hayes collections formed the core of the archives because they touched “on the activities of Catholics and of the Church.”<sup>45</sup>

Soon after the establishment of the archives, CUA again pursued labor-related collections, an initiative that had abated after Haas’s promotion and transfer. Monsignor George G. Higgins assisted Browne in acquiring labor collections in the 1950s. Like Haas, Higgins’s role in collecting labor records was one part of his larger personal and professional activities supporting organized labor.<sup>46</sup> Higgins devoted his life to the study of labor history and support of the labor movement. As a CUA graduate student, Higgins gravitated quickly to Haas and sought an active role in labor relations.<sup>47</sup> He recalled fondly in his autobiography that “one of the most popular events was Haas’s extra-curricular seminars. On Sunday mornings after mass, dozens of students would pack a classroom to hear him talk about the latest in labor-management relations and related issues.”<sup>48</sup> His dissertation at CUA investigated the voluntarist political philosophy of the American Federation of Labor.<sup>49</sup> Higgins served on the United Auto Workers’ Public Review Board in the 1950s and was a strong and visible supporter of the United Farm Workers in the 1960s and 1970s. The personal connections he created through his activism in the labor movement proved instrumental in the acquisition of a number of important labor manuscripts at the CUA Archives in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, the CUA Archives received a commitment from John Brophy for his personal papers in 1953. Brophy had been a miner and an activist in the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in the early 1900s. Between 1916 and 1926, Brophy served as the president of UMWA District #2. He then served in a variety of important posts in the CIO during its entire twenty years as an independent organization.<sup>50</sup> Brophy was also a devout Catholic.<sup>51</sup> Henry Browne first contacted Brophy about

<sup>45</sup> Meagher and Shepherd, “The Local Church from a National Perspective,” 97.

<sup>46</sup> For more on Higgins’s more than fifty years of activity in the labor movement, see Higgins (with Bole), *Organized Labor and the Church*; Gerald Costello, *Without Fear or Favor* (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1984); an issue of *U.S. Catholic Historian* dedicated to the life of Higgins, *U.S. Catholic Historian* 19 (Fall 2001); and John J. O’Brien, *George G. Higgins and the Quest for Worker Justice: The Evolution of Catholic Social Thought in America*. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

<sup>47</sup> George Higgins to Francis Haas, 1 July 1941, folder 17, box 26, Francis Haas Papers, ACUA; Higgins, *Organized Labor and the Church*, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Higgins, *Organized Labor and the Church*, 30; Blantz, *A Priest in Public Service*, 174.

<sup>49</sup> Haas served as a reader on the dissertation, which was completed in 1944 and published in 1969. George G. Higgins, “Voluntarism in Organized Labor in the United States” (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1944); George G. Higgins, *Voluntarism in Organized Labor in the United States, 1930–1940* (New York: Arno, 1969).

<sup>50</sup> For more on Brophy, see John Brophy (with John Hall), *A Miner’s Life: An Autobiography* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964); Sister M. Camellia Mullay, “John Brophy: Militant Labor Leader and Reformer” (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1966).

<sup>51</sup> Brophy (with John Hall), *A Miner’s Life*, 9, 65, 100.



Monsignor George G. Higgins and AFL-CIO leader John Brophy taking a break at the AFL-CIO Education Directors Luncheon, February 1956. Personal friendships that developed between activist Catholic priests like George Higgins and Catholic labor leaders like John Brophy were critical in the building of the labor collections at The Catholic University of America. (George G. Higgins Papers, The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.)

the disposition of his papers in 1951.<sup>52</sup> After some prodding from Higgins, a personal friend of Brophy, the labor leader agreed that there would be “no better place for them” than the CUA Archives.<sup>53</sup> Soon after Brophy died in 1962, his family honored his wishes and deposited his papers in the CUA Archives. The Brophy Papers are an inconsistent but rich source on the early CIO, and to a lesser extent, the UMWA in the 1920s.

