

Labor Hall of Fame

## Cyrus S. Ching: pioneer in industrial peacemaking

*As a manager, and later as a government executive, Ching pointed the way to a cooperative system of labor relations by showing that differences are much more easily resolved when reason, rather than rancor, prevails*

A. H. Raskin

Through much of America's rise to greatness as an industrial power, mistrust and misunderstanding have been dominant characteristics of relations between employers and organized labor. Most managements viewed attempts by unions to represent their workers as mischievous intrusions, destructive of the interests of company and employee alike. That attitude found expression in tactics so hostile to unionization that many of the country's foremost corporations built up private armies of labor spies and strongarm men to keep labor at bay.

Unions responded with counterweapons that were violent and often illegal—a response made more virulent by the widespread belief within labor that the agents of law enforcement were vassals of the all-powerful captains of industry. Strikes were long, bitter, and often bloody. The costs were high in lost production, shoddy workmanship, and inefficiency. They frequently were even higher in the damage inflicted on the public by a prolonged cutoff of vital services or by the weakening of companies whose financial health was essential to the jobs of their employees and the well-being of whole communities.

In the 1930's and 1940's, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal opened the

way for a union assault on the mass production industries, a tiny group of men of good will became pioneers in the development of techniques to reduce the conflict between management and labor by substituting reasonableness for tests of strength. A position of towering eminence in this select circle was occupied by Cyrus S. Ching, a corporate executive who demonstrated such breadth of vision and freedom from parochial identifications that unionists were almost always at least as enthusiastic as their opposite numbers in management when Ching agreed to help find mutually advantageous solutions to seemingly intractable disputes.

The lofty stature he speedily acquired as a mediator transcended the fact that his height of 6 feet 7 inches would have made him an impressive figure in any labor-management conference room. Early in his career, Ching capsulized his philosophy of dispute resolution in words that would remain as guideposts for future practitioners of the mediator's trade. "The only way you can get things settled," he was wont to say, "is to find a way where each side can save face. If one side or the other in a labor dispute tries to push the other to the wall, it's going to have disastrous effects on the situation under consideration as well as for future relations."

A. H. Raskin is an economic analyst formerly with *The New York Times*. Much of the material in this article is drawn from an oral history of Cyrus S. Ching, as related by Ching in a series of interviews with John Truesdale, September 1965–December 1967, and from an oral memoir recorded by Ching in August 1965.

## Up through the ranks

Ching was born May 21, 1876, on his father's farm in Prince Edward Island, Canada. The only son in a family with seven daughters, he came of Welsh stock (Chynge was the original spelling of the family name), was educated in a one-room schoolhouse, and early on developed a voracious appetite for reading, mostly history and the classics. At the age of 16, he accompanied a favorite uncle to the county seat, where he sat in on a court trial and was instantly consumed with an overwhelming urge to become a lawyer.

On his return to the farm, young Ching went out to pick potatoes with his father. He took that occasion to inform his dad that never again would he pick potatoes. The elder Ching had no money to send his son to college, but the uncle, who was better off, volunteered to foot the bill. Within a week, Cyrus was in Charlottetown, the capital of Prince Edward Island, and enrolled in Prince of Wales College, a cross between a prep school and an institution of higher education.

He studied there for 2 years before transferring to a business college, where he spent a year acquiring skills in stenography, shorthand, and bookkeeping. In 1895, he abandoned the Gulf of St. Lawrence for a 4-year stay in Alberta, where he worked for a grain elevator company visiting farmers and making contracts for delivery of their grain to the company's elevators. His salary was a munificent \$20 a month, plus room and board.

But his ambition from the start was to move across the border to the United States, a country for which Ching had developed an enormous admiration through his reading of Viscount James Bryce's 1888 classic, *The American Commonwealth*. On October 31, 1899, with \$31 and a copy of Bryce's book, he went to Boston and filled out an application for employment with the utility company that ran Boston's trolleys and was about to expand into operation of an elevated rapid transit system. A recession was on and jobs were scarce, but Ching persuaded a supervisor to put him on as an extra on the job list for streetcar motormen. His income averaged \$7 a week, and most days he had to start his 10-hour schedule at 5:20 a.m. A more serious problem was that his great height made it hard for Ching not to bump his head on the ceiling of his open cab every time he reached for the trolley cord.

Escape came through Ching's assignment as a checker of the fares registered on each trolley as it came off its last night run. He started work at 5 p.m. and stayed on duty until 3 a.m., 7 days

## The Labor Hall of Fame

This is the fourth of several articles, commissioned by Friends of the Department of Labor, about members of the Labor Hall of Fame, which honors posthumously Americans who have contributed most to enhance the quality of life of American workers. The Labor Hall of Fame is an activity of Friends of the Department of Labor, an independent membership organization established in 1987 "to support the traditional programs and goals of the U.S. Department of Labor, and to generally support the cause of improved labor-management relations."

The first eight persons elected to the Labor Hall of Fame were Samuel Gompers, John R. Commons, Cyrus S. Ching, Frances Perkins, John L. Lewis, A. Philip Randolph, George Meany, and James P. Mitchell.

A panel composed of national leaders from unions, industry, academia, and government, and chaired by Monsignor George Higgins, makes the selection to the Labor Hall of Fame. Former Secretary of Labor W. J. Usery, Jr., chairs Friends of the Department of Labor. The Hall of Fame is housed in the north lobby of the Frances Perkins Building, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20212. Friends of the Department of Labor invites Hall of Fame nominations. They may be submitted to Friends of the Department of Labor, Box 2258, Washington, DC 20013.

a week, at 22 cents an hour. However, his enterprising spirit would quickly lift Ching out of that drudge detail. The elevated system, with electric cars equipped with airbrakes and automatic controls, was scheduled to begin operations June 10, 1901.

Months before that date, while cars still were being fitted out, Ching went on his own time to the system's Charlestown yards and familiarized himself with the new equipment. His mooselike figure quickly became part of the landscape. He displayed endless curiosity in questioning the electrical engineers and airbrake experts on the intricacies of the machinery and the controls. The supervisors in charge of training for the elevated trains developed such respect for the knowledge Ching was picking up that they sent him out as an instructor to help break in the motormen assigned to trial runs. Even though he had no operating experience of his own, Ching proved so adept a teacher that he was assigned as a troubleshooter at the outset of

regular service on the elevated, and was then quickly promoted to a post in charge of restoring service whenever there was a breakdown or other difficulty on the line. By this time, he had worked himself up to a weekly pay envelope of \$18.50 for a 12-hour shift.

