

Yale University

EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale

MSSA Kaplan Prize for Use of MSSA Collections


Library Prizes

5-2015

Insurgent Labor Activists at Yale, 1968-1971

Raymond L. Noonan III
Yale University

Follow this and additional works at: https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/mssa_collections

 Part of the [Labor History Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Noonan, Raymond L. III, "Insurgent Labor Activists at Yale, 1968-1971" (2015). *MSSA Kaplan Prize for Use of MSSA Collections*. 5. https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/mssa_collections/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Library Prizes at EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale. It has been accepted for inclusion in MSSA Kaplan Prize for Use of MSSA Collections by an authorized administrator of EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale. For more information, please contact elischolar@yale.edu.

INSURGENT LABOR ACTIVISTS AT YALE, 1968-1971

Raymond Noonan
Advisor: Professor Beverly Gage
April 6, 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

II. STRIKING SIRABELLA

III. YNFAC

IV. YALE BREAK

V. CONCLUSION

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

I. INTRODUCTION

At noon on April 30, 1971, some Yale students began busing their own trays. Others flipped food-filled plates and tables onto the floor. Almost 100 students broke chairs and other furniture.¹ Commons, the main dining hall on campus, became a “slippery, sloshing pigpen,” according to the *Yale Daily News*.² Soon, nearly 300 students flooded Commons, throwing metal trays across the hall while policemen and dining managers watched grimly nearby.³

“Support the Yale workers,” they chanted, doing all they could to halt Commons’s services.⁴ That day, over 1,000 service and maintenance employees at Yale, part of Local 35 of the Federation of University Employees, went on strike. Their leader, Vincent Sirabella, was determined to avoid a repeat of three years earlier, when Yale crushed the union’s walkout in less than a week. New on the job, Sirabella faced his opportunity to demonstrate his concern, toughness, and tactical acumen to Yale and to the workers he represented. Failure would almost certainly entail a spell of pitiful wages and poor working conditions for his workers, as well as ejection from his job. It was up to him to rally his workers against the monolithic, aggressive, superrich institution that was Yale.

But Sirabella was not the only labor organizer on Yale’s campus in 1971.

* * *

Histories of labor during the “Long 1970s”—which scholars often bracket between the mid-1960s, when the New Left began mobilizing, and 1981, when President Reagan broke the

¹ John Geesman, “Commons ‘Trashed,” *Yale Daily News*, May 1 1971, 3.

² *Ibid.*, 3 and 5.

³ *Ibid.*, 3 and 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵ ~~Cal~~ Winslow, “Overview: The Rebellion from Below, 1965-81,” in *Rebel Rank and File*, ed. Aaron

PATCO strike—have, until recently, been sparse.⁵ This may be surprising, since the period is a watershed for American workers. By nearly any metric, labor activity exploded between 1964 and the early 1970s. The fraction of employed workers striking was four times greater in 1971 than it was in 1963; more days were lost due to work stoppages between 1967 and 1971 than during the ten years that preceded it; and in 1970 alone, workers sacrificed 66 million work days during 5,716 strikes, at that time the greatest number ever.⁶ Over a third of the era’s strikes were wildcat, running loose without union leadership’s support.⁷ Yet by the decade’s conclusion, workers’ incomes had decreased substantially, Jimmy Carter had crushed dreams of a Democratically-fueled labor revival, and Ronald Reagan had captured the votes of blue-collar whites before smashing the air traffic controllers’ union one year later.⁸ The Long 1970s were thus, in the words of Jefferson Cowie, labor’s “swan song.”⁹

My essay engages with three important elements of this emerging literature: labor leadership, civil rights, and second-wave feminism. Many historians have blamed labor’s sudden upsurge and decline in the early 1970s on the union leaders themselves. They argue that these leaders became too bureaucratized and corporatized, complacent in taking whatever share of the post-war riches management gave them without listening to the rank-and-file. When the rank-and-file revolted, so these historians argue, labor leadership suppressed them in order to protect the structures and relationships that bore the union leaders money and security—without

⁵ Cal Winslow, “Overview: The Rebellion from Below, 1965-81,” in *Rebel Rank and File*, ed. Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Cal Winslow (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2010), 2. See the bibliography for a list of works addressing the seventies.

⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Work Stoppages Data,” accessed November 30, 2014 at <http://www.bls.gov/data/>, data series WSU010 (Number of Workers (in 000) Involved in all Work Stoppages Beginning in Period); *ibid.*, data series LNU02000000 ((Unadj) Employment Level); *ibid.*, data series WSU001 (Number of Days of Idleness (in 000) from all Work Stoppages in Effect in Period); Kim Moody, “Understanding the Rank-and-File Rebellion in the Long 1970s,” in *Rebel Rank and File*, ed. Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Cal Winslow (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2010), 133.

⁷ Cal Winslow, “Overview: The Rebellion from Below, 1965-1981,” 1.

⁸ Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010), 12-16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

necessarily helping the everyday worker. As a result, historians such as Robert Brenner write that the “[rank-and-file rebels] found, for the most part, that it was too much to fight not only their employers who stepped up their assault still another notch, [but also] entrenched union leaderships quite unwilling to risk union organizations that offered them a relatively secure material base.”¹⁰ Jefferson Cowie disagreed with this emphasis, claiming that it is idealistic to read the majority of workers as itching for shopfloor revolution.¹¹

Others have claimed that the race- and gender-conscious social movements of the late 1960s influenced workers’ rebellions. Dorothy Sue Cobble wrote that the civil rights movement inspired many—especially female service workers—to pursue unionization since “trade union representation became one way of fulfilling the new movement’s aspirations for respect, dignity, and escape from poverty.”¹² According to Joshua Freeman, the Long 1970s’ labor militancy was born out of workers’ firsthand experiences with the civil rights movement, especially for black

¹⁰ Robert Brenner, “The Political economy of the Rank-and-File Rebellion,” in *Rebel Rank and File*, ed. Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Cal Winslow (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2010), 74. Brenner wrote that “the [union] organization and its paid officials can survive, and prosper, even while the members suffer the serious deterioration in their condition” (*ibid.*, p. 42). Cal Winslow, in the same collection, wrote that “The unions, for the most part, were obstacles in the paths of rank-and-file workers” (“Overview: The Rebellion from Below, 1965-81”, 31). Kim Moody argued that “the growing insularity of business unionism’s industry-by-industry, company-by-company focus on wages and benefits, along with the racism and sexism that dwelt in the house of labor, blinded it to the potential of the new workers.” (“Understanding the Rank-and-File Rebellion in the Long 1970s,” *ibid.*, 117). Jefferson Cowie wrote that “the existing power brokers believed they had built a perfectible system and, accordingly, did most of what they could to ensure the failure of those who challenged it... Unlike any previous upheavals in American labor history, during this one, the labor question already had its solution, and there was a host of institutional interests invested in maintaining those solutions exactly how they already existed” (*Stayin’ Alive*, p.72).

¹¹ Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive*, 69.

¹² Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 211; Cobble, “A Spontaneous Loss of Enthusiasm: Workplace Feminism and the Transformation of Women’s Service Jobs in the 1970s,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 56 (Fall 1999), 26. Also see Kim Moody in *Rebel Rank and File*, pp.118-119. Nancy MacLean has an especially good insight regarding the civil rights movement’s impact: “Nearly every movement for equality since [the Johnson administration] has followed the black struggle in concluding that legal freedom, formal equality, was not enough. Rather, genuine inclusion—full belonging as Americans—required participation in the economic mainstream—newly, access to good jobs at all levels once reserved for white men alone” (MacLean, “Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace,” (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.5).

