

On April 10, 1952, a large crowd gathered in the early morning chill underneath the marquee for Greenfield's Garden Theater. They were not there to see "At Sword's Point", the movie advertised overhead. Nor was this a governmental or religious event. Over a thousand men and women had been summoned on short notice to attend a Mass Meeting where differing viewpoints were argued followed by a carefully monitored secret ballot. The outcome of this vote surprised most observers, just as other results had in recent memory, with far-reaching effects throughout Franklin County.

All of the people packed into the movie theater that morning had two things in common: they worked for Greenfield Tap and Die (GTD), the area's largest employer; and they belonged to the United Electrical (UE) worker's union, who called the meeting. They were convened to vote on what would be the first organized work stoppage in that storied company's history - the most important decision union members have to make under normal circumstances.

But the circumstances that confronted GTD workers in the early 1950s were anything but normal. Greenfield found itself at the center of a national political maelstrom - wholly out of keeping with the town's character - and its workers found themselves operating under the proverbial Sword of Damocles.

In order to unravel the startling set of events in and around the plants here at that time we need to reconstruct the development of manufacturing in this place. We need to create a study over time of the evolving relationship between workers and the business owners who employed them. The study of one union, in one company, in one town sheds light in two directions: we see characteristics of

Greenfield, and we gain insight into a struggle that has played out across countless cities and towns in America. The story of work in Franklin County is at one time quite unique and emblematic of a much bigger story.

This is a labor history of Greenfield and surrounding towns with a focus on organized labor in the 1940s-50s. Traditionally over a third of the population worked in manufacturing in this rural county. This is an industrial history without the usual emphasis on inventors, their inventions, or the entrepreneurs who brought them to market. It is rather the story of the men and women who made the valued products that made Greenfield famous day in and day out. Again, what is of primary interest is the changing relationship over time between employees and the company that employed them.

To study these changes we begin with a brief survey of working life before and during industrialization. Greenfield was made “exceptional” by the special place it occupied in the industrial process and this was reflected in labor relations for much of its history. Labor did not organize until well into the twentieth century; but when it finally did, it did so in a surprising – or perhaps not so surprising – way.

We Are All Working Men¹

Yankee farmers from eastern Massachusetts settled Greenfield in the mid-eighteenth century. It was a frontier outpost that guarded against raids by the French and their Native American allies. Almost every man was his own boss since he owned the land he worked to help provide for his family. His economic

independence was protected by his full participation in a democratic political process. Greenfield was among a handful of Massachusetts towns that eliminated property requirements to vote in Town Meeting in 1776 – this was “one man/one vote” regardless of wealth or social station.² Many of these men fought at the Battle of Saratoga in defense of rights and responsibilities they cherished in their hometown.

The same Greenfield farmers who were a driving force in the American Revolution were also on the cutting edge of America’s Industrial Revolution. Not content to simply work the land, they harnessed the power of cascading rivers and streams to saw logs, grind grain and then to make textiles. Factory Hollow Mill, built in 1830, is called the nation’s first vertical industrial park. The six-story granite structure assembled all the belt-driven machines needed to process raw wool and cotton into fabric under one roof.³ A few years later native son John Russell applied the same approach –the American Method of Manufactures - to making knives and chisels from imported stock steel. By 1837 he employed 70 people at his “Green River Works” mass-producing edge tools using powered trip hammers, grinding stones and emery wheels. His mill, followed by others in Franklin County, turned out inexpensive, quality tools on a scale never seen before.

How can we explain the rapid growth of the metal tool industry in this place? The town had waterpower and access to raw materials and markets via river and soon rail. A strong network of regional banks underwrote new ventures throughout the county. Greenfield, unlike many other small and mid-sized industrial cities around the state, was not founded by the Boston Associates, absentee investors who

owned the means of production. But the principle resource that drove production was the pool of skilled labor found here.

The early 1800s was a period of transition from self-employed farmers and artisans to wage workers. As production was concentrated and capitalized, making more tools faster for expanding markets, farmers started to sell their labor to Russell and other shop owners. They worked as independent contractors, paid for what they produced rather than by the hour. They were given incentives to create laborsaving innovations that benefited themselves and the companies they worked for. As they experimented with jigs, gages, templates and fixtures they gave birth to the American machine tool industry.⁴

A reliable, skilled workforce was the key to increased production and profits for owners. Workers made the most of their relative advantage in a tight labor market, but there was also growing unease with the notion of becoming permanent wageworkers.⁵ Owners addressed this new sense of class disparity with the notion that every diligent worker could be the boss of his own shop someday, that divisions between employers and employees were temporary and fluid: “We are all working men.” This viewpoint was promulgated in company literature well into the twentieth century.⁶

There was some truth to this narrative at this point in time; many skilled machinists did go on to open their own shops. But the fact remained that many of the tasks that went into mass-producing steel edge tools – like grinding and polishing – were repetitive and hazardous. Owners increasingly turned to recruiting metal workers from Great Britain and Germany to do these jobs. These workers

brought with them needed skills along with native traditions of trade unionism. They helped lead early walkouts at the Green River Works in 1843 and again in 1863 over wages. Both strikes failed when owners threatened to hire replacement workers and permanently bar strike leaders from future employment in town. A growing divide between the interests of labor and owners was now plain to see.⁷

By the end of the Civil War, Franklin County produced over half of the nation's cutlery and also led in machine building. In a preview of what would happen again a century later, the Russell family suddenly decided to close its Greenfield plant and move its operations across the river to Turners Falls. Within a few years the town lost its manufacturing base and was casting about for a replacement.

The Tap and Die Town of the Universe⁸

In 1872 a revolutionary new idea came to town. John Grant, an English-born machinist working in western Massachusetts, devised a tool for cutting screw threads into steel quickly, accurately and consistently. Up to this time blacksmiths used jamb plates to crush threads by force. Grant's patented tool cut threads using hardened steel and shot out the discarded material, called "chips", simultaneously – the so called "once over". His die could be adjusted to cut screw threads onto different sized bolts, pipes or rods. Taps were developed to cut matching threads into the inside walls of holes drilled into steel parts. Precisely calibrated taps and

dies made it possible to join prefabricated metal parts in assembling increasingly complex pieces of machinery.⁹

Grant chose Greenfield to develop his invention because of its workforce. The town hosted a large number of skilled machinists left behind when the cutleries closed. Still smarting from this experience, they persuaded Grant to use the opportunity created by this new technology to form the Co-operative Machine Company in order to finance and manage production themselves.¹⁰ Before it could get off the ground, two businessmen, including John Russell's nephew, took control of the patents on Grant's idea. They brought in additional investors and embarked on mass production of the new tools. It was back to business as usual.

By the end of the century several large competing plants in Greenfield made taps and dies for a national market. This niche market grew rapidly as the nation industrialized and made increasingly large and complex machines in ever growing numbers. Manufacturers paid top dollar for quality precision tools that drove every step of the production process.

