## CHAPTER V

### DECISIVE VICTORIES

A REPORT of a strike usually enumerates a list of grievances, as formulated by the union or by investigators, and sometimes adds to them a statement that there is "general discontent." The reader receives the impression that there are certain well-defined goals which the workers have in view, and that with these attained, the processes of work will go on smoothly, as if the grievances were foreign bodies which had to be removed from the industrial system by skilful surgery. Such a conception of a strike may be helpful to analysis, but it is over-formal, and does not give a real picture of the worker's state of mind. His daily life is to him a continuous process; he knows when it becomes burdensome or unbearable, but he does not often pick out a single minor cause for that condition. Some things, to be sure, irritate him more than others, but his dissatisfaction is usually a general and cumulative one, and is only dulled by the adjustment of grievances. Not until the whole course of his life is altered for the better does he feel any appreciable difference.

So it is with the issues which have assumed im-

portance in the many struggles of the needle-trades unions. They have been in themselves important; but to understand their significance to the workers it is necessary to think of their lives as a whole.

Dr. A. S. Daniel, speaking before the annual meeting of the National Consumers' League early in 1901, described a tenement which he said was typical of the thousands in which home work was being done on the East Side of New York. "The apartment consists of three rooms, two opening on an absolutely dark air-shaft; the other on a narrow yard; at midday only does any light from the outside penetrate this apartment, and then only the outer room, for a short time. At other times kerosene oil lamps or candles are used. Two families (consisting of eight persons) occupy this apartment, for which is paid $9.00 rent. One of the men has consumption, and both men, heads of the two families, assort lemons, which one peddles, or they assist their wives in finishing trousers at 1½c each pair. Their hours are as long as they can hold their heads up or they have any work to do. . . . It requires two hours for one person to finish a pair of trousers, and by their combined efforts they earn 30 to 50 cents a day, or rather in twenty-four hours. The children have become rachitic, the elders will succumb to the first severe malady that attacks them. . . . I have seen women in the last stages of consumption, propped up in bed, finishing trousers until nature could stand it no longer, and the work stopped



from absolute exhaustion, or death mercifully put an end to their suffering."

Dr. John H. Pryor, testifying before the Tenement House Commission on Nov. 16, 1900, stated, "In New York City alone there are in the tenement houses constantly 20,000 consumptives." Dr. Hermann M. Biggs testified that the dust in such houses was infectious, and that experiments had shown that it produced tuberculosis in animals. Mrs. Frederick Nathan, President of the New York Consumers' League, on the same day testified, "The clothing industry is one of the most degraded, if not the most degraded of all the industries." Such conditions were not peculiar to New York, but existed wherever clothing was made. Overcrowding was discovered for instance in Baltimore through a special investigation by the Maryland Bureau of Industrial Statistics in 1901. They visited 247 tenements containing clothing sweatshops, and found in the small rooms used for work, an average of over five persons to a room. Among them were a large number of boys and girls under fifteen. The number of persons both living and working in these houses amounted to a little over two to a room, counting as rooms cellar, garret, kitchen, toilet, and hall rooms.

Much has been written about the evils of the sweatshop, but this is enough to give a hint of what "home work" means. As for the folk-ways of the contractor's shop, they can be suggested by quoting in part the story of an Italian girl, taken down ver-

batim by Prof. Katherine Coman of Wellesley College during the Chicago strike of 1910, and published in *The Survey* of Dec. 10, 1910.

This girl applied for work, and when she showed that she was experienced the contractor hired her as forewoman for the other girls in the shop, whom he described as "greenhorns." She asked him why he did not employ more experienced people, and said she had some friends who might do. The contractor replied:

"Experienced girls? Not in my shop." "Why not?" He said: "I want no experienced girls. They know the pay to get. I got to pay them good wages and they make me less work, but these greenhorns, Italian people, Jewish people, all nationalities, they cannot speak English and they don't know where to go and they just come from the old country and I let them work hard, like the devil, and those I get for less wages."

The contractor then told her she must make the girls finish ten coats a day.