workers, who struggled against racial discrimination.¹³ Sociologists have even attempted statistical regressions to translate the New Left’s mobilization into shop floor dynamism.¹⁴ With regard to gender-oriented movements, Dorothy Sue Cobble has written that “in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the transformation of women’s work occurred as much in response to pressure from below as from above”—working both within and around organized labor.¹⁵ During this time, she has argued, working-class women organized around the gendered nature of work and unacceptable workplace interactions between the sexes as much as they did around higher wages and respect.¹⁶ These efforts, she said, “expanded the vocabulary of workplace rights and helped redefine once again the meaning of discrimination.”¹⁷ Nancy MacLean has noted working women’s efforts to fight objectification—particularly flight attendants’ struggles against their male superiors—and has stressed the efforts of NOW to pressure the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discriminated on the basis of sex as well as race.¹⁸

These dichotomies—institutionalized labor elite versus rebellious rank and file, racist and sexist laborers versus workers more attentive to issues of race and gender—are useful ones, illuminating how insurgent labor in the early seventies diverged from its predecessors. But there is an additional layer of complexity that historians have not yet explored. On the ground,

¹³ Joshua B. Freeman, “Working Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II” (New York: New Press, 2000), 176 and 179.

¹⁴ Larry Isaac, Steve McDonald, and Greg Lukasik, “Takin’ It from the Streets: How the Sixties Mass Movement Revitalized Unionization,” *American Journal of Sociology* 112:2 (July 2006), pp.46-96. Isaac et al. find that radicals, especially those participating in the civil rights movement, “did stimulate a militant oppositional culture that moved from the streets into workplaces. That oppositional culture was especially significant in the public sector, where it fueled union recognition strikes which, in turn, helped push the extension of collective bargaining laws in that sector, opening the door for union growth.” (46)

¹⁵ Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 206.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American workplace* (New York, NY: Harvard University Press, 2006), 129-130.

rebellious labor organizing was fragmented. Different rebellious labor institutions negotiated these dualities of their national political scene differently, each devising its own solution to create a new politics that they hoped would ultimately earn them higher wages, dignity, and respect. Yale's own labor struggles from 1968 to 1971 illustrate this complexity. Adjusting to female undergraduates, first admitted in 1969, and weathering the May Day protests as well as the Black Panther trials from 1970 to 1971, Yale was a swishing torrent of New Left activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as many other campuses were. Yet not all of Yale's contemporary insurgent labor institutions, today understudied or forgotten, identically incorporated these movements into their politics. They borrowed different bits and pieces of traditional organizing language and the campus's New Left-influenced rhetoric to forge hodgepodge politics of "respect" and "escape from poverty"; sometimes, their institutional interests collided with one another, and internecine strife left insurgent factions clamoring with each other for control.¹⁹

According to legend, Vincent Sirabella, leader of Yale's Local 35 during the 1970s, was brought in by workers angry with Local 35's cozy arrangement with Mother Eli.²⁰ During his first major conflict with the University—a six-week-long strike in 1971—he negotiated the national political scene through what I call *two-pronged organizing*, blowing rhetorical bombast on two fronts. To the New Haven and Yale communities, Sirabella made overtures to racial tensions, connecting his workers' cause to that of poor minority Elm City residents. To his own workers, Sirabella pitched the strike without referring to race or gender. He instead took a more traditional approach with his rank and file, rallying them to his cause by stressing the institutional importance of the union—its existence, its ability to strike, and its ability to

¹⁹ Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 211.

²⁰ Julius Geltman, *Restoring the Power of Unions: It Takes a Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 44.

negotiate with the University. For Sirabella, these institutional or structural issues were means to the end of giving workers more.

The Yale Non-Faculty Action Committee (YNFAC), a motley crew of female secretaries and lab assistants working outside traditional union structures, attempted to organize Yale clericals and technicals from 1968 to 1971. They won the right to an NLRB election and got smashed. Less important than the result, though, is how they organized— practicing what I call *class-based feminism*. Besides the Black Panther trials and the question of women at Yale, YNFAC had an additional source of political drama through which it had to navigate—its national, the National Council of Distributive Workers of America (NCDWA), plainly drew upon the New Left’s articulations of justice and liberation and communicated these ideas to YNFAC leaders. YNFAC’s negotiated these political realities by producing a politics with material benefits front-and-center. After it burst onto the scene, it usually let issues of gender recede. In fact, YNFAC’s literature often portrayed women as disempowered and helpless rather than powerful.

