CHAPTER 1

Beyond Economism

Workers flood the streets to protest government policy. They shut down businesses and public offices. This describes moments in nineteenth-century America; it certainly captures recent events in parts of Europe, Asia, and the American Midwest. While all unions are involved in politics to some degree, large-scale political strikes are rare in the contemporary Anglo-Saxon democracies, and rarer still is the use of industrial action for political ends. Variation in the size, form, and goals of political mobilization is the subject of countless studies. The most interesting tend to focus on the collective actions of those who are marginalized—be they African Americans in the United States or peasant farmers in China—or those engaged in out-and-out rebellion or revolution against the state. This book raises a somewhat different puzzle.

We ask why some organizations move beyond the particular and particularized grievances that are the raison d'être of the organization and engage in political actions, especially those that have little or nothing to do with members' reasons for belonging. For example, in the late 1930s, dockworker unions in Australia and on the West Coast of the United States refused to load scrap iron bound for Japan, in protest against the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. These unions continue to periodically engage in work stoppages or boycotts in opposition to national foreign policy or to assist in freedom struggles overseas.

We explore the variation in organizational norms, governance arrangements, and social networks that produce systematic differences in aggregate behavior. We also explain why members go along. Left-wing longshore union members give up time and money to fight on behalf of social justice causes from which they can expect no material return. Parishioners of churches throughout the United States risk jail to shelter asylum seekers. Altruism is common enough, and so are volunteering, political commitment, and unselfish service to others. Yet, we know that there are environments that evoke such behavior and those that depress it. Why and how do some organizations produce membership willingness to self-sacrifice on behalf of a wide range of political and social justice issues? In some instances, the answer may be simple: self-selection. Those

who want to act on behalf of others join the church or the interest group
or the activist organization that encourages, indeed advertises, such be-
havior. The more interesting cases are those in which individuals join for
one reason but come to pursue goals they may not have considered pre-
viously. Membership changes them. It shapes their identity and choices.

Part of the answer lies in how an organization defines its community
of fate (Levi and Olson 2000), those with whom individuals come to
perceive their own interests as bound and with whom they are willing to
act in solidarity.[1] This term is more than a rhetorical flourish. It embodies
two distinct but interrelated concepts. The community identifies those
whose situations organizational members see as distinct possibilities for
themselves. An individual looks at others and imagines "there, but for
the grace of God, go I." But more than simple human recognition is the
entwining of fate. The community of fate identifies those the organiza-
tional members perceive as engaged in similar struggles for similar goals.
Organizational members view their welfare as bound up with that of the
community. It is a short jump to see how defining a community of fate
has strong implications for the organization's scope of legitimate action.
The community of fate may encompass only members of the organiza-
tion, in which case its actions will be narrow and exclusively self-serving.
But the community of fate could encompass unknown others for whom
the members feel responsibility. These external others need not recognize
or even know about the organization.

A community of fate requires recognition of common goals and en-
emies, and it is strengthened by interdependence. Social interactions, edu-
cation, and the transmission of credible information by leadership shape
common beliefs about what actions are possible for the organization and
its members. Perceived interdependence is a function of immediate social,
work, and residential networks, but it can also result from learning about
distant events and connecting them to local possibilities.

Organizations successful at encouraging costly actions that transcend
narrow self-interest are worthy of note in their own right. They also offer

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[1] Levi and Olson believed they had invented the term but have since learned that other
scholars have also employed the concept—albeit with somewhat different meanings. Pos-
sibly the closest usage to ours is Chang (1997), but he ties the awareness of a common goal
to a shared legal framework. A related idea appears in arguments concerning how employ-
ers try to convince employees that the interdependence of their livelihoods should make
workers willing to sacrifice for the firm. See, e.g., Cole (1979), Videla (2006). Baehr (2008)
relies heavily on the concept of "community of fate" to describe a temporary phenomenon,
". . . a process of group formation under extreme 'disaster'" (140). He relates it to the con-
tested German term *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, which Weber also uses. Baehr distinguishes
himself from Resnik (1999), who uses the concept in a medical context to refer to groups
tied together by empathy.

insight into the processes that foster aggregate behavior and, possibly, changes in beliefs and preferences. An extensive literature exists on the factors affecting individual choice and the aggregation of individual preferences into collective outcomes. We build on that scholarship to understand the factors that encourage individuals to act in ways they may not have considered, let alone gone along with, prior to their engagement in a particular organization.

In attempting to explain the conditions under which organizational membership transforms individual action, altering aggregate behavior, we reframe the question that motivated Lenin in *What Is to Be Done?* (1963 [1902]). Lenin wanted workers to think beyond their own immediate needs, to imagine a society in which a different life was possible, and then to engage in revolution to achieve it. Workers are relatively easily persuaded to fight for improvements in wages, hours, and working conditions. For Lenin, such goals constitute "economism," a focus on the narrow economic interests bound up in the job. He wanted to transform the preferences, beliefs, and actions of the working class. His aim was to create class-conscious workers who understood their fate as bound up with each other across occupations and even borders, workers who realized their struggle had to be over far more than their working conditions and pay. Lenin held that only in this way could the proletariat become victorious, significantly improving their material well-being while also achieving a more equitable society.

