

grams. Until the first part of the 1900's, the beneficial activities of these unions were limited to providing death and disability benefits and homes for aged members.

Although there were several earlier attempts at providing regular superannuation benefits, the system of the International Typographical Union, established in 1908, was the first which covered any large number of workers and which is still in existence. This was followed by plans established by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers in 1912, the Bricklayers, Masons, and Plasterers in 1915, the Railway Conductors in 1917, the Bridge and Structural Iron Workers in 1918, the Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen in 1920, the Railroad Trainmen in 1923, the Printing Pressmen in 1924, and the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in 1928. These systems were financed by assessments on the membership and were, except in the case of the railway brotherhoods, compulsory. Eligibility for pension benefits was based upon age, length of membership in the union, and inability to get employment in the trade. Benefits were looked upon as a form of charity rather than as a right earned for long service in the trade.

Union pension funds had assets of \$11.5 million in 1929, according to Latimer,³ and only 10 unions had such funds. The American Federation of Labor reported 14 unions paying "old-age benefits" in 1929, and 20 in 1931, paying just over \$6 million in benefits. During the 1930's a number of union pension programs were dropped or their funds exhausted, so that by 1940 only 12 unions were paying benefits and the payments came to \$1.7 million.⁴

Beginning in the 1940's unions shifted their efforts from financing retirement benefits by member assessments to obtaining employer support in providing pension payments to retired workers. In the larger, financially secure firms with relatively stable labor forces, a company-wide pension plan provided the best compromise between union demands for adequate retirement payments and management's desire to limit the costs of such benefits. Thus most negotiated pension plans were restricted to the employees of a single company.

However, workers in industries with small firms and frequent transfers of employees between firms also had need for retirement security which could not be economically provided by single-company pension plans. The first areawide pension system supported by employer contributions was initiated in 1929 by Local 3 of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Electrical Contractors Association of New York City. A similar plan for Electricians and the Electrical Employers Association of St. Louis was agreed upon in late 1929, but the agreement was voided by the Missouri Supreme Court in 1931 as a conspiracy in restraint of trade. During World War II, wage controls encouraged unions to seek contract improvements in the form of welfare benefits. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union negotiated multiemployer pension systems in the garment trades, beginning with Local 324 of the ACWA in 1943. Benefits are financed entirely by employer contributions, but the funds are administered and the level of benefits determined solely by the union.

³ Murray W. Latimer, *Trade Union Pension Systems*, New York, 1932.

⁴ H. A. Millis and R. E. Montgomery, *Organized Labor*, New York, 1945, Table 6, p. 334. See also Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Beneficial Activities of American Trade Unions*, Bulletin 465, 1928.