Yale Break—a newsletter “by and for Yale women”—practiced what I call *gender-centered labor*. Produced by anonymous female Yale affiliates, it most closely approximates historians’ conventional accounts of the early seventies’ rank-and-file rebellion. Attentive to women’s liberation, the Yale Breakers emphasized gender as much as—and sometimes even more than—class, taking on workplace discrimination as well as low wages. They negotiated these issues through personal narrative, reacting to their grievances by asserting through artistic form that Yale clericals were people, too, deserving of respect. They also borrowed imagery from the Black Panthers when May Day hysteria was in full swing.

I detail each of these three aspects of Yale's labor movements in turn, seeking to demonstrate that the early seventies didn't experience a single rank-and-file rebellion, influenced in the same way by the same contemporary justice-oriented social movements. It experienced many mini-rebellions, sometimes overlapping and sometimes diverging in message, purpose, and action—Sirabella using two-pronged organizing, YNFAC deploying class-based feminism, and *Yale Break* harnessing gender-centered labor politics. Bobbing and weaving through Yale's local politics, these organizations shaped their messages according to the expediencies of time as they saw fit, trying to earn dignity, respect, and a living wage.

II. STRIKING SIRABELLA

Vinnie Sirabella came to New Haven in 1958 as a labor pariah, exiled from the local restaurant workers union in his hometown of Providence.²¹ A son of the Depression and of a widowed father, he was forced to drop out of school and wash dishes to support the family, and exploitation at work drove him to the labor movement.²² From an early age he had rebelled against union leaders too close with management. As a teenager, he was fired from a waiting gig for suggesting that a more worker-oriented business manager take over, and in the early 1950s he led dissatisfied workers from the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE) into the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).²³ In 1957 he ran against HERE's conservative incumbent business manager, and although the ballot-counters claimed he lost, an international HERE representative approached him about managing a union somewhere besides Providence.²⁴ He accepted and was shipped to New Haven's HERE Local 217, organizing for them for 12 years.²⁵

On May 3, 1968, with almost no public build-up, Yale's Local 35 went on strike. The *Yale Daily News* printed just a few stories hinting at labor tensions before the strike was called—one, on April 4, announcing that negotiations had begun; another, on April 30, announcing that negotiations had inexorably stalled; and two noting that the contract had expired and a strike was probably going to materialize.²⁶ “Management will be very shocked by our action,” Local 35's general counsel publicly predicted, suggesting that union leadership believed themselves to be

²¹ Julius Geltman, *Restoring the Power of Unions*, 42.

²² *Ibid.*, 40-41.

²³ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁶ “Yale Faces Union Negotiations,” *Yale Daily News*, April 4 1968, 1; David Fine and Clifford Stromberg, “Local Employees’ Union Authorizes Yale Strike,” *Yale Daily News*, April 30 1968, 1; David Fine, “Contract Ends; Strike Imminent; Mediator Enters Yale Dispute,” *Yale Daily News*, May 1 1968, 1; David Fine, “Union Quits Negotiations,” *Yale Daily News*, May 2 1968, 1.

wily.²⁷ Many did not seem to know why the strike was occurring, and Local 35 appeared aimless and unorganized; a *News* story the day before the strike began stated, “One thousand University employees will not strike today, but may well strike tomorrow.”²⁸ It lasted only five days. During this time, the University broke the strike by employing financial aid students to fulfill traditional union jobs.²⁹ The tactic was effective, as operations did not slow down much, and Yale’s chief business negotiator said he was “delighted” with how well the University was operating under the circumstances.³⁰ For their part, Local 35’s leaders made few statements to the press, and those that they did make were vague and tepid, lacking a coherent narrative. “You know how the university is,” Local 35’s general counsel said, without specifying what, exactly, the University was.³¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, Local 35’s leaders swiftly returned to the bargaining table and settled on a contract.³²