Lenin proposed political education as the way to inspire workers. He advocated a workers' newspaper to convey information, and he encouraged other socialization processes to make workers aware of and sensitive to the salience of political projects near and dear to the revolutionaries' hearts.[2] His strategy, developed within an authoritarian and repressive context, also included the organization of the revolutionaries into cells, with very few individuals knowing each other. He was eager to prevent the regime from locating and jailing the Communist Party activists.

Predating Lenin and operating within a democratic framework, Frederick Engels argued that ballots might transform capitalism into socialism. However, confidence in electoral victories stumbled on the very problem Lenin identified: workers were more committed to achieving immediate material benefits than long-term changes that might come at a significant price (Przeworski 1985). The empirical reality is that middle-class

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[2]   Others who shared Lenin's commitment to revolutionary change offered other approaches. Rosa Luxemburg (1971 [1916]) argued for mass action and general strikes. Antonio Gramsci distinguished between democratic and non-democratic regimes and then suggested the most appropriate strategies for each (Gramsci and Buttigieg 1992).

and well-off proletariat voters reveal little interest in overturning the economic system (Przeworski and Sprague 1986; Ziblatt 2014).

Mobilizing the proletariat to engage in revolution is not what is at issue for us in this book, but we do care about the conditions that change individual beliefs and actions. While we can dismiss Lenin's model of revolution, we cannot so easily dismiss the central question he raises: What motivates members of organizations developed to serve the interests of their membership to choose to engage in actions on behalf of a larger whole? Nor can we easily dismiss some of Lenin's insights, namely the critical role of leadership, education, and information. Our research reinforces the importance of these factors in empowering members to act in ways they may not previously have thought viable.

Some scholars focus on structural factors and political opportunities that make it more or less likely for a group to act and to act in a certain way. The principal contemporary exemplar of this analytic tradition is the resource mobilization literature (Lipsky 1968; Tilly 1978; Zald and McCarthy 1979; Tarrow 1994) and its more recent contentious politics variant (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). While our approach shares much in common with the contentious politics perspective, our focus is more squarely on the micro-foundations of behavior and the strategic interactions between the leaders and followers and among the followers themselves. Consistent with recent work by Bueno de Mesquita (2010), we claim that leaders need to convince followers that they can succeed, which in turn requires a demonstration that enough others share the leaders' sentiments about appropriate actions and are willing to act when necessary.

One way to think about this set of issues, of course, is through models of collective action, particularly those that suggest the various dilemmas that exist for those deciding whether to cooperate or contribute (see, e.g., Lichbach 1995, 1997). Mancur Olson (1965), James Q. Wilson (1973), and many others emphasize selective incentives, largely material but also solidary and ideological. Selective incentives certainly play a role in accounting for certain kinds of contributions; indeed, Olson discussed union dues–paying as a primary example of how selective incentives work in practice. Others emphasized leadership as a means for providing and targeting selective incentives (Frohlich, Oppenheimer, and Young 1971). What selective incentives cannot adequately explain is how encompassing communities of fate are or how governance and norms influence group choice. Rational choice models, particularly the new economic institutionalism (North 1990; Ostrom 1990), get us a little further by considering how rules constrain or facilitate behavior. Behavioral economics provides even more clues with its focus on social preferences, such as ethical commitments and altruism. Considerations of when prosocial

preferences are crowded out by material incentives (Bowles and Polanía-Reyes 2011) and the extent to which social context influences this process (Fehr and Hoff 2011) are related to the issues we raise here.

Our question and approach also have much in common with the large sociological literature on group mobilization and collective action.[3] Though we build on several insights in this literature, we differ in that our concern is not so much with cooperation in discrete, well-defined activities. Rather, we emphasize how groups already recognizing a mutual interest come to expand their scope of action to act on behalf of those outside the group. That is, we make endogenous the projects a group is willing to undertake. A central issue here—one that is less explored in the sociological literature—is how such commitments can be maintained and reproduced through time in the context of formal organizations.

Our approach is to identify the aggregate behaviors that result from interactions between leaders and followers, as mediated by organizational institutions. Although we rely on both game theory and economic models, ours is a highly contextual account emphasizing the beliefs of the leaders, the settings they create as well as inherit, and the beliefs, networks, and responses of the members. Unlike most of the work in the literatures from which we primarily draw, we do not presume that individuals already have clear preferences. We are open to the possibility that preferences change as a consequence of membership. At the least, preferences are clarified and, possibly, reordered as members come to believe that certain goals are actionable and potentially achievable.

Our Argument

We explore our puzzle in the context of labor unions, focusing on variation in unions' use of industrial power for political ends. A union's bargaining power ultimately lies in the members' ability to coordinate in withholding labor from employers.[4] Most unions maintain some contact with politicians and political authorities. Nevertheless there is variation across unions in both the extent of political mobilization and their industrial success. Most unions, not surprisingly, strike rarely and then only to promote the wages, hours, benefits, job security, and working conditions of members, or even specific subsets of members (Golden 1997). Many

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[3] See Oliver and Myers (2002) for a review.

