

GTD Workers Gather to Vote on Strike Proposal

Greenfield Recorder, April 10, 1952

At Sword's Point:

The United Electrical Workers Union and the Greenfield Tap & Die Company

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Editor's Introduction: *Greenfield, Massachusetts has a remarkable industrial history. This small manufacturing center located in a rural corner of the state made the precision steel tools that drove the industrial process around the world. Less well known is that the men and women who crafted those tools have an equally remarkable story to tell.*

The small city was made exceptional by the unique value of what it produced. This was reflected in labor relations at Greenfield Tap and Die, its largest employer. Labor and management coexisted peacefully for many years until a series of changes moved workers to unionize in 1941. The United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America was a good fit for Greenfield workers until out-of-towners tried to persuade them otherwise. What followed surprised everyone except the workers themselves. Tom Goldscheider earned his B.A. at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 2009 in the University Without Walls program. He completed his M.A. in History at the University of Massachusetts in

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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 Workers (UE) 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 at that time, we need to reconstruct the development of manufacturing in Greenfield and 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.

What follows 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 brought fame to Greenfield and of the changing relationship over time between these employees and the company that employed them.

To study these changes, we begin with a 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 MEN”¹

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 – called a “yeoman farmer” – since he owned the land he worked in order to provide for his family. Today we would call him an autonomous workman who labored when and where he wished on his own terms. 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 valued in their hometown. “Home rule” was a cherished ideal to them that meant guarding local autonomy against encroaching outside interference.

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 make textiles. Factory Hollow Mill, built in 1830, has been 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 – termed the American Method of Manufactures – to making knives and chisels from imported stock steel. By 1837, he employed seventy 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 the Connecticut 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



Russell Cutlery (original Green River Works), c. 1834

Image courtesy of Museum of Our Industrial Heritage, Greenfield, MA

<http://www.industrialhistory.org>

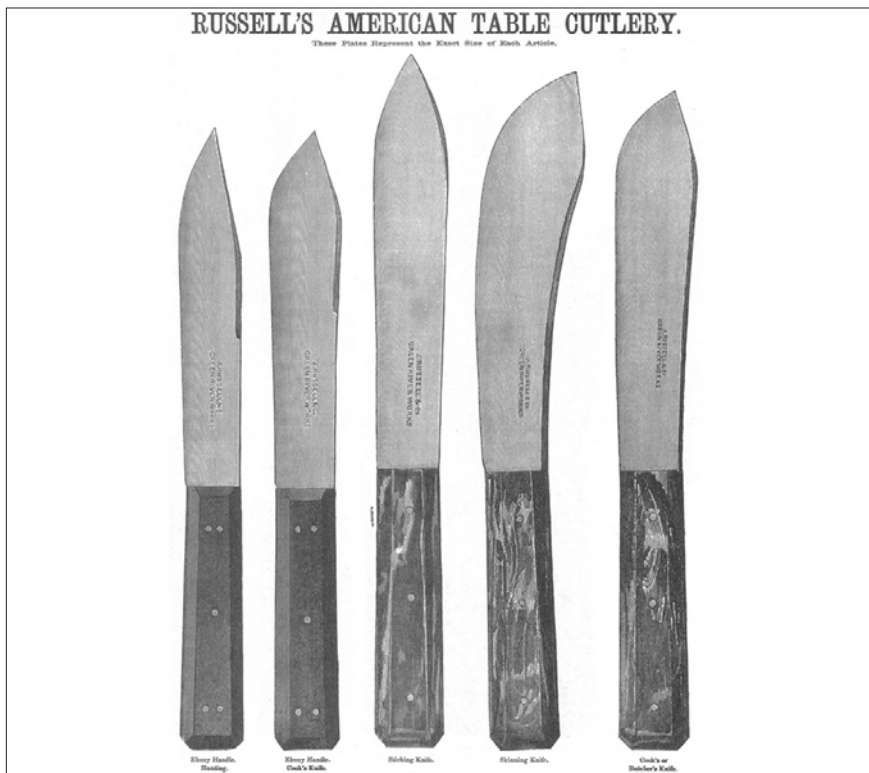
founded by the Boston Associates, absentee investors who owned the means of production. But the principle resource that drove industrialization was the pool of skilled labor found here. The self-reliant farmers and artisans living in and around Greenfield successfully transferred their skills to mechanized metal working.

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. Greenfield became an important piece of an “innovation corridor” for precision manufacturing that stretched north and south of the Springfield Armory.⁴

A reliable, skilled workforce was the key to increased production and profits for owners. Workers made the most of their advantage in a tight labor market to get decent wages and working conditions, but there was also growing unease with the prospect of becoming permanent wageworkers. They were reluctant to forfeit freedoms they enjoyed in their work lives.⁵

Owners such as Russell 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 and therefore less appealing to local farmers. As a result, 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



Russell Knives, c. 1865

from future employment in town, a practice known as “blacklisting.” The beginnings of a rift between the interests of labor and owners was coming into view.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 Connecticut 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 UNIVERSE”⁸

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 less reliable tools called jamb plates to crush threads by force. Grant’s patented tool cut threads instead using hardened steel and shot out the discarded material, called “chips,” simultaneously – an operation called the “once over.” His dies 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 and manufacture his invention on account 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. The local newspaper approved:

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.¹⁰

Before this venture 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.



Tap and Die Set Manufactured by GTD, c. 1912

Taps (the elongated threaded pieces shown in the kit) cut threads on the inside surface of a hole, creating objects such as a nuts. Dies (the cylindrical pieces with bladed central openings) cut threads on cylindrical materials, creating objects such as bolts.

By the end of the century, several large competing plants in Greenfield made taps and dies for a national market. The largest among these were Wiley and Russell, founded by John Russell's nephew Charles along with investor Solon Wiley; and Wells Brothers, founded by F.E. and F.O. Wells, one a bookkeeper and the other a machinist. All were Greenfield natives. 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 mass-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 to little success.¹¹

Meanwhile, "labor peace" reigned at the tap and die plants in town. There were no reported attempts to unionize or strike around the turn of the century. 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 was no row housing built for workers in Greenfield, as 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 had 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 paternalistic relationships with their workers, offering housing opportunities and security in return for their loyalty. The capitalist’s imperative to maximize returns on his investments was tempered by notions of community, faith-based morality, an appreciation of craft, and the value of personal relationships with his employees.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 Wells Brothers, along with two other plants in town, were absorbed into Wiley and Russell, and F.O. Wells was named the new company’s first president. “The Corporation,” as it called itself, was the first publicly-traded business in town, and as such was vulnerable to unwanted interference from outside investors. This consolidation of tool shops in Greenfield marked the end of the healthy competition that had spurred innovation and benefited machinists. Owners no longer had to compete for skilled workers by offering improved wages and conditions, and machinists were less apt to develop ideas and open their own small shops.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 standardized interchangeable parts that relied on taps, dies and gages (highly accurate measuring devices) made in Greenfield. GTD exported overseas up to half of what it manufactured as it eagerly supplied both sides of the arms race in Europe.¹⁵ The town now produced more taps and dies than the rest of the world combined.