Bad luck overtook Ching 2 months after he assumed his broader responsibilities. He was trying to fix a live wire on a defective brake shoe when a board on which he was standing for insulation slipped out from under him, and he received an electric shock so severe that he was unconscious for 6 days. His hair and clothing were burned off in the accident; his eyes were closed by blisters and the doctors feared he might be permanently blind; only diligent effort by his nurses to remove damaged tissue prevented lifelong scarring that would have distorted his face. Until his death, he did carry scars on both hands, marking the places where the current had passed from one side of his body to the other.

There was no workmen's compensation at that time, and Ching was dropped from the Boston El payroll the minute he entered the charity ward at the Boston municipal hospital. The company did not even offer to pay for his burned clothing. Friends advised Ching to sue the company, but he decided there was no chance of winning because the utility would accuse him of contributory negligence in not taking greater care to make sure that the board on which he was standing was secure.

Two weeks after he left the hospital, the Boston El gave him a temporary job as a prior to restoring him to his old job at the beginning of 1902. Higher-ups in the company had by that time recognized that they had a good thing in Ching. He was transferred to the management side of the fence at a salary of \$2,500 a year and put in charge of training motormen to run a new type of streetcar. In his new post, he soon came to know motormen, conductors, and brakemen all over the system. His friendliness made the employees feel he was one of them, not a boss, and they never hesitated to share with him their thoughts about the company and the way it treated its workers. Very little of what they told him was complimentary.

The company had 15,000 employees and its pay scales were frozen from the time the elevated operations started until 1912, a period during which there were no unions, and little talk of unionization, on the system. Over these years, Ching moved through a series of jobs, all of which kept him in close touch with the employees, and he sensed that low wages, lack of overtime pay, overtight schedules, and an utter lack of communication between management

and workers were breeding dissatisfaction that could mean trouble for the company.

Ching had become a U.S. citizen in 1909, and in 1912 he had received his law degree after completing night courses at what is now Northeastern University. By that time, his apprehensions about labor trouble at the Boston El were overwhelmingly strong, but he could not get the company to take his warnings seriously. The top men would not believe that a union could get anywhere in their system, even though activists were wearing union buttons openly for the first time in the company's history. The prevailing view was that the union movement could be quashed by firing a few troublemakers, and Ching's superiors thus were not receptive to his entreaties that conditions be improved to alleviate unrest.

The result of this head-in-the-sand policy was a strike by 7,000 of the firm's 15,000 employees, which lasted from June to August of 1912. The company maintained operations on a sporadic basis with strikebreakers, most of them brought in from New York. The Mayor of Boston and the Governor of Massachusetts, under intense public pressure to get the transit system back to normal, put the heat on the company to settle. They called in the Boston El's president, a general in the State militia, and warned him that they had sufficient evidence in their possession to convict him of bribing legislators to influence regulatory legislation affecting the company. They threatened to expose him and turn the incriminating data over to the U.S. district attorney if he failed to recognize the union immediately and sign an agreement ending the strike.

The company president, in words Ching used years later to describe the event, "went all to pieces like a burst balloon." The first news the operating people at the line had of the settlement was a story in the afternoon papers heralding the strike's end. The company president resigned soon after and was replaced by a minor management official who had gained the confidence of the union and the workers. He was Matthew C. Brush, who up to then had been the company's assistant vice president and who later became a firm friend of William D. Mahon, the international president of the Amalgamated Association of Street Car Employees, the union involved in the strike.

The first task confronting the new company leadership was to negotiate specific terms of the settlement. No one on the management team except Ching was willing to take on that assignment. A 23-member committee representing the union trooped into his office, looking both dour and belligerent. He told them to cheer up. "You

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gave us a good licking. Why not enjoy it?" he asked.

That broke the ice, and Ching made the initial order of business a pledge by both sides that neither would ever again use spies to sit in on the other's private meetings. The unionists angrily denied that they had ever stooped to such tactics. Ching did not argue the point. Instead, he called into the meeting room one of his own young assistants who, Ching knew, had been planted in his office to ferret out confidential information and feed it to the union. He revealed to the startled assistant and the union committee that his suspicions had been aroused weeks before when he discovered the young aide peering into communications and records that had nothing to do with his job. Ching's Machiavellian response to this discovery was to channel to the spy a steady stream of misleading data intended to confuse the union.

Everyone laughed when Ching finished his recital, and the laughter turned to cheers when he announced that he held no grudge against the young assistant, who was basically an intelligent and useful worker, and that he intended to keep him on his staff in the new era of amicable relations with the union. Ching made no bones that the company, for its part, had been guilty of infiltrating the union's ranks with spies and provocateurs. He promised that the practice would stop at once—a promise Brush, the newly installed company president, was quick to endorse.

The new agreement obligated the company to discharge all the scabs it had brought in, many of whom had been promised permanent employment. They got no bonuses for their strikebreaking activity, simply enough money to get them back home. Other terms of the new contract proved more difficult to hammer out to the satisfaction of both sides. As a result, most of the terms, including new wage scales, were turned over for binding determination by a three-man arbitration panel, chaired by the president of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, with one representative from the company and one from the union as his comembers. Eighty percent of the strikers were reinstated in their old jobs. Those who were dropped from the payroll were fired for stealing fares or for other infractions of established rules, and not for strike-related activities.

Mahon's Amalgamated Association was recognized as bargaining agent for all the hourly rated employees on the Boston transit system, but the American Federation of Labor and its affiliates in the building trades were not happy with that arrangement. After conferences attended by Ching, Mahon, and Samuel Gom-

pers, the federation's founder and president, the Amalgamated ceded jurisdiction over the Boston El's electricians, carpenters, painters and other craftsmen to the construction unions—a concession that meant the company had to make separate agreements, in the form of written contracts or oral understandings, with 34 distinct labor units. That created new complications, especially when it came to harmonizing construction wage rates with those the arbitrators had established for the transit line's operating crews. Facing up to that challenge gave Ching additional opportunities to persuade the chiefs of the Boston El unions of his commitment to fair treatment of the company's employees.

One such opportunity presented itself when the divisional chairman for the Order of Railway Telegraphers sought out Ching with a copy of the union's standard contract. He was startled when Ching refused to sign on the grounds that the proposed wage rate of 32 cents an hour was too low. It had to be 2 cents higher, he insisted, to match the 34-cent rate the transit system's basic contract fixed for motormen and conductors.