"Well those people were all married women, they all had families of small children, some had husbands that were sick, and there was a woman there that had a husband that was blind for two years and besides he was sick in bed, and she was in that condition she could not work, but she had to work in the shop to get fifty cents a day to support her and her husband. So I said, 'Well you must finish up ten coats a day.' Those people started to cry. They said: 'How can we support our families if we have to do ten coats a day, because we could not do a coat in an hour and a half.' . . .



"So I went to the boss and I told him, I said: 'The people are not satisfied. Ten coats a day, an hour and half on each coat, you ask them to work fifteen hours a day.' He said, 'If they cannot finish ten coats a day, let them finish up just as much as they can in the day time, and the rest of the coats they bring home and make them in the night time, so they can do one day's work.' "

The workers, seeing that at their existing wages, paid on the basis of ten coats a day, they could not hold body and soul together, asked for piece-work rates. The contractor offered thirteen cents a coat. The forewoman said this was too cheap, since if they worked ten hours a day they could only make 50 cents. "I can get all the greenhorns I want to do the work," replied the boss, "and I can get them cheap." The women therefore accepted this rate. A little later he came to the forewoman and told her he had to turn out the work cheaper to keep his trade, and therefore would have to lower the rate to twelve cents.

" 'If you would lower the price down to twelve cents they cannot make it.' He said: 'If they cannot make it, here is the window and here is the door. If they don't want to go from the window they can go from the door, and if they don't want to go from the door, they can go from the window. I have lots of greenhorns. I got to make my own living.' "

This price was also accepted. The boss then

made himself obnoxious by walking about the shop and insulting the girls because they were not working fast enough. At length the forewoman asked to be relieved of her job and put at work with the others. He made an arrangement with her for basting, but demanded impossible performance. "You know that these coats must fly like the leaves on a tree, that is the way you must make the work fly," he would say to her. He blamed her for not doing her part of the work quickly enough to keep the others busy, but he would employ no one else to help in her operation.

"Of course, he was insulting me every day and the other people too. So I knew they were striking in all the other shops, so I told all our girls, I said: 'The first whistle we hear in the window, that means for us to strike. You cannot work for twelve cents a coat, and I cannot baste thirty-five coats a day, and we will all go on strike. So one day, it was dinner time, a quarter after twelve, and we hear a big noise under the window and there were about 200 persons were all whistling for us to come down and strike, so I was the first one to go out and get the other girls to come after me."

This story illustrates a number of the grievances which on various occasions became the subject of negotiation. The suggestion that the girls take the work home is reminiscent of the "black bag" which was for many years the symbol for this practice in the needle trades. Tired workers could be seen going home in the evening with large shapeless bags



filled with unfinished garments to be sewed as long as they could keep awake at night. Children's express wagons, baby-carriages, and pushcarts were also used for this doleful freight. The need for standardization of wages and hours is evident. It was not only a matter of securing fair rates from individual employers, but of making sure that those rates were uniformly upheld throughout the trade, so that competition would not immediately depress them. The demand for the abolition of the contractor, or for a guarantee of wages on the part of the "inside shop" is also explained. The boss's constant insistence that he could do what he liked because he had "plenty of greenhorns" shows why a strong union was necessary, why it had to insist on recognition, and on some form of the union shop.

There were other causes for complaint. Owing to the fact that the industry had grown up from the custom tailoring trade, and that the first workers had been independent artisans, it was for a long time the practice for the operators to supply their own sewing machines and their own thread and sundries. The fact that the worker had to move his machine whenever he changed his job practically bound him to one employer in spite of any abuse he might receive. Many of the strikes in the 'nineties had among their objects the furnishing of machines by the employer. Later, the fatigue from using foot-power all day long led the workers to demand electric power, and many employers installed it simply on account of its superior efficiency. Still, how-

ever, the cost of the power was charged against the worker, and deducted from his wages. When the employers began to furnish thread and sundries, they also charged these against the wage account. The inevitable result was such a reduction of wages —often a reduction out of all proportion to the actual cost of power and thread,—that the employees revolted against it.