The relentless drive to ramp up production to meet demand triggered a thirty-eight-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 permanent 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 immediate postwar years had been 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 these troubles had come 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 were brought in to run the company with training in finance and a limited appreciation for the trade Wells called the “backbone of the industry.”¹⁷

Peacetime sales at GTD remained strong as millions of Americans bought automobiles and electrical appliances for the first time in the 1920s. The greatest potential disrupter to steady output was labor. Keeping up productivity meant reducing turnover and absenteeism. From the company's perspective, 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, apprenticeships, hot meals on site, and a bevy of recreational programs. This was a sophisticated update to civic capitalism seen earlier, often termed “welfare capitalism.” It was not oriented towards



"An Interrupted Resolution"

This image on *The Helix's* January 1921 cover depicts labor organizers as children resolving "to raze hell" while a club-wielding policeman eyes them threateningly. Image courtesy of the Museum of Our Industrial Heritage, Greenfield, MA (<http://www.industrialhistory.org>).

a shared pride in the community of Greenfield, but was rather a precisely-calibrated campaign designed to cultivate loyalty to the corporation itself.

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 because 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.

The 1930s presented a very different picture for Greenfield workers. By 1929, GTD was generating sales of \$3.5 million annually, but three years later that figure dropped to \$1 million. The Great Depression meant layoffs and pay cuts for company workers, and 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 had helped to create during good times was there for them when they needed it most.¹⁹

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 whose primary residence remained in New York City.²⁰ GTD was now owned and managed by an essentially invisible Board of Directors made up of outside investors.

The new management team 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.²¹ 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 whose process for setting pay rates was opaque at best. This represented the ultimate intrusion into the autonomy they had enjoyed on the job for generations.²² In 1930, fifty men walked out of the polishing room after their piece rates were revised downward, an effective pay cut. They won

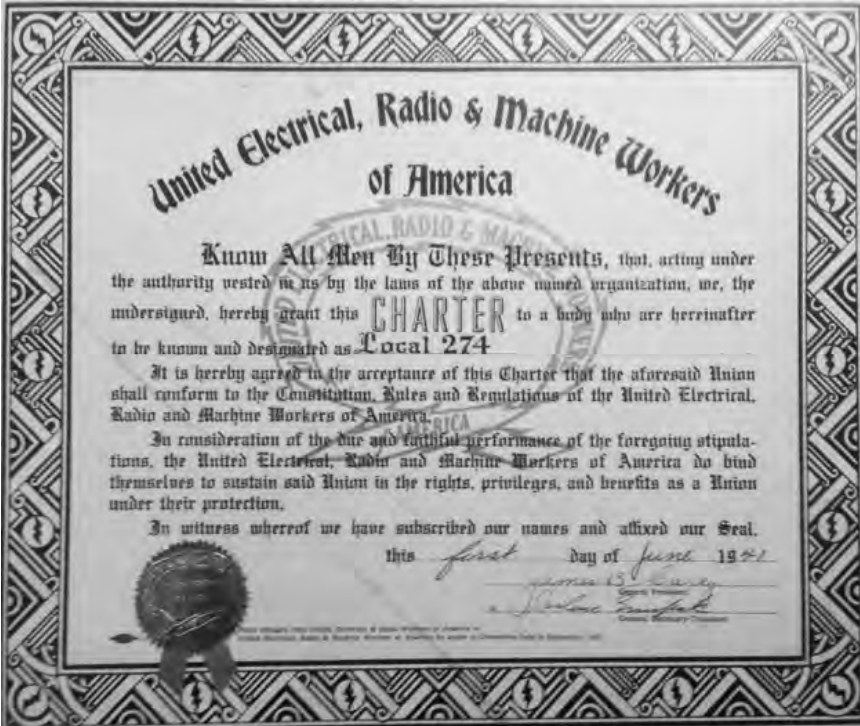
a five-cent raise and returned to work. This marked the first successful labor action at GTD.²³

“ZERO HOUR”

Greenfield workers made their way through the prolonged economic depression. In 1934, several shops at GTD combined to form an independent trade union with the company’s approval, but it had limited bargaining power without the backing of a national labor organization. National trade unions affiliated 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 reassess piece rates in 1939. This final affront to personal autonomy and dignity on the job, combined with a pay cut in hard times, created a tipping point in workers’ attitudes. The next year, several national labor organizations were invited to Greenfield to show what they could offer in terms of representing GTD workers’ interests. In 1941, production workers at Plant #1 voted in one of the CIO unions by a margin of 569-361. The following year Plant #2, also in Greenfield, joined them along with the shipping, tool room and box shop departments. A GTD worker described the train of events:

Everybody was so fed up by that time that even the “Old Guard” [senior workers] thought the union was a good idea. Of course that was only Plant #1. It took us another year to get Plant #2 because they’re way up on Sanderson Street right next to management. We could always be more militant because we were always further away from the bosses, and they never knew what was going on with us. To tell you the truth, there were a lot of finks there, but we organized them the next year.²⁴

The election results surprised everyone.²⁵ Greenfield workers chose to join a national labor organization after a hundred years and they opted for a young, growing union. The new local’s first elected president, Albert Lambert, called it “the quietest election they [union organizers] had ever seen.”²⁶ Management put up only token resistance to the process. Another GTD worker added, “All in all, it seemed like they [GTD] were really glad to see the union come in. I couldn’t figure it out.”²⁷ The *Greenfield Recorder* was



UE Local 274 Charter Dated June 1, 1941

The signatures of UE founders James Carey and Julius Emspak appear on the lower right. Image courtesy of UE Local 274, Greenfield, MA

taken up with Britain's valiant struggle for survival against Nazi aggression—its "Zero Hour"—and gave scant notice to this local development. Some people in town decried outside interference by "Worcester men" who helped organize the plants. In fact, the principal organizer was Edith Hammer, based in Greenfield.²⁸ A third of this union's field organizers were women, even though precision tool making was predominantly a male domain.²⁹

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 relatively unknown union?

Greenfield is said to be in the world but not of the world. It is happily perched upstream from all that it chooses to be a part of. 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



Early Leadership of UE Local 274

Local 274 President Albert Lambert (left) is shown here presenting a check to a representative of a polio research fund while Greenfield-based UE field organizer Edith Hammer looks on. Source: UE News Photograph Collection, 1933-1998, UE.14.1, Archives & Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh Library System.

“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 enjoyed on the shop floor. The bond between workers and owners that had kept organized labor at bay for so long broke down over time with each change in the way the company was organized and managed.