When the post-strike agreements came up for renewal in 1916, Ching had stabilized relations with the unions to a point that arbitration was unnecessary. He informed the company's board of directors that a general pay increase of 2 cents an hour would be needed to avert a strike. He also told the board that he had promised the unions they would have the company's answer to their demand for higher wages in time to present it to the rank and file at a rally in a Boston hall the following evening.

Unimpressed by this notice, the board adjourned without making a decision on the pay hike. Ching tracked down his boss, Matthew Brush, after the meeting and warned him that the company was making a "horrible mistake." The company president summoned all his top executives to a strategy session the next morning, during which Brush assured Ching that he would back him in any measures necessary to avert a strike. However, he accompanied that assurance with an unequivocal declaration that there was no way to reconvene the company board before the union's scheduled meeting that evening.

Ching had no choice but to invite the officials who would preside at the union session to meet with him an hour before the opening discussion by the union members on whether to strike or stay at work. He admitted to them that he felt terribly let down, but that he must have more time to get the company's OK on the 2-cent increase. The union's international vice presi-

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*At U.S. Rubber, he became the company's de facto director of industrial relations—a somewhat amorphous assignment.*

dent, the ranking labor official at the conference with Ching, did not waste time reproaching the board of directors for their failure to bite the bullet. Instead, with the union's 7 o'clock opening session only a few minutes away, he put through a call from Ching's office to the superintendent of the union meeting hall.

He told the superintendent to station his assistant at the hall's main lighting switch and to go himself to the platform and inform those at the meeting that the union's international officers were still in negotiations with the company and could not come to the session. Immediately on that announcement, the assistant superintendent was to pull the switch and plunge the hall into total darkness, so that no rump meeting could be held by militants bent on fomenting a walkout.

The strategy worked beautifully, and the next morning all the employees reported for work. But Ching felt he owed it to his saviors in the upper echelon of the international union not to let the board of directors off too lightly for their dereliction. He told Brush and the board that they had bought time but that they would have to pay for it. What would now be needed to prevent a strike, he said, would be a 4-cent hourly raise, double the amount that would have been required if the company had honored the original timetable. Privately, Ching had no doubt that the union rank and file would ratify a contract calling for a 3-cent boost, but he wanted to teach the board a lesson in the costs of management obtuseness. The board approved the 4-cent figure and the union could exult in a victory.

That experience made Ching a strong believer throughout his career in involving the parent union directly in negotiations when a fractious local leadership or rank and file appeared eager to shut a company down before efforts at peaceful resolution of disputes had been exhausted. "One reason I get along with people so well," he said in an amplification of his philosophy, "is that I like people. I like people en masse and I like people as individuals." The rapport he established with the multiple unions on the Boston El was so pervasive that, even though all but two unions had a contractual right to arbitration of unresolved grievances, only two cases went that route and both involved unions not covered by the arbitration clause as a matter of right.

### **The workers' man in management**

When the United States entered World War I in 1918, Ching was rejected for military service because no branch of the Armed Forces would take anyone over 6 feet 4 inches. That same

year, he quit the Boston El because the declining state of that company's finances had compelled it to petition the Governor and the Massachusetts legislature for takeover by the State. Ching felt he would be happier remaining in private industry and, early in 1919, he went to work for the United States Rubber Company, which had many small plants in New England and other sections of the country. He had no title to start with, but on the basis of his record at the Boston El, he was assigned responsibilities that made him the company's de facto director of industrial relations—a somewhat amorphous assignment because the 40,000 employees working under the U.S. Rubber umbrella were split up among 34 subsidiary companies, most of which had presidents of their own and substantial autonomy in managing their day-to-day affairs.

The first test of how well this bifurcated command structure would operate in the field of labor relations came when workers in the Montreal plant of one affiliate, the Dominion Rubber Company, struck for recognition of a union they were in the process of forming. Ching, with the acquiescence of local management, issued a press statement declaring the company's readiness to meet its employees halfway by setting up grievance machinery, capped by arbitration. That commitment brought Ching a sulphurous rebuke from U.S. Rubber's executive vice president. "Have you gone mad?" Ching's superior bellowed. "We're never going to let outsiders tell our company what to do." Happily for Ching, the president of U.S. Rubber was in the room and promptly overruled his chief aide. "As long as I'm president of this company, we'll never refuse to arbitrate a grievance," he said.

Publication of the Ching statement brought all the strikers back to their jobs in the Canadian unit, and the company established a committee to represent them while arrangements were made for a secret-ballot election on union affiliation. The militantly antimanagement labor movement, the Industrial Workers of the World, had helped initiate the strike, but support for its radical program waned swiftly in the wake of the conciliatory attitude that Ching had persuaded management to adopt. The election resulted in certification of a local chartered directly by the AFL, the first union recognized as a bargaining agent anywhere in the U.S. Rubber corporate structure.

That breakthrough did not unleash a tide of unionization elsewhere in the company, nor did Ching feel it was in the company's best interests to foster such a movement on a broad scale. What deterred him was a recognition that the

AFL's commitment to craft delimitation provided poor protection for the welfare of workers in a mass production industry like rubbermaking, which operated along industrial, rather than craft, lines. A preferable alternative, in Ching's estimation, was that each U.S. Rubber plant encourage employees to organize factory councils, which would choose their own officers to meet regularly with management as spokespeople for the work force. It took Ching 4 years to get general acceptance within the company of the factory council idea. That was partly because he had to persuade skeptical plant executives of the scheme's value before he could begin to enlist employee support.

Ching encountered resistance from plant officials, who were eager to safeguard their autonomy from headquarters interference. One of the approaches he found effective in overcoming their fears is exemplified by his experience with the manager of a plant in Woonsocket, RI. The manager gave Ching an icy greeting, complaining that all his time was wasted on shepherding around bumptious visitors from the company offices in New York. "What the hell do you want?" he demanded. "I don't think what I want is important at all," Ching replied. "It's what you want that is important to me." The manager took him at his word and thrust before Ching a months-old requisition to headquarters for a new boiler to replace one that was in imminent danger of blowing—a requisition that had been consistently ignored despite the manager's frequent, urgent calls for action. Ching got on the phone and shortly obtained from the president of U.S. Rubber the go-ahead for installation of a new boiler at Woonsocket. The incident marked the start of a lifelong friendship between the plant manager and Ching.

Another Ching move to cement relations between the plant managers and his office was his veto of topside suggestions that all the local industrial relations managers report directly to him, rather than to their plant bosses. Ching believed that the plant managers had to be supreme in all matters affecting their operations, subject to removal only if they proved inadequate to their jobs. As he saw it, the function of the local industrial relations manager was to try to persuade the plant chief of the correctness of the policies he was advocating, but to go along with the boss's final decision. The plant managers were counseled to recruit industrial relations managers from inside the plant, with ability to get along with workers and to win their confidence the main yardstick in determining whom they selected.

