

# Walkout: The Chicago Men's Garment Workers' Strike, 1910-1911

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<i>A lull in the struggle,</i>	<i>For this we have marched</i>
<i>A truce in the fight,</i>	<i>Through the snow-covered street,</i>
<i>The whirr of machines</i>	<i>Have borne our dead comrades</i>
<i>And the dearly bought right,</i>	<i>While muffled drums beat,</i>
<i>Just to labor for bread,</i>	<i>For this we have fought,</i>
<i>Just to work and be fed.</i>	<i>For this boon dearly-bought.</i>

*"After the Strike," by Mary O'Reilly, Reprinted from Life and Labor*

ON SEPTEMBER 22, 1910, Hannah Shapiro decided she could not accept 3 3/4 cents (a reduction from four cents) to sew a pocket into a pair of men's trousers. Hannah and sixteen other young women picked up their scissors and walked out of Shop No. 5 at 18th and Halsted streets, one of the forty-eight tailor shops owned by the Chicago firm of Hart, Schaffner & Marx. Thus began a strike that would last four and a half months, enlist strong support from progressive trade unionists and reformers, and bring about an investigation by the Illinois Senate.

The men's garment industry began in small workshops following the Great Fire of 1871 and grew rapidly in the course of the next forty years. Two types of manufacturing existed side by side in the city. By the turn of the century, a market for quality clothes had compelled the larger manufacturers to combine small shops into large factories as a way of assuring a standard product. At the same time, a growing market for ready-made clothes and the seasonal nature of the industry encouraged the continued proliferation of contract shops, also known as sweatshops.

The contract system continued to flourish alongside the large, fully integrated concerns primarily because of its elasticity. The existence of contractors meant that manufacturers did not have to add employees during the busy season but simply contracted for extra work. Sweaters continued to compete by providing small orders directly to retailers.

Whether the garment was produced from start to finish in a factory or partially made by contract labor, the initial stages of production were the same. The designing and cutting of the garments were done in the factory. If contractors were involved, the cut cloth was packed in bundles and delivered to the sweatshops. Here a succession of specialized machine operators (each doing a specified portion of the garment) did the sewing, helped by basters, who basted the unsewn pieces and removed the bastings from the sewn ones. Next the garments went to the button-holer (usually a subcontractor); the finisher (often working in her own home); and finally the presser, usually working in the factory in which the production process had begun. With this elaborate refinement in the division of labor, the sewing of a coat could be broken down into approximately 150 separate operations.

This division of the manufacturing process into self-contained operations was highly conducive to sweatshop production. Moreover, as little capital as fifty dollars and some

knowledge of tailoring were enough to establish oneself as a contractor. A typical entrepreneur might buy half a dozen sewing machines, set them up in his apartment, and hire neighbors to operate them. Such tenement sweatshops dotted Chicago's West Side. So did the workshops of the country's largest clothing manufacturer, Hart, Schaffner & Marx.

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The manufacturing firm of Hart, Schaffner & Marx had been organized in Chicago in 1887 by a family of retail merchants who wanted to produce suits for their own stores. At first the firm contracted orders to sweatshops, most of which were located in tenements employing an average of fifteen persons per shop. By 1905 the company had purchased forty-eight sweatshops, bringing production under its direct supervision. The contractors sold their equipment to the company and became foremen while the workers did similar work for a new employer.

Other large manufacturers of men's clothing in Chicago were The House of Kuppenheimer (founded in 1876 as a retail store), the Scotch Woolen Mills, Royal Tailors, and Society Brand. These Chicago clothing firms became pioneers in mass advertising, associating their trade names with quality clothing through advertisements in such national magazines as *Colliers* and the *Saturday Evening Post*.