It is also notable 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 legally protected 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, as had been seen earlier. The federal government now stood behind the right to form unions and created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) as an enforcement agency.

Another principal factor was the coming of war. With Frederick Payne at the War Department, GTD was positioned to win major contracts as the nation shifted into armaments production. The federal government built a

million-dollar gauge plant for the company, Greenfield Plant #2, in 1940, a year before it declared war. GTD now accounted for a third of the world's gauge production. These highly accurate measuring devices were critical in the use of interchangeable parts. 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 needed a reliable workforce to fulfill its production quotas. Perhaps allowing workers to organize under these circumstances was seen as a way to improve efficiency at the plants.

“WE ARE THE ONES WHO WILL RUN OUR UE UNION”³⁰

Greenfield workers chose to organize with this 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 1936.³¹ Many key figures in the union had roots in Massachusetts. Greenfield workers were naturally drawn to an organization with local ties at a time when the company they worked for felt increasingly foreign to them.

It helped that most of the union's founders were machinists. Al Coulthard, a pattern maker, and Bill Turnbull, a turbine inspector, both from the General Electric (GE) plant in Lynn, joined Julius Emspak, a tool and die maker from GE Schenectady, and James Matles, a machinist and organizer from downstate New York, to form the UE in 1936. James Carey, a young organizer focused on enlisting radio assembly workers, joined forces with them.³² 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 had seen small craft unions organized separately within large companies crushed in the early 1920s. Highly paid machinists therefore chose a union in which they could ally themselves with their lower paid co-workers in the same plants. Instead of one or two shops walking out and failing, as seen at GTD in 1916, the whole plant could be shut down, stopping production. This approach, called “industrial unionism,” was applied by the UE. Every worker, regardless of pay grade, had equal standing as a union member (one person/one vote). Everyone at GTD 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 to join. The CIO's motto was "organize the unorganized," to reach out to industrial workers that the AFL had excluded from its ranks. 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 1,200 plants and negotiated national contracts with the Big Three.³³ It also dominated the machine tool industry in the Northeast. UE founder James Matles called the union's rate of growth in New England during the late 1930s and early 40s "abnormal."³⁴

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 drew up and ratified their own bylaws. They elected stewards for their individual shops who represented grievances to management. Contract negotiators were chosen from within the local; lawyers and union organizers could advise them, but workers negotiated their own contracts in open sessions. Contracts were ratified by secret ballot in open meetings and the decision to strike was also made this way. Members were picked to represent the local at the UE's annual convention, where national officers were elected.³⁵

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 because the organization's 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, seniority protections and time off.³⁶ 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. Stewards put a check on incompetent and/or abusive shop foremen who directly impacted workers' everyday experiences on the job. And most importantly, making taps and dies involved extreme 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.³⁷

“THE LARGEST NUT TO CRACK”³⁸

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 situation in 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 enacted regulations to prevent work disruptions in the plants. The War Labor Board enforced a wage freeze and a pledge not to



Factory Floor at GTD, c. 1930s

Image courtesy of the Museum of Our Industrial Heritage, Greenfield, MA

<http://www.industrialhistory.org>



Citation for "Excellence in War Production" Issued to GTD Worker

Image courtesy of Museum of Our Industrial History, Greenfield, MA

<http://www.industrialhistory.org>

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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ In 1946, 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, the 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."⁴¹

The following year Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act, which linked these two issues to devastating effect. Most of the language in the law was aimed at limiting unions' abilities to organize and to engage in direct labor 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. But by 1948, the vast majority had knuckled under and taken 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 in declaring: "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."⁴²

This does not square with what we know about Local 274 in Greenfield, which was democratically run to a fault. Had GTD workers unwittingly affiliated with an organization run by radical subversives? It turns out that 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 used to secure strong contracts for the workers it represented. It also pointed to active engagement in the larger political sphere. In this view, 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.⁴³

National and international politics were rarely discussed at Local 274,⁴⁴ but this was not the case 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"; they declared that "democracy should begin at home before we try to spread it abroad."⁴⁵ This referred to the coercive use of loyalty oaths at home while Truman pursued an aggressive policy of regime change in Greece. The union's platform decried U.S. meddling abroad and increased military spending and called for protections of free speech and the rights of workers, minorities and women at home. The

UE was labeled a “left-wing union” for the political positions it took and for its refusal to take the loyalty oaths.⁴⁶

A split between “left-wing” and “right-wing” factions within the UE came to a head at the Boston convention. More than half of UE 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 withdrew its membership and then 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 over this issue, 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 Union of 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 1,500 telegrams to management at plants represented by the UE, calling for elections to choose between the two rival unions.⁴⁷

“WE HAVE A SERIOUS PROBLEM”⁴⁸

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 plants in 1941. The UE was firmly established at GTD; it had 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 stopped 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.⁴⁹

By this time, the heat was turned way up on the national UE over its alleged ties to the Communist Party. It began in 1947, when Senator Nixon summoned UE founders James Matles and Julius Emspak to Congress for

aggressive questioning. The following year, Carey went to Capitol 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 investigations began with a focus on labor unions, and the first union they set their sights on was the UE.

Almost overnight, Greenfield was embroiled in a civil war, pitting union brothers and sisters against one another. Albert 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



Daniel Nadeau

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.⁵⁰ The IUE targeted families with Eastern European ancestry who strongly resented the Soviet occupation there.⁵¹ Priests in eight Catholic churches throughout Franklin County openly instructed their congregations to vote in the IUE.⁵² Greenfield’s Protestant churches also took out a series of full page advertisements warning readers against “faith in false gods.” Greenfield workers were divided by political beliefs, nationality and creed as never before.⁵³

The leadership at Local 274 closed ranks behind its new president. Shop stewards met immediately and voted unanimously to support the UE, stating that “[the] union is not communist, been good . . . management [will] use [this] opportunity to put contract negotiations on ice.”⁵⁴ 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.”⁵⁵ They pointed to what members had and what they stood to lose and said a divided union would only benefit the bosses.

DONATION OF \$100.00
TO ANY GREENFIELD CHARITY
IF
HUGH HARLEY, U.E.,
AT THE TOWN CLERKS OFFICE WILL
TAKE THE FOLLOWING OATH AND
SWEAR THAT: —

(1) I am not now nor have I ever been a member of the Communist Party, nor affiliated with such party. I do not nor have I ever believed in the Communist Party

(2) I do not now nor have I ever believed in the Communist party

(3) I do not now nor have I ever supported or pursued the policies and activities directed toward the achievement of the program or the purposes of the Communist party or of any other Totalitarian or Fascist organization.