Ching's spadework paid off in widespread employer support for the factory council con-

cept, then shunned by most other big companies. The underlying idea was that the councils would function as vehicles for two-way communication between management and workers. The bylaws governing all the councils called for arbitration in the event that direct talks between the two sides did not resolve a dispute. During the decade in which the councils flourished, no case ever went to arbitration, strong support for Ching's conviction that an acceptable compromise could always be achieved so long as the people on both sides were reasonable.

The commitment to mutuality of interest became so ingrained among the employees that, in some plants, the factory councils organized sales committees to persuade service stations and other retailers to stock and promote U.S. Rubber tires. Similar employee-initiated sales campaigns focused on the operators of major trucking fleets; the theory behind all of these efforts was that expanded sale of U.S. Rubber products meant more secure jobs. The councils also came up with valuable suggestions for adapting production lines to more advanced tire-building technology. In Detroit, where the company had one of its largest plants, members of the council rode the streetcars to ask employees and riders what they considered the best place to work in Detroit. Eighty-two per cent of those questioned picked U.S. Rubber over all of the giant auto companies that were fast turning the city into the motor capital of the world. One of the automakers was so incensed by U.S. Rubber's sponsorship of factory councils that it canceled a \$10 million contract for tire deliveries, but that did not diminish U.S. Rubber's zeal for the concept.

However, the power balance in the rubber industry shifted substantially during the early 1930's, as Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act set off a wave of union organization in many basic industries. The AFL, still clinging to its preference for craft unionism, reluctantly authorized formation in 1934 of a United Rubber Workers Council to coordinate the federal locals to which it had issued charters. The combined membership of these locals at the end of 1933 was estimated to be close to 50,000 workers, most of them at Goodyear, Goodrich, and Firestone.

Unhappiness with the federation's half-hearted backing for any real unionization campaign in the mass production industries soon led to disaffection within the federal locals. In May 1935, John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers, spearhead of the industrial union forces clamoring for a fundamental shift in AFL policy, prodded the federation's Executive Council to charter the collapsing federal locals as a new

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international union, the United Rubber Workers (URW). Lewis's success in this direction was less than complete, however. The AFL high command specifically excluded from the jurisdiction of the new international all rubber workers engaged in construction or maintenance work or in the manufacture or installation of machinery. This renewed capitulation by the federation to the craft unions, which insisted that they be allowed continued jurisdiction, at least on paper, over rubber workers they had never seriously attempted to unionize, coupled with other limitations the parent organization put on the United Rubber Workers, made that union a quick enrollee under the banner of the Committee for Industrial Organization. Later to become the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the committee was established by Lewis and other ranking industrial unionists to pressure reforms by the federation establishment.

*Other companies regarded Ching as a maverick.*

In 1936, the aggressive new rubber workers union called sitdown strikes in Akron at plants of all the major rubber companies except U.S. Rubber, a testimonial to the stability of relationships Ching was able to maintain between the company and the factory councils even in a year of general turbulence. The industrywide drive was a full year old before the first tentative moves to organize U.S. Rubber were made by the URW. Employee attendance was pitifully small at scattered meetings the union called in that initial period, but that did not make Ching complacent.

He could see the union becoming a force in the rest of the industry and had no doubt U.S. Rubber's turn would come. Moreover, he recognized that the parallel organizing effort by the United Auto Workers in the big automobile companies could eventually lead to a situation in which unionized autoworkers would refuse to mount tires that were not union-made on the vehicles coming off the assembly line. The Great Depression had put U.S. Rubber's finances in the precarious shape, and Ching feared the outcome of any strike offensive the URW might launch against the company's plants.

He decided boldness was the best approach to addressing that potential challenge. Apropos of nothing at all, he put in a phone call to the union's newly elected international president. Sherman Dalrymple, a Marine lieutenant in World War I, had come to prominence in rubber unionism through his militancy as first head of the Goodrich local. Ching had never met Dalrymple, but he felt the best way to get his attention was to be blunt in his very first remarks. "I just wanted to tell you something," Ching said as soon as the union chief said hello. "If I didn't know any more about organizing the employees

of the United States Rubber Company than you do, I'd quit the job." Dalrymple exploded. "I don't mind telling you we'll get you organized," he shouted at Ching. The response was intended to calm the unionist down. "I know you will, Mr. Dalrymple," Ching said, "but when you do, I want you to organize it right. The way you're doing it is creating a lot of antagonism, which is entirely unnecessary, and I would like to sit down and talk with you."

Dalrymple hesitated, whereupon Ching interjected that he would not go to the union headquarters in Akron and he knew the union head could not come to the company offices in New York without having to account to his people. In the interest of confidentiality, Ching proposed that they meet in Pittsburgh. He said the only associate he would bring along was a veteran plant manager from Indianapolis. When Dalrymple said he would have to have someone with him, Ching agreed, but then startled the unionist for the second time by adding, "I'm going to tell you who you're going to have with you." That ignited a new explosion from Dalrymple's end of the wire. "There isn't anyone going to tell me whom I'm going to have with me," the unionist sputtered. Ching was unabashed. "You're going to have Allan Haywood [the CIO's national director of organization and a close associate of John L. Lewis]," Ching said. When Dalrymple asked whether the U.S. Rubber executive knew Haywood, the response was, "I sure do and I like him very much."

The Pittsburgh meeting started at 10 o'clock one morning and continued without a break until Ching had to leave 12 hours later to catch his train back to New York. The conferees got along famously, with Ching in the role of mentor to Dalrymple on the right road to unionizing the U.S. Rubber work force. He recommended that the union head and his aides get to know the heads of the factory councils at each plant, whom he described as the people in the company best informed about the needs and desires of the workers. If the URW could convince these council leaders that their organizations ought to become part of the union, Ching pointed out, the CIO would not have to devote any money or staff to organizing. He promised that the company would put no obstacles in the union's path but would leave it entirely up to the employees to decide the issue of affiliation.