Beyond Greenfield, the closing decades of the nineteenth century were marked by widespread, intensely bitter labor disputes. Violence marred epic labor actions across the country. Closer to home, workers in Springfield and Holyoke organized into national labor unions and struck large plants. Workers at Franklin County's cutleries did not organize but walked off the job one department at a time with little success.¹¹

Meanwhile “labor peace” reigned at the tap and die plants in town. There were no reported attempts to unionize or strike at this time. Two principle factors help account for this.

The owners of the Greenfield plants relied on skilled workers who turned out tools calibrated to tolerances of up to one thousandth of an inch day in and day out and paid them accordingly. These were among the highest paid workers in the industrialized world.¹² There is no row housing built for workers in Greenfield; most owned their homes and achieved a good quality of life for their families. A machinist who was dissatisfied with conditions in one shop could vote with his feet and find work at a competing shop in town.

Another reason workers did not organize was because many still felt they had more in common with their employers than with “outsiders” brought in to help form unions. Many of the owners started out as machinists and virtually all were born and raised in Franklin County. This was the era of “civic capitalism” when many owners felt allegiances to the communities that helped make their success possible. They donated generously to make improvements in town and formed paternal relations with their workers, offering housing opportunities and security in return for their loyalty.¹³

The status quo began to shift in 1912 when competing tap and die firms around town merged to form Greenfield Tap and Die (GTD). This was a forced merger brokered by local banker Frederick Payne with backing from Boston investors. “The Corporation”, as it called itself, was the first publicly traded business in town, and therefore made vulnerable to interference from outside investors. The

consolidation of tool shops in Greenfield marked the end of healthy competition that spurred innovation and benefited machinists.¹⁴

The merger seemed timed to coincide with exponential growth in the industry in the run-up to World War I. This was the first fully mechanized war that used the mass production of standardized interchangeable parts that relied on taps, dies and gages (highly accurate measuring devices) made in Greenfield. GTD exported up to half of what it manufactured and eagerly supplied both sides in the arms race in Europe.¹⁵ The relentless drive to ramp up production to meet demand triggered a 38-day walkout in several shops at GTD in 1916. Workers asked for an eight-hour-day, overtime pay and a say in how piecework rates were calculated. GTD responded by moving to hire replacement workers and the strike collapsed. Greenfield plants were no longer immune to labor troubles, but its workers were still a long way from organizing into unions.

The Spirit of Cooperation

In January 1921 the management at GTD wished its workers a Happy New Year in its handsomely bound monthly magazine, *The Helix*:

The Corporation has produced and shipped more in the Year 1920 than in any previous year, and this has been brought about through the spirit of cooperation and mutual interest existing between Company and workers.¹⁶

The magazine article went on to say the company wished to put recent “upheavals” behind it and return to “normal conditions” as soon as possible. The

post-war years were marked by levels of national labor unrest never seen before. Union membership doubled as one in five American workers walked off the job in 1919. Strikes and unions were forcibly broken up across the country as companies, with support from the federal government, invoked fear of the spread of Soviet Communism to the U.S. – the first “Red Scare”.

None of the troubles came to Greenfield, and wary managers wished to keep it that way. The biggest change that year was that Frederick Payne replaced F.O. Wells as President of GTD. Both were founding members of the company born and raised in town, but Wells was a machinist and Payne was a banker. Professional managers now ran the company with training in finance and limited appreciation for the trade Wells called the “backbone of the industry”.¹⁷

Peacetime sales at GTD remained strong as Americans bought automobiles and electrical appliances for the first time. The greatest potential disruptor to steady output was labor. This meant reducing turnover and absenteeism. It also meant discouraging workers from organizing and making demands on the company. GTD warned its employees of “irresponsible men” with designs to “sow seeds of discord” within the company.¹⁸ It also offered its workers a host of perks designed to win them over: insurance benefits, pension plans, training programs, hot meals on site, and a bevy of recreational programs.

The benefits of working at GTD were artfully presented in the pages of *The Helix*, staffed by professional writers and photographers. If workers had job-related grievances, they could bring them to their own “Associates of the Legislature” made up of elected co-workers, who passed them on to management. They didn’t need a

union; they had a “company union”. Management wished to convey that labor and capital were in harmony in Greenfield, working toward a shared prosperity based on their “mutual interests”.

GTD voluntarily shared some of its profits with its workers in the form of competitive pay rates and additional benefits in order to buy “labor peace”. The problem, from a worker’s perspective, was that these were one-sided concessions. What was given in this way could be taken away again – these were not contractual arrangements. The company union could dialogue with management but it had no bargaining power. The company was generous to an extent, but strictly on its own terms.

By 1929 GTD was generating sales of \$3.5 million annually; three years later that figure dropped to \$1 million. The Great Depression meant lay-offs and pay cuts for Greenfield workers. The insurance and pension plans they were given in the 1920s proved worthless in hard times. Employees were disillusioned that none of the wealth they helped create during good times was there for them now.

The downturn in the economy coincided with yet another change in management. Frederick Payne left GTD to serve as U.S. Assistant Secretary of War and was replaced as President by Donald Millar, a Wall Street banker with his primary residence in New York City.¹⁹ GTD was now owned and managed by an essentially invisible Board of Directors made up of outside investors.

The new management chose this time to apply a “scientific” approach to increasing efficiency in production. They hired outside contractors to conduct “time/motion studies” to calculate how much workers were paid for every

individual task they performed.²⁰ Men with stopwatches timed every step of the production process and used this data to set pay rates. Machinists in particular resented interference by “experts” with little to no knowledge of the trade; and that the process used to set the pay rates was opaque at best. This represented the ultimate intrusion into autonomy they had enjoyed on the job going back generations.²¹ In 1930, 50 men walked out of the Polishing Room after their piece-rates were revised downward, an effective pay cut. They won a five cent raise and returned to work – the first successful labor action at GTD.²²

Zero Hour

Greenfield workers made their way through the prolonged economic depression. In 1934, several shops at GTD formed an independent trade union with the company’s approval. It had limited bargaining power without the backing of a labor organization. National trade unions with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) made repeated overtures to persuade GTD workers to join them. The AFL unions were in competition with recently formed unions affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). All these advances were rebuffed by Franklin County workers still wary of outside interference in their affairs - until the company called for a new round of job evaluations to re-assess piece-rates in 1939. The next year several national organizations were invited to Greenfield to present what they offered in terms of representing GTD workers’ interests. In 1941, production workers at Plant #1 voted in one of the CIO unions 569-361. The following year

Plant #2, also in Greenfield, joined them along with the shipping, tool room and box shop departments; they were followed by the Threadwell plant, GTD's smaller competitor in town.²³

The election results surprised everyone.²⁴ Greenfield workers chose to join a national labor organization after 100 years and they opted for an upstart union. Union officials called it "the quietest election they had ever seen".²⁵ Management put up only token resistance to the process.²⁶ The *Greenfield Recorder* was taken up with Britain's valiant struggle for survival against Nazi aggression – its "Zero Hour" – and gave scant notice to this local development. Some decried outside interference by the "Worcester men" who helped organize the plants. In fact, the principle organizer was Edith Hammer from Springfield.²⁷ A third of this union's field organizers were women even though precision tool making was a male domain.