The Italian girl's story takes no account of seasonal unemployment (see Chapter I). The effort of the unions to mitigate this has taken various forms. At first it was an insistence that all their members should be employed the year round. Such a demand was rarely successful, and where it was granted, the light work in the dull seasons led to such a reduction of wages that it was of little avail. The constant struggle for a reduction of the working week was largely based on the theory that if overtime were made expensive enough for the employer during the busy season, he would try to find some way of distributing work more evenly throughout the year. An indirect method of this sort, however, is at best unsatisfactory. Recently, since the unions have grown more powerful, they have begun to demand an average minimum wage based on a full number of weeks in the year. This measure is really effective, since although it puts pressure on the manufacturer to equalize the seasons, it does not allow the worker's livelihood to depend on success in that attempt.

Abolition of unsafe and insanitary conditions in



the shops and tenements has also been an important factor in improving the life of the workers. An account of the progress in this regard will be found in Chapter VI under the Joint Board of Sanitary Control.

It is impossible to trace the conquest of any one of these evils separately, to say that on such and such a date the undesirable condition was eliminated. Home work, for instance, gradually disappeared as the union grew stronger and was able to enforce its demands wherever clothing might be made. If the unions should be dissolved tomorrow, as much clothing might soon be made in insanitary tenements, in spite of anyone's desire to the contrary, as in 1890.[1] The amount of actual home work is largely

[1] A demonstration of the ineffectuality of legal measures to control home work is furnished by an article in *The Survey* of February 4, 1911, which shows that in spite of tenement house and factory laws, 13,000 tenement houses in New York were licensed by the Bureau of Factory Inspection of the State Department of Labor, and that these licenses were issued merely on the basis of a perfunctory sanitary inspection once a year. The number of families occupying the houses was not taken into consideration, and there was no law to prevent children under fourteen from working in the tenements. In 1918, during the war with Germany, Professor William Z. Ripley of Harvard University, in an address to the convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers, stated that the United States arsenal at Schuylkill, Pennsylvania, gave out work in bundles to be done in the homes of about five thousand women in neighboring cities. Said Professor Ripley: "Here is a home in Philadelphia where a man died of tuberculosis, while his wife was working on shirts. . . . The Board of Health had been asked to fumigate the house several weeks before, and had apparently forgotten to do it. Shirts went on being made day after day in those unfumigated premises." . . . Another case was of a colored woman who wished to do work for the government and applied for the necessary inspection. "She got her inspection. Why? Not because anybody came to her tenement, but because the Board of Health of the city of Philadelphia was pleased to report that some years before they had inspected another tenement in the block and found it all right. And in that house there were both measles and whooping-cough, and those shirts were going out to the boys on

dependent on the general level of wages. The same is true, to a limited extent, of hours. A collective agreement may specify a maximum number of hours, but if the union is not strong enough to see that this provision is carried out in small and independent shops as well as in the shops of the manufacturers' association, if it cannot keep wages up to the point where home work after hours is not indispensable, the provision as to hours soon becomes a dead letter. It is even impossible to quote general figures on the rise in wages, except of the roughest sort. Such a large proportion of the work has been done at piece rates, and those rates vary so largely with the many different operations, all of which change with the changes in styles, that no complete figures have ever been compiled. Even where minimum rates are specified in collective agreements, it is impossible to compute average weekly earnings for the year without taking into consideration the slack work in the dull seasons.

The condition of the workers, given the same basic economic conditions, depends finally on the organic strength of the unions, upon their control over all the wage-earners, and their vigor in every shop, small as well as large. The unions are like an advancing army. Their main object is not to find provender, to win this or that position, to defeat this or that opposing corps. Their purpose is to win the war; all the rest is incidental. With

the other side." When the War Department took measures to supervise the sanitary conditions under which army clothing was being made, it had to rely largely on the assistance of the unions.



power and victory, the incidentals follow. And this truth corresponds with the worker's actual feeling about the industrial struggle. He is interested not so much in the recording of concessions on paper as in the general engagements and victories, the morale and effectiveness of the whole force of which he is a member.