The paltry three-year contract the Union “won” infuriated many of its rank-and-file workers. “Chaos Reigns At Meeting,” the *Yale Daily News* headlined its piece on Local 35’s meeting to end the strike, and indeed, “jeers and catcalls from the membership” pervaded as much of the rank-and-file rebelled over the deal.³³ Some workers claimed that the leadership had “sold [them] down the river.”³⁴ One dining hall waitress noted, “We got a crummy two cents an hour. What kind of success is that?”³⁵ The contract included tiny wage increases with only cost-

²⁷ Fine and Stromberg, “Local Employees’ Union Authorizes Yale Strike,” 1.

²⁸ Fine, “Union Quits Negotiations,” 1.

²⁹ Val Dean, “Bursary Boys,” *Yale Daily News*, May 3 1968, 1; Paul Taylor and David Fine, “Yale Adjusts To Strike; More Than 500 Picket,” *Yale Daily News*, May 3 1968, 1; Paul Taylor, “Union Negotiations Stall; Midweek Settlement At Best,” *Yale Daily News*, May 6 1968, 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Fine and Stromberg, “Local Employees’ Union Authorizes Yale Strike,” 1.

³² Ray Warman, “Talks to Resume,” *Yale Daily News*, May 7 1968, 1.

³³ Paul Taylor and Gideon Gordon, “Union Votes End to Strike Chaos Reigns At Meeting,” *Yale Daily News*, May 9 1968, 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

of-living *reviews*—not guaranteed increases—over the next three years.³⁶ Although the 1968 contract passed by a relatively close margin, the dissenting workers won out in the long term, recruiting Sirabella in 1969 to revitalize Local 35 as its Business Manager.³⁷

Sirabella demonstrated his meddle two years later, when Local 35's contract was up for renegotiation. As early as November 1970—a full four months before negotiations were supposed to begin—he declared that a strike was highly likely and lambasted Yale's "arrogance of power."³⁸ At issue were smaller wage increases for lower-skilled workers, more work for the same pay, and "Red Circle" rates that limited the workweek to 40 hours (without reduction in pay) for older workers but not newer ones—dividing union member from union member.³⁹ Sirabella then requested that negotiations start a month early and trumpeted the fact that Local 35 had collected workers' demands from divisions across the University, contrasting Local 35's democratic negotiating tactics with monolithic, arrogant Yale.⁴⁰ The next week, Local 35's workers voted nearly unanimously to authorize a strike vote after May 1 if necessary.⁴¹ (The 1968 contract had a no-strike clause, so Local 35 could not officially call for a strike until the current contract expired in the beginning of May.) By April 23, almost a week before the contract's May 1 deadline, Local 35's strike was all but officially declared, Sirabella telling the *Yale Daily* as much and indicating that he had ordered over 300 picket signs.⁴² Finally, as

³⁶ Paul Taylor and Gideon Gordon, "Union Votes End to Strike Chaos Reigns At Meeting," *Yale Daily News*, May 9, 1968, 1.

³⁷ Julius Geltman, *Restoring the Power of Unions*, 44.

³⁸ Scott Herhold, "Union Strike Looms For Next Spring," *Yale Daily News*, November 17 1970, 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ David Kusnet, "Yale Management, Union Prepare For Negotiations," *Yale Daily News*, February 18 1971, 1.

⁴¹ "Union Readies Position," *Yale Daily News*, March 1 1971, 1.