We are presented with three questions: Why did GTD workers unionize after so many years? Why did the company let them organize so easily? And why did they choose to join a young, untested union?

Greenfield is in the world but not of the world. It is perched upstream from all that it chooses to connect with. For many years the plants people worked in were founded, financed and run by people from town, forming a formidable barrier to unwanted interference from "outsiders". Workers developed loyalties to plant owners who contributed to the community and made efforts to reach out to them personally. Machinists in particular felt valued in the wages they were paid and the freedom of movement they were granted on the job. The bond between workers and

owners that kept organized labor at bay for so long broke down over time with each change in the way the company was organized and managed.

Also notable, was that after decades of actively resisting any effort to organize at GTD, the company quietly acquiesced in the 1940s. How do we account for this reversal? For one thing, the right to organize was now a legally protected activity following the Supreme Court's upholding of the Wagner Act in 1937.

Workers could no longer be fired or blacklisted for organizing their fellow workers. The federal government now stood behind the right to form unions and created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) as an enforcement agency.

Another principle factor was the coming of war. With Frederick Payne in the War Department, GTD was positioned to win important contracts as the nation shifted into armaments production. The federal government built a million dollar gage plant for the company in 1940, a year before it declared war. Annual sales at GTD went from a low of \$1 million in 1932, to \$22 million and rising in 1941; the company was overwhelmed with orders into the foreseeable future. In that moment it wanted a reliable workforce to fulfill its production quotas. Perhaps allowing its workers to organize under these circumstances was seen as another move toward improving efficiency at the plants.

We Are the Ones Who Will Run Our UE Union²⁸

Greenfield workers chose to organize with the new union over its more established rivals for a number of reasons. The first was familiarity. The United

Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE) won its first major contract at the Westinghouse Refrigerator plant in West Springfield in 1936.²⁹ Many key figures in the union had roots in Massachusetts. Greenfield workers were naturally drawn to an organization with local ties at a time the company they worked for felt increasingly foreign to them.

It helped that most of the union's founders were machinists. A pattern maker and a turbine inspector from the General Electric (GE) plant in Lynn, a tool and dye maker from GE Schenectady and a machinist from downstate New York formed the UE in 1936. They were joined by a young organizer focused on bringing in radio assembly workers.³⁰ As machinists they advocated for greater freedom of movement on the shop floor and for limiting the effects of "time-study men" in the workplace.

GTD workers also appreciated the lessons of history. They witnessed small craft unions organized separately within large companies crushed in the early 1920s. Highly paid machinists therefore chose to ally themselves with their lower paid co-workers in the same plants partly as a tactical response. Instead of one or two shops walking out and failing (like at GTD in 1916), the whole plant could be shut down, stopping production. This approach, called "industrial unionism", was applied at GTD whereby every worker, regardless of pay grade, had equal standing as a union member ("one person/one vote"). Everyone in the plants eventually belonged to the union except for management, sales, engineering and office workers.

The AFL was not interested in organizing whole plants. It stood by the time-tested model of smaller, voluntary craft unions organized by trade within larger

factories. It refused to charter the UE over this issue and so the upstart union affiliated with the CIO instead, the first union to join. The UE's primary goal was to organize the "Big Three" electrical companies: GE, Westinghouse and RCA. A group of machinists running their own union with an annual budget of \$30,000 took on GE with annual sales of \$2.3 billion. The UE counted 15,000 dues-paying members working in six plants in 1936. Ten years later it had 600,000 members spread across 1200 plants and negotiated national contracts with the Big Three.³¹ It also dominated the machine tool industry in the Northeast; its growth in New England at this time was called "abnormal".³²

How do we account for this level of success in the region, and in particular in Greenfield plants that had never organized before? After industrial unionism, the second guiding principle at the UE was "rank and file" unionism. GTD workers elected their own officers at Local 274 in Greenfield. They elected stewards of their individual shops who represented grievances to management. Negotiators were elected from the membership; lawyers and union organizers could advise them, but workers essentially negotiated their own contracts. Contracts were ratified by secret ballot and the decision to strike was also made this way. Members were chosen to represent the Local at the UE's annual convention where national officers were elected.³³

The UE was structured to promote local autonomy and participatory democracy – very much the way towns are governed in New England Town Meetings. This promoted a sense of ownership in the members of Local 274 – they did not await orders from the national office. Corrupt practices were almost

impossible to conceal, the structure was too localized and too transparent for that. No one ever charged the UE leadership with corruption; other sets of charges awaited them instead.

And finally, these were practical Yankees: what did they get for their union dues? They got better contracts bargaining collectively than they could as individuals. This meant improved wages, benefits and time off. The highly complex matter of evaluating jobs to calculate piece-rate pay was overseen by the union, fostering a sense of accountability and fairness missing before. Shop stewards were effective in settling disputes where and when they happened, stopping little problems from turning into much bigger ones. And most importantly, making taps and dies involved heat, the use of caustic chemicals, and razor-sharp cutters moving at high speeds. This was hazardous work that called for protections overseen by the workers themselves.³⁴

The Largest Nut to Crack³⁵

The U.S. industrial response to World War II was unprecedented. GTD was a linchpin in America's "Arsenal of Democracy"; its tools made mass production using interchangeable parts possible. Extra workers were drawn in from around the region to fill additional shifts, including many women who stepped in for draftees. GTD workers were awarded five of the highly coveted "E for Excellence" awards for exceptional contributions made to the war effort.

Unlike the 1920s, a genuine “Spirit of Cooperation” prevailed between management and its newly organized workforce. Nearly everyone had loved ones in harm’s way and wanted to “get the job done”. The federal government also regulated war production to prevent work disruptions in the plants. The War Labor Board enacted a wage freeze and a pledge not to strike during the war years. The UE accepted these restrictions and focused instead on organizing more workers and improving their benefits.

Victory abroad was followed immediately by a monumental power struggle at home. U.S. corporations made the machines that won the war and generated roughly \$117 billion in profits for their efforts. Unions, no longer restricted by wartime labor provisions, demanded their fair share in the form of wage increases to offset rising consumer prices.³⁶ Employers insisted that raising wages would fuel inflation. Labor countered that inflation was driven by excessive corporate profit taking and demanded companies “open the books” to prove their case.³⁷ Across the nation 200,000 UE workers went on strike along with 800,000 steelworkers and 300,000 autoworkers – the closest thing to a national strike in U.S. history.

Powerful companies struck back on the picket lines and in the political arena. In 1946 the Republican Party took control of Congress and seated two new senators: Richard Nixon and Joseph McCarthy. Charles Wilson, Chairman of GE, offered this assessment of the situation: “The problems of the U.S. can be summed up in two words: Russia abroad and labor at home.”³⁸

The following year Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act that linked these two issues to devastating effect. Most provisions in the law were aimed at limiting

unions' abilities to organize and engage in direct actions. The last provision required all union leaders to file sworn oaths with the federal government annually that they did not support the Communist Party or any organization that looked to "overthrow the U.S. government by force". The penalty for non-compliance was five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. Union leaders who refused to take the oaths were also barred from participating in labor negotiations or elections involving federal oversight.