The first great strike in the clothing industry which resulted in substantial and permanent gains was that of the New York Cloak, Suit, and Skirt Makers in 1910. The grievances included almost all the evil conditions against which the unions had fought for two decades. The workmen objected to subcontracting within the "inside shops," to low wages and long hours, to home work, to individual contracts which bound the employee to the manufacturers at disadvantageous terms, to irregular payment of wages and charges against wages for materials and power.

As an example of the result of subcontracting, one shop has been cited which employed 500 operatives, but paid directly only fifteen. These fifteen had two series of subcontractors under them, with the result that actual wages were very low, the helpers at the bottom of the system receiving only from $3.00 to $6.00 per week. Aside from subcontracting, however, even the highest paid workers, the sample makers, received but $18.00 weekly during the busy season in the best shops, the cutters and skilled operators averaged in the neighborhood of $15.00, the pressers $14.00, the finishers, including

their earnings from night work, $12.00. This meant in terms of average weekly earnings throughout the year, a starvation wage. During the busy season the hours were eleven daily, and only after this exhausting period was the extra rate for overtime paid. The union asked for a forty-nine hour basic week, with a maximum of two and one-half hours of overtime daily during the busy season.

The principal demand of the strikers, however, was for the status which would safeguard whatever gains they might win. Long experience had taught them that strikes, no matter how extensive and how successful for the time being, were fruitless in the long run if the industry were to be allowed to relapse into the old chaos as soon as they went back to work. They therefore placed most emphasis of all upon the "closed shop." If they could wring from the employers an agreement to employ none other than union members, all other concessions could be retained, and the foundation laid for future advances.

Before the strike the Cloakmakers' union had about 20,000 members, but the response to the strike call, issued on July 6, 1910, was almost unanimous among unorganized as well as organized workers, 45,000 in all going out. Approximately 1,800 establishments were affected. With a strike on such a vast scale, by poorly paid workers most of whom were unaccustomed to union tactics and discipline, a tremendously difficult problem of administration was presented to the union. The first step was to organize the strikers about the unit of the shop. The



workers in each of the 1,800 shops elected their own chairman and their own picket committee, and held separate meetings daily. To provide places for these meetings, a Hall Committee of the union was appointed, which hired fifty-eight halls. A corps of speakers, experienced and widely known union members, was organized by a Speakers' Committee to address the meetings. Understanding the large part which public opinion plays in the settlement of strikes—the public has perhaps shown a more marked interest in the clothing strikes than in the workers' struggles in any other industry—a Press Committee was appointed. A Law Committee took care of the legal difficulties which always accompany a great strike.

About 5,000 workers, one-tenth of the entire number, did not at first answer the strike call, and picketing was undertaken to win them over. The workers in each shop had the duty of picketing that shop, since they knew thoroughly the location and characteristics, and the employees in it. Picketing had to be carried on day and night, in four-hour shifts, since all the shops which attempted to keep open were naturally working overtime to fill their orders, and strikebreakers were often imported at night. The result was that practically every striker did picket duty. In order to advise the pickets as to their rights and duties, to fill in where a preponderance of women strikers made help necessary in the night picketing, and to guard shops which employers moved elsewhere in the city or out of town, a General

Picket Committee was formed at union headquarters.

In the second or third week, it was necessary to begin paying benefits to the more needy members. At first about five to ten thousand had to be relieved, and the number grew as the strike continued. To undertake this duty a Relief Committee was organized. Its work was performed with admirable method and promptness. Applications for relief were first signed by the chairman of the shop, who knew the workers and their circumstances. They were then countersigned by the various hall chairmen—the men in charge of the halls, who knew the shop chairmen and could guarantee their signatures. The applications for the day were totalled and compared with the available funds for that day. If the funds were not sufficient, a pro rata reduction was made. Every cent collected and expended was accurately accounted for by a corps of bookkeepers. It was the duty of the Relief Committee also to help in collecting the funds.

The general officers of the union were occupied in supervising the work of the various committees, in making speeches, in raising funds, and in carrying on negotiations with the employers. Strike headquarters were as busy as the headquarters of an army in the field. It is worthy of remark that these responsible administrative tasks were performed successfully by men receiving little more than the ordinary wages of the average workmen.