[4] Even when considering the seemingly straightforward situation of wage bargaining, there is considerable debate over how exactly to specify a union's maximand; see Dunlop (1944), Martin (1980), Oswald (1982), Blair and Crawford (1984), Mori and Tedeschi (1992), Booth (1995).

unions also lobby for protective legislation or forms of social insurance from which they will benefit. At the extreme end of both continua are unions that use their industrial power in the service of political ends having virtually nothing to do with their own conditions. They do not give up their social movement energy as Michels (1962 [1919]) predicted or displace their goals as Merton (1968 [1957]) observed.

But why do they behave this way and how do they sustain it? To state the main thesis of the first part of the book: sustained political mobilization requires an ideologically motivated founding leadership cohort who devises organizational rules that facilitate both industrial success and coordinated expectations about the leaders' political objectives. The result is contingent consent (Levi 1997): members will willingly, sometimes enthusiastically, go along with leadership demands as long as they are convinced that they are receiving the material benefits the organization promised them upon joining, that the leadership is accountable, and that enough other members are also going along. In the second half of the book, we explore the claim that members come to hold the belief (or at least act consistently with the belief) that their fate is intertwined not only with their associates in the organization but also with a larger population; by helping others, they are helping themselves. This may also require them to focus on long-term goals in addition to immediate aims. Interactions among the members, the capacity to challenge leadership arguments and demands, and attachments to the organizational traditions are the factors that produce both contingent consent with leadership and a more encompassing community of fate.

Figure 1.1 outlines schematically the first part of our argument, identifying the major actors, variables, and outcomes that we discuss in subsequent chapters. We begin at a moment of organizational founding or crisis. At such times a leader who devises tactical solutions to the threats confronting the organization has an outsized opportunity to design subsequent organizational governance institutions, defined as the formal rules and informal norms that delineate how decisions are taken, how the organization will respond to future events, and how and on what basis organizational members should evaluate the actions of leaders. But there is no guarantee that effective leaders will emerge. A persuasive leader could arise and drive the organization off a cliff with the wrong policies or weak governance institutions. Or perhaps the challenges facing the organization are simply insoluble. In these cases, the organization will fail.

All the leaders we investigate are asking members to act on behalf of material interests, but some are also asking members to act on behalf of political or ethical goals that have little or nothing to do with the reasons for joining the voluntary organization. Variation in leaders' political commitments is not the object of explanation here; we take the

Building an organization

Figure 1.1: The founding argument in schematic form

leaders' preferences as exogenous. Our explanation emphasizes the processes by which leadership earns the confidence of members and then succeeds in persuading them to act on behalf of goals the leadership argues are important. The leader attempts to convince members that their own fate hinges on achievement of ends that serve external others as well as themselves. Successful leaders effect their ends through a four-step process: (1) achievement of the economic goals of the union; (2) the announcement of principles the leaders pledge to uphold; (3) the creation of governance arrangements that allow leadership and members to effectively coordinate; and (4) processes and institutions that either induce consensual maintenance of the principles or compel members to act as if they consent. Numbers 2, 3, and 4 on this list are components of the organizational governance institutions.

Nearly all unions, indeed most organizations, have governance institutions in this sense. However, not all organizational governance institutions emphasize acting beyond material self-interest. That, we argue, requires leadership commitment to political causes. More generally we argue that leadership is costly and difficult. Those who undertake to lead do so not only for the benefit of the organization but also because they themselves have other desires and objectives—monetary, social, or political. Organizational members will be willing to contribute to the leader's "rents" so long as the leader continues to serve the members well. The founding leaders at these pivotal moments are in unique positions to establish the form and level of leadership rents. Where these founding leaders are politically motivated, the resulting leadership rents will be such that the leader is able to ask for member mobilization for political causes, up to a point.

We claim that these features—form and level of leadership rents, organizational principles, and governance institutions—form, loosely

speaking, an equilibrium in which they are all self-reinforcing. Organizational principles coordinate member expectations about leader demands. Leader demands must be consistent with organizational principles.

In equilibrium we can observe stable organizational behavior, including action consistent with an encompassing community of fate when principles and governance institutions allow for it. Where leadership rents, governance institutions, principles, and behavior are out of equilibrium, the organization can fail. As an example, nominally Communist union leaders who engage in financial corruption while trying to suppress internal dissent act against their own stated principles; they are likely to precipitate a dramatic change in leadership and governance institutions.

If we understand the production of the organizational governance institutions as the result of a kind of contract between leadership and members, then there is also a question of how it is reproduced through time. Figure 1.2 presents a schematic representation of the dynamic part of our argument.

This dynamic part of the argument has two prongs. The first has to do with the endogenous effect of organizational governance, specifically leadership rents, on the types of individuals who are likely to come forward as potential leaders in the future. In an organization where leadership rents are mainly political in nature, the organization will tend to attract political activists as leaders over time. So long as the organization continues to perform well, this relationship will persist. Leaders will continue to demand political mobilization from members across leadership cohorts. The second prong involves the members' reasons for complying with the leader's calls to action. We suspect that the workers come to the job with beliefs about what is attainable through a union and what the union has a right to expect of them. Some of these beliefs are crystallized