ALSO
\$100.00 REWARD TO
ANYONE
IF THEY CAN ARRANGE TO HAVE
JAMES MATLES AND
JULIUS EMSPAK
TOP U.E. OFFICERS
MEET WITH JAMES B. CAREY, PRES. OF THE
I.U.E. C.I.O.
AT THE TOWN CLERKS OFFICE
IN GREENFIELD
FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE THREE TAKING
THIS ABOVE OATH
Henry H. Lussior, Field Rep.
I.U.E., C.I.O.

IUE Red-Baiting Publicity Stunt Aimed at UE, 1949

Image courtesy of UE Local 274, Greenfield, MA

Newspapers and radio waves were filled with ads supporting both sides. The IUE came up with a publicity stunt offering \$100 to charity if UE field organizer Hugh Harley took a loyalty oath with Greenfield's Town Clerk. Harley was a high-profile figure locally and in the national UE. Before coming to Franklin County, he had played a key role in union battles in Erie, Pennsylvania. He ended his career as Director of Organization. UE

President Albert Fitzgerald told 200 GTD workers 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."⁵⁶ He implored members not to fall prey to smear campaigns coming at them from all sides. Fitzgerald had been president of his own Local at GE in Lynn before getting elected president of the national organization.

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.⁵⁷ As expected, the results were very close: 357 voted for the IUE and 347 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 staying power after being expelled from the CIO. Contract negotiations were scheduled to resume the following week.

A year later, workers at Threadwell, a smaller tap and die maker in town, voted 54-36 to rejoin the UE. They had brought in the union in 1942 but voted it out in 1946, while most of the principal 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 several times a day. Every worker was mailed a copy of the book *I Led Three Lives*, a lurid, fictionalized account of subversive behavior in Boston. Threadwell workers, many of them recent veterans, 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.⁵⁸

"A HOUSE DIVIDED"

A look at Local 274's two presidents gives us a picture of how the town divided at this time. Albert Lambert was the founding president and served from 1941 to 1949, when he switched his allegiance to the rival union. Daniel Nadeau took his place and served until his untimely death in 1959. Both men grew up in large French-Canadian households in neighboring Montague and

became machinists in their early twenties. Both had families of their own and sent their children to college. And both men were enthusiastic members of fraternal organizations outside of Local 274, where members also addressed one another as “Brother.”

Interestingly, Lambert joined and soon became State President of the Fraternal Order of Eagles (FOE) in the post-war period. The political evolution of this organization mirrors changes we see in Lambert’s political outlook. In the 1930s, they counted FDR as a member and strongly supported Social Security legislation. In the late 1940s, they shifted their focus and initiated two new requirements for membership: applicants had to swear that they were not be members of the Communist Party or “any organization dedicated to overthrowing the U.S. government”; and they had to be “Caucasian.” Lambert distanced himself from the UE at the time he moved into a leadership role at the Eagles. He remained a loyal lifetime member and ended his days in an FOE retirement home in Florida.

Both men fully embraced their leadership roles at Local 274. Lambert had clearly been a charismatic figure who played a key role in organizing the plants.⁵⁹ Daniel Nadeau brought a different leadership style to the Local, somewhat gruff and very matter-of-fact. He was elected annually ten years running at a time the UE was under siege. He called on Franklin County workers to “reject the Red name-calling” and to demand hard evidence that UE national leaders were anything other than “loyal American trade unionists.” He was focused on negotiating strong contracts with GTD, not on national politics. The pressures he was subjected to may have affected his health – Nadeau died suddenly of a heart attack at age 54, just weeks after representing the Local at the annual UE Convention held in Chicago.

Both Nadeau and Lambert felt that the other was being manipulated by outsiders with hidden agendas. Lambert likely intervened on Nadeau’s behalf in 1949 and kept his “close friend’s” name out of attack ads aimed at loyal UE members.⁶⁰ Politics almost didn’t get in the way of friendship in this case. Both held strong opinions and agreed to settle their differences at the ballot box. Some Greenfield workers, like Lambert, became convinced that Soviet infiltration into American society constituted a legitimate threat, and that the UE was guilty by association. More workers, like Nadeau, became increasingly skeptical about this messaging based largely on where it was coming from. A Threadwell worker gave this response to management’s use of this issue in 1951:

I mean, what did we know about communism? We just wanted a union. We’d all been through the Second World War so we

knew all about Hitler and Tokyo Rose trying to knock down your morale with their propaganda. This was just the same. You just had to look at who was saying it to know it was a bunch of baloney.⁶¹

“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 plants the day before to appear at a mass meeting to “be completely sure that the members are ready to strike under the present circumstances.”⁶² The membership had 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 shut down.

The biggest issue separating labor and management was pay. The Korean War was a tremendous boon to business at GTD – net earnings increased fourfold in the space of two years and the company paid out substantial stock dividends.⁶³ Workers were aware of the value they were creating and of what others were getting paid in comparable shops across the region and the nation.⁶⁴ 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 the town’s 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 had lost after the union was voted out in 1946, negotiating issues such as seniority, wages, health insurance, vacation time, and piece rates.

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 got the last word in making an important decision that directly affected them.⁶⁵ The *Greenfield 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 its membership.”⁶⁶

The year 1953 was no less eventful. It started off peacefully with a series of friendly meetings between GTD and Local 274 representatives concerning

contract issues.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸

Just as Local 274 was gearing up to renegotiate its contract with GTD, which was 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 a second time. 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 remained a UE shop from that time forward.

On November 10, contract negotiations picked up again as if nothing had happened. Sixteen GTD workers headed by Local President Nadeau sat across the table from nine members of GTD top brass headed by President Millar. No lawyers or mediators were present except for Hugh Harley. Nadeau called the company’s proposal that day “the most inadequate ever presented.”⁶⁹ Again, they were stuck on wages. According to the local’s president: “The Company refused to change one comma of their cheap offer. They refused to improve their package by 1/16th of a cent.”⁷⁰

Another issue that divided the two sides was health insurance. President Harry Truman had tried and failed to enact national health insurance in 1945 and Americans were left to rely on employment-based coverage. Employees at GTD read the fine print on their Liberty Mutual plans and were outraged.⁷¹ The fact that Millar sat on an “advisory board” to the insurance company left a bad taste in people’s mouths.⁷² The UE demanded that GTD switch to Blue Cross in order to provide adequate coverage for its workers.



GTD Picket Line During 1953 Strike

Image courtesy of UE Local 274, Greenfield, MA

The mood shifted from a year earlier, when workers had pulled back from striking at the last minute. On November 18, they voted by a margin of 752-280 to authorize a strike 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 out to the community; an entertainment committee helped to maintain morale; and a picket-line committee coordinated the logistics behind maintaining a permanent presence at the plants.