⁴² Greg Huth, "Negotiations Slow Down; Workers' Strike Imminent," *Yale Daily News*, April 23 1971, 1.

students flung food in Commons while Local 35's contract with Yale was on its death throes, 1,157 service and maintenance employees went on strike.⁴³

As Yale's labor relations began heating up, the University was undergoing its own revolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was under the stewardship of the dashing, well-connected University President Kingman Brewster—a champion sailor who traced his lineage to the *Mayflower*—and of the Yale Corporation, populated by Brewster's bourgeois friends, such as Paul Moore Jr., Episcopal bishop of New York, and John Lindsay, mayor of New York City.⁴⁴ Brewster and his Corporation colleagues represented a generation of well-to-do WASPs with liberal politics and a determination to change the very systems that placed them in power. Less than a year after Brewster was inaugurated in 1964, Yale awarded an honorary degree to Martin Luther King, Jr., much to the chagrin of conservative Elis, who cancelled donations and wrote vociferous letters to Kingman.⁴⁵ Brewster also overhauled the College's admissions system by admitting more public school students, Jews, and minorities on merit, without regard for ability to pay, but only after University administrators struggled with one another and old-fashioned alumni cried out acrimoniously.⁴⁶ A few years after Brewster's inauguration and his ill-conceived plan to merge Yale with Vassar, Yale coeducated its undergraduate body.⁴⁷

When Yale opened its gates to women, it was also becoming engulfed in the tides of women's liberation. Gloria Steinem spoke on campus.⁴⁸ The *Yale Daily* began running advertisements for birth control with headlines such as, "Making love is great. Making her

⁴³ Lew Schwartz, "Jobs Abandoned 12 Hours Early," *Yale Daily News*, May 1 1971, 1.

⁴⁴ Geoffrey Kabaservice, *The Guardians: Kingman Brewster, His Circle, and the Rise of the Liberal Establishment* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 14-15, 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 204-5 and 186.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 259-271.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 293-298, 365-369.

⁴⁸ "Steinem, Attorney to Speak," *Yale Daily News*, January 20 1971, 1.

pregnant isn't.”⁴⁹ Two female Yale undergraduates wrote a two-hundred-seventy-five page sociological study entitled *Women at Yale: Liberating a College Campus*, which addressed “Sex and Sin in New England,” marriage, and social dynamics between male and female students, among other gender issues.⁵⁰ Publishing their work in 1971, they concluded that “Coexistence of the sexes here is still being worked out...the demands are for immediate and meaningful change.”⁵¹ Such findings suggest currents of heightened consciousness concerning gender on Yale's campus, as both male and female students were forced to renegotiate what gender, friendship, leadership, and Yale meant in the presence of students with two X chromosomes. Tracing the change of female attitudes on campus, Janet Lever and Pepper Schwartz wrote,

Unlike the first year of coeducation, when even sympathetic women were afraid of the Women's Liberation label, the second year has brought a real commitment to female solidarity... Women at Yale are beginning to polarize around the issue of Women's Liberation. This seems to be indicative of the political scene in the country generally.⁵²

In 1971, second-wave feminism at Yale was in full swing.

The Black Panther trials, too, were heavy on many Yalies' minds. When Alex Rackley, a nineteen-year-old Floridian suspected by the Black Panthers of being an FBI informant, was interrogated, tortured, and murdered by three New Haven-based Party members, two Party

⁴⁹ Population Planning Associates, “Making Love is Great. Making Her Pregnant Isn't,” *Yale Daily News*, September 6, 1971, 2. Additionally, when negotiations between Sirabella and Yale began, the Women's Equity Action League, along with the Yale Academic Professional Women's Forum and some ragtag non-faculty female employees, files a complaint with the Department of Labor claiming that Yale discriminated against women (Ruth Falik, “Women Cite University for Job Discrimination,” *Yale Daily News*, February 25, 1971, 1). NOW lobbied accusations of sexism against the Medical School (“Women's Groups Call HEW Here,” February 8 1971, *Yale Daily News*, 1; “Women Censure Med School,” *Yale Daily News*, March 30 1971, 1). Female Yale students held discussions on day care; the Women's Center offered coffee to get women to “engage in discussion” (“Women's Center,” *Yale Daily News*, April 7 1971, 1). Female undergraduates bartended alumni events (Beverly Waystaff, “Yale Coeducates the Martini,” *Yale Daily News*, March 9 1971). They joined secret societies, one for the “sheer joy of iconoclasm” (Phyllis Orrick, “Women Enrich Tombs,” *Yale Daily News*, April 23 1971, 1).