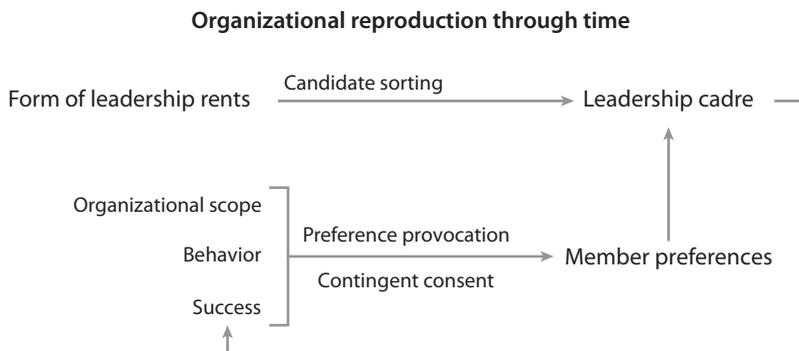**Organizational reproduction through time**

Figure 1.2: The dynamic argument in schematic form

before joining; others are evoked upon being asked to participate in political actions. As new members join, they will likely view the culture of the organization as so many norms of behavior. They will comply, i.e., engage in called-upon actions, provided there are sufficient numbers around them visibly engaging in that behavior. Initially, we expect that some combination of sanctions and expectations about others promotes compliance. Over time, however, the new recruits may come to reconsider their beliefs and preferences. By being asked to contribute—and initially doing so for simple rationalist reasons—members may come to update their beliefs about what is relevant and possible in the context of their union, a process we call preference provocation.

The first part of the book focuses on the issues outlined in figure 1.1. We consider what leaders do, given their particular aims and beliefs, to achieve their ends and engage members in that process. We imagine that, in these initial pivotal moments, members are in fact "economistic." Building on this basis we describe the nature of governance institutions required to elicit member compliance with requests for political activism, treating this activism as a benefit accruing only to the leader. In the second half of the book we turn the argument outlined in figure 1.2 to understand what members actually believe or prefer when it comes to political mobilization. This is more difficult to determine, and understanding change in those beliefs and preferences is harder still. Yet our investigation of how to achieve membership compliance also reveals some of the possible mechanisms by which beliefs might be formed or at least acted upon.

In addressing the issue of revealed organizational preferences, we build on economic theories of the firm, extending and modifying them to look at how organizations with different types of goals come about. In so doing, we present a basic framework for examining an organization's "culture."[5] Our focus is on the role of leaders in shaping and transmitting information to the membership through organizational rules and the leaders' actions. Members, for their part, come to accept the leaders' positions so long as the organization continues to deliver good basic outcomes. We will demonstrate that where there are costly actions exerted in support of causes that have no direct material benefit to union members; leadership abided by the principles established in the formative period; some members' beliefs were transformed by their participation in the organization; and leaders' demands were rewarded with membership's contingent consent.

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[5] See Levi (2005) for an earlier version of this argument.

The Cases

The cases that particularly interest us are those organizations that ask individuals to engage in actions that require self-sacrifice, sometimes to the point of death, and where personal payoffs and selective incentives appear to be an insufficient explanation of behavior. In particular, we are fascinated by how organizations induce members to take costly personal actions that do not seem to have connection to the reasons people joined the organization initially. To understand these cases requires us to compare them with what the followers themselves are also likely to consider: cases where the organization survives without demanding similar actions.

Organizations that manage to expand their scope of action admittedly are not the norm, but neither are they unheard of. And whereas our discussion focuses on labor unions, the phenomenon that interests us is considerably broader. For example, McDaniel (2008) examines political mobilization among American black church congregations during the civil rights era. Some congregations mobilized at considerable risk and expense, while other congregations (and whole denominations) chose to eschew political causes as outside the purview of a religious community. He argues that preferences of the senior pastor along with organizational rules were pivotal in explaining which congregations mobilized and which did not.

Empirically we investigate a specific type of organization: labor unions in democratic countries. We choose four unions in the transport sector. Truckers and dockworkers occupy key positions in national and international supply chains. Their strikes stop trade. The considerable leverage their unions can exercise over the economy is certainly important in securing good contracts. It also means they could use industrial actions to political effect, even if basically symbolic. However, only some do. Among them are the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in the United States and the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) in Australia (now merged into the Maritime Union of Australia, or MUA). In stark contrast are two other American unions, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) and the International Longshore Union (ILA). Table 1.1 arrays the cases along the two dimensions we discussed earlier: degree of industrial success and the extent to which the members are politically mobilized.

The political mobilization dimension coincides with the business union/ social movement union distinction made in the labor studies literature, with the IBT and ILA representing archetypal business unions, those whose commitments are to the welfare of members exclusively. But both business unions and social movement unions (those committed to the social welfare of members and the larger society) can vary in the extent to

Table 1.1: The cases organized by industrial
success and political mobilization

		Political mobilization	
		High	*Low*
	High	ILWU	Teamsters
Industrial success			
	Low	WWF/MUA	ILA

which they succeed in improving the material conditions of dues-payers.[6] Almost all unions (and certainly those we examine) ask members to contribute personal time and money or approve organizational resources for charitable purposes, electoral campaigns, and lobbying. Relatively few, however, advocate political and social justice causes that seem unrelated to the achievement of better wages or working conditions.