This was a total, plant-wide shut down—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, including those

outside of Greenfield, were picketed twenty-four hours a day in four-hour shifts. Two nearby homes were converted to soup kitchens to sustain cold and hungry picketers.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴

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.”⁷⁵

“THE DIRTY DECADE”

The UE persevered at GTD in one of the first tests of its staying power, but this was just the beginning of a sustained assault against the union that stretched across what James Matles called “The Dirty Decade.”⁷⁶ 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 and honest and that 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, New York. In 1946, the UE won a strong contract there following a plant-wide shutdown, and in 1950, workers voted overwhelmingly to stay with the union. In February 1954, just weeks after Local 274 had won its contract gains at GTD, Senator Joseph McCarthy scheduled a series of closed HUAC hearings in Albany. He subpoenaed a number of UE organizers, local officers, and stewards 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 (often paid) informants. Most refused to answer McCarthy’s questions, invoking the Fifth Amendment; they were cited in contempt of Congress and fired from GE. 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, Jack Davis, chose to cooperate and “confess” to his own left-wing political affiliations. The price he paid for being spared contempt charges was to name

Greenfield Recorder-Gazette Monday, April 12, 1954

Franklin County's Own Newspaper for One Hundred Sixty-Two Years

Published at 397 Main Street, Greenfield, Massachusetts

A Sinking Ship

By this time it must be evident to the membership of UE Local 274 that it would be better served by affiliation with a different national labor group.

UE is on the way out. Some of its large locals are moving to affiliate elsewhere. National officers are on the suspect list. Area organizers and workers are accused of one-time Communist Party membership.

Whether Hugh Harley, Herb Satter and Clifford McAvoy were Communists, as charged in Albany, N. Y., last week, we wouldn't know. All we can say is that they and many others who have appeared here in Greenfield are accused by a former associate.

Statements before the un-American Activities Committee do not convict a man of anything. Nor are they necessarily true. The public must realize that UE is engaged in a life-or-death struggle with IUE and with other labor groups which are seeking to draw away its members. Labor leaders are no cream-puffs; they hit hard and occasionally below the belt.

The cumulative effect of these attacks disturbs Greenfield as greatly as the charges. Suspicion has been growing steadily over the years. It may be guilt by association, as UE leaders charge, but there exists in Franklin County a belief that all is not well with our largest labor group. Many persons believe that Local 274 is being victimized.

Such suspicions are injurious to the Greenfield local and to its membership. There have been no indications of Communism within the unit. We believe the officers to be loyal citizens of the United States. However, this does not alter the fact that outsiders look askance at any level of an organization which has been so consistently attacked by a Red-dominated, eventually Local 274 and its official family will be under fire and the cause of organized bargaining will suffer because many persons will believe there is something sinister in the local's insistence upon maintaining ties with a discredited national office.

UE Local 274's officers have a great responsibility. Their own conduct has been a major factor in the membership's loyalty in two past jurisdictional struggles. But the time is drawing near when their national ties will be so suspect that not even their record of achievement will shield them from denunciation. They will be foolhardy to maintain an association so dangerous to their members.

Now is the time to think seriously about Local 274's future. There exist several national unions which enjoy good reputations and which would welcome an affiliate in Greenfield. Rather than risk humiliation or disgrace in the public's eyes, the local would be wise to change its course before it is too late.

Greenfield Recorder Urges Abandonment of UE

Image Courtesy of Local 274, Greenfield, MA

others in the UE as communists. Davis had been a field organizer working in western Massachusetts and he named fifteen fellow UE organizers from the area, including Hugh Harley. It later came to light that Davis was an undercover FBI agent posing as a UE organizer.⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸ The *Greenfield Recorder* editorialized that GTD workers should "prepare to abandon ship."⁷⁹ While generally pro-business in tone, the daily paper also recognized the benefits of workers organizing with the UE and did not join in questioning the patriotism of individuals at the local. This was a call to pragmatism over loyalty to a union under siege that went unheeded at GTD.⁸⁰

Legal pressures on the UE continued to mount. In 1955, a Massachusetts commission declared that UE organizers in the state should be required

to pass loyalty tests. Nadeau responded: “This a lot of bull – and that’s all I can say about it.”⁸¹ That same year, U.S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell called on UE members to “clean their organization of communist dictators.”⁸² Julius Emspak, Secretary-Treasurer, and James Matles, Director of Organization for the national UE, had refused to cooperate with a HUAC investigation in 1949. Emspak was charged with a record sixty-eight counts of contempt of Congress for every question he refused to answer. Both he and Matles fought the charges against them all the way to the Supreme Court and won. Emspak faced imprisonment and Matles faced deportation throughout most of the 1950s.⁸³

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 national 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 to “left-wing” organizations by their active opposition to the growing threat of international fascism in the 1930s.⁸⁴ 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. Ruth Young, a longtime field organizer with the UE, talked of her transition from a “trade union communist to a communist trade unionist.”⁸⁵ The majority of UE activists, like Fitzgerald, Harley and Nadeau, had no associations with left-wing political organizations but were tarred nonetheless.⁸⁶

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 of any action that compromised U.S. preparedness before, during, or after World War II. The UE never called a strike that would have interfered with a War Department contract.⁸⁷ In the absence of any proof of foul play, 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. The editors at the *Greenfield Recorder* agreed:

So long as the democratic spirit survives in the United States, there will be dissenters from any majority action. They have the right to be heard, so long as their arguments conform with the laws of the land and of society.⁸⁸

It's also 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. This policy stood in sharp contrast to the constitution of the International Association of Machinists, a rival union, that explicitly barred Negroes from membership at this time. Most remarkably, the UE was a "voice in the wilderness" in opposing U.S. military engagement in Vietnam in 1964. The Left lost a strong voice when the UE's influence diminished, tilting the balance of our national political discourse. One observer posited:



UE Annual Convention in New York City, c. 1970s

The gender and racial diversity of attendees and the banners proclaiming "Curb the Pentagon" and "Protect Civil Rights" reflect the union's longstanding commitments to political and social justice. Image courtesy of UE Local 247, Greenfield, MA

“No other left-wing led institution in American history achieved the power and influence of the UE.”⁸⁹

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 became a bipartisan issue: “liberals,” including Senator John Kennedy, endorsed this policy.⁹⁰ After the CIO expelled the UE, the AFL and CIO merged in 1955. From that time forward, 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 UE, using its infamous “Red Squad” (though the Greenfield Legion remained neutral⁹¹), and Cardinal Francis Spellman, the most influential Catholic leader in America, implored believers – comprising over half of UE members – 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 dropped to 58,000. All the major plants in greater Springfield voted out the UE in the 1950s, including Westinghouse Refrigerator, 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. In 1954, Greenfield Gas and Light reconsidered after the scare in Schenectady and pledged with the UE again. Later that year, Mayhew Steel, a small toolmaker outside Greenfield, voted in the UE by a margin of 27-2. A meeting sponsored by the IUE to enlist Mayhew workers was cancelled when only three people showed up.⁹² Lamson and Goodnow, one of the nation’s oldest cutlery makers, followed suit. In 1966 Millers Falls Tools, the county’s second largest employer, voted to affiliate with the UE.⁹³ The union now represented over two thousand workers throughout Franklin County. Greater Greenfield was now a “one union town” in a larger landscape almost wholly purged of militant, democratic trade union representation in the workplace.