When Dalrymple objected that neither he nor his aides could get past the guards if they went to the plant gates on their own, Ching promised to take care of that problem. By way of example, he phoned from the hotel room in which the conference was being held and spoke to the manager of the U.S. Rubber plant in Detroit. He

conveyed Dalrymple's desire to meet the manager in Detroit and asked him to give the union president any information he wanted when he visited the plant. "OK if you say so," was the manager's answer, and an appointment was arranged for the following Tuesday. At that time, the plant official supplied the unionist with the names of the council heads and a smooth relationship was promptly achieved in Detroit and at other U.S. Rubber plants. In the months that followed, the erstwhile leaders of the factory councils at several facilities presented themselves to their management counterparts at the regularly scheduled time for their monthly meeting and simply announced that they now were there as representatives of a new unit of the URW. The company's response was, "Fine, let's go on from here," and usually there was very little change, if any, in the old ways of doing things.

In contrast with the chaos that surrounded union bids for recognition at many other large companies, no elections were necessary to establish the URW's right to speak for the employees at U.S. Rubber plants. Under a commitment made to Dalrymple by Ching at their first conference, union recognition was automatic whenever a local came in with cards signed by a majority of the employees at a U.S. Rubber plant. "You can only doublecross me once and I don't think you will; I don't think you're that kind of man," Ching had told Dalrymple. That foundation of trust spared his company discord of the kind that would plague U.S. Rubber's competitors for years.

### Peacemaking as profession

For their part, the other companies regarded Ching as a maverick, at least up until World War II. The 1942 appointment of the War Labor Board as monitor of industrial relations and enforcer of the "Little Steel formula," which set an economywide ceiling on pay increases, made coordination of approaches to the union a measure all the tiremakers recognized as a mutual safeguard. Even then, however, the investment Ching had made in winning Dalrymple's respect for the good faith U.S. Rubber consistently displayed in its dealings with the union worked out advantageously for the company. Thus, when union members at the company's Detroit plant walked out in a 1944 wildcat strike that violated organized labor's wartime pledge to avoid all work stoppages, the international president fined all the members involved and made the penalty stick, despite much protest within the union.

The originality Ching demonstrated in break-

ing down historic barriers to harmonious labor-management relations frequently prompted the Government to request his services in ironing out disputes that menaced the national welfare. He was also in demand as a member of tripartite panels assisting in the administration of novel programs for promoting industrial stability, especially during the Great Depression and the turbulent periods just before and after World War II.

In the "preparedness" period preceding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, during which the Nation's steel mills were operating under forced draft to produce steel for tanks, guns, and other armaments for the allies fighting the Axis powers, William S. Knudsen, chairman of the National Defense Advisory Commission, called in Ching early in 1941 to head off a threatened strike at the big Lackawanna, NY, plant of Bethlehem Steel. Knudsen, who had been president of General Motors when President Roosevelt drafted him for the defense post, had come to admire Ching for his skillful handling of the business disputes that frequently clouded relationships between General Motors and U.S. Rubber.

Bethlehem Steel, which had repulsed the United Steelworkers in a violent 1937 strike, was in no mood to let the union capitalize on the defense emergency to win recognition 4 years later. When the first pickets appeared outside the Lackawanna gates in February 1941, the company's general counsel phoned Knudsen and asked him to get the Governor of New York to call out the militia to clear the streets around the plant and ensure safe passage for those who wanted to work.

Ching picked up an extension phone and told the Bethlehem lawyer that Knudsen would do no such thing. Instead, he directed the lawyer to round up Joseph Larkin, Bethlehem's vice president for industrial relations, and come to Washington that afternoon for a face-to-face meeting with the defense mobilization chief. The meeting was held in Knudsen's apartment, but the Bethlehem executives were not the only ones there. Ching had arranged to have Philip Murray, the steel union president, and Sidney Hillman, whom the President had named as labor coordinator of the preparedness program, also in attendance.

Ching's own preliminary exploration had made him sure that the union would send everyone back to work if it could get company agreement to let the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) hold a quick election to determine whether the CIO group had the support of a majority of the plant employees. When that idea was broached to the company officials, they

*The foundation of trust he established spared his company the discord that would plague its competitors for years.*



asserted that the union support was confined to a handful of agitators. Ching said the only way to find out whether the union spoke for the majority was through an election, and asked Hillman to find out from the NLRB how long it would take to arrange one. The answer was 10 days. When the company assented to the vote, the picket lines were withdrawn and production returned to normal. When the poll was taken, 75 percent of the workers backed the union.

A few weeks later, President Roosevelt appointed Ching as one of four employer members of a tripartite National Defense Mediation Board to do systematic troubleshooting of the kind Ching had done at Bethlehem. The board's life was brief. It collapsed shortly before Pearl Harbor when its two CIO members resigned in protest against the refusal of their 10 colleagues (including the two members representing the AFL) to recommend that the United Mine Workers be given a union shop contract requiring all miners employed in the captive coal mines owned by the steel companies to join the UMW as a condition of employment.

Ching himself had no philosophical objection to the union shop, provided it was contracted voluntarily between an employer and a union. However, he felt it was totally inappropriate for any Government agency to mandate compulsory union membership—a position he continued to hold even after the United States became an active combatant and the entire economy was made subject to Government controls on wages, prices, and many other aspects of commercial life. In the captive mine dispute, the President superseded the National Defense Mediation Board with a special arbitration panel consisting of Dr. John Steelman of the White House staff, John L. Lewis of the union, and Benjamin F. Fairless, the chairman of United States Steel. The panel's decision, which by ironic coincidence came down on the very day the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor, awarded the union shop to Lewis's union. However, the National War Labor Board, which had oversight of labor-management relations throughout World War II, operated under a philosophy, akin to that Ching espoused, against Government imposition of compulsory union membership. As an alternative, the wartime board evolved a compromise formula known as "maintenance of membership," under which workers who belonged to the union at the time a contract was signed were required to remain members, but those who did not belong were under no obligation to join. Ching had no qualms about that formulation. He served as an employer representative on the War Labor Board from February 1942 to September of the following year and

then returned to his duties at U.S. Rubber, which was heavily involved in the manufacture of military equipment made of synthetic rubber. In part because of the cooperative tradition he had ingrained, a new plant, rushed into operation in Des Moines early in the war, took on 19,000 employees as fast as they could be processed, with no shred of labor difficulty.

After the war ended and the headaches of reconversion to civilian production were behind the company, Ching decided it was time to retire. When he submitted his notice to the board chairman in August 1947, effective at the close of the year, he was already 6 years past the normal retirement age of 65. The chairman urged him not to wait for his separation date before starting to relax, and Ching went off with his wife to a fishing camp on the Tobique River in New Brunswick, Canada, where he swiftly engrossed himself in catching salmon. Late one afternoon, while the Chings were having cocktails with Mortimer Proctor, the former Governor of Vermont, a caretaker rushed over in great excitement to announce that the White House was on the phone.