⁵⁰ Janet Lever and Pepper Schwartz, *Women at Yale: Liberating a College Campus* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1971).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 263-264.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 267-268.

leaders—including national chairman Bobby Seale—were indicted for the crime.⁵³ By the time the pretrial proceedings began in March 1970, radicals across the United States stirred themselves into action, convinced that the trial was a manifestation of the oppression of colored people.⁵⁴ They vowed to descend upon the Elm City and demonstrate against the trial of two Black Panthers.⁵⁵

New Haven, already dramatically shedding manufacturing jobs after the creation of two interstate highways, became enveloped in what one author has characterized as “a miasma of fear.”⁵⁶ Rumors circulated that 100,000 bomb-throwing radicals and right-wingers were flooding the city.⁵⁷ The law school library mysteriously caught on fire, and anonymous individuals seized rifles and supplies for blasting caps from a truck.⁵⁸ The main event occurred on “May Day”—May 1, 1970—when about fifteen thousand youth flocked to the New Haven Green and protested Seale’s and Huggins’s prosecution.⁵⁹ Allen Ginsberg wrote a poem for the occasion that chanted, “Your bodies here so tender & so wounded with Fear, / Metal gas fear, the same fear Whales tremble war consciousness / Smog city—Riot court paranoia,” suggesting the climate of terror present in the Elm City.⁶⁰ Hundreds of National Guard troopers with M16 assault rifles stormed New Haven, and police used tear gas to quell violent protestors.⁶¹ Two

⁵³ Paul Bass and Douglas W. Rae, *Murder in the Model City: The Black Panthers, Yale, and the Redemption of a Killer* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 3-12, 36, 67-70.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 116-119.

⁵⁶ Kabaservice, *The Guardians*, 409; Douglas W. Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 361.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Bass and Rae, *Murder in the Model City*, 153.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 157-8 and 160.

bombs detonated inside Yale's Ingalls Rink just after a concert there for May Day protestors had ended; no one was hurt.⁶²

The Panthers were prevalent on Yale's campus, too. At Woolsey Hall, a young Panther leader urged white Yalies to shoot "pigs."⁶³ 1,500 students packed Battell Chapel for a "teach-in" on the trial and applauded when a Panther called upon them to shut down the ivy-clad institution.⁶⁴ In the words of journalist Paul Bass, "Elite white students in New Haven were only too ready to romanticize and be swayed by figures at home looking to imitate their anticolonialist Third World brethren," and black bulldogs "couldn't ignore the Panthers;" "the entire campus was...consumed with the Panther trial."⁶⁵ 4,500 to 5,000 flooded Ingalls Rink for another pro-Panther rally, although then, students booed the speaker for telling them to murder the police.⁶⁶ The situation became so heated that, in April, Kingman Brewster and the Yale faculty suspended academic expectations for the rest of the spring 1970 semester—students could focus on the questions raised by the trial then and make up course assignments over the summer.⁶⁷

May Day's vestiges crept onto campus afterward. Perhaps most importantly, Bobby Seale's trial began precisely when Sirabella and YNFAC were organizing against Yale. During this time Sirabella, YNFAC, and the Black Panther trials often shared the *Yale Daily News's* front page. The *News* covered Seale's trial closely, from jury selection to its conclusion, asking, "Can a black man receive a fair trial in the United States at this time?"⁶⁸ Bobby Seale's lawyer addressed 350 students at the Yale Political Union.⁶⁹ February featured a three-day colloquium

⁶² *Ibid.*, 159.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 128 and 132-133.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁶⁸ Jeffrey Mayer, "Fairness and a Jury," *Yale Daily News*, January 20 1971, 1.