POSTSCRIPT: "THE LAST ANGRY UNION"⁹⁴

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?⁹⁵ What do these labels mean? Did conserving traditional values sound like a "radical" idea in the postwar era? Were ideas that were considered revolutionary in 1776 just as revolutionary in 1946?

Greenfield workers stood by the UE for a number of reasons. First, they placed a high premium on loyalty. As GTD became more alien 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.⁹⁶ If anything, the heavy-handed red-baiting backfired in Greenfield, and the more aggressive it got, the more workers pushed back. Many resented accusations that they were being played for uneducated dupes.⁹⁷ And lastly, the union worked for GTD employees. One of them explained: "You see, we Greenfield workers are pretty stubborn people. When we have something good we hold on to it."⁹⁸

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 took 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 there should 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, however, GTD made a series of tradeoffs in which something was gained and something was lost, almost always at the workers' expense. The company eliminated competition and sold stock to centralize and capitalize production in order to meet growing demand. When it did so, workers lost the freedom to move among shops and the local founders of the company eventually 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. Over time, workers lost faith in the company's ownership and finally organized to protect what was left to them.



GTD Stock Certificate Dated September 6, 1951

Image courtesy of the Museum of Our Industrial History, Greenfield, MA

<http://www.industrialhistory.org>

Local 274 largely succeeded at improving and maintaining living standards for the workers it represented, but ultimately it could not prevent their jobs from disappearing in the late 20th century. The UE scored a major victory when it finally signed with Millers Falls Tools in 1966 following several unsuccessful attempts. The company was a classic example of paternalism – it had the same president, Philip Rogers, for forty-two years!⁹⁹ The hundred-year-old manufacturer of fine hand and then power tools had close to a thousand workers on its payroll at the time the UE was voted in. Within a decade, however, that number was cut in half as tool lines were dropped and parts were outsourced. In 1962, the company had merged with Ingersoll-Rand, a multinational corporation that moved Millers towards the production of lower quality tools to compete with cheap foreign imports. The parent company cited poor sales, high labor costs, and state taxes as reasons for closing plant after plant until Millers reached its “vanishing point” in 1976 and closed up shop. Local 274 made a number of bold and innovative attempts to save those jobs, but it simply could not make the numbers work without any cooperation from government.

GTD has faced a similar set of challenges, but it survives in diminished form, and its workers are still represented by Local 274. In 1958, GTD President Donald Millar negotiated a merger with another cutting tool

business based in Chicago. Ten years later, the resulting corporation was absorbed by the aerospace giant TRW, Inc. In 1986, venture capitalist Sam Fox took control of the Greenfield division in a highly leveraged buyout. Current owner Kennemetal bought out Fox in 1992 and closed the main plant, reducing the payroll to less than a hundred workers.

Local 274 found it increasingly frustrating trying to negotiate with absentee owners represented by division managers focused on short-term profits. The 1960s saw a series of protracted strike actions culminating in a ninety-day walkout in 1968. One young plant manager brought in by TRW in the 1980s boasted: "I have never been on the shop floor!"¹⁰⁰ He was interested in making his numbers, not in manufacturing quality tools of lasting value. Production was outsourced to the South and overseas and automated, all in the name of lowering labor costs to remain "competitive."¹⁰¹ These changes were part of a national shift: between the 1950s and the 1990s, the U.S. went from being the world's largest exporter to its largest importer of machine tools.

Local 274 fought every step of the way against the dismantling of a great company, but it was rebuffed by the same government officials who offered owners financial incentives to move production out of state. Greenfield workers were subjected to larger forces that no one local could successfully address. Only a vibrant, militant national union was capable of effecting change at the national level, and that union had itself been largely dismantled. "Militant unions" led by the UE were largely replaced by "business unions," top-down organizations in which union bosses had more in common with the businessmen they negotiated with than with the workers they represented.

By organizing into a union that could negotiate with management on a level playing field, Greenfield workers maintained a balance of power between labor and capital – that is, between the people who made the taps, dies and gauges and the people who oversaw financing, marketing and engineering. This balance was good for workers and their families, good for Greenfield, and arguably, good for the company's bottom line.

A retired UE machinist in Windsor, Vermont recalled: "The years with the UE were the best the company ever had." The first difference he saw with the union was that the boss stopped buying himself a brand-new Chevrolet every year. The UE kept the company honest: it maintained a balance between profit-taking and investing in the company and the people who worked there. Empowered workers who are treated with respect are motivated to increase productivity and take pride in what they are making. And the union did a huge amount of detailed, time-consuming work that greatly enhanced efficiency in the plants. This is seen in the reams of job evaluation reports

and grievance hearing minutes archived at Local 274. These were not greedy workers who wanted artificially high wages beyond what the company could afford. As Threadwell workers put it in 1951: “But we have no intention of insisting on demands which would make the company lose money and close. After all, we make our bread and butter in Threadwell.”¹⁰²

The editors of the *Greenfield Recorder* agreed that a sharing of interests between workers and owners benefitted the community as a whole. Writing in the tumultuous fall of 1953, they said Greenfield was an “ideal spot” precisely because of “a sense of mutual responsibility between employer and employee.” They 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.”¹⁰³

HJM

Notes

1. A catchphrase used by owners to describe relations with their workers, or to perpetrate the myth that they lived in a classless society. See John Cumbler, *A Social History of Economic Decline* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989).
2. Paul Jenkins, *The Conservative Rebel* (Town of Greenfield, 1982), 33.
3. *Ibid.*, 50.
4. The Springfield Armory acted as a federally-funded incubator for the development of this industry. It attracted talent and was a place where new ideas were tried out. It helped spawn a growing network of machine shops up and down the Connecticut River Valley. Early machine workers were likened to “honeybees of technology, moving freely from shop to shop, absorbing ideas and passing them along to others.” See Tim Blagg, *Machine Valley: The Connecticut Valley and Its Role in the Development of Industrial Manufacture in the U.S.* (undergraduate thesis, Skidmore College University Without Walls, 1992).
5. Skilled workers were mobile and pursued opportunity: “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, 80).
6. A pamphlet produced by the company states: “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* (Greenfield Tap and Die Corporation, Greenfield, MA, 1943), archives of the Museum of Our Industrial Heritage (hereafter cited as MOIH), Greenfield, MA).
7. Jenkins, 83.