By 1910, the men's clothing industry had become Chicago's largest employer—even larger than the stockyards—with a workforce of 38,000. Sixty-five percent of these clothing workers were foreign born, with another thirty-two percent having foreign-born fathers. The two largest ethnic groups were Polish Catholics and Bohemians, with substantial numbers of Italians and Eastern European Jews also working in the industry. Approximately half of these workers were women. Employers furnishing information to the Immigration Commission of 1910 explained that, "To [a] certain extent immigrants have been employed in the clothing trades of Chicago, because of their peculiar skill. This is more especially true of the Bohemians, who are considered the best coat makers in the world; of the Scandinavians, who are the best workers on pants and vests; and of the Italians, who are the best hand sewers." After this lavish praise of foreign expertise, the report continued, "The chief explanation . . .

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given by the manufacturers . . . that American employees were not available [was that] . . . the Americans had a very marked prejudice against the business and refused to work at it."

In Chicago, as in other cities, the industry was concentrated in several distinct districts. The sales and general offices and the cutting and shipping rooms were usually located in the same building, close to the central business district. The Hart, Schaffner & Marx building on Franklin and Van Buren is the lone remaining representative of a once-flourishing garment district. The contract shops were located in surrounding areas near the workers' homes, mostly on Chicago's West Side, usually in ethnic enclaves.

Italian workers, who did most of the hand work, were squeezed into the area between Halsted Street and the Chicago River. Further south, between 16th Street and Roosevelt Road, thousands of Russian Jews opened some of the most crowded sweatshops in the city, specializing in coats and pants. Bohemians were located to the southwest between 17th and 22nd streets along Blue Island, where they produced coats. Sprinkled among them were Germans and Scandinavians, although these groups had almost disappeared from the industry by 1910. To the northwest was the large Polish district along Milwaukee Avenue between Ashland and Western, specializing in pants shops.

Sporadic attempts to organize garment workers in large cities had been only partially successful, though two national unions, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (founded in 1900) and the United Garment Workers of America (founded in 1891 to coordinate the activities of local unions in the men's garment industry) showed promise. But attempts to organize the Chicago men's garment workers received a severe setback in the course of an eight and a half month strike in 1904. The strike, and subsequent care on the part of employers not to hire union members or sympathizers, decimated the ranks of the United Garment Workers in the city. Only two UGWA cutters locals with members working in a few of Chicago's small shops survived.

Employers, suffering from intense competition, were also consolidating and building cooperative organizations, one of whose purposes was to resist the organization of unions. Louis Kuppenheimer, one of the founders of the Chicago Wholesale Clothiers' Association, described that organization's purpose as exchanging credit information and facilitating the sale of goods. But the Chicago Wholesale Clothiers' Association, and the two national associations with which it was affiliated—the National Association of Clothiers and the National Association of Manufacturers—were also dedicated to resisting labor unions. Although the firm of Hart, Schaffner & Marx did not join these organizations, it shared their attitude toward unions, refusing to hire anyone suspected of union sympathies.

This was the atmosphere in which Hannah Shapiro (also known as Annie) and her coworkers decided to protest their employer's move one that was by no means uncommon in the industry—to lower the piece rate agreed on in the negotiations at the start of the season.

At eighteen, Hannah Shapiro was a veteran of Chicago's garment industry. The oldest child of a Russian immigrant family, she had gone to work in a small shop making bow ties when she was thirteen. Two years later, she moved on to Hart, Schaffner & Marx, where she earned three dollars a week for ten-hour days pulling out bastings on coats. At one point she operated a pocket cutting machine, receiving her highest weekly wage of twelve dollars. But the rates on that task had also been reduced. In September of 1910 she—was earning seven dollars a week seaming pockets.

In a 1976 interview, Hannah Shapiro Glick recalled that period of her life. In spite of her

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strike experience she did not remember the Hart, Schaffner & Marx workshop as a terrible place. She noted the advantage of being allowed passes to leave early on Friday and of not being forced to work on Saturday, which pleased her father, an orthodox Jew. Nor did she mind walking to the fifth floor, or the petty fines, which she was skilled enough to avoid. But inevitably, there were grievances, and because she was friendly with many of her coworkers—Polish, Rumanian, and Italian, as well as Jewish—and high spirited, Hannah often carried both their complaints and her own to the bosses. The cut in the piece rate was strongly resented, and despite the fear of what the consequences might be, Hannah Glick recalls, "We all went out; we had to be recognized as people."