After labor leader Philip Murray died in 1952, both Higgins and Browne sought his records. Murray had been the president of the CIO (1940–1952), the United Steelworkers Union of America (USWA, 1942–1952), and its predecessor, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (1936–1942). Prior to that,

<sup>52</sup> Henry J. Browne to Raymond McGowan, 14 December 1951, John Brophy Accession Files, ACUA.

<sup>53</sup> George G. Higgins to Henry J. Browne, 16 July 1953; Henry J. Browne to John Brophy, 24 July 1953; John Brophy to Henry J. Browne, 30 July 1953, John Brophy Accession Files, ACUA.



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The United Steelworkers of America (USWA) donate the Philip Murray Papers to The Catholic University of America (CUA), 1956. From left to right: Frank Hoffman, legislative representative, USWA; Most Reverend Bryan J. McEntegart, rector, CUA; David McDonald, president, USWA; Anthony Federoff, staff representative, USWA; Right Reverend Monsignor William J. McDonald, vice-rector, CUA; and Reverend Henry J. Browne, archivist, CUA. (Catholic University Photographic Collection, The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.)

Murray served as vice president in the UMWA.<sup>54</sup> After discussions with family members and USWA leaders, the union donated the Murray Papers to the CUA Archives. According to historian Steve Rosswurm, “Murray was a devout and profoundly antisecular Catholic.”<sup>55</sup> This appeared to be an important consideration when his friends and colleagues opted to donate his paper to CUA. At the presentation ceremony celebrating the donation, CUA rector, Bishop Bryan J. McEntegart, indicated the importance of CUA’s social reform tradition in the building of a labor archives at the university: “Today’s ceremony marks a

<sup>54</sup> For more on Murray’s life in the labor movement, see Ronald Schatz, “Philip Murray and the Subordination of Industrial Unions to the United States Government,” in *Labor Leaders in America*, ed. Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, 234–57 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Juanita Ollie Diffay Tate, *The Forgotten Labor Leader and Long Time Civil Rights Advocate—Philip Murray* (Greensboro: North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University Press, 1974).

<sup>55</sup> Rosswurm, “The Catholic Church and the Left-Led Unions,” 130.



distinctive contribution to the research facilities of the University—a contribution which, while it further bolsters our tradition of interest in social justice, at the same time presents a splendid opportunity for the study of an important recent period of labor and industrial history.”<sup>56</sup> USWA president David McDonald’s speech at the same ceremony indicated that the labor history records being donated to the CUA Archives also reflected the Catholicism of labor leaders like Murray: “Mr. Murray would feel at home in no educational institution in the United States more than this one [CUA],” McDonald correctly proclaimed.<sup>57</sup> The USWA transferred the Murray Papers to the CUA Archives in 1956 and 1958.

The 1955 merger of the CIO and the AFL prompted Browne—who worried that the merger of the two offices could lead to the destruction of valuable historical documents—to pursue the CIO Records.<sup>58</sup> He argued that the social reform tradition at CUA, which encouraged both the study of labor and the activism of professors like Ryan, Haas, and Higgins, made CUA an ideal location to house the CIO Records.<sup>59</sup> He enlisted the help of Higgins, who had friends in the offices of the AFL-CIO, to persuade the AFL-CIO to donate the CIO Records to the Catholic University Archives.<sup>60</sup> The AFL-CIO deposited the CIO Records in the CUA Archives in three installments between 1962 and 1967. The general office files of the CIO complemented the Brophy and Murray Collections, which the archives had acquired during the previous decade.

The development of labor collections at the CUA benefited not only from the commitment of clergy scholars to labor history and their activism, but also through the deposit of their personal papers. The first installment of the John A. Ryan Papers entered the CUA Archives in 1949, the year after it opened. As discussed above, Monsignor Ryan was one of the primary architects and teachers of the Catholic social reform philosophy at CUA. He published extensively on economic and social issues such as the minimum wage, capitalism, and ethics, taught at CUA for decades, and helped found the NCWC in 1919. He headed the Social Action Department of the NCWC from 1919 until his death in 1945. The Ryan Papers are an important source on the Catholic Church’s role in the New Deal and on the intellectual construction of Catholic social reform theory.