As a result of the efforts of the Press Committee, and of disinterested members of the general public



—like members of the National Consumers' League which had long been trying to abolish the sweatshops —wide public interest was aroused, and general sympathy for the strikers was expressed. Prominent men like Mr. Louis Brandeis and Mr. Louis Marshall became interested and assisted in the negotiations. The owner of a retail store in Boston, an important buyer of clothing, Mr. A. Lincoln Filene, exerted his influence with the employers in behalf of a just settlement. In spite of all pressure, however, it was long before an approach to an agreement was made.

On the closed shop issue the union would not surrender, and the manufacturers, although willing to make other concessions, would not meet the demand of the strikers on the vital one. Twice negotiations were broken off on this account. A manufacturers' association, including seventy-five of the largest employers, was formed, and resolved to resist the closed shop to the end. As the deadlock wore on and became more costly to the manufacturers, many not in the association surrendered to the union. At length 600 independent establishments, employing 30,000 persons, had settled. The payments from these working members increased the strike fund. A few weeks before the close of the strike Judge Goff issued a remarkable injunction forbidding union members to picket in support of the demand for the closed shop. The New York *Times* characterized this injunction as "the strongest decision ever handed down against organized

labor." As an answer to the injunction, $18,000 was poured into the union treasury in one day from its members, and in one evening 85 pickets were arrested for defying the order. This was proof enough of the support for the closed shop among the rank and file.

At length a happy suggestion, the authorship of which is usually attributed to Mr. Brandeis, brought a settlement nearer. For the "closed shop" as ordinarily understood was substituted the "union shop," or the preferential shop, that is, a shop in which union conditions were to be adhered to, and in which, when engaging an employee, the employer should give preference to a union member. The first draft of the proposed agreement used the words, "union shop as distinguished from the closed shop," and specified that of two applicants of equal ability, the union member should be given the preference. It left hours and wages to arbitration, and did not recognize the shop chairman as the representative of the employees in negotiations about the piece prices. On these accounts the strikers rejected it. They contended that the explicit distinction between the closed shop and the union shop would serve only to make trouble, that the phrasing of the preference clause made the employer the sole judge of ability and would lead to evasion, and that to insure justice the shop chairmen must be recognized.

After ten weeks, on September 2, a final agreement was reached and the noted Protocol signed. It was almost a complete victory for the union. It urged



the installing of electric power and abolished charges against employees for power and material. It forbade the giving out of home work, abolished subcontracting within the shops, and ordered the regular weekly payment of wages in cash. It raised the pay of workers by the week from 25 to 100 per cent, and established the 50 hour week, with a maximum of two and one-half hours extra during the busy season only, and with double-time rate for overtime. Piece rates it left to be adjusted between shop chairmen and individual employers. It established the Joint Board of Sanitary Control.

What was to the union the most important clause was that establishing the union shop, which read as follows:

> Each member of the manufacturers is to maintain a union shop, a "union shop" being understood to refer to a shop where union standards as to working conditions, hours of labor, and rates of wages as herein stipulated shall prevail, and where, when hiring help, union men are preferred, it being recognized that, since there are differences in skill among those employed in the trade, employers shall have freedom of selection as between one union man and another, and shall not be confined to any list, nor bound to follow any prescribed order whatever.

Since at the close of the strike there were not more than 1,000 strikebreakers working in the shops, and many of these immediately joined the union, the clause was as effective, for the union's purpose, as if the full closed shop had been adopted. Ever since this settlement the cloakmakers have

retained in their organization practically all the workers eligible.

The Protocol departed from all previous collective agreements in specifying no date for its termination, although, like an international treaty, it could be terminated at any time by the decision of either party. It established a Board of Arbitration with an impartial chairman, before which future disputes should go, before a strike or lockout could be declared. A subordinate committee on grievances was set up. Much attention has been directed to these sections of the agreement, which some prophets expected would establish permanent peace in the industry; but future events proved such expectations exaggerated. The arbitration provisions undoubtedly did prevent petty and unwarranted strikes and lockouts, but their main function was not so much the ambitious one of preserving permanent peace as of seeing that the provisions of the agreement, while it lasted, were honestly carried out. A discussion of the arbitration machinery will be found in the next chapter.