Three weeks elapsed from the first walkout until most of the Hart, Schaffner & Marx workers were on strike. Communications were slow: there were no leaders to make decisions, no mechanism to call a strike. Spontaneous walkouts by angry workers in sweatshops were common. Usually the contractor either met their demands or fired the few involved. Employment

in larger factories gave workers a better opportunity to communicate with each other but much of the work was still done in shops scattered throughout the area.

Within a week people from seven out of the ten West Side pants shops refused the work from Shop No. 5. Sidney Hillman, another recent arrival from Russia who worked in one of those shops, later recalled that at first these girls were a joke among the men, until finally some "bold spirits" decided to join them. Another worker, Jacob Potofsky,\* attended a meeting of more than 500 people at Hull-House, where workers aired their grievances. The next day he talked about the meeting to the Bohemian, Polish, and Jewish women with whom he worked. When the 300 people in the workshop started to leave the room, the foreman shut the doors in a vain effort to stop them. After three weeks at least 2,200 "bold spirits" were attending daily meetings at the West Side Auditorium.

Hart, Schaffner & Marx reacted to the walkout in a variety of ways. First the firm insisted that there was no strike. At the same time Harry Hart authorized a rate adjustment in the shop in which the trouble had started. But by now things had gone too far and there was no stopping the strike. By October 15 the firm admitted that it had been forced to hire private detectives "to protect the weak and foreign born employees from intimidation by strike agitators."

By the middle of October Hart, Schaffner &

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\*Hillman and Potofsky would later become founding members and leaders of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

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Marx strikers were being joined by workers from Kuppenheimer, Hirsch-Wickwire, and other clothing firms. Spokesmen for the Chicago Wholesale Clothiers' Association claimed that their workers had no grievances and were only striking out of sympathy for Hart, Schaffner & Marx workers or because they feared violence from agitators.

Although their workers were harassed by insults and bricks hurled at them through the factory's windows, Kuppenheimer managed to maintain production throughout the strike. Louis Kuppenheimer prided himself on the "moral" atmosphere of his factory, in which there was no mixing of girls and boys. Indeed, he claimed that many parents appealed to him to hire their daughters because of the protection thus afforded them.

Like most industrialists, Kuppenheimer refused to deal with a union because he claimed that workers were better off contracting as individuals. Furthermore, he considered open shops more American. As the strike continued, in addition to advertising for workers, he hired a New York agent to recruit strikebreakers. One entire floor of the factory was converted into sleeping and kitchen facilities to protect and isolate strikebreakers.

Nevertheless, the strike continued to spread. Strikers paraded past shops blowing whistles as a signal to workers to join them. One of the strikers, Clara Masilotti, later recalled that, having heard about the signal she told the other workers in her shop: "The first whistle we hear...means for us to strike. You cannot work for twelve cents a coat and I cannot baste 35 coats a day." One day 200 persons appeared under the shop window at Blue Island and Polk whistling. Clara was the first to respond and the "greenhorns" followed.

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Born in the United States, Clara had been taken back to Italy by her family as an infant. She returned to Chicago in time to attend school for several years. At the age of thirteen she

went to work in a date factory for thirty-two cents a day, Later she basted coats in a number of small shops, usually quitting after a disagreement with a foreman. In 1910 she was asked to be a forelady and teach the "greenhorns." She remembered that "the boss preferred Italians, Jews, all nationalities who can't speak English. They work like the devil for less wages."

Clara lost her position as a forelady when she refused to tell the workers that their wages had been cut, and she went back to doing piecework. In the course of the 1910 strike she became a leader in the Women's Trade Union League and continued as a union organizer.

At the time of the walkout, the strikers had approached Robert Noren, Chicago district president of the United Garment Workers of America. After consulting Thomas Rickert, the national president, Noren turned down their request for support. Rickert's reluctance stemmed from a "lack of faith in the possibilities of organizing these people," and the assumption that "it was just an over-night strike."