The call was from Presidential assistant John Steelman, who said President Truman wanted Ching to become the first director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), recently created under the Taft-Hartley Act (1947). That law, passed by Congress over the President's veto, had been dubbed a "slave labor" law by both wings of organized labor because of the many promanagement revisions it made in the Wagner Act of 1935, long regarded as labor's Magna Carta. Perhaps the least controversial of the changes under the new law was its provision for replacing the old United States Conciliation Service, a branch of the Labor Department, with the independent FMCS, the agency Truman wanted Ching to head. Ching's first response was an emphatic no. All he wanted to do was stay by the river and fish.

His response was the same when Steelman called again to say that the chairman of a House appropriations subcommittee was refusing to approve any funds for the new agency until he knew who its director was going to be. So far Ching was the only one the congressman seemed willing to approve. When Ching refused to be swayed, Steelman contented himself with asking when Ching was getting back to his office in New York. Within an hour of Ching's return to New York, Steelman was back on the phone telling him the President wanted to see him at the White House the next day.

Because he still was technically on the U.S. Rubber payroll, Ching notified the company's

*Ching had no philosophical objection to the union shop, if it was voluntarily contracted between the union and management.*

chairman and executive committee of the nature of the upcoming meeting with the President and was told the decision was his to make. Ching's inclination still was to turn the job down and he gave Truman a long list of reasons for doing so. When the President continued to press for acceptance, Ching came up with the argument he expected would be the clincher. "I'm a Republican," he said. Truman looked back at him without blinking. "Well, is that any reason why you shouldn't serve your country?" he asked. Ching knew when he was licked. "You win, Mr. President," he said. He was sworn in the Friday before Labor Day 1947.

None of the savage partisan conflict that had surrounded passage of the Taft-Hartley Act manifested itself in the Senate's confirmation of the Ching nomination. On the contrary, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Robert A. Taft, who had been the law's chief architect, called the new FMCS director a few days after his appointment to say it would not be necessary for him to appear at a confirmation hearing. The committee had already voted to approve him. So far as Truman was concerned, his sole instruction to Ching was to administer the law in the best way possible to advance the interests of all the country's people. The President made it clear that neither Ching nor anyone else charged with the law's administration was to be influenced by the negative views Truman himself had expressed in the message accompanying his veto of the Taft-Hartley Act.

How seriously the President meant that admonition was swiftly demonstrated to Ching. A sticky dispute developed at the Oak Ridge, TN, nuclear plant between the Union Carbide Company, operating the plant for the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), and the unions representing the Oak Ridge workers. Mediation failed to break the deadlock, and David E. Lilienthal, the AEC chairman, told Ching that a strike at the facility would be disastrous. On that basis, Ching went to Truman and advised him that the White House ought to move for an 80-day no-strike injunction under the national emergency provisions of Taft-Hartley, the first occasion on which that highly sensitive section of the new law would come into play. However, when the President agreed, Ching felt obliged to sound a cautionary note.

"Now you've listened to me and you say it's the thing to do, but before you proceed, Mr. President, I'd suggest that you talk to some of your political advisors because your political future might be at stake," Ching said. Truman glared at him angrily. "When my political future is placed side by side with the best interests of

the American people, my political future is not at all significant," the President snapped. Truman and Ching, who had scarcely known one another before the FMCS appointment, became fast friends. Ching had originally accepted the job for 1 year, but he found the fashioning of new instruments for industrial peace so exhilarating that he stayed on through all of Truman's second term as well. His rapport with the President was in no way damaged by the fact that he had voted for Thomas E. Dewey when Truman ran for reelection in 1948.

The start-up staff of the FMCS was composed entirely of employees of the old United States Conciliation Service. Ching set about improving both the caliber and the morale of the personnel at all levels. The staff's response is well illustrated by an incident that occurred while Ching was holed up in his office one weekend making calls to a half-dozen cities in an effort to settle a critical case. He began early Saturday morning and was still at it at 4 a.m. Sunday when it suddenly hit him that someone on the FMCS switchboard must be matching him in devotion to duty. He picked up his phone and asked the woman at the other end of the line, "What in the world are you still doing around here? When did you come on?" When she said she had been there since before he started work the day before, he blurted, "For heaven's sake, I'm sorry." She would have none of his apology. "Mr. Ching," she said, "I knew you were in a very critical situation and I knew you were going to need telephone service, so I just stayed."

The notion widespread among both labor and management that industrial disputes are most easily resolved when the public knows nothing about what goes on behind the closed doors of the collective bargaining chamber did not appeal to Ching as the proper posture for the head of an agency whose mission it was to promote labor-management amity in behalf of the public. At a press conference after his swearing-in, he informed the reporters on the labor beat that his door would always be open to them. All they had to do was stick their head in whenever they had a question, and he would tell them what he could, limiting himself to "no comment" if he felt anything he might say would jeopardize a settlement.

Friends advised Ching that a more practical way to deal with the press was to hire a public information specialist to supplement his personal contacts. That idea proved a bust. The publicist would shoulder Ching aside and insist that he be the one to answer questions from the audience after Ching's frequent speeches before business or labor groups or on college cam-

*Ching's rapport with Truman was in no way damaged by the fact that he had voted for Dewey in 1948.*

pus. Worse yet, the press officer spread the word among reporters that he was the one to see whenever they had a question about mediation activities. When that policy was made known to Ching by one irked newsgatherer, he was shocked.

He called in his director of administrative management and announced that he had discovered a way to save money on the FMCS budget: fire the public relations man. That action was followed up with a press conference, at which Ching renewed his assurance to the media representatives that they could always get through to him or anyone else in the agency. Everybody looked pleased until Ching followed his statement up with an announcement that he was creating a special committee to advise him on public relations. The reporters brightened up again when he said: "The committee will consist of you gentlemen in this room and its chairman will be Louis Stark [then the chief labor reporter for *The New York Times* and the acknowledged dean of the press corps]."

The only time Ching held out on the press in connection with a major labor dispute was in 1949, when an industrywide strike in steel over the establishment of company-financed pensions was throttling the economy. The strike had grown out of the steel industry's refusal to accept the recommendation of a Presidential factfinding board, headed by Judge Samuel I. Rosenman, for a pension system underwritten exclusively by contributions from the steel producers.

The basic industry position, with United States Steel as its principal enunciator, was that the workers should share the cost of the system with their employers. Ching suspected that Bethlehem Steel, which ranked second only to U.S. Steel in size, was less than wholehearted in its support of this stand. He knew that Bethlehem had, in fact, been running a noncontributory pension plan for its own employees since 1923.