Labor leaders initially resisted the new law calling it a rehash of the Red Scare used to break up unions in the 1920s and an unconstitutional assault on free speech. By 1948 the vast majority knuckled under and took the pledges with the exception of the UE and a handful of smaller unions. CIO President Philip Murray singled out the third largest union in his organization: "We can no longer tolerate the Communist Party masquerading as a labor union." He later asserted: "Left-wing unions will cause the destruction of democratic trade unions".³⁹

This does not square with what we know about Local 274 in Greenfield that was democratically run to a fault. Had GTD workers unwittingly affiliated with an organization run by radical subversives? It turns out the third guiding principle at the UE after industrial and rank and file unionism was militant unionism. This meant a willingness to engage in direct, legally sanctioned actions in order to secure strong contracts for workers it represented. It also pointed to active engagement in the larger political sphere. Issues of vital importance to Greenfield workers were directly impacted by decisions made in Washington, therefore a national union must advocate for its workers in the national arena.⁴⁰

Politics was rarely discussed at Local 274;⁴¹ not so at the UE's national conventions held every summer. Domestic and foreign policy issues were brought before the membership here. At the 1947 convention held in Boston, UE officers demanded that "Wall Street be driven out of Washington"; and they declared "democracy should begin at home before we try to spread it abroad".⁴² This referred to the coercive use of loyalty oaths at home while Truman pursued an aggressive policy of regime change in Greece (the birthplace of democracy). The UE was labeled a "left-wing union" for the political positions it took and for its refusal to take the loyalty oaths.

A split between "left-wing" and "right-wing" factions within the UE came to a head at the Boston convention. More than half the members supported the union's position on loyalty oaths and its outspoken policy pronouncements. Another faction called on the leadership to take the oaths and tone down its positions on policy matters. The left-wing faction prevailed but the right-wing faction saw to it that the entire union was expelled from the CIO. The UE was the first and largest of eleven unions forced out by the CIO totaling over a million workers, or twenty percent of its membership. A new CIO-sponsored union was formed to replace the UE wherever possible: the International United Electrical Workers Union (IUE). James Carey, one of the original founders of the UE and now President of the IUE, began this effort by dispatching telegrams to management at plants represented by the UE calling for elections to choose between the two unions.⁴³

We Have a Serious Problem⁴⁴

As usual, the political firestorms that filled national headlines had little to do with daily life in Greenfield. Local 274 faced off against GTD in the postwar years over wages and went so far as to authorize a strike before reaching a compromise settlement in negotiations. Orders dropped off and many of those hired during the war were let go and subsequently replaced by men returning from the service – the same men who helped organize the union in 1941. The UE was firmly established at GTD; it won hard-fought gains in wages and benefits in contract negotiations with management that were generally amicable.

Contract talks were well under way in the fall of 1949 when a telegram arrived for GTD President Donald Millar from James Carey. In it the IUE President insisted that GTD break off negotiations with Local 274 and deny recognition of the UE because it was no longer affiliated with the CIO and because its leadership refused to take the loyalty oaths. Millar responded by not withholding union dues from paychecks until an election was held to decide which of the rival unions should represent GTD workers. Greenfield was suddenly thrust into the national limelight as one of the first major tests of the fledgling IUE's ability to dislodge the UE.⁴⁵

By this time the heat was turned way up on the UE over its alleged ties to the Communist Party. It began in 1947 when Senator Nixon summoned four UE leaders to Congress for aggressive questioning. The following year Carey went to the Hill and swore under oath that the union was controlled by Communists. In 1949 Senator McCarthy held House of Un-American Activities (HUAC) hearings in Boston and subpoenaed UE leadership from the GE plant in Lynn to appear. The McCarthy-

era witch-hunts began with a focus on labor unions, and the first union they set their sites on was the UE.

Almost overnight the town was embroiled in a civil war, pitting union brothers and sisters against one another. Alfred Lambert, one of the original organizers at GTD, was spotted handing out IUE leaflets and was replaced by Daniel Nadeau as Local 274 President. The membership was evenly split over which union to support. IUE supporters spoke solely to the issue of Communist infiltration, which implied subversive and even treasonous behavior by UE leaders. They cited government sources and “outstanding magazines” as evidence.⁴⁶ The IUE targeted families with Eastern European ancestry who strongly resented Soviet occupation there.⁴⁷ Priests in eight Catholic churches throughout Franklin County openly instructed their congregations to vote in the IUE.⁴⁸ Greenfield workers were divided by political beliefs, nationality and creed as never before.⁴⁹

The leadership at Local 274 closed ranks behind its beleaguered union. Shop Stewards met immediately and voted unanimously to support the UE stating: “Union is not communist, been good... management [will] use [this] opportunity to put contract negotiations on ice.”⁵⁰ UE supporters implored members to keep their eyes on the ball and not be distracted by what they heard from outside agitators or by what they read in *Reader's Digest*. They warned that Millar's promises to maintain past contract gains with a new union “were not worth the paper they were written on”.⁵¹ They pointed to what members had and what they stood to lose and said a divided union would only benefit the bosses.

Newspapers and radio waves were filled with ads supporting both sides. The IUE came up with a publicity stunt offering \$100 to charity if Local 274 Field Organizer Hugh Harley took a loyalty oath with Greenfield's Town Clerk. UE President Albert Fitzgerald spoke before 200 assembled at the Order of Odd Fellows on December 14: "As soon as you band together in a union you are termed a radical, a trouble-maker, a red or a Communist."⁵² He implored members not to fall prey to smear campaigns coming at them from all sides.

On December 21 workers got to choose in an election closely monitored by the federal government. Not a single untoward incident was reported that day.⁵³ As expected, the results were very close: 357 voted for the IUE and 347 voted for the UE. Since this result did not represent a clear majority, and nine ballots were declared invalid, a run-off election was scheduled for January 24. Once again polling stations were set up around the plants where secret ballots were cast, this time with surprising results. The UE won this election decisively 396-332 in one of the first tests of its durability after being expelled from the CIO. Contract negotiations were scheduled to resume the following week.

A year later workers at Threadwell, the other tap and dye maker in town, voted 54-36 to rejoin the UE. They brought in the union in 1942 but were voted out in 1946 while most of the principle organizers were still in uniform. In the run-up to the vote in 1950, managers put loudspeakers in every room of the factory to broadcast the UE's ties to international Communism. Threadwell workers issued this response:

We are loyal American workers and we are not tied up and will

never be tied up with 'sabotage' or enemies of the USA. So far as we are concerned, no one in the UE has ever been shown to be guilty of sabotage or acts against our country. The name calling and red smear against UE by yourselves and other unions does not impress us. We are grown men and we are the ones who will run our UE union – no one else.⁵⁴

At Sword's Point

And so we return to the huddle of GTD workers pictured under the marquee of the Garden Theater on that chilly April morning in 1952. They had been leafleted at the plant the day before to appear at a Mass Meeting to "be completely sure that the members are ready to strike under the present circumstances".⁵⁵ The membership voted to authorize a walkout in February, the third such authorization since 1948, if negotiations failed to yield results. Every shop at GTD voted individually and Stewards took these results to the Executive Council that decided to set a date for a plant-wide shutdown.