Not until one month after the walkout did the UGWA finally issue a general strike call. Within a week of that call, on November 5, Thomas Rickert and Harry Hart signed a document agreeing on the selection of three persons to take up alleged grievances. The agreement also guaranteed that former employees could return to work without discrimination should they affiliate with the union. It specifically excluded the question of any shop organization. However, when the agreement was submitted to the strikers at a meeting at Hod Carriers' Hall, it was overwhelmingly rejected. The cutters--the aristocrats of the industry--had elected Sidney Hillman to explain why the settlement was unsatisfactory. Rickert was hooted with cries of "sold out," "betrayed," "traitor," and forced to flee from the hall. This episode was followed by a near riot when the UGWA was unable to honor 10,000 of its strike benefit vouchers.

In the meantime the strikers were seeking support from a variety of sources. A delegation of women had approached the Women's Trade Union League, founded in 1903 by social reformers and settlement house workers to support the efforts of working women to organize. Members of the League, moved by what they heard, promised to help if the Chicago Federation of Labor would endorse the strike. The League would provide aid to pickets, speakers for meetings, contact with the general public bringing favorable publicity, and relief aid.

After listening to an appeal by the strikers, the Chicago Federation of Labor delegates were

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moved to declare that "this firm [Hart, Schaffner & Marx] and others of like character were nothing more or less than slave driving institutions of the worst imaginable kind, and ... gradually but surely, getting worse year by year." The day after the strikers rejected the Hart-Rickert agreement the Chicago Federation of Labor came out in support of the garment workers.

A Joint Strike Conference Board assumed leadership of the garment workers' strike. The Chicago Federation of Labor's president, John Fitzpatrick, became chairman; Edward Nockles, the second CFL representative, vice president; Agnes Nestor, a glove worker and president of the Chicago Women's Trade Union League, and Margaret Dreier Robins, social worker and president of the National WTUL and a member of the CFL Board, represented the WTUL; and Robert Noren and Samuel Landers represented the United Garment Workers of America. A committee of thirty-five, representing the workers, met with the Board to maintain liaison between it and the ranks. The Board unanimously adopted an agreement stipulating the need for

a union shop, minimum hours with time and a half paid for overtime, and the establishment of grievance procedures.

Several other community groups rallied to support the struggling clothing workers, including the city's socialist organizations and a Citizens Committee. The *Chicago Daily Socialist* strongly supported the strikers and was credited with goading the UGWA into action. Two special strike editions were sold, earning over \$3,000 for the strike fund as well as spreading the workers' story.

Chicago's prominent reformers formed a Citizens Committee chaired by Rabbi Emil Hirsch, whose congregation included some of the clothing manufacturers. A report prepared by the committee and given widespread attention by the press "revealed serious difficulties in all of the shops..." The report denied that union agitators were responsible for the walkout and declared that the strike was justified. It went on to recommend some form of shop organization. Citizens Committee members became active in attempts to mediate the strike, often behind the scenes.

To sustain the strike through a blustery winter the joint Conference Board commenced a massive fund drive, ultimately collecting \$110,000. Approximately sixty-five percent of the funds came from organized labor, ten percent from socialist organizations, and the remainder in response to appeals organized by the Women's Trade Union League. In addition to financial aid, the Jewish Labor Federation donated \$36,000 worth of meal tickets while the Bakers Union contributed 60,000 loaves of bread.

Gertrude Barnum, Margaret Dreier Robins, and other WTUL members took "girl strikers" to meetings all over Chicago to plead for support. A meeting at Kings Restaurant, across from the old *Chicago Daily News* building on Wells Street, was well attended by newspapermen who frequented the restaurant. As one reporter wrote, "Over a simple little breakfast the girls talked their hearts out and explained their problems in natural fashion to a few friends." He went on to say that "Annie Shapiro...told her story in such a dramatic manner in broken English that her bearers were moved to tears." Clara Masilotti revealed that she had been coerced into working faster for less pay. And Bessie Abramovitz\* explained that during rush periods she was often forced to work twelve or thirteen hours without extra pay, despite the Illinois ten-hour law, while during the slack periods she had to stay in the workshop all day for only one or two hours' pay.