⁶⁹ Cookie Polan, "Garry Addressed PU; Assails Court System," *Yale Daily News*, January 27 1971, 1.

with Huey Newton.⁷⁰ The night before the strike began, the *Yale Daily* published a story of key quotes to commemorate the event—after all, Local 35’s strike began on May 1, 1971, the one-year anniversary of May Day.⁷¹

In this context Local 35’s strike occurred. Publicly, Sirabella drew upon concern for minorities and the poor while criticizing Yale, plainly tapping into the campus’s Panther fever and New Left fervor. Three weeks into the strike, Local 35 distributed a press release containing a petition signed by many minority New Haven community leaders supporting Local 35. “Especially in the inner-city neighborhoods, grass-roots activists know the severe problems of the working poor,” Sirabella said of the petition.⁷² The petition included demands for a minority recruitment program and read, “Yale as a virtually tax-free institution has been a liability to the black, white, and Puerto Rican people in our communities for years.”⁷³ Its signers included Black and Hispanic neighborhood leaders, as well as the director of the Dixwell Legal Rights Association, staff members at Hill Health Center, multiple pastors, environmental groups, and civil rights lawyers.⁷⁴ Including civil rights lawyers and minority leaders on the petition lent a not-too-subtle subtext to Sirabella’s call to action: Local 35 supported racial solidarity, and to fight Yale was to fight a discriminatory, oppressive ivory tower.

Sirabella’s private messages to his own workers told a different story. He communicated with them through fiery statements decrying the Yale administration. These statements were as vitriolic as they were traditional, omitting overtures to African-Americans, women, or the poor in favor of framing the strike primarily in terms of protecting the institutional integrity of the union.

⁷⁰ Tom Watson, “Three-Day Colloquium Ends,” *Yale Daily News*, February 5 1971, 1.

⁷¹ “Memories of Mayday—A Year Is A Long Time,” *Yale Daily News*, April 30 1971.

⁷² Untitled Local 35 press release, Series I, Box 9, Folder 10.4 Labor Relations ’71, Subfolder 10.6 Communications - Union (1971), Labor-Management Relations Records, Yale University (RU 977), Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University Library (hereafter LMR).

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

“Yale is proposing that Local 35 sign not a fair and just contract, but its own death warrant,” he wrote in a May 10 statement.⁷⁵ Agreeing to Yale’s proposed contract “would be like participating in a prize fight with both hands tied behind your back” because students, who were “potential strikebreakers,” would take bargaining-unit jobs and cripple the union’s ability to strike, weakening the union at the negotiating table.⁷⁶ Brewster had pushed for need-blind admissions, which the Corporation approved in 1966.⁷⁷ To finance this expansion, Brewster proposed that Yale increase the number of ‘bursary’ positions—University jobs reserved for financial aid students so that they could contribute to their scholarship. Vincent Sirabella and Local 35 made this expansion the key issue of their strike, since, according to them, increasing bursary positions in bargaining unit jobs would weaken the union’s negotiating power; students, they reasoned, were more likely to break ranks during future strikes than traditional bargaining unit employees.⁷⁸

Sometimes Sirabella emphasized that he wanted a strong union to protect and improve working conditions. His May 24 update included some rhetoric about working conditions—increased speedup, “damag[ing] jobs.”⁷⁹ To this end, he claimed that the proposal would “make it impossible for us to effectively represent our members. We would be so weak, Yale could push

⁷⁵ Statement by Vincent J. Sirabella, May 10 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder Labor Relations ’71, Subfolder 10.4 Negotiations – 1971, LMR.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* Along similar lines, in the same document Sirabella argued that Yale’s proposal would leave unionized part-time employees without benefits—not because the workers needed such benefits, but because “[t]he Union would be building a time bomb with these disgruntled workers if we accepted dues and allowed Yale to deny them benefits.”

⁷⁷ Geoffrey Kabaservice, *The Guardians*, 264.

⁷⁸ “Strike Settled, but bursary issue unsolved,” *Yale Daily News*, June 30 1971, 1; Vincent J. Sirabella to all bargaining unit employees and their families, May 24 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder Labor Relations ’71, Subfolder 10.4 Negotiations – 1971, LMR. No documents could be found breaking down Local 35’s membership by race or gender, which could help explain Sirabella’s language to his workers. An Office of Institutional Research