8. This is what Greenfield called itself, since it produced more taps and dies than the rest of the world combined. See Orra L. Stone, *History of Massachusetts Industries* (Boston: The S.J. Clark Publishing Company, 1930).
9. *Facts About Taps and Tapping* (Greenfield Tap and Die Corporation, Greenfield, MA, 1943), MOIH archives.
10. *Greenfield Gazette and Courier*, April 1871, cited in Jenkins, 134.
11. Jenkins, 143.
12. One magazine article claimed that Greenfield employers paid the highest wages in the state; that Massachusetts paid the highest wages in the nation; and that the U.S. paid the highest wages in the world. See *Western New England* (July 1912), MOIH archives.
13. Cumbler, 5.
14. F.O. Wells, as an independent businessman, 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. Taken from a conversation I had with MOIH Director Jim Terapane.
15. GTD produced metric taps and dies to French and German standards, as shown in a GTD tool catalogue from the period housed in the MOIH archives. The company circumvented a U.S. embargo on exported goods to Germany in 1916 by supplying them through mutual trading partners in South America (Jenkins, 189).
16. Quoted from one of the first issues of a monthly magazine, *The Helix*, published by GTD for the “benefit” of its workers, MOIH archives.
17. *The Helix*, January 1921. The quote serves as the caption of 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. This was really the “sweet spot” in terms of productive output at GTD: the fruitful interaction between inventive engineers who supplied new designs and materials and innovative machine operators with technical expertise and years of experience. This partnership was disrupted by management’s move to “rationalize” production and diminish input from the shop floor.
18. Ibid.
19. During the period 1920-1929, while General Electric Company was also under a similar “Plan of Representation,” the corporation’s profits went up 300%, matched by wage increases of 1%. See Stephen Tormey, *A Brief History of UE Bargaining with GE: Seventy Years of Struggle* (Pittsburgh, PA: United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, n.d.). From the personal collection of Dave and Judy Cohen, Greenfield, MA.
20. He stayed at the Weldon Hotel, located minutes from GTD offices, Monday through Thursday, and returned to his family in Manhattan on weekends (Jenkins, 209).

21. Many machinists were faced with a choice: to work at a human pace or to earn a living wage. See Ronald Schatz, *The Electrical Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).
22. As late as the 1930s, some workers enjoyed “machine seniority” whereby only one man could work at a designated machine and he possessed proprietary knowledge about that machine passed down by previous operators. See Wayne Broehl, *Precision Valley: Machine Tool Companies of Springfield, Vermont* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1959).
23. Jenkins, 213.
24. This is taken from an oral history conducted by James Wooster in 1975. See Jenkins, 214.
25. “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).
26. *Greenfield Recorder*, September 18, 1941.
27. Jenkins, 215.
28. *Ibid.*, 214.
29. Nationally, a third of UE members were women, primarily working in large assembly plants. During World War II, this figure went up to one-half of workers in the electrical industry. At GTD, women worked mainly outside of the machine shops at assembly, packing, inspection, and clerical work.
30. From a written statement by Threadwell workers addressed to management reprinted in the *Greenfield Recorder*, April 12, 1951.
31. UE organizer Matthew Campbell 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.” See Robert Farrant, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 24 (2000).
32. Schatz, 65.
33. 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. See Ronald Filippelli and Mark McCullough, *Cold War in the Working Class: The Rise and Decline of the United Electrical Workers* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995).
34. James Matles, *Them and Us: Struggles in a Rank and File Union* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), 73.
35. This is taken from *UE Aims and Structures*, a booklet prepared by UEducation, from the personal collection of Dave and Judy Cohen, Greenfield, MA. National officers were elected annually and their salaries could not exceed the base pay of the highest-paid worker represented by the union. One of those officers, James Matles,

Director of Organization, explained: "Your officers and your organizers should feel *like* the members and not *for* the members" (Matles, 11).

36. Seniority was a critical issue at GTD because of wild fluctuations in employment in this industry. Protections insured that the first one hired was also the last one laid off.

37. The day-to-day work at Local 274 is seen in meeting minutes from the period found in the local's current office located in Greenfield. Shop stewards served a vital function – "the first line of defense." The local spent a lot of time settling job evaluation and time study disputes.

38. This was the headline of 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 and McCullough, 2).

39. According to Matles (154), U.S. corporate profits from 1940-45 totaled \$117 billion and in 1946 the cost of living increased by 45% while wages rose by only 15%.

40. Schatz, 156.

41. Cited in Tormey, 6.

42. Schatz, 185. When the law was first passed, Murray called it "[t]he 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, 118). One year later, both Murray and Reuther, along with 81,000 other union officers, signed the oath.

43. "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* (UE, 1975), from the personal collection of Dave and Judy Cohen, Greenfield, MA).

44. A letter printed in the *Greenfield Recorder* (September 11, 1953) stated, "I sat for months at a time on UE contract negotiations with officials of GTD [and] I never heard a single word about Communism or anti-Communism." While it is problematic proving something by its absence, in looking through scores of meeting minutes at Local 274 from this period, I never once came across any mention of national politics other than the addressing of red-baiting in Greenfield. Minutes were detailed and would surely have made note of this.

45. Associated Press coverage of the UE Convention held in Boston in September 1947 was carried in the *Greenfield Recorder* on September 22, 1947. Former U.S. Vice President Henry A. Wallace, the "peace candidate," addressed a convention that was highly critical of Truman's foreign policy.

46. A picture of the UE annual conventions emerges in the "General Officers

Reports” issued from the 1950s onward, copies of which are housed at the Local 274 office. The conventions offered workers a leftist critique on a range of topics, from plant closings to U.S. foreign policy to the labor movement itself. Presentations there connected the dots between larger issues and conditions on the shop floor. These were not top-heavy meetings dominated by union brass; the overwhelming majority of those in attendance were from the rank and file.

47. Carey, called the “Boy Wonder” because he was so young and never worked at a trade, was voted out as UE President in 1941 in a bitter contest and went to work directly for the CIO. He used his position as an insider at the central organization to push for the UE’s ouster from the CIO.

48. “Herbert Salter says we have a serious problem confronting us, and we should have a Board and Stewards meeting as soon as possible” (Local 274 Executive Board Meeting minutes, November 29, 1949, UE Local 274 archives, Greenfield, MA). Salter was a UE field organizer based in Springfield.

49. *Greenfield Recorder*, December 21, 1949.

50. *Ibid.*, 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” with “a politburo to decide policy” and described UE workers’ presence in plants working on defense contracts as a “gaping security loophole.”

51. “The Polish remember what happened to Poland. The Czechs. . .” (Letter to the Editor, *Greenfield Recorder*, October 23, 1953). Franklin County was evenly split between Catholics and Protestants. The original Yankee settlers had been joined by immigrants from Germany, Great Britain and Ireland before the Civil War, followed by a second wave of newcomers from Southern and Eastern Europe as well as French Canada.