After the settlement independent manufacturers who had already granted the closed shop were allowed to substitute the Protocol for their original agreements, and join the association. Many did so, and the Protocol soon became the ruling basis of the industry.

The first great strike in the men's clothing industry began in the early part of October 1910, in Chicago. It was a spontaneous outbreak, beginning



with twenty workers in one shop, and spreading rapidly until 40,000 were out. The grievances were long hours and low pay, deductions from wages through fines and charges for material and power, amounting in many cases to 15 or 20 per cent of the total wages, overbearing foremen, and the absence of any way to adjust disputes. Demands were formulated only after the strike had become general. They included the closed shop in the cutting and manufacturing departments, a forty-eight hour week for cutters and trimmers, and a fifty-four hour week for tailors, with time-and-a-half rates for overtime and double time for holidays, and the adjustment of local misunderstandings between the employer and the shop steward of the union, with a third impartial party as arbitrator if they failed to agree.

A settlement was soon negotiated between the manufacturers and the officers of the United Garment Workers. It provided for an arbitration board to decide the questions at issue, but excluded from consideration by that board all questions relating to the recognition of the union and the closed shop. The open shop was to be retained, and was not to be considered a grievance. This settlement was signed by the officers of the union, but was overwhelmingly defeated by a referendum of the strikers on the same day.

A large citizens' committee was then formed to investigate the dispute. The chairman was Emil G. Hirsch, and among the members were the Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Judge Julian W. Mack, Jane

Addams and Alice Hamilton. This committee reported that sweatshop conditions had been carried over into the factory, that the employees were underpaid and overworked, and that they were subjected to innumerable petty tyrannies. It recommended some form of organization within the shop in order that the employees might have adequate representation and a voice in the conditions under which they were working. To all demands of the strikers and appeals of the public the manufacturers replied by a general denial of bad conditions, stating that the strike was simply the result of agitation and that they had nothing to arbitrate.

Meanwhile the spirit and determination of the strikers became firmer. Unorganized as they had been, they needed assistance, and this was furnished without stint by the Chicago Federation of Labor under John Fitzpatrick and the Women's Trade Union League under Mrs. Raymond Robbins. A strike organization was perfected similar to that of the New York Cloakmakers. The Chicago Federation recommended that its affiliated locals assess themselves to help the tailors, and many unions did so. The Teachers' Federation, liberal churches, and public leaders gave assistance. On November 28th the Board of Aldermen resolved to mediate, and appointed a committee which suggested a conference. The large firm of Hart, Schaffner and Marx and a few others consented to this plan, but most of the manufacturers held to their original position.

As the strike continued through the winter it was



estimated that the daily loss in profits and wages was over $100,000. The strikers naturally were threatened with tragic destitution, and relief for them was organized on a large scale. Rather than pay cash benefits, the strike committee made its resources go farther by buying supplies in bulk, and rationing them out. To supply the families four stores were set up in various parts of the city, one for the Poles and Lithuanians, one in the Italian settlement, one for the Bohemians, and one for the Jews. Five hundred numbered tickets were issued for each store, for each of the six week days. A ticket entitled the head of a family to a week's rations. Thus 3,000 families were supplied weekly by each of the four stores. The tickets were given out by the shop chairman to the individuals known to be needy. In this way twenty-two carloads of food and 200,000 loaves of bread were distributed. For unmarried workers 3,000 meal tickets were supplied by the Jewish Labor World and the Jewish Workingmen's Conference; the Women's Trade Union League opened a free lunch room for girls. A special milk fund for babies was provided by a public committee, and 2,000 quarts of milk were distributed daily for two months. The Women's Trade Union League sent coal where it was most needed, but many strikers had to go without this luxury. A special committee was formed to deal with rents and evictions, and it succeeded in moderating the action of the landlords. Many hospitals gave free care to the sick. One volunteer committee furnished layettes for the ex-

pectant mothers. On Christmas Day 1,200 Christmas baskets were sent out, but many of the more radical strikers politely declined them, on the ground that they did not wish to accept charity. The settlement houses contributed old clothing and shoes.