Another reason for examining unions is that they must recruit a large number of workers in a firm or industry to effectively control the supply of labor. This implies that unions cannot rely on strict rules and steep demands on members to screen for only the most motivated—tools available to smaller groups with different objectives (Iannaccone 1992).[7]

All four of these unions have periodic elections, thus allowing us to explore what leaders do to retain their positions and with what success. In all of them we find examples of dissident behavior; how the leadership deals with the members involved reveals something about the process of institutionalizing acceptance of the leaders' beliefs.

Finally, these unions represent plausible counterfactuals of one another in the sense that all of these unions could use industrial action to political advantage should they choose; they all occupy a critical niche in international supply chains that permits them to exercise both economic and political leverage unavailable to most unions. Any of these unions could have followed the opposite path, and local branches within each union often did.

We have selected unions that share certain features but whose governance institutions vary. The membership, at least at the beginning of

[6] The heading "social movement unions" is ambiguous, since some scholars use this term to refer to organizing tactics (Voss and Sherman 2000) and others to refer to activist unions with broad-based social commitments. When we use the term "social movement unionism" we use it in the latter sense.

[7] But these unions do succeed in raising the cost of exit. We thank Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenca for emphasizing these points.

the seventy-plus years we study, was largely drawn from a labor pool of casual, i.e., temporary, workers chosen more for their brawn than their brains. There is considerable evidence that the same workers sometimes were employed as truckers, sometimes as warehousemen, and sometimes as dockworkers. Yet, the workers also come from a diversity of religious, ethnic, and political backgrounds. Some have considerable exposure to and experience with radical unionism, and some have none. Our presumption is that the membership of the unions we investigate is heterogeneous in terms of the levels and even kind of political convictions they possess. Even when a union has a screening process before accepting a worker to full membership (as the ILWU does), whether the worker can do the job well and is a "good mate" are the most salient attributes. Even if unions expend a considerable amount of effort on socialization, political convictions appear to vary, albeit perhaps not by as much as prior to the socialization. Put another way, these unions are particularly interesting cases because people join them to find work on the waterfront, not because they want to join a political group.

The IBT and ILA exemplify unions that ask their members to act consistently with a relatively narrow concept of self-interest; the other two unions elicit from members not only effort to improve their own well-being but also sacrifices of time and money in support of social and political causes. The social movement/business union distinction is not meant to imply that business unions do not engage with politics. To the contrary, business unions routinely endorse and contribute to political parties and candidates and turn out to protest various public policies and government actions. Nevertheless, these political activities always surround policies and jurisdictions that are directly relevant to the members' interests and therefore lack the puzzling quality of the broader mobilizations we study.

The most dramatic—and risky—actions involve using the union's industrial strength and leverage to make political points on topics far from the direct interests of union members. The costs to the participants include loss of pay and threats of punitive action by employers and, sometimes, by government. These actions include work slowdowns, boycotts of ships, countries, or cargos, and even shutting down the ports. For example, on November 30, 1999, the ILWU closed the ports on the West Coast to protest the World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial being held in Seattle. In his speech to the protest rally in Seattle, ILWU president Brian McWilliams declared, "That is why the ILWU is here today, with all of you—to tell the agents of global capital that we, the workers, those who care about social justice and protecting our rights and our planet, will not sit quietly by while they meet behind closed doors to carve up our world." He went on to refer to several similar events from the ILWU's history, including the following:

- The 1997 boycott of the *Neptune Jade* and the 1998 closure of the Port of Oakland to protest the ship loaded by strikebreakers in Liverpool. The ILWU boycott inspired subsequent refusals to work the ship in Vancouver, Yokohama, and Kobe.
- The 1989–92 boycott of coffee cargo from El Salvador in response to the killing of six Jesuit priests by U.S.-supported right-wing death squads
- The 1981 refusal to handle military cargo bound for El Salvador
- The sustained refusal of ILWU locals, especially Local 10 (Oakland/San Francisco), to handle cargo from Apartheid South Africa throughout the 1980s
- The 1980–81 boycott of Iranian shipping in response to the hostage crisis
- The 1974 boycott of Chilean cargo in response to the U.S.-backed Pinochet coup
- In 1939 the ILWU refused to load scrap iron heading for Japan in response to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria

The ILWU has simultaneously closed all West Coast ports in political protest on several occasions, including the 2008 May Day protest of the Iraq War; the 1999 WTO protest; the April 24, 1999 closure in solidarity with the national protest to free Mumia Abu-Jamal; the 1977 closure of the ports to all South African–flagged ships; 1968 port closures in mourning for Martin Luther King, Jr.

Similarly, the WWF has closed ports and banned certain commerce on a variety of occasions, including: the 1938 refusal to load scrap iron on ships bound for Japan; 1945–46 refusal to load Dutch ships bound for Indonesia; various closures in 1948–54 to protest the Australian Crimes Act, and especially the Menzies government's use of it against Communist activists. In the heated period of the 1960s through 1980s, the WWF instituted bans on South African shipping (not lifted until Mandela was freed) and on Indonesian cargo in support of the East Timorese. The Sydney branch repeatedly refused to handle cargo associated with involvement in the Vietnam conflict, including a 1973 ban on all U.S. military shipping in Sydney in response to U.S. bombing in Vietnam. The WWF also provided support for embattled trade unionists in Chile, Poland, Pakistan, and other parts of the world, often as part of a campaign initiated by the International Transport Federation (ITF).