The biggest issue separating labor and management was pay. The Korean War was a tremendous boon to business at GTD – net earnings increased four-fold in the space of two years and the company paid out substantial stock dividends.⁵⁶ Workers were aware of the value of what they were producing and what others were paid in comparable shops across the region and the nation.⁵⁷ The union asked for a twelve-cent raise, the company countered with an eight-cent offer, and the two sides deadlocked over the difference.

The recent attempt to oust the union weighed on voting members along with the knowledge that this would be the first organized strike at GTD and only the

second in town history. In 1951, just months after Threadwell workers voted the UE back in, 110 walked off the job for four weeks, stopping production. They won back most of what they lost after the union was voted out in 1946.

After three hours of speeches, over a thousand members were called alphabetically to the front of the theater to cast secret ballots. The results stunned everyone; they voted by a two to one margin not to strike. This vote represented the ultimate expression of rank-and-file unionism – the workers themselves got the last word in making important decisions that directly affected them.⁵⁸ The *Recorder* editorialized that Local 274 officers were “left on a limb” and then “confounded their critics by allowing an immediate and honest expression of opinion by membership”.⁵⁹

The year 1953 was no less eventful. It started off peacefully with a series of amicable meetings between GTD and Local representatives concerning contract issues.⁶⁰ Both sides participated in planning a giant 200th birthday celebration for the Town of Greenfield in June followed by thoughts of well-earned summer holidays. And then it started:

On August 17, 1953 we all came back from our vacations. Inside and outside the GTD plants there had not even been a whisper of any problems in our Union. Then, all of a sudden, an uproar broke loose in Greenfield. Red, communist, liar, cheat, sell-out Company union, affidavits, oaths, grand juries, jails and a thousand other wild words started flying around town like hailstones. In the newspapers, in ads, on the radio, in leaflets, we have been blasted from morning to night.⁶¹

Just as Local 274 was gearing up to re-negotiate its contract with GTD due to expire in November, the IUE launched another raid. Work inside the plants carried on as IUE organizers leafleted workers at the gates to the plants and in their homes. The IUE got thirty percent of workers to sign cards and won the right to call an

election to choose between the rival unions. The UE called for a quick election so it could get on with contract negotiations. By law the UE could not appear on the ballot as punishment for not signing the mandated loyalty oaths. GTD workers had to mark their ballots for the UE with “no union”. In yet another stunning upset, they voted to stay with the UE by a three to one margin. GTD would remain a UE shop from that time forward.

On November 10 contract negotiations picked up again as if nothing happened. Sixteen GTD workers headed by Local President Daniel Nadeau sat across the table from nine members of GTD top brass headed by President Millar. No lawyers or mediators were present outside Hugh Harley. Nadeau called the company’s proposal that day “the most inadequate ever presented”.⁶² Again, they were stuck on wages: “The Company refused to change one comma of their cheap offer. They refused to improve their package by 1/16th of a cent.”⁶³

Another issue that divided the two sides was health insurance. President Truman tried and failed to enact national health insurance and so Americans were left to settle for employment-based coverage. Employees at GTD read the fine print on their Liberty Mutual plans and were outraged.⁶⁴ The fact that Millar sat on an “advisory board” to the insurance company left a bad taste in people’s mouths.⁶⁵ The UE demanded that GTD switch to Blue Cross in order to provide adequate coverage for its workers.

The mood shifted from a year ago when workers pulled back from striking at the last minute. On November 18 they voted to authorize a strike 752-280 effective two days later if no concessions were forthcoming. On the morning of November 20

they gathered at the Garden Theater for a planning session instead of going to work. They started by organizing into committees made up of workers and their families: a finance committee raised funds mainly from other UE Locals and outside unions; a welfare committee disbursed those funds to families in need and encouraged local businesses to ease credit terms for the duration of the strike and to donate goods and services; a publicity committee got the union's message into the community; an entertainment committee helped maintain morale; and a picket-line committee coordinated the logistics behind maintaining a permanent presence at the plants.

This was a total plant-wide shutdown – 1,250 production and maintenance workers walked off the job leaving a skeleton crew of foremen and office workers to keep an eye on things. Machinists greased their tools to prevent rusting in anticipation of the strike. All five GTD plants were picketed 24 hours a day in four hour shifts. Two nearby homes were converted to soup kitchens to sustain cold and hungry picketers.⁶⁶ Hugh Harley called for “orderly conduct on the line” and there were no reports of disturbances. Picket duty was a requirement for receiving assistance from the Local.⁶⁷

The two sides returned to the table on December 2. This time GTD was prepared to make pay concessions and to switch to the Blue Cross plan. The first organized strike at GTD lasted eleven days. A UE newsletter noted in hindsight: “It took the 1953 strike to teach GTD proper respect for the membership of UE Local 274.”⁶⁸

The Dirty Decade

The UE persevered at GTD in one of the first test cases of its staying power, but this was just the beginning of a sustained assault against the union that stretched across what supporters called “The Dirty Decade”.⁶⁹ The union’s detractors soon discovered that worker loyalty to the UE ran deep; members experienced a sense of ownership in an organization that was well-run, honest and produced strong contracts. It would take considerable effort to dislodge the UE, but by the end of the decade its opponents largely succeeded.

Most of those efforts had little effect in Greenfield, with the exception of what happened at GE’s flagship plant in Schenectady, NY. In February 1954 Sen. McCarthy scheduled a series of HUAC hearings in Albany. He subpoenaed several UE organizers from the GE plant in the neighboring city to appear. Those summoned could not bring lawyers, call witnesses on their own behalf, or challenge hearsay testimony from anonymous informants. Most refused to answer McCarthy’s questions, invoking the Fifth Amendment; they were cited in contempt of Congress and fired from GE. More importantly, the hearings were part of a coordinated effort to cast a cloud over the UE and then immediately call for an election to replace it with a “real American Trade Union”. The plan worked and the UE was voted out of GE’s largest plant with its almost 20,000 workers.

