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STATEMENT ON TAFT-HARTLEY BILL
ISSUED BY THE SOCIAL ACTION
DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL CATHOIC
WELFARE CONFERENCE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Now that collective bargaining and trade unionism occupy an accepted place in American life, it is the part of political and economic statemanship to develope an organized system of employer-labor partnership by industries and in the general economic life of the country. Otherwise collective bargaining may degenerate into class conflict instead of being a spring-board towards cooperation for the good of the entire economy.

The Taft-Hartley Bill does little or nothing to encourage labor-management cooperation. On the contrary, it approaches the complicated problem of industrial relations from a narrow and excessively legalistic point of view. It runs the risk of disorganizing and disrupting industrial relations by hastily and completely recasting the whole range of federal labor legislation just at the time when industrial stability is most desperately needed and, ironically enough, just at the time when collective bargaining shows definite signs of moving towards collective cooperation for the common good. Instead of encouraging labor and management to work together in harmony for the general economic welfare, the bill puts a number of legal restrictions on collective bargaining and particularly on the activities of trade unions--restrictions which will almost inevitably lead to industrial strife and unrest. The bill is an open invitation to management to have recourse to the courts and to the Labor Board at almost every turn and thus to sidetrack or evade the normal processes of constructive collective bargaining. It will also result in strikes of all sorts during the long period in which the administration and the legality of the bill are being clarified. It will create the sort of confusion which prevailed in American industry during the period in which the National Labor Relations Act was being tested in the courts. There is no sufficient reason to risk such wholesale confusion at the present time.

More specifically, we oppose the Taft-Hartley Bill because of the following unfair and unworkable provisions:

1.) By outlawing the closed shop, the bill disregards completely the history of industrial relations in the United States during the past fifty years or more. Hundreds of thousands of American workers are now covered by closed shop contracts, which, in the vast majority of cases, have operated and are now operating to the mutual benefit of labor and management alike. To wipe out these long-standing contracts by the stroke of a pen is to invite legitimate rebellion on the part of organized labor and consequently to encourage widespread industrial unrest and confusion. If there are occasional abuses under existing closed shop agreements, surely these abuses can be corrected without resorting to the wholesale prohibition of the practice of the closed shop itself.

2.) The bill denies to foreman and to certain other supervisory employees the legal protection of their natural right to organize into trade unions of their own free choosing. This denial is at once unethical and impractical. Again it is an open invitation to foremen and supervisory employees to disrupt industrial relations by fighting a last-ditch battle for the free exercise of a right which they know to be theirs and which they are determined to safeguard. Recent events indicate very clearly that these workers have no intention of tolerating such a serious infringement upon their moral and constitutional right to organize. They have every reason to expect and to demand that the exercise of this right be guaranteed and protected by law.

3.) The bill, in effect, would tend to encourage the separate States to enact anti-labor legislation. It would do so by going out of its way in a most unprecendented manner to provide that in spite of the federal law the States are free to outlaw the union shop in any of its various and long-established forms.

4.) The provision in the bill which would deny official certification to a union unless all of its officers declare under oath that they are not members of the Communist Party and that they do not favor the forceful or unconstitutional

overthrow of the government is likely to lead to serious confusion. Likewise it will prove to be very embarrassing to the great majority of sincere anti-Communists in the American labor movement. Simply by refusing to sign the required affidavit, a single Communist officer could prevent an otherwise decent and legitimate union from being legally certified for purposes of collective bargaining. This provision of the bill is calculated, therefore, to play into the hands of the Communists, who thrive on confusion and disorder. Once again the bill reveals an uncritical tendency to try to solve complicated problems of industrial relations by an over-simplified legalistic approach--an approach which, in the present instance, is rejected as worse than useless by the vast majority of those who have had practical experience in combating the influence of the Communist minority in the labor movement.

We urge the Congress to reconsider its vote and to make haste more slowly in its approach to a problem which is far too delicate and far too complicated to be legislated out of existence. If additional labor legislation is necessary, let it follow and not precede the bi-partisan study of industrial relations which is provided for in Title IV of the bill. This study ought not to limit itself to the details of collective bargaining as such. Rather it ought to concentrate seriously on discovering ways and means of going beyond the limits of traditional collective bargaining into an organized system of labor-management cooperation on the whole range of industrial and economic problems. Anything less than this will tend to encourage class conflict by setting off organized management and organized labor as contestants in a continuing struggle for power.