High-profile port closures are only one indicator of costly political stands the union and its leadership have taken. The ILWU was among the most racially progressive unions in the United States, and the WWF promoted Australian Aboriginal equality early on. Both were among the earliest public opponents of the Vietnam War. The ILWU supported Henry

Wallace in the 1948 presidential election; 1950s WWF federal leaders supported the left candidates in the Australian Labor Party. The majority of the membership in both unions rallied around their leadership when they were under threat from national governments for political stands, even when those stands were not consonant with membership preferences. Both unions routinely raise and donate money to support striking and locked out workers but also to support humanitarian and political causes around the world. Contingents of ILWU activists routinely appear at major protest events, even those, such as the 2011 protests in Madison, Wisconsin, that are far from their industrial jurisdiction and homes.

The previous examples serve to emphasize two things. First, the dramatic political work stoppages are part of a larger pattern of organizational commitments and behavior. Second, there is an important distinction between the political mobilization we are examining here and political strikes more broadly. The activities of the ILWU and WWF are particularly noteworthy because the issues at hand did not directly affect their rank-and-file members; neither union was likely to effect change in government policy on its own.[8] This is in sharp distinction to large-scale labor mobilization and "strike waves" (Franzosi 1995) directed against governments in which there *is* an expectation that the unions' actions could force a change in policy or even bring down the government. Put another way, there is an analytic and qualitative difference between longshoremen striking to protest the Iraq War five years into the conflict and teachers, firefighters, and state workers protesting at the Wisconsin state capitol to influence legislation.

Our Data and Approach

Methodologically, we see our work as contributory to a growing research tradition that integrates interpretative perspectives with game theory (see, e.g., Ferejohn 1991; Bates, de Figueiredo, and Weingast 1998; Bates, Greif et al. 1998; de Figueiredo and Weingast 1999; Sanchez-Cuenca 2001; Chandra 2004; Brady, Ferejohn, and Pope 2005). We have immersed ourselves in the history and governance details of the organizations we study. This enables us to identify precisely how leadership builds a trustworthy reputation, the nature of the institutions and how they operate to constrain or enable behavior, the processes of socialization and education, the focal points for coordination, and the triggers for action. Formal models sensitize us to the dynamics of a given situation and allow us to derive testable propositions. The contextual and historical material provides the basis for interpreting the motivations of the actors and their beliefs.

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[8] Although many unionists reported feeling that their actions had made a difference in the world, at least at the margin.

Our research relies throughout on the combination of multiple methods and developed theory (à la Poteete, Janssen, and Ostrom 2010). Statistical analyses of strike and survey data offer additional evidence for our claims. Recently developed tools for statistical matching even take us a good way toward showing that union membership can transform members' opinions and behavior. Our hard-won quantitative data, however, cannot provide the in-depth understanding of the organizations and the processes that our explanation demands. For a fuller account, we rely on the combination of our formal models and contextual detail. The end product, we hope, resonates with the experiences of the actors we describe as well as with our models.

We investigate the four unions over time so that we are able to identify the extent and nature of any belief change that takes place and the process by which it is reproduced, if it is, despite demographic and leadership changes within the union and technological, economic, and political changes affecting the industry. Our data come from records of union meetings and decisions, membership and electoral rolls, interviews, and oral histories that date from the 1920s through the early years of the twenty-first century. All the cases are considered at significant moments of transformation and growth.

At the pivotal moments, in the 1930s, our data allow us to determine whether the unions' members self-select for political or ideological reasons. They do not. As the unions develop over time and as the economic benefits of membership improve, there does appear to be a selection process at work. The motivation may be nepotism, or it may be political. The cause is of less import than the effect: It becomes relatively easy to reproduce the organizational equilibrium within the unions whose employers choose job applicants from among the family and neighbors of those already working there.

Alternative Accounts

Voluntary organizations exhibit tremendous variation in their expectations of adherents, and members differ in their willingness to comply with organizational demands. We argue that, in certain circumstances, organizational membership leads to actions on behalf of others or for a cause, actions that entail unrequited costs in time, lost income, and possible bodily harm. This seems to be what is happening within a subset of religious, political, and labor organizations.

We are hardly the first to observe that some unions and voluntary organizations sustain political, economic, or justice commitments that other similar organizations do not even consider. The easiest and most

straightforward explanation is that the beliefs and preferences that seem to be shared by the group reflect a process of self-selection. Individuals join political parties, labor unions, churches, activist groups, and even soccer clubs in which the organizational expectations are consistent with their interests and leave those that make demands that are too onerous. This is an unlikely scenario for unions, however, whose membership is generally determined by employment opportunities or job preferences, not by political persuasions. Even so, we will explore any possible role of self-selection as we proceed.

In other cases, individuals fear ostracism if they deviate from the group norm and hope for social acceptance if they acquiesce. Selective incentives provide sufficient explanation for the collective actions produced by voluntary organizations relying on self-selection or social pressure. However, it is not always easy to tell if this is truly the case. Sometimes what appears to be shared norms is actually silence, as Timur Kuran (1995) has documented and as recent international events so well demonstrate. Organizations and governments often succeed in suppressing dissent. In the chapters that follow we will endeavor to show that preference falsification is not occurring in the most politically mobilized unions. Repression is most visible in the *non-mobilized* unions.