Reporters learned that Anna Cassetteri car-

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\*Later the wife of Sidney Hillman and a founding member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

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ried additional material home to earn nine or ten dollars a week. Sixteen-year-old Anna Rudnitsky had been forced to sew slowly in order to keep her pay low. In spite of intimidation by the foreman, she led 300 young women out of Hart, Schaffner & Marx Shop No. 11. Mrs. Bina Wool testified that she had gone from place to place looking for better conditions, but found them all the same.

Hannah Shapiro did not confine herself to addressing society women and reporters: for the first time in her life she entered saloons to plead for her cause. One bartender contributed fifty cents saying: "That's all I've got, little girl, for since the strike started nobody pays for a drink."

The most successful undertaking of the joint Board was the operation of six commissary stores, providing appropriate fare for the different ethnic neighborhoods. The first two commissaries were opened in the Jewish Shelter House at 525 Maxwell Street and the Northwest Settlement in the Polish area at 1014 Noble. Jewish strikers were also served at 1853 Blue Island; Poles and Lithuanians at 1272 North Lincoln; Italians at 1015 Johnson Street; and Bohemians at 610 West 14th Street. Shop chairmen were responsible for distributing tickets for prepackaged weekly supplies. Reformers took advantage of the opportunity to educate the immigrants. Zelig P. Emerson and Katharine Coman, in a joint article written later, noted: "Many foreigners learned the nutritive value of articles of food hitherto unknown, such as beans and oatmeal. Hereafter, they will probably demand a higher class of ordinary groceries." Twenty-two car loads of food and 200,000 loaves of bread were distributed to over 11,000 families a week.

Of special concern were the 5,000 babies whose families were now unemployed. "Strike babies"--1,250 were born during the strike--received layettes and milk through settlement houses. Appeals for financial aid were sent on postcards carrying the heading, "Sacred Motherhood," and picturing a woman nursing a baby and working on a sewing machine while several small children played among unfinished garments.

The reformers were less successful in controlling the streets. Early efforts by the strikers to induce all the workers to join them were

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relatively calm. But as the weeks dragged on and employers began to import strikebreakers, violence on the part of strikers, non-strikers, and the Chicago police escalated.

A daily pattern was set by the end of the first month. Meetings were held in at least thirty-four halls scattered throughout the garment district. Some meetings were conducted in the native language of the particular group that worked there. More often speakers orated in several languages. Polish was spoken at Walsh's Hall on the Northwest Side; Italian and Yiddish in the West Side Auditorium; and Bohemian and Polish at Pilsen Park on the Southwest Side. After rousing speeches, cheering strikers left the halls in groups to march past tailor shops blowing whistles, enjoining workers to abandon their machines.

A Women's Trade Union League picket committee chaired by Emma Steghagen "undertook the twofold task of picketing with the girls and of patrolling the streets for their protection." After being handled roughly by the police, Steghagen and Ellen Gates Starr, the cofounder of Hull-House, officially and publicly protested. Starr had been grabbed insolently and told to go away or she would be sent to the station even if she were a social worker. Steghagen was given more specific instructions: "Go home and wash your dishes."

Just before Thanksgiving, strikebreakers attracted to the city by employers' agents and advertisements began to arrive in Chicago in large numbers. Pickets were sent to guard the railroad depots and clashes increased. Occasionally appeals to potential strikebreakers to go home succeeded--in one case the United Garment Workers paid the return fares of thirty-five arrivals. But more often the outcome was less peaceful. The Chicago Railroad Company appealed to the police for protection after twenty women set upon non-union Italians inside a streetcar.

Out-of-town strikebreakers were not the only

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source of trouble for the strikers. A substantial number of garment workers had never joined the strikers and as the tension mounted many of these were chased and attacked by strikers on their way home. Private guards were hired by employers to escort strikebreakers to elevated stations and to their homes.