To make matters worse, one of the organizers called before the committee chose to cooperate and “confess” to his own left-wing political affiliations. The price he paid for being spared contempt charges was to name others in the UE as Communists. He decided to name several UE organizers in western Massachusetts

including Hugh Harley.⁷⁰ This was a one-two punch that sent shudders through Local 274. The Greenfield Gas Light Company, also a UE shop, immediately called for an election.⁷¹ The *Recorder* editorialized that GTD workers should “prepare to abandon ship”.⁷²

Legal pressure on the UE continued unabated. In 1955 a Massachusetts commission declared that UE organizers in the state should be required to pass loyalty tests. Nadeau called this “a lot of bull”.⁷³ That same year U.S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell called on UE members to “clean their organization of communist dictators”.⁷⁴ Two top elected leaders in the union refused to testify before HUAC in 1949. They fought contempt charges all the way to the Supreme Court and won. One faced imprisonment and the other forced deportation for most of the 1950s.⁷⁵

It’s fair to ask: were there Communists in the UE? This is a complex issue that goes beyond the scope of our look at Greenfield, but the short answer is: yes, some, but what of it? The leadership of the union was primarily drawn from European-born trade unionists with traditional ties to labor parties; and from Americans influenced by what happened to unions in the early 1920s and by the effects of the Depression. Many were drawn “left-wing” organizations because of their active opposition to the growing threat of international fascism in the 1930s.⁷⁶ Together they formed a core of idealistic, incorruptible and highly effective organizers at the UE. They dedicated themselves to representing the interests of workers in their Locals and over time increasingly left their politics behind.⁷⁷

More importantly, despite the ruthless investigations aimed at the UE, no “smoking gun” was ever produced that indicated disloyal behavior within the union. There is no evidence of paid foreign agents or any action that compromised U.S. preparedness before, during or after World War II.⁷⁸ At this point this becomes a “free speech” issue – according to the First Amendment, citizens should not be persecuted for expressing their political views, no matter how unpopular.

Joseph McCarthy has been judged harshly by history: his committees dispensed with constitutional protections and harmed countless innocents. He also began the process of dismantling the trade union movement in America. It’s hard to look at the Red Scare as anything other than a deliberate attempt by ownership, writ large, to divide and weaken the voice of labor.

It’s worth noting that the “radical” positions taken by the UE have stood the test of time. The union was the first to fight for “equal pay for equal work” for women in the 1940s; and the first to support black civil rights in the early 1950s. Most remarkably, it was a “voice in the wilderness” in opposing U.S. military engagement in Vietnam in 1964. The left lost a strong voice as the UE’s influence diminished, tilting the balance of our national political discourse.⁷⁹

The combination of forces arrayed against the union was overwhelming. The corporations that opposed it were among the most powerful in the world. It was targeted by Congress (HUAC) with cooperation from the FBI. The Atomic Energy Commission and the Defense Department denied security clearances to UE members working under government contracts. This was a bi-partisan issue; “liberals” like Sen. John Kennedy supported this policy.⁸⁰ After the CIO expelled the

UE, it merged with the AFL and Big Labor presented a united front against renegade “left-wing” unions. The mainstream media from the *Saturday Evening Post* to *Time* and virtually every major news outlet in between took a hard line against what it labeled the “Red Fortress”. The American Legion called on members to vote out the UE⁸¹ and Cardinal Spellman, the most influential Catholic leader in America, instructed parishioners to oust “Christ-hating Communists” from their unions.

Not surprisingly, all this took a tremendous toll on the union. At its peak in 1945 the UE had upwards of 600,000 dues-paying members; by 1960 that figure sank to 58,000. All the major plants in greater Springfield voted out the UE including Westinghouse where it all started. The IUE boasted that the UE was “cleaned out of Fitchburg” with Lynn to follow. In 1954 Pittsfield GE voted in the IUE by over a two to one margin.

Franklin County workers took a different path. They were the first to stand by the union when it came under attack and they stayed the course through the darkest days of the McCarthy era. The workers at GTD, the region’s largest employer, never wavered after that initial challenge. The same can be said for Threadwell. Greenfield Gas and Light soon re-considered after the scare in Schenectady and pledged with the UE again. In 1954 Mayhew Steel, a small precision tool maker outside Greenfield, voted in the UE 27-2. A meeting sponsored by the IUE to enlist Mayhew workers was cancelled when only three people showed up.⁸² They were followed by Lamson and Goodnow, one of the nation’s oldest cutlery makers. In 1966 Millers Falls Tools, the county’s second largest employer, voted to affiliate with the UE. Greater Greenfield was now a “one union town” in a larger

landscape almost wholly purged of militant, democratic trade union representation in the workplace.

Closing Reflections: Our American Standard of Living

We are left to ponder this puzzle: How did a solidly Republican, “conservative” rural county become the last bastion of America’s most “radical” labor union?⁸³ What do these labels mean? Did conserving traditional values look like a “radical” notion in the post-war era? Or were ideas that were considered revolutionary in 1776 just as revolutionary in 1946?

Greenfield workers stood by the UE for a number of reasons. They placed a high premium on loyalty. As GTD became more foreign to them they transferred their loyalty to a union with roots in the region and in the trade. The same fierce sense of loyalty that kept unions out of town now worked to keep out the IUE. The same sense of detachment from what the rest of the country was thinking and doing created a healthy skepticism toward mainstream media campaigns.⁸⁴ If anything the heavy-handed red baiting seemed to backfire in Greenfield – the more aggressive it got the more they pushed back. Many resented accusations that they were played for uneducated dupes by underhanded subversives.⁸⁵ And lastly, the union worked for them: “You see, we Greenfield workers are pretty stubborn people. When we have something good we hold on to it.”⁸⁶ These words could have been spoken in 1774 following the passage of the Intolerable Acts.⁸⁷

It appears that the values held by Greenfield workers remained the same while the values held by the company changed. From beginning to end the workers wanted to be treated with respect for everything they brought to the job. They wanted to be compensated fairly according to the value they added to the company. They had pride in workmanship. They believed in the democratic process and thought it should be extended to the workplace. And they were rooted in Greenfield and felt that everyone who lived here should find a way to give back to the community.

To trace changes in management at GTD is to survey most of the important trends in the American workplace over two centuries. For many years relations between workers and owners were relatively harmonious. Over time GTD made a series of tradeoffs in which something was gained and something was lost – almost always at workers’ expense. It eliminated competition and sold stock to centralize and capitalize production in order to meet growing demand. In doing so workers lost the freedom to move among shops and the local founders of the company lost control of management. The professional managers who took over at GTD traded their workers’ freedom to innovate on the job for notions of increased “efficiency” in production. Eventually workers lost faith in their managers and organized in order to protect what was left to them.

During a brief lull in a season of union raids and strike votes, Greenfield celebrated its 200th birthday with six days of tournaments, parades and barbeques. The town commemorated its role in the American Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and the machine tool industry. Local 274 took out a full page

in the *Greenfield Recorder* addressed to “The People of Greenfield”. It reminded them that by setting the standard for wages and benefits at GTD they were promoting the “good and welfare... of the entire community”. By doing so they were making “improvements in our American Standard of Living”.⁸⁸

Perhaps this was the UE’s “radical agenda” in Greenfield. By organizing into a union that could negotiate with management on a level playing field, workers maintained a balance of power between labor and capital. That is between the people who made the taps, dies and gages and the people who oversaw financing, marketing and engineering. This balance was good for workers and their families, it was good for Greenfield, and it was arguably good for the company’s bottom line.⁸⁹ It fostered a “sharing economy” based on shared values rooted in tradition.