There is a long-standing and ongoing debate about the reasons why individuals adopt the norms of the organizations in which they find themselves a part or, less strongly, comply with the actions the organizations demand even when they do not fully agree with what is being demanded of them. One pole of the debate is represented by a social relational or network approach (Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2009) that emphasizes the normative and affective commitments group membership elicits: "The strength of normative social commitments reflects the degree to which people perceive an affinity between themselves and a group's or organization's mission, values, and goals" (ibid., 24). The second is a rational choice account that emphasizes dependence on the organization or group (Hechter 1987). Individuals adhere to normative demands when there are no viable and preferable alternatives (also see Ensminger and Knight 1997). Relationships within the organization as well as dependence upon it are important factors in understanding group behavior, but more important, we argue, are the rents sought by the group's leadership and the institutional arrangements in which members operate.

Research specifically on union behavior has also generated some alternative explanations to ours. The first is that unions formed and initially led by Communists are the ones most likely to have broad political agendas (Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 2002). It is indeed the case that radical leadership is a key to the beginnings of the ILWU and WWF, but a founding ideology in and of itself cannot account for why some of these unions

maintain such commitments and others do not. Many of the unions founded or led by radical Communists in the 1930s–1950s did not mobilize politically, at least not to the extent we document here. Many have passed from the scene as their industries were transformed by technology and trade or because radical, ideologically driven leaders failed to ensure that the members' hard-won benefits were defended (Kimeldorf 1992). There are even examples, such as the British Electrical Trade Union, when radical leaders engaged in ballot-rigging, leading to their defeat at the hands of both internal and external foes and the wholesale reconstitution of the organization in the early 1960s.

A second alternative hypothesis concerning the role of leadership ideology comes from Robert Fishman (2004), who seeks to answer the question of why some unions engage in actions that link their specific struggles with larger national and international goals and some only engage in "defensive localism" (ibid., 62).[9] His answer emphasizes conversational ties that link socially recognized intellectuals with the leadership of local unions. Although links between leaders and parties certainly existed, we find little evidence of the deep linkages Fishman describes. Despite the existence of intellectuals eager to engage with unions in the periods on which we focus, hardly any such engagement took place. Perhaps this reflects the absence of a socialist party in the United States and the fraught relationship of the WWF with the Australian Labor Party. Nonetheless, Fishman's work alerts us to the possible influences the Communist Party may have exercised on several of the leaders we discuss.

Some scholars (e.g., Lipset 1994) argue that certain national cultures and religions are more likely than others to engender strong allegiance to democratic practices and social justice ends; progressive tendencies are more commonly attributed to Anglo-Saxon or Nordic Protestants, and conservative perspectives to Irish or Southern European Catholics. Howard Kimeldorf argues that the demographic differences between the largely Scandinavian Protestant dockworkers of the West Coast and the Italian Catholic dockworkers of the East Coast partially explain the distinctiveness of the ILWU relative to the corrupt and hierarchical International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), from which the ILWU splintered in 1937 (Kimeldorf 1988). An immediate reason to doubt this account is the fact that the Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF) of Australia shares the ILWU's political orientation but has a membership that is heavily Catholic and Irish.

Kimeldorf's primary explanation of the difference between the ILWU and the ILA is the degree of concentration and coordination among the employers of dock labor. His account resonates with others that

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[9] The term "defensive localism" comes from Weir (1994).

emphasize government and employer initiatives in explaining the broad contours of labor power (Hall 1986; Swenson 1989; Western 1997; Iversen 1999; Ebbinghaus and Visser 2000; Wallerstein and Western 2000; Streeck 2002; Mares 2003). While they capture part of the story, they underplay the degree to which employer organizations are endogenous to labor power and vice versa. In the ILWU case, the coordination of employers was partly induced by the ability of the union to sustain a coast-wide strike.

Yet another explanation has to do with the nature of the work and the labor market. Maritime workers, including those in longshore, tend to be internationalist in perspective. They come into contact with individuals from many different countries, they are exposed to a wide range of ideologies and belief systems, and they recognize that they are part of a network of ports whose workers can make a big difference during job actions and contract disputes (Silver 2003; Gentile 2010). Moreover, the team nature of the work on the docks, particularly before containerization, made the workers interdependent in ways that should facilitate solidarity. These factors are important but do not account for the considerable variation in the militancy of longshore workers. The organizational governance institutions and aggregate behavior of the ILA are closer to that of the Teamsters than to that of the ILWU and WWF.

Finally, it might be the case that symbolic political action is actually an instance of instrumental action. By demonstrating solidarity and militancy around an issue that does not reflect attacks on wages, hours, benefits, and conditions of work, the union is in fact signaling how tough it will be if employers threaten union gains. We devote chapter 8 to examining this possibility.