Three weeks into the strike, Ching phoned Joseph Larkin, Bethlehem's industrial relations chief, and set up a private luncheon at the Drake Hotel in New York. Larkin brought along Eugene Grace, the company's chairman, who authorized direct talks between his aides and a union committee headed by Philip Murray outside the framework of the master negotiations for an industrywide peace formula. The problem then became how to divert the attention of the media from Bethlehem, lest too much publicity torpedo what were, at best, going to be delicate explorations.

The expedient Ching hit on was to announce with considerable fanfare that he believed it would be useful to hold separate conversations

with each company on a possible solution. The first such talks, he said, would be with U.S. Steel, the traditional pacesetter, with Ching participating personally in the meetings at the Biltmore Hotel. Nothing was said about any meetings with Bethlehem.

Reporters were out in force at the U.S. Steel conferences, which began at 10 a.m. each morning and continued until 5 p.m., with a midday break for lunch. Ching would brief the press after each session and would profess optimism, even though nothing inside the conference room provided the remotest foundation for hope. U.S. Steel was adamant that any pension plan would have to involve some copayment by workers. On the fourth day, John Stephens, the U.S. Steel vice president for industrial relations, drew Ching aside and asked what game he was playing, because it was so obvious to the company representatives that the whole exercise was a charade. Ching confessed after first extracting a promise from Stephens that he would not tell anyone in his own group what was up with Bethlehem. "God bless you," was Stephens' response. "That's the only way out of this thing." The next day, an accord was concluded at Bethlehem and the rest of the companies soon fell into line. The pattern of noncontributory pensions became widespread in American industry over the next 2 years, another step in the development of a supplemental layer of social security under labor-management auspices.

A problem for Ching throughout his 5 years at FMCS was to preserve the independence of the service from the Labor Department, whose Secretaries had trouble reconciling themselves to the idea that they did not have primary responsibility for moving on industrial disputes, especially those with national overtones. When Truman was reelected in 1948, a pivotal plank in the Democratic platform called for blanket repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act, a step that would have doomed the separate status the law guaranteed for FMCS. When the Congressional session began shortly after Truman's surprise victory, several bills were introduced by ranking Democrats for Taft-Hartley nullification.

One Thursday in January, the clerk of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor notified Ching that the committee wanted him to testify on the repeal measures on the following Tuesday. Ching's testimony was to be confined to the one provision of special interest to him—maintaining the distinct identity of FMCS, free from any institutional attachment to the Labor Department. He knew that his position conflicted with the basic White House position that Taft-Hartley should be annulled in toto. More especially, it was diametrically opposed to the

*As FMCS chief, Ching assured reporters that his door would always be open to them.*

stand Secretary of Labor Maurice Tobin had persuaded the Administration to take with respect to the mediation service. Tobin, who had been Mayor of Boston and Governor of Massachusetts and a highly effective campaigner for Truman in the 1948 campaign, won strong White House backing for his view that, even if Congress rejected the arguments for repealing the whole law, a fight should be made to give jurisdiction over mediation of industrial conflicts back to the Labor Department.

Aware of the constellation of Administration power arrayed against him, Ching still felt he must let the legislators on Capitol Hill know of his disagreement. He conferred with Peter Seitz, the FMCS general counsel, and began drafting testimony in favor of independence for the Federal mediators. When he got home that Thursday evening, Ching told his wife to start packing their household belongings, because he felt the President would be requesting his resignation for openly differing with the White House on an important policy question. He finished drafting his statement on Friday and arranged a Monday meeting with representatives of the Budget Bureau, whose responsibility it was to review and clear all presentations to Congress by Administration officials.

Before Ching got out of bed on Saturday, his wife informed him that Matthew J. Connelly, the President's executive secretary, was on the phone, eager to talk to him. Ching put his hand over the mouthpiece and whispered to his wife, "Here it comes." Connelly asked him to come right over to see the President. Ushered into Truman's presence, he was told by the Chief Executive that he understood Ching would be testifying on the Taft-Hartley Act 2 days later. "You're very well informed, Mr. President," Ching replied. He was totally unprepared for what followed. "I just wanted to tell you to say anything you believe and never mind what the Administration position is," were Truman's words. "Say whatever you believe to be right." Ching did, and throughout his tenure as chief, further Labor Department challenges to the jurisdiction of the FMCS were almost nonexistent.

### Reflections on a career

The qualities that made Ching so impressive in stilling fierce emotional clashes and re-creating an atmosphere of rationality among disputants extended beyond his personal warmth and nimbleness of mind. Where he might readily have used his imposing height as a means of impressing the belligerents, Ching managed to do just the opposite. His shambling gait and the Sherlock Holmes-type curved pipe, from which he

coaxed great billows of smoke whenever he was not ostentatiously refilling it with tobacco, combined with his easy manner to fill any conference room with a sense of calm conducive to meetings of mind.

That did not mean Ching could not be tough. At the height of one of the long series of coal strikes ordered by John L. Lewis in the late 1940's, Ching called Lewis and the negotiators for the mine owners to meet with him. He began by asking Lewis and George Love, chairman of the Consolidation Coal Company, to tell him what the dispute was all about. Love deferred to Lewis, who proceeded to excoriate every coal operator in the room as a greedy oppressor of the miners. Then the president of the United Mine Workers had a few choice words to address to the peacemaker sitting in for Uncle Sam:

"Now you, Mr. Ching, have the temerity to sit here representing the United States Government and claim to be impartial. You know you've been a corporation executive all your life. How could you possibly be impartial? I don't expect impartiality from you." When Lewis stopped speaking, Ching asked whether he was quite through. "Yes, sir," was the frigid reply. "Well, I want to tell you something; you've completely failed in your purpose," said Ching. "What do you mean, sir?" Lewis inquired in his most imperious tone. "Your principal object in what you said about me was to get me mad, and you can't do that," Ching declared. "I only get mad when I want to and I just don't want to at this time. I think it's very amusing." That defused Lewis. "Oh, what's the use," he growled. "Let's get down to business." With that, everything got back on track and the negotiations proceeded without further insults.