Alarmed by the mounting violence, City Council member and social reformer Professor Charles E. Merriam of the University of Chicago proposed that the City Council headed by Mayor Fred Busse mediate the strike. The joint Conference Board and Hart, Schaffner & Marx cooperated with these efforts. It was hoped that if a settlement could be reached with the largest manufacturer, the others would follow. However, the representatives of the Chicago Wholesale Clothiers' Association persisted in their refusal to meet with union representatives.

Early in December a private detective shot and killed Charles Lazinskas, one of three strikers arguing with two young workers who were being escorted home. The detective barely escaped with his own life as an angry crowd quickly formed.

Approximately 30,000 strikers and sympathizers paraded through the West Side after Lazinskas's funeral, led by bands playing the rallying anthem of the French Revolution, the *Marseillaise*. They had been refused permission to march past the clothing firms' central offices in the Loop. In defiance of another police stipulation banning red flags, marchers carried red and white banners inscribed with rousing slogans. The marchers ended up at the West Side Ball Park, where they heard passionate oratory delivered in six languages. Charles Murphy, owner of the Chicago Cubs, donated coffee and sandwiches as well as the ballpark.

On December 15 a second striker, Frank Nagreckis, was killed and his companion severely injured by a policeman during a skirmish which broke out when strikebreakers tried to enter Kuppenheimer's. In both cases the crowds turned on the police and private detectives. Priests officiating at the funerals of the two Lithuanian workers asked for donations to the strike fund.

Joseph Schaffner and his partner, Harry Hart, appear to have been genuinely shocked by the outbreak of the strike. They had prided themselves on the modern, sanitary workshops provided for their workers, conditions that compared favorably with those prevailing in the sweatshops.

As the strike progressed, however, it became clear that while the physical surroundings of the workers might have been brought up to date, many of the oppressive conditions typical of the sweatshops had persisted. In 1916, testifying before the United States Industrial Regulations Commission, Schaffner declared: "The fundamental cause of the strike was that the workers had no satisfactory channel through which minor grievances, exactions and petty tyrannies of underbosses, etc., could be taken up and amicably adjusted."

While insisting that the strikers' grievances were minor in character, he admitted that they had been allowed to accumulate to the point of creating "a feeling of distrust and enmity toward their immediate superiors." Schaffner went so far as to confess that he had been "so badly informed of the conditions...[that he had] concluded that the strike should have occurred much sooner."

In another account published after Schaffner's death—*Joseph D. Schaffner, 1848-1919, Recollections and Impressions of His Associates*—an attempt was made to put the blame for the strike on the foremen, on the grounds that the owners were too absorbed in the merchandising aspects of their business to pay attention to what was happening in the workshops. The foremen, themselves working on a piece rate, and eager to produce more for less, imposed typical

sweatshop conditions: erratic pay scales, speedups in production, and fines and petty persecutions.

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By the time of Lazinskas's funeral, Hart, Schaffner & Marx had presented their proposal to the mediators. The reaction of the strikers surprised their leaders. After hearing funeral orations urging them to stick together until all the manufacturers conceded their rights, strikers went to their separate meeting halls. Workers who spoke in favor of settlement were drowned out by those opposed to it. Father Lawczyinski, of St. Mary's Independent Catholic Church, exhorted Polish workers to hold out for a closed shop, and holding up a crucifix called on them to make a solemn promise not to accept the terms.

At a meeting at Hod Carriers' Hall, emotions ran so high that John Fitzpatrick and Margaret Dreier Robins were unable to speak. Strikers at the meeting felt betrayed. Discussion was delayed until the agreement could be printed in nine languages and an educational campaign launched. After ten days the joint Board acknowledged defeat in its efforts to settle the strike.

The violence accelerated. Just before Christmas John Donnelly was delivering a wagon filled with unfinished garments to home workers from a non-union tailor shop. Three men shot the eighteen-year-old to death, then disappeared into the crowd. According to his mother, he had been threatened before and intended to quit the next day.

