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FOREWORD

by

Joseph O'Meara*

Power to bring the nation's economy to a virtual standstill cannot be immune from legal accountability. That such power is lodged in some, at least, of the great national and international labor unions has been demonstrated repeatedly, most recently by the United Steelworkers. One can be wholly sympathetic with labor's aspirations and still reject the notion that the nation's economic health and safety should be dependent upon unilateral decisions by a group of private individuals — union members and their leaders — decisions taken for their own ends, however legitimate. So vast a power — terrifying in its potentialities — must be brought under reasonable legal controls.

The reason is simple and, in other contexts, long has been taken for granted: *the public interest is paramount*. Hence the law must intervene to protect the whole from the consequences of private action designed to benefit a few.

Partisans can be expected to dissent, but I believe most Americans will agree with the proposition I have just put forward. That, at any rate, represents the thinking behind this Symposium, whose purpose is to explore the sources and extent of labor-union power, its effects in terms of the public interest and how best to deal with the complex and difficult problems it raises.

This is a subject of urgent national concern. It is also a subject of hot debate, involving deep-seated loyalties and strong emotional commitments. It is fitting, therefore, that it should be examined in an academic setting, and it is our hope to approach the subject with as much objectivity as humans are capable of, avoiding so far as possible any bias in favor either of unions or of management. What we want to do is to focus attention on the fact that there is a third party involved, namely, the public — the innocent bystanders, whose interests are seldom adequately represented and, indeed, are apt to be ignored. The intent of our Symposium is to speak out for *them*.

With these few remarks, designed to put our Symposium in context, it is my privilege to present our distinguished Chairman, Professor Charles O. Gregory of the University of Virginia Law School.

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