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

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

54. Minutes of Local 274 shop stewards’ meeting, November 7, 1949, UE Local 274 archives.

55. *Greenfield Recorder*, December 1, 1949.

56. *Ibid.*, December 14, 1949.

57. No violence was reported at Greenfield’s union elections, unlike those in Lynn and Schenectady, NY. According to GTD’s Chief Steward, “UE local stewards used neither threats or pressure . . . the UE members don’t bother the people who are working for the IUE” (*Greenfield Recorder*, September 30, 1953). A man I spoke to who knew people in Local 274 at that time described the atmosphere as extremely

tense and said that threats were made.

58. From an open letter to management at Threadwell, signed by 65 workers, printed in the *Greenfield Recorder* on April 12, 1951.

59. Correspondence to and from Lambert and Nadeau may be found in Local 274 Records, UE.16.274, Archives & Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh Library System, Pittsburgh, PA.

60. In a somewhat cryptic unsigned letter printed in the *Greenfield Recorder* on September 2, 1953, the writer reaches out to Nadeau, saying: "I am trying to wake you up to the truth before it is too late." He offers "help and protection . . . to break away clean from the UE."

61. From an oral history conducted by James Wooster in 1975. See Jenkins, 226.

62. *Greenfield Recorder*, April 10, 1952.

63. Dividends per common share almost doubled from 1949 to 1951, while net sales increased from \$8,268,287 to \$19,744,996. These are dramatic examples of the effects of war on GTD sales. See *Greenfield Recorder*, February 3, 1952.

64. GTD workers took pride in their product. They called GTD "one of the finest machine shops in the country" (Arbitration meeting minutes, July 15, 1953, Local 274 archives).

65. This 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." The editors responded to this claim: "Local officers are not elected by professional organizers; they are chosen by the members and they can be deposed by the members" (*Greenfield Recorder*, April 4, 1952).

66. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1952.

67. GTD President Donald Millar spoke of the "pleasant association with Union" during negotiations. Executive Board Meeting minutes, June 2, 1949, Local 274 archives.

68. Letter to *Greenfield Recorder*, October 31, 1953.

69. Contract Negotiations with GTD minutes, November 10, 1953, Local 274 archives.

70. Local 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. See *Greenfield Recorder*, November 20, 1953.

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

72. Contract negotiations with GTD minutes, December 2, 1953, Local 274 archives.

73. *Greenfield Recorder*, November 21, 1953.

74. "Everyone must maintain orderly conduct on lines. No drunkenness, roughstuff etc." See Mass Meeting After Call in Strike minutes, November 20, 1953, Local

274 archives.

75. *UE Local 274 News*, April 20, 1961, from the collection of Dave and Judy Cohen, Greenfield, MA.

76. James Matles (*Them and Us*) and others used this term to describe the 1950s, a time when the UE was under constant assault.

77. Harley, 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" (*Greenfield Recorder*, August 4, 1955). He had been charged with attending Communist Party meetings in Springfield in 1948 while he was still living in Pennsylvania (*Greenfield Recorder*, April 14, 1954). Davis made a similar charge against another UE organizer, Ted Buczek, accusing him of being present at events at the same time the accused was still in the Army overseas. See James Young, *Union Power* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2017), 166.

78. "When they talked Communist about Matles, Emspak and Fitzgerald it wasn't too bad, but last week they hit too close to home," said Greenfield Gas's Chief Steward (*Greenfield Recorder*, April 14, 1954).

79. The editorial continued, "UE has been good to the local workers but its days are numbered. Loyalty must not be carried to dangerous extremes" (*Greenfield Recorder*, July 6, 1954). On August 21, 1953, the labor writer for the *Springfield Union* predicted the UE's "demise" within two years. Not only the IUE, but other CIO and AFL unions aggressively raided UE shops throughout this period.

80. According to a *Greenfield Recorder* editorial published on July 6, 1954, "American working men enjoy the best living standards in the world, largely because they organize and have influence enough to deal directly with ownership." The paper had supported the right to organize and never questioned the loyalty of the leadership at Local 274, but it got cold feet in 1954.

81. *Greenfield Recorder*, October 11, 1955.

82. *Ibid.*, December 21, 1955.

83. James Matles 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 was a second-generation tool and die maker at GE Schenectady. He left the plant to get a Ph.D. in philosophy at Brown University before returning to work for the UE. Both refused to testify at one of the first HUAC hearings held in 1949.

84. McCarthy termed these individuals, who were objects of his suspicion, "pre-mature anti-fascists."

85. Steve Rosswurm, *The CIO's Left-Led Union* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

86. UE President Albert Fitzgerald famously stated: "As a citizen of the United States of America, I despise the philosophy of the Communist Party. But as a member and officer of the union, I will not let that issue tear this union apart" (Filippelli and

McCullough, 62).

87. *Ibid.*, 60.

88. *Greenfield Recorder*, April 10, 1952.

89. *Ibid.*, 4.

90. An undated *IUE-CIO Bulletin* in the Local 274 archives led with the headline "Senator Kennedy Exposes UE."

91. The national organization created its own "unAmericanism Commission" that was hostile to the UE. The Greenfield Legion remained neutral out of deference to the popularity of the union in Franklin County. See Local 274 Executive Board minutes, October 30, 1953, Local 274 archives.

92. *Greenfield Recorder*, October 20, 1954.

93. "I feel like a man whose wife has just divorced him," said Millers Falls President John Owen after workers voted 408-364 to join Local 274 (*Greenfield Recorder*, February 11, 1966).

94. This quote is taken from "GTD: Of taps, dies, contracts, disputes" in the short-lived magazine *Western Massachusetts Business* (February 1986), MOIH archives. The article describes Local 274 confronting "hardball capitalist" Sam Fox.

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

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

97. One IUE representative was quoted as saying, "The commies fool the best brains in the United Nations and the people of Greenfield were also fooled" (*Greenfield Recorder*, January 24, 1950).

98. *Ibid.*, October 31, 1953.

99. It was said that Rogers would walk through the plants and offer a free cigar to any worker whose name and family history he could not remember.

100. Retired UE field organizer Dave Cohen recounted this conversation to me.

101. In 1958, GTD opened a plant in the Netherlands in the interest of "promoting economic development in the Free World" (*Greenfield Recorder*, January 8, 1958). In 1962, United-Greenfield "secretly built a fully automated drill plant in Clemson, S.C." (*Greenfield Recorder*, August 28, 1964).

102. Excerpt from an open letter addressed to the management at Threadwell Tap and Die Company signed by 65 of 96 eligible employees, *Greenfield Recorder*, April 12, 1951.

103. *Ibid.*, November 21, 1953.