The Chapters

We build our case in two parts. The first part of the book, consisting of chapters 2–5, focuses on the founding or pivotal moments of an organization when the major tactical and strategic innovations have enabled the union to overcome its fundamental collective action problems. Our first step, presented in chapter 2, is the development of a formal model that specifies the relationships between leaders and members. In the model we derive some key insights. Organizational leaders can develop reputations for effectiveness; this reputation makes possible leadership rents, which expand cooperation and compensate the leader when information acquisition and communication are costly. Members agree to contribute to the leader's compensation up to a point. The form these rents take, whether monetary or political, affects the scope of union activities. Since these

outcomes are only a few of many possible, we introduce the concept of organizational governance institutions that embody the union's solution to the equilibrium selection problem. As in all formal models, particularly those intended as part of an analytic narrative (Bates, Greif, et al. 1998), the game lays out the paths not taken as well as the one followed. This allows us to derive alternative hypotheses and testable implications, which we then delve into with historical narrative and archival records as well as quantitative analysis of political and industrial work stoppages.

In chapters 3–5 we turn to the cases themselves, beginning with the two business unions, the IBT and ILA in chapter 3. Chapter 4 focuses on the two more politically committed unions, the ILWU and WWF. We identify the pivotal historical moments and leaders in these organizations and discuss their attitudes toward the appropriate scope of union activity and the type of rents they hoped to secure in exchange for taking up the costly and risky task of leading a labor organization in the 1930s–1970s. We identify the (usually) explicit set of organizational principles that formalize these beliefs about union scope of action and show how the organizational governance institutions are consistent with both the stated principles and the form of the leader's rents in ways anticipated by the model in chapter 2. In chapter 5 we begin the process of relaxing some of the assumptions in the theoretical model by examining how the national-level organizations manage internal heterogeneity across individual members as well as specific geographically defined subunits. We observe internal opposition to the dominant national leadership of the IBT, ILWU, and WWF. We compare specific locals within each union, to show the robustness of the larger organizational governance institutions to perturbation once in equilibrium and that, at the local level, workers did not sort in to unions for political or social reasons; rather, they joined where the economic opportunities first appeared. We find that the ILWU and WWF, the unions whose leaders ask member contributions to political projects, pursued active persuasion combined with tolerance, including leaders backing down from some controversial stances. The IBT, on the other hand, invested less in persuasion and employed screening and repression. This local heterogeneity and the strategies to manage it were unanticipated by the model in chapter 2, leading us to consider some model extensions in the second part of the book.

In chapters 6–9 we explore the anomalies and inconsistencies that our historical and statistical data have turned up, including ILWU and WWF members reporting profound transformations in their political thinking and behavior. In chapter 6 we revisit the theoretical argument, suggesting extensions and revisions of our basic theoretical framework. We argue that, while some people have specific and deeply held political commitments, most appear to hold only vague or ill-formed beliefs. People revise

and act on them only when challenged to do so in particular contexts, and most have not had such an opportunity prior to joining the union. Presenting members with a specific demand to act jointly and coherently forces them to crystallize their preferences and generates information about their own political and industrial efficacy. We present interview and oral history evidence to document self-reported changes in political beliefs among the ILWU and WWF rank and file as a result of their union experiences.

In chapter 7 we extend the analysis to include an original survey of rank-and-file ILWU members. We begin with a specific puzzle: even though ILWU members clearly have benefited from increased international trade, the union has maintained a consistent stance opposing trade liberalization for several decades. Interviews with ILWU leaders show that the union's stance appears to be sincere, based on the belief that current international trade rules unfairly benefit multinational corporations while imposing costs on the workers and the environment in both rich and poor countries. Union leaders repeatedly justify their position in reference to the ILWU's stated organizational principles. We then turn to an original survey of both newly registered and long-term ILWU members in Los Angeles/Long Beach, Seattle, and Tacoma from 2006 to 2010. We compare ILWU members' attitudes toward trade with those of non-members with otherwise similar characteristics. We also compare new union members with older cohorts. We find that ILWU members are more likely to have strong political opinions; they are more likely to support trade restrictions and oppose NAFTA; and they are more likely to engage in politics, including turning out to vote, protest, and donate to political causes. All these relationships are stronger among those with a more intense exposure to the union, even accounting for age cohort effects. Taken together, these findings are difficult to explain with reference to union members' economic interests, but they are consistent with a process of preference provocation due to ILWU membership.

Chapter 8 seriously considers the possibility that political activism may yield an economic benefit to the union. To the extent that this is true, it further reinforces the rank-and-file confidence in the leadership and consequently the governance equilibrium leading to group-level political mobilization. Specifically we consider whether and how large-scale political actions by the ILWU and WWF/MUA could serve as signaling devices to employers when it comes time to bargain over wages. We lay out this logic and examine its implications using original data on ILWU and WWF political work stoppages. We find some evidence that the signaling explanation may be at play in the ILWU, but only after significant technological shocks to the industry and a softening of confidence in Harry Bridges' leadership. The WWF, operating in a far different institutional

environment, displays no evidence that its political mobilizations are an attempt to signal solidarity or resolve to employers.

The final chapter represents our efforts to pull our findings together and extend the reasoning to other circumstances, including the future of the ILWU and WWF. We reflect on how organizational attempts to build (or restrict) a population's "community of fate" can have effects in state-building and in the politicization of ethnic or religious divisions. By uncovering the processes that account for why some unions go beyond economism when others do not, our intention is to offer a more general explanation of the observed diversity among religious, political, and even nationalist groups. Our first job, however, is to understand unions. It is to that task we now turn.