Since people lived as well as worked in the neighborhoods in which such clashes were occurring non-strikers became unwitting victims. Ferdinand Weiss was walking near a group of strikers arguing with strikebreakers and private detectives, when he was killed by a gunshot fired by a private detective. Mourning garment workers attended his funeral en masse. The fifth victim of the strike, Fred Reinhart, a guard at Hart, Schaffner & Marx, was apparently much hated by the strikers. On January 3 he was ambushed and killed by strikers while escorting two young strikebreakers home.

At the beginning of January two manufacturers who were members of the Chicago Wholesale Clothiers' Association agreed to sign contracts with the United Garment Workers of America, thus breaking the impasse. But the strike was far from over.

The settlement with Hart, Schaffner & Marx was accepted on January 14, 1911. It provided for the re-employment of all strikers and guaranteed that there would be no discrimination in favor of or against membership in the United Garment Workers. While no prior settlement on wages and working conditions was made, the agreement called for the establishment of an Arbitration Committee to settle current and future grievances. The Committee was to include one representative of the company, one of the workers, and a third chosen by the first two. No adjustment in wages or working conditions was to take place until after the workers returned to their jobs.

On January 17, Hannah Shapiro, Bessie Abramovitz, and 2,000 of their fellow workers were greeted by their foremen as they returned to their jobs at the Hart, Schaffner & Marx workshops. The approximately 18,000 people still on strike against Clothiers' Association members who had not settled attended meetings denouncing the agreement with Hart, Schaffner & Marx, the Chicago Federation of Labor, the Women's Trade Union League, and the United Garment Workers. Representatives of the radical International Workers of the World appeared at these meetings, hoping, according to one organizer, "to revitalize the strike."

On the other side, most of the members of the Chicago Wholesale Clothiers' Association refused to budge, in spite of tremendous public pressure and negative publicity, including an investigation by the Illinois Senate.

In the face of this intransigence Thomas Rickert, president of the United Garment Workers, took drastic action. On February 3, without consulting the joint Strike Conference Board, let alone the strikers who were still

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attending meetings, he called off the strike. This time the leaders of the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Women's Trade Union League, as well as the strikers felt betrayed. Margaret Dreier Robins called Rickert's action a "hunger bargain." As Sidney Hillman later recalled, the great majority of the workers:

were forced to return to their old miserable conditions, through the back door; and happy were those who were taken back. Many who had participated in the 1910 strike were victimized for months afterward. They were forced to look for other employment and to wait until their record in the strike was forgotten. [*The Tailor Revisited*]

A new group of leaders had, however, been created by the strike, a more militant group than the leadership of the United Garment Workers. As Frank Rosenblum of the strike committee described the situation, the workers were "licked from a strike point of view [but] it did create a nucleus of an organization."

The long-range consequences became quite clear at the 1914 national convention of the United Garment Workers of America held in Nashville, Tennessee. Dissatisfied with the conservative leadership of the union, dissidents from Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York, the main centers of the men's garment industry, joined to form a new union--the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

Under the leadership of veterans of the 1910 Chicago strike—Sidney Hillman, Jacob Potofsky, Bessie Abramovitz, and others—the Amalgamated went on to become one of the country's leading labor unions. The lessons of the Chicago strike were not forgotten.

#### Selected Sources

A basic source has been the material gathered by the committee appointed by the Illinois General Assembly to investigate the 1910-11 strike. In addition to the committee's published report (*Special Senate Committee to Investigate the Garment Workers' Strike*, 47th General Assembly, 1911), much valuable information is contained in the committee's papers on deposit at the Illinois State Archives, Springfield. Other useful documents include a reprint of an April 4, 1937 speech by Abraham Hart on "The Fifty Years of Hart, Schaffner & Marx" made available by the Hart, Schaffner & Marx Company; "Extracts from the Minutes of the Chicago Federation of Labor," November 6, 1910, John Fitzpatrick Papers, CHS; and the videotape interview of Hannah Shapiro Glick by Rebecca Sive-Tomashefsky (Chicago, 1976) on deposit at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle.

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