<sup>56</sup> Henry J. Browne, “The Records of American Labor: Its Sources at the University,” *CUA Bulletin*, April 1956, 13.

<sup>57</sup> Browne, “The Records of American Labor: Its Sources at the University,” 6.

<sup>58</sup> Henry J. Browne to James Carey, 7 May 1956, Congress of Industrial Organizations Records Accession Files, ACUA.

<sup>59</sup> Henry J. Browne to Jim Gildea, 6 June 1956, Congress of Industrial Organizations Records Accession Files, ACUA.

<sup>60</sup> George G. Higgins to Henry J. Browne, 8 June 1956, Congress of Industrial Organizations Records Accession Files, ACUA.

After Bishop Haas died in 1953, his personal and professional records were deposited at the CUA Archives.<sup>61</sup> The Haas Papers documented his role in New Deal agencies and as a labor arbitrator. Haas played an important role, for example, in the mediation efforts during the well-known Teamster Local #574 strike in Minneapolis in 1934, and he served as chairman of the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) in 1943.<sup>62</sup> The Haas Papers complemented the Ryan Papers. While the Ryan Papers focused on the intellectual foundation of the Catholic social activist theory, the Haas Papers documented it in action.

Between the mid-1930s and the mid-1960s, the collecting at the CUA Archives benefited from the Catholicism of labor leaders, as well as the strong connections that developed between Catholic labor leaders and Catholic clerics active in the labor movement. Both Philip Murray and John Brophy were devout Catholics, and their religious affiliation no doubt encouraged the placement of their records at a Catholic institution. Both Terence Powderly and John Mitchell, who converted from Protestantism as an adult, also were Catholic, although religion played a much less important role in their lives than in Murray's and Brophy's.<sup>63</sup> Mary Powderly, the owner of the Powderly Papers at the time of their deposit to CUA, however, was a secretary for Bishop McNamera. Her Catholicism played an important part in the disposition of those records.<sup>64</sup> Reverend Thomas Darby described John Mitchell's sons, the owners of his papers at the time of their deposit to CUA, as "excellent Catholics."<sup>65</sup> The personal relationships that developed between Catholic labor leaders, such as Murray and Brophy, and activist Catholic clerics at CUA, such as Haas and Higgins, influenced the deposit of labor materials at the CUA Archives.

### Changes in the 1960s

By the mid-1960s, the CUA Archives had become one of the most important labor archives in the country. The Powderly, Hayes, and Mitchell Papers focused

<sup>61</sup> The majority of the Francis Haas Papers were deposited in two installments in 1954 and 1957. Materials related to Haas's tenure as a bishop in Grand Rapids are maintained at the Archives of the Diocese of Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

<sup>62</sup> On Haas and the Teamsters strike, see Blantz, "Francis J. Haas and the Minneapolis Truckers Strike of 1934," 5–15. On his role in the FEPC and on other government agencies, see Blantz, "Francis J. Haas: Priest and Government Servant," *Catholic Historical Review* 57 (January 1972): 571–92; Blantz, *Priest in the Public Service*.

<sup>63</sup> On Mitchell's conversion to Catholicism, see Craig Phelan, *Divided Loyalties: The Public and Private Life of Labor Leader John Mitchell* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 303. On Powderly's Catholicism, see Craig Phelan, *Grand Master Workman: Terence Powderly and the Knights of Labor* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000), 20–21; Browne, *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor*, 39.

<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, Powderly's wife was vehemently anti-Catholic and would likely not have donated his papers to CUA if she had maintained ownership.

<sup>65</sup> Reverend Thomas Darby to Francis Haas, 20 July 1942, folder 17, box 25, Haas Papers, ACUA.

on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They provided rich primary source materials on one of the most important labor federations of the period, the Knights of Labor, and one of the most important unions of the period, the UMWA. The Haas, Murray, Brophy, and Ryan Papers and the CIO Records created a strong core of materials on the New Deal and the CIO that focused on the 1930s and 1940s. These collections were complemented by labor-related collections, such as the Richard L. G. Deverall Papers, the Charles Patrick Neill Papers, and the Harry Cyril Read Papers, that entered the CUA Archives in the 1950s.<sup>66</sup> These collections were the last significant labor union or personal papers of important labor leaders acquired by the CUA Archives for decades.

A number of things had changed for both the CUA Archives and labor history archives. When the CUA Archives began collecting labor history materials in the late 1930s, repositories demonstrated little interest in labor materials, but this began to change in the 1950s as both archivists and historians pushed for the collection of union records. In 1952, archivists formed the Committee of Labor Records to investigate the extent of labor holdings in archives.<sup>67</sup> The following year, 1953, a caucus of historians and archivists interested in labor history—which included CUA archivist Henry Browne—met at the American Historical Association conference to address the dearth of labor manuscripts in archival repositories.<sup>68</sup> In November of 1958, the Tamiment Institute in New York City hosted a meeting of librarians, archivists, and historians concerned about the disposition of labor history records. This meeting led to the formation of the Committee for the Preservation of Labor Archives, which encouraged the collecting of labor history records.<sup>69</sup> The increased attention to the identification and collection of union records coincided with an upsurge in academic interest among historians and publications focused on labor history as demonstrated by the creation of the journal *Labor History* in 1960.<sup>70</sup> Importantly, from its first issue, *Labor History* regularly highlighted existing labor sources and encouraged collecting of labor records at archival facilities.

<sup>66</sup> Importantly, both Deverall and Read were devout Catholics informed by Catholic social justice teachings. The initial deposits of these collections came to the CUA Archives in 1956 (Neill Papers), 1958 (Read Papers), and 1959 (Deverall Papers).

<sup>67</sup> Paul Lewinson and Morris Rieger, "Labor Union Records in the United States," *American Archivist* 25 (January 1962): 39.

<sup>68</sup> Henry J. Browne, "Raiding Labor Records," *American Archivist* 17 (1954): 263.

<sup>69</sup> "News and Notes: Preserving Labor History Materials," *Labor History* 1 (Winter 1960): 98–99.

<sup>70</sup> Initiated in 1958, the first issue of *Labor History* appeared in winter of 1960. It was published by the Tamiment Institute in New York City with support from the AFL-CIO. The subfield of labor history as a discipline in history departments emerged in the 1960s. For an interesting personal account on the development of the field, see Melvyn Dubofsky, *Hard Work: The Making of Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 5–33.

Repositories specializing in labor records increased substantially thereafter. In the early 1960s, a number of universities, including Wayne State University (Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor History and Urban Affairs), Georgia State University (Southern Labor Archives), Pennsylvania State University, and the University of Texas at Arlington (Texas Labor Archives), created facilities to collect the records of organized labor.<sup>71</sup> As the number of repositories committed to collecting labor manuscripts multiplied, the need for CUA to pursue labor records became less critical.

The CUA Archives changed as well. The commitment of the university to its archives waned considerably after the transfer of Henry Browne to New York City in 1956. Between 1957 and 1977, eight different people held the position of CUA archivist. Moreover, the archivists in this period were often straddled with multiple duties, either in academic units like the history department or in library administration, with the archivist position being their least important responsibility.<sup>72</sup> The university did not properly staff nor fund the archives during many of these years. Just as important, CUA no longer possessed a core of progressive, socially activist clergy interested in the labor movement. The university no longer served as a center for training activist labor priests.

When the CUA Archives stabilized in the mid-1970s, it sought to bolster its labor history holdings. But the collecting atmosphere had changed dramatically. The proliferation of repositories collecting labor-related materials in the 1960s and 1970s created a highly competitive environment, and the field became known for its cut-throat "collecting wars."<sup>73</sup> The archives pursued a number of labor collections, such as the papers of AFL-CIO president George Meany, USWA presidents David McDonald and I. W. Abel, and the UMWA Records.<sup>74</sup> But there was significant competition for these labor union records from archives at Penn State, Wayne State, Cornell, and West Virginia University. This competition did not exist in the 1940s and 1950s. Moreover, the personal connections between labor priests at CUA and Catholic labor leaders that were so strong and important in the 1940s

<sup>71</sup> Mason, "Labor Archives and Collections in the United States," 12–13.

<sup>72</sup> The archivists after Browne were Rev. Patrick Gearty (1956–1959), Rev. Robert Trisco (1959–1962), Charles Ritter (1961–1963), James Moylan (1964–1965), Rev. Michael Hall (1965–1967), Thomas F. Elliott (1967, acting), Moreau B. C. Chambers (1967–1973), George Hruneni (1974–1977), Anthony Zito (1977–1994), John Shepherd, (1994–1995, acting), Tim Meagher, (1995–present). Neusse, *The Catholic University of America*, 338.

<sup>73</sup> F. Gerald Ham, "Archival Strategies for the Post-Custodial Era," *American Archivist* 44 (Summer 1981): 214.

<sup>74</sup> Clarence Walton to George Meany, 21 May 1976; George Meany to Clarence Walton, 8 June 1976, George Meany Folder, Prospective Donor Files, ACUA; Clarence Walton to Maurice Schulte, 3 May 1976; Clarence Walton to David McDonald, 17 May 1976; Clarence Walton to David McDonald, 7 June 1976; Clarence Walton to I. W. Abel, 17 May 1976; I. W. Abel to Clarence Walton, 12 July 1976, David McDonald Folder, Prospective Donor Files, ACUA; George Hruneni to Lloyd Wagner, 17 July 1974, UMWA Folder, Prospective Donor Files, ACUA.

and 1950s had faded. The people at CUA who now attempted to acquire union records did not have close personal friends in the labor movement based on their active support of organized labor. This made it difficult for CUA to attract union records, and none of these collections were donated to CUA.

Consequently, the CUA Archives changed its collecting focus in the 1970s to favor the records of national Catholic organizations, such as the National Catholic Education Association and the National Conference of Catholic Charities/Catholic Charities USA, and those of Catholic intellectuals, such as John Tracy Ellis. By the 1980s, the collecting policies of the CUA Archives had shifted almost entirely to national Catholic organizations, Catholic social justice movements, Catholic intellectuals, and its own university collections.<sup>75</sup> Many of these collections related to Catholic workers, and sometimes unions, but the CUA Archives no longer actively pursued union records, which were being collected by a host of other academic special collection departments.<sup>76</sup>

In 2002, Monsignor George G. Higgins died. Higgins, who followed Ryan and Raymond McGowan as head of the Social Action Department of NCWC in 1954, was a fixture at CUA and an active force in the labor movement for over fifty years. Higgins provided the last connection to the progressive social reform tradition so vibrant at CUA from the 1910s through the 1950s. Like Monsignor Ryan and his mentor, Bishop Haas, Monsignor Higgins donated his papers to the CUA Archives.<sup>77</sup> The more than 200 linear feet include a strong component of labor materials related to his work for the United Farm Workers, as an arbitrator, as an organizer of support for a number of strikes—such as the Harlan coal miners and the J. P. Stevens strikes—and to his service on the United Automobile Workers Union Public Review Board. The death of Higgins marked the end of the Catholic social reform tradition at CUA that began almost a hundred years earlier with Monsignor John A. Ryan.

### Lessons from the CUA Labor Archives

The history of the labor archives at CUA sheds light on collecting development practices, highlighting broad changes in collecting policies among repositories. The experiences at CUA demonstrate the transformation of collecting practices from a casual, uncoordinated, informal, and weakly defined

<sup>75</sup> Some small labor-related collections were deposited into the CUA Archives in the 1970s, including the Joseph Daniel Keenan Papers (1976) and the Norman McKenna Papers (1977), but clearly the majority of deposits were now from University Records and national Catholic organizations.

<sup>76</sup> This refers to union records narrowly defined. The CUA Archives has always and continues to collect records that document Catholic activists in all social justice movements, whether they are the records of Catholic priests or Catholic organizations, such as ACTU.

<sup>77</sup> He began making deposits in 1980 and regularly deposited materials until his death in 2002.

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activity, into a narrowly defined, formal, and somewhat more coordinated process. This essay has demonstrated that the collecting of labor records at CUA emerged as one aspect of the activism of priests in the labor movement. Although an important and highly relevant group of students and professors at CUA, this cohort surely represented a small portion of the university community, even between the 1910s and 1950s. The university administration never provided a mandate to collect labor union manuscripts, but rather, the collections were thrust upon it by the activist priests who often acted on their own accord. When CUA created a formal archives unit in 1948, it defined its mission with a rather broad Catholic collecting scope. Henry Browne interpreted it to embrace the already created informal labor history focus. Although Browne's rationale made sense, the logic of his argument could have led the CUA Archives to collect records from a vast array of organizations that included Catholics. There was no reason to focus on union records other than that they already formed the core of the archives and that the subject interested Browne and the others active in the acquisition of records. The CUA Archives now had a formal collecting policy that was rather broad in print, but narrow in application. The collecting of records continued as it had prior to the formation of the archives: a small legion of priests, motivated by their commitment to the contemporary labor movement and their intellectual interest in labor history, continued in the 1950s to use personal connections in the labor movement to collect union manuscripts. It is important to note that, at the time, the CUA Archives' informal acquisition process was not unusual; many other archival collections formed and developed in a similar informal and uncoordinated manner, often based on the research interests of faculty and archivists.

When CUA recommitted to creating a strong archival facility, a long process that began slowly in the late 1970s, it reassessed its informal acquisitions policy. A formal and much narrower collecting scope emerged that focused on a core of its newer holdings, the mission of the university, and its ability to support and contribute to the broader archival community. The proliferation of repositories collecting labor records in the 1960s and 1970s and the increased competition for labor manuscripts played a significant role in the decision to omit union records from the new collecting policy, which focused instead on national Catholic organizations, Catholic social activists, and Catholic intellectuals, all collecting areas with less competition. The CUA Archives still sought the records of Catholic social activists in the labor movement. For example, it recently acquired the papers of John C. Cort, a Catholic social activist and theorist for over fifty years. The collection documents Cort's role in a variety of organizations, including the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists in the 1930s and 1940s, and as a business agent for the Boston Newspaper Guild local in the 1950s. But union records that did not have a notable Catholic component were no longer pursued, nor mentioned in CUA's formal collecting policy.



The creation of a labor archives at CUA and its evolution demonstrate an important change in how archival collections are acquired. The debate between Lester J. Cappon and F. Gerald Ham in the 1970s on acquisitions practices marks a critical turning point in the transformation from informal collecting practices to formal acquisitions procedures.<sup>78</sup> Ham rebuked the profession for its collecting practices: "Is there any other field of information gathering that has such a broad mandate with a selection process so random, so fragmented, so uncoordinated, and even so often accidental?"<sup>79</sup> Ham supported a coordinated system of collecting based on institutional cooperation that sought to provide a more rational and complete method of documentation. The manner that the CUA Archives developed was, according to Ham's analysis, part of a larger problem in the archival community. Cappon, then an elder statesman in the archival community, countered that "research collections are not generated by superimposed proposals from a national planning office, but rather by the initiative of archivists and historians and interested laymen with specific records in mind and a *local* nucleus of support on which to build."<sup>80</sup> Cappon's comments, on the other hand, support the informal approach used to create and develop the CUA Archives from the 1930s into the 1970s. The transformation to a narrower, formal, and institutionally supported collecting policy at CUA indicates that Ham and others who criticized the informal and uncoordinated collecting policies of the previous era affected archival collecting practices perhaps more than they thought.<sup>81</sup> Although the explicit interinstitutional coordination that Ham and others desired has only rarely been achieved, the collecting policy changes at CUA suggest that institutions began considering the broader archival community in a manner that helps realize an informal coordination of records acquisition. This history supports Richard Cox's analysis that the argument between Ham and Cappon considering records acquisition was, at least in part, a generational shift in practices and thinking in which the 1970s might be viewed as the transitional decade.<sup>82</sup>

The legacy of the informal collecting policies at CUA and elsewhere often created problems. In 1975, Mary Lynn McCree warned archivists "to remember

<sup>78</sup> For a more complete assessment of this disagreement, see Richard Cox, in *Lester J. Cappon and the Relationship of History, Archives, and Scholarship in the Golden Age of Archival Theory*, ed. Richard J. Cox, 23–25 (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004).

<sup>79</sup> F. Gerald Ham, "The Archival Edge," *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975): 5.

<sup>80</sup> Lester J. Cappon, "The Archivist as Collector," in *Lester J. Cappon*, 82.

<sup>81</sup> For examples of others who have been critical of collecting policy development, see Timothy L. Ericson, "At the 'Rim of Creative Dissatisfaction': Archivists and Acquisition Development," in *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice*, ed. Randall G. Jimerson, 181 (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004); F. Gerald Ham, "Archival Strategies for the Post-Custodial Era," *American Archivist* 44 (Summer 1981): 207–16; Jutta Reed-Scott, "Collection Management Strategies for Archivists," *American Archivist* 47 (Winter 1984): 23–29.

<sup>82</sup> Cox, *Lester J. Cappon*, 24–25.

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that there are pitfalls in attempting to tailor a collection to the interests of one group of faculty or students, or one small pressure group.”<sup>83</sup> As McCree argued, faculty and student interest in a particular collecting area can be ephemeral. How these collections fit into the larger university and archives mission after the interested parties leave is often problematic. It is sometimes difficult, for example, for the CUA Archives to be a part of the labor archives community when it no longer actively collects union records, even though it houses important labor manuscripts. Researchers who read the CUA Archives' formal collecting scope will not readily know of its union records, because it contains no mention of them. Likewise, collaborative projects among like institutions will not often consider the CUA Archives as a partner. The maintenance of particular subject area records that are no longer in the explicit collecting scope of an archives situates the materials in a permanent netherland of in-betweenness; part of the past, but not of the present or future.

Despite its difficult position, the CUA Archives maintains a strong commitment to its labor history holdings and the heritage of the activist priests and scholars who founded and built its labor history holdings. The creation and the continued existence of a social activist reform philosophy at CUA motivated and informed the collecting policies of the CUA Archives for decades. A coterie of priests embraced an activist agenda that encouraged both a genuine scholarly interest in labor history and the creation of a labor history archives to further their interest and their students' interest in the field, as well as their active involvement in the labor movement. The social reform environment at CUA blended its activist and scholarly elements, which complemented and reinforced each other. The collecting of labor history manuscripts at CUA demonstrated an unusual concern for labor history and a belief in the importance of scholarship in the labor movement. The success of the CUA Archives and the activism of its first archivist also encouraged the formation of labor archives elsewhere. The importance placed on creating a labor archives reveals the sincere support of the founders of the archives for organized labor as well as the strong and mutual links that developed between some Catholic labor leaders and labor-supporting clergy at CUA. The historiography considering the role of Catholic clergy in the labor movement will surely continue to be contentious and lively. The creation of a labor history archives at CUA should be considered within the context of the current historiographical debate that addresses the role of Catholic clergy in the labor movement.

<sup>83</sup> McCree, “Good Sense and Good Judgment,” 108.