In all, nearly $100,000 was spent for relief, and of this sum all but $25,000 was contributed by working people.

The conference between representatives of Hart, Schaffner, and Marx and the strike committee had meanwhile arrived at a basis for settlement which omitted the objectionable features of the former offer. A board of arbitration was to consider all questions at issue without exception, its decision was to be binding, and all strikers were to be taken back to work except a few who had been convicted of violence during the bitter struggle. On December 24 this proposition was submitted to the Hart, Schaffner, and Marx employees, but they refused to benefit by a peace which did not affect the people in the other shops. As a proof of comradeship they rejected the proposed settlement unless it should be extended to all the strikers. This decision naturally was regretted by those who had negotiated the agreement, since they felt that the heroic struggle could not continue much longer. It showed, however, how strongly the spirit of solidarity had entered the workers who but a few weeks before had been for the most part unorganized. This spirit was given emphasis, when, on a cold winter day, 20,000 strikers marched to the deserted baseball park



and held a mass meeting, being addressed in small groups by hundreds of speakers in half a dozen different languages.

At length, on February 3, this cold and hungry army, unable to hold out longer, capitulated without conditions and went back to work. An agreement similar to the one previously rejected had in the meantime been accepted by the Hart, Schaffner, and Marx employees, but the rest had to be satisfied with the subjective victory of having learned that they could conduct a strong campaign. Further operations were merely postponed. The struggle broke out again several times during the succeeding years, and was never relinquished until the majority of the employers signed a collective agreement in the summer of 1919.

The decision of the arbitrators in the Hart, Schaffner, and Marx case granted better wages, hours and conditions, cleared the way for the presentation of complaints, and established a permanent board of arbitration. It did not, however, provide for recognition of the union or for the union shop. Successive improvements were made in it without an actual break in relations, so that today the preferential union shop exists, and the agreement is in other respects among the most satisfactory in the country. It was in this establishment that light was first thrown upon the extraordinary abilities of a young leader, Sidney Hillman, who later became the first General President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

The two strikes of 1910 were not only dramatic events in themselves but they served as the foundation for the rapid progress of the unions. They were models for the conduct of future battles; they gave the workers a confidence in themselves unknown before, and the agreements which arose out of them established the minimum necessities for sound growth. Future struggles were undertaken for the establishment of similar agreements in other branches of the industry or in other cities, for the preservation of gains won in these agreements, or for still better agreements.

Subsequent controversies raged about higher wages and shorter hours, the right of the worker to security in his job, improvements in the machinery of the agreements, measures for alleviating seasonal unemployment, and further uniformity in wage rates. Most of these, on account of the spirit of the workers, the strong form of industrial organization, and the democratic efficiency of the unions, have been won by them. More detailed discussion of these victories belongs with the chapter on collective agreements.

The present situation of the workers in the well unionized branches of the ready-made clothing industry is as favorable as that of any group of American trade-unionists. Most of them have the forty-four hour week. Their unions have full recognition, and the union shop, in one form or another, prevails. The cruder forms of suffering, such as those inseparable from home work and the sweatshop, have been virtually abolished. Organized



control within the shop has been achieved through the shop chairmen and price committees; it was well developed before the advent of the shop committee movement in other industries, of which we have heard much since the war. General averages of wage-rates, for reasons explained before, it is impossible to quote, but the minima specified for the best paid workers are in the neighborhood of $45.00 weekly, and the average is probably well above that of industrial wage-earners throughout the country, which still, in the fall of 1919, lingered about $20.00.

To say this is not to say that the unions have no difficult tasks before them. There are large branches of the clothing industry in which the workers are still without the full benefits of the union. The seasonal character of the trade is still unconquered; it causes much unemployment and reduces the yearly wage level unduly. Where they are strong, the unions have reduced to extremely narrow proportions the margin between what they have won and what it is possible to win from the industry in its present character and under its present régime. But the possibilities for the better organization of the industry and its more efficient conduct are great. It is to the development of these possibilities that attention must now be turned if further advances are to be made. For this reason the most solid achievement of the unions is not to be measured in terms of any material gain, but rather in terms of their power and intelligence, of their internal fitness for further victory.