Ching could be equally forthright when a top industrialist was obstructing resolution of a consequential impasse. In 1949, when the United Steelworkers and the large steel producers were approaching the showdown over employer-subsidized pensions, Ching felt the only way to avert a strike was through appointment of a Presidential factfinding board. Truman, whose early experiences with labor in the White House made him reluctant ever to get back into the middle of a major industrial confrontation, was cool to the idea. Ching had to enlist the support of John Steelman, Clark Clifford, and Tom Clark, then the Attorney General, before Truman said yes. Philip Murray assured Ching that his union would keep its members at work if the companies agreed to appear before the factfinders. Ching anticipated no difficulty on that score, because any recommendations made by the panel would not be binding.

*Ching favored independence from the Labor Department for government mediators.*

*Ching remained actively involved in mediation duties right up to the time of his death at age 91.*

The board of directors of United States Steel proved wary, however, and the rest of the industry held off, awaiting "Big Steel's" response. The first word from the board was a telegram to Truman raising questions about the function of the factfinders. Ching regarded all of these inquiries as legitimate, and he had a telegram designed to overcome U.S. Steel's apprehensions sent over the President's signature. The company directors came back with a second telegram to Truman, raising further questions, and Ching was called to the White House for a decision on what the Government's next step should be. Ching advised Truman not to answer the wire, but instead to empower the FMCS chief to call Benjamin Fairless, the company's chairman, and tell him he was speaking in the President's name. Given a green light by Truman to proceed, Ching was blunt in his conversation with Fairless the next day.

"My conversation is going to be very short this morning," Ching said. "Number One, I want to tell you that you can't bargain with the President of the United States and, Number Two, will you send an answer, yes or no, this morning. Either you will or you won't, no more exchanging of telegrams." Fairless gasped. "You're quite plainspoken this morning," he said. "Yes, I intended to be. And that is the message I'm giving you from the President in answer to your telegram." That conversation ended the holdout, and the factfinding panel headed by Judge Rosenman began its vain effort to head off the strike. It took a month of shutdown before the breakthrough at Bethlehem produced a settlement in line with the panel's recommendation that the full cost of pensions be borne by the companies.

President Eisenhower endeavored to persuade Ching to stay on at FMCS after the 1952 election, but Ching felt it was time for a change and enthusiastically recommended David Cole as his successor. Thereupon, Lewis Strauss, the new chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), urged Ching to accept the chairmanship of a special labor relations panel to handle disputes at AEC installations. Ching indicated readiness to take on that task, provided he was allowed to submit names of people from academe, industry, and labor to round out the panel and make it possible to set up three-member subcommittees to hold hearings and mediate conflicts in various parts of the country.

Ching's list of panel nominees sat around the White House without action for several weeks in mid-1953. When a dispute broke out at the Oak Ridge installation during that period of drift, Strauss and James P. Mitchell, then Secretary of Labor, phoned Ching at a salmon fishing

camp in New Brunswick and told him to get his panel to work on the case right away. Ching responded that there was no panel because the White House had not approved anyone he nominated. Ching said he was going to continue fishing because there was no point in his returning to Washington until there was a panel and he had an opportunity to meet with it and set up operating procedures.

The next day, an official from the White House and another from the AEC flew up to explain to Ching somewhat abashedly that some of those he had recommended were politically unacceptable and that none of them had been cleared with the proper authorities in the Republican Party. Ching was horrified. "If that's the kind of thing you want, why, go ahead. I'm not going to have anything to do with it," he said. It took months before matters were resolved to Ching's satisfaction. In the interim, some of those he had nominated had taken other jobs that made them unavailable for service. However, most of the rest were duly appointed, and Ching was satisfied that he would be presiding over a group of mediators and arbitrators of stature, well able to grapple with any dispute either in a factfinding capacity or with authority from the parties to make definitive decisions both sides would implement. Reports from the subcommittees were to be reviewed by the full panel, and all decisions had to be unanimous. Ching was still actively involved in his duties as panel chairman right up to his death of a heart attack at home on December 27, 1967, at the age of 91.

In a thoughtful memoir tape recorded by Ching in August 1965, he mused on the transformations that had taken place in the labor-management scene since he started work at U.S. Rubber just after World War I. The master-servant relationship still dominated employee relations in most companies in the early days of his career. Ching recalled a visit he had made in the early 1920's to the strikebound Rhode Island plant of a textile company that supplied tire fabric to U.S. Rubber. When he had asked the company treasurer what the strike was about, he was told that the workers had sent a committee to see the treasurer to protest a 10-percent pay cut decreed by the company. "What did you say to them?" Ching asked. "Say to them? When the time comes that I have to talk to my servants, I'll quit," the treasurer replied. As Ching went out the door, his final words were: "Well, the Czar and the Kaiser both said that, and they had to quit."

In the early years, not more than a half-dozen large corporations embraced Ching's concept of two-way communication with the work force through factory councils or other employee rep-

resentation plans. When Ching and Arthur Young, director of industrial relations for International Harvester, were invited to a manufacturers' meeting in the 1920's to outline the experience of their companies with factory councils, the chairman of the session, a top executive of the J. I. Case farm equipment company, cut off any discussion after their presentations. "We've heard enough of this Bolshevik talk; let's go on to the next order of business," he said.

The employer response to unionism in the early years was just as frosty, even among the few companies willing to open doors for employee-employer communication. When Herbert Hoover, who had been United States Food Administrator in World War I, served as president of the Federated Engineering Societies for a year before joining the Harding Cabinet as Secretary of Commerce in 1921, he became friendly with Samuel Gompers of the AFL. Hoover asked the heads of U.S. Rubber and several other companies he regarded as forward-looking to meet with him at the Metropolitan Club in Manhattan one Sunday afternoon. He asked these men why their companies didn't sit down with Gompers and try to work out an

amicable relationship with organized labor. Such a relationship, in Hoover's opinion, would be a bulwark against the spread of radicalism reflected in the rise of the "Wobblies," the Industrial Workers of the World. The Hoover initiative got no encouragement from those at the meeting. The obstacles that Hoover did not comprehend, Ching recorded in his memoir, were that Gompers had no standing in the affairs of any company except to the extent that AFL unions had organized the workers, and that the federation's focus on craft unionism precluded any effective organization of the mass-production industries by its affiliates.

Ching's championship, within management, of the concept of nonadversarial relations with workers, organized and unorganized, and his unshakable confidence that "fair, square, open, honest dealings" were bedrock requirements for employer-employee harmony account for his designation alongside Frances Perkins, John R. Commons, and Samuel Gompers as initial entrants to the Labor Hall of Fame. "Labor relations are something like family relations, except the boss and workers can't get a divorce." Making that relationship a mutually rewarding one was his lifelong goal. □

*He considered 'fair, square, open, honest' dealings to be bedrock requirements for employer-employee harmony.*