The “conservative” editors at the *Recorder* agreed. They said Greenfield was an “ideal spot” precisely because “a sense of mutual responsibility between employer and employee” prevailed here. This implied a sense of mutual respect and that both sides were dipping their oars for the common good. The editors closed with a warning that resonates with lived history between then and now: “It cannot continue if any class is deprived of fair treatment. Unless a proper balance is maintained, our only path is downward.”⁹⁰

1A phrase used by owners to describe their relationships with their workers; or to perpetuate the illusion that they lived in a classless society. John Cumbler, *A Social History of Economic Decline* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989)

2Paul Jenkins, *The Conservative Rebel* (Published by the Town of Greenfield, 1982) p. 33.

3Ibid, p.50

4Early machine workers were likened to “honeybees of technology, moving freely from shop to shop, absorbing ideas and passing them along to others”. Tim Blagg, *Machine Valley: The Connecticut Valley and Its Role in the Development of Industrial Manufacture in the U.S.* (Skidmore College UWW Thesis, 1992).

5“Here today, gone tomorrow; working with desperate energy for a year or so and then away; to the West, to business, to farms, to professions, to scatter the length and breadth of the land.” Jenkins, *The Conservative Rebel*, p. 80.

6“‘This small group of original employees of the Wiley and Russell plant is striking evidence of what did and can happen in a country where free enterprise, capital, and a native desire to get ahead exists.’” *Greenfield 1872-1943*, pamphlet produced by the Greenfield Tap and Die Corporation, Greenfield, MA, 1943.

7Jenkins, *The Conservative Rebel*, p. 83.

8This is what Greenfield called itself since it produced more taps and dies than the rest of the world combined. Orra L. Stone, *History of Massachusetts Industries* (Boston: The S.J. Clark Publishing Company, 1930)

9*Facts About Taps and Tapping*, pamphlet produced by the Greenfield Tap and Die Corporation, Greenfield, MA, 1943.

10The town newspaper strongly endorsed this experiment: “When industrious mechanics form a co-operative association for the purpose of placing the fruits of their skill and labor in the market without the aid of capitalist and employer, they do more for the cause of working men than all the ‘Unions’ and ‘strikes’ in the world, and will receive the hearty support of the public”. *Greenfield Gazette and Courier*, April 1871. Found in Jenkins, *The Conservative Rebel*, p.134.

11Jenkins, *The Conservative Rebel*, p. 143.

12One magazine article staked the claim that Greenfield workers were the highest paid in the state; that Massachusetts paid the highest wages in the nation; and that the U.S. paid the highest wages in the world. *Western New England*, July 1912. Found at the Museum of Our Industrial Heritage (MOIH) archives.

13Cumbler, *A Social History of Economic Decline*, p.5.

14F.O. Wells, the first President of GTD, encouraged machinists working in his shop to branch out and start their own small businesses to pursue their ideas with the understanding that he would likely reabsorb the startups at some point.

15GTD produced metric taps and dies to French and German Standards, found in a GTD tool catalogue from the period. It circumvented a U.S. embargo on exported goods to Germany in 1916 by supplying them through mutual trading partners in South America. Jenkins, *The Conservative Rebel*, p.189.

16This was one of the first issues of a monthly magazine published by management for the “benefit” of its workers. Found at the MOIH archives.

17Taken from *The Helix*, January 1921. The quote captions a profile of a lifelong GTD machinist named John Clancy who ended his schooling at age eleven but used skills he learned on the job to increase output on his machine sixteen-fold times.

18*The Helix*, January 1921.

19He stayed in a suite at the Weldon Hotel Monday through Thursday and returned to his family in Manhattan on weekends.

20 Many machinists were faced with a choice: to work at a human pace or to earn a living wage. Ronald Schatz, *The Electrical Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983)

21 As late as the 1930s some workers enjoyed “machine seniority” where only they could work at that machine and they possessed proprietary knowledge about that machine passed down to them by the previous operators. Wayne Broehl, *Precision Valley: Machine Tool Companies of Springfield Vermont* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1959).

22 Jenkins, *The Conservative Rebel*, p.213.

23 Charles Severance, *History of Greenfield 1930-1953* (Town of Greenfield, 1954) p.2106

24 “A number remembered the election of 1942 when it was thought that the independent shop union [AFL] would easily defeat the CIO.” *Springfield Republican* January 24, 1950.

25 Albert J. Lambert, one of the principle organizers at GTD was quoted in the *Greenfield Recorder* on September 18, 1941.

26 “All in all, it seemed like they [GTD] were really glad to see the union come in. I couldn’t figure it out.” GTD worker James Wooster quoted in Jenkins, *The Conservative Rebel*, p.215.

27 Ibid, p.214

28 Written statement by Threadwell workers quoted in the *Greenfield Recorder*, April 12, 1951.

29 The UE organizer there ran for mayor of Springfield in 1936 with the United Labor Party. He took a pledge to “always give preference to local products in [City] purchases, provided prices and labor conditions are up to our local standards”. Robert Forrant, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* (Cambridge Journal of Economics, No. 24, 2000).

30 Schatz, *The Electrical Workers*, p.65.

31 Enormous corporations like GE and Westinghouse could simply shift production from one plant to another to avoid meeting workers demands. The UE therefore negotiated national contracts that applied to all the plants those companies owned. Ronald Filippelli, Mark McCullough, *Cold War in the Working Class* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995).

32 James Matles, *Them and Us: Struggles in a Rank and File Union* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1974) p.73.

33 *UE Aims and Structures*, booklet prepared by UE Education. National Officers were elected annually and their salaries could not exceed the base pay of the highest paid worker in the union. One of those officers, James Matles, Director of Organization, said, “Your officers and your organizers should feel *like* the members and not *for* the members.” Matles, *Them and Us*, p.11.

34 The day-to-day work at Local 274 is seen in meeting minutes from the period found in the Local’s current office. Shop Stewards served a vital function – “the first line of defense”. They were effective in dealing with abusive or incompetent Shop Foremen who really controlled workers’ daily lives. The Local spent a lot of time settling job evaluation and time study disputes in meetings with management.

35 This was the headline for a 1949 *New York Times* article on the UE. It described the CIO’s third largest union as “a strong and well-disciplined organization”. Filippelli, *Cold War in the Working Class*, p.2.

36 According to Matles, U.S. corporate profits 1940-45 totaled \$117 billion and in 1946 the cost of living went up 45% and wages went up 15%. Matles, *Them and Us*, p.154.

37 Schatz, *The Electrical Workers*, p.156.

38 Taken from *Seventy Years of Struggle*, published by the UE, p.6.

39 Schatz, *The Electrical Workers*, p.185. When the law was first passed Murray called it: “The first step toward fascism in America.” *Greenfield Recorder* December 13, 1949. Walter Reuther concurred: “Let us all be careful that we do not play the bosses’ game by falling for the Red Scare. No union man worthy of that name will play the bosses’ game.” Matles, *Them and Us*, p.118. One year later, they and 81,000 other union officers had taken the oath.

40“There is a difference between political action and playing politics. When we fought the politicians and we won the legislation we did, we didn’t play politics; we engaged in political action. We didn’t rub bellies with politicians. There was plenty of air between us.” James Matles, *The Role of Labor Today*, printed by the UE in 1975.

41“I sat for months at a time on UE contract negotiations with officials of GTD I never heard a single word about Communism or anti-Communism.” Letter printed in the *Recorder* on September 11, 1953.

42Associated Press coverage of the UE Convention held in Boston in September 1947 was carried in the *Greenfield Recorder* on September 22, 1947. Former Vice-President Henry Wallace addressed a convention that was highly critical of Truman’s foreign policy.

43James Carey was the only one of the founders of the UE who was not a machinist by trade. He began his career as a full-time organizer at a young age focused on radio assembly workers.

44Taken from the minutes of an emergency Executive Council meeting at Local 274.

45*Recorder*, December 21, 1949.

46*Recorder*, Letter to the Editor, October 23, 1953. One article was noted in particular, “Red Pipeline in our Defense Plants”, published in the *Saturday Evening Post* on March 1, 1947 and reprinted in *Reader’s Digest*. It called UE Local 301 in Schenectady “a soviet in microcosm, it has a politburo to decide policy....”

47“‘The Polish remember what happened to Poland. The Czechs....” *Recorder* Letter October 23, 1953.

48“Good labor men were urged to vote ‘right’ in the election to protect their families, home and country.” *Recorder*, January 24, 1950.

49The Preamble to the UE Constitution states its intention to unite all workers “regardless of craft, age, sex, nationality, race, creed or political beliefs”.

50Minutes of Local 274 Shop Stewards meeting.

51*Recorder*, December 1, 1949.

52*Recorder*, December 14, 1949.

53There was no violence reported in Greenfield, unlike union elections in Lynn and Schenectady, NY. “UE local stewards used neither threats or pressure... the UE members don’t bother the people who are working for the IUE.” GTD Chief Steward writing in the *Recorder* on September 30, 1953. I spoke to a man who knew people in the UE in Greenfield at that time. He said the atmosphere was extremely tense and that threats were made.

54An open letter to management at Threadwell signed by 65 workers published in the *Recorder* on April 12, 1951.

55*Recorder*, April 10, 1952.

56Dividends Per Common Share almost doubled from 1949 to 1951. *Recorder*, February 3, 1952.

57GTD workers took pride in their product. They called GTD “one of the finest machine shops in country”. Arbitration Meeting minutes, July 15, 1953.

58It also speaks to the rights of people with minority opinions at Local 274. An anonymous visitor to the editors at the *Recorder* claimed: “Few members dare to speak in union meetings. The conservative element is howled down.” *Recorder*, April 4, 1952.

59*Recorder*, April 10, 1952.

60GTD President Donald Millar spoke of the “pleasant association with Union” during negotiations. Executive Board Meeting minutes, June 2, 1949.

61Letter to *Recorder*, October 31, 1953.

62Contract Negotiations with GTD minutes, November 10, 1953.

63Local 274 accused GTD of adopting GE’s “take it or leave it” negotiating stance. They would put their offer on the table and walk away. *Recorder*, November 20, 1953.

64The plan covered the cost of surgery but did not include the cost of anesthesia.

65Contract Negotiations with GTD minutes, December 2, 1953.

66*Recorder*, November 21, 1953.

67“Everyone must maintain orderly conduct on lines. No drunkenness, roughstuff etc.” Mass Meeting After Call in Strike minutes, November 20, 1953.

68UE Local 274 News, April 20, 1961.

69James Matles and others used this term to describe the 1950s, a time when the UE was under constant assault.

70Harley, who lived outside Brattleboro, said later: “I’m up in Vermont most of the time and I don’t think I’m any great threat to the Commonwealth.” *Recorder*, August 4, 1955.

71“When they talked Communist about Matles, Emspak and Fitzgerald it wasn’t too bad, but last week they hit too close to home.” Greenfield Gas Chief Steward quoted in the *Recorder* on April 14, 1954.

72“UE has been good to the local workers but its days are numbered. Loyalty must not be carried to dangerous extremes.” *Recorder*, July 6, 1954. The labor writer for the *Springfield Union* predicted the UE’s “demise” within two years. August 21, 1953 Not only the IUE, but other CIO and AFL unions aggressively raided UE shops throughout this period of vulnerability.

73*Recorder*, October 11, 1955.

74*Recorder*, December 21, 1955.

75James Matles, Director of Organization, was a familiar face in Greenfield. He moved to the U.S. from Romania as a young man and spoke with a heavy accent. Julius Emspak, Secretary-Treasurer, was a second-generation tool and dye maker at GE Schenectady. He left the plant to get a PhD in philosophy and then returned to work for the UE. Both refused to testify at one of the first HUAC hearings in 1949. Emspak was indicted on 68 counts of contempt, a record, for every question he refused to answer.

76McCarthy termed this suspect class “pre-mature anti-fascists”.

77Steve Rosswurm, *The CIO’s Left-Led Union* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992). Ruth Young, a longtime Field Organizer with the UE talked of the transition from “trade union Communists” to “Communist trade unionists”.

78Filippelli, *Cold War in the Working Class*, p.60.

79“No other left-wing led institution in American history achieved the power and influence of the UE.” *Ibid*, p. 4.

80The *IUE-CIO Bulletin* led with headline “Senator Kennedy Exposes UE”.

81The national organization created its own “unAmericanism Commission” that was hostile to the UE. The Greenfield Legion remained neutral out of deference to the popular union. Local 274 Executive Board minutes, October 30, 1953.

82*Recorder*, October 20, 1954.

83The UE survived in small pockets, mostly in the Northeast. Two Locals were left in western Massachusetts besides 274 – one in Holyoke and the other outside Pittsfield. Franklin County, and neighboring Windham County, Vermont, were the only surviving clusters of UE shops.

84“The first thing I told them was that the RED business would never work at GTD or anywhere else in Greenfield.” *Recorder*, October 28, 1953.

85“The commies fool the best brains in the United Nations and the people of Greenfield were also fooled.” IUE Representative quoted in the *Recorder*, January 24, 1950.

86*Recorder*, October 31, 1953.

87Parliament passed the Massachusetts Government Act – called Intolerable here - to punish the entire colony for acts of insubordination primarily in and around Boston. It called for the suspension of Town Meetings.

88*Recorder*, June 9, 1953. The editors at the *Recorder* concurred: "American working men enjoy the best living standards in the world, largely because they organize and have influence enough to deal directly with ownership." April 4, 1952

89I spoke with a retired machinist in Windsor, Vermont who told me the best years for the company he worked at were the years workers were organized with the UE.

90*Recorder*, November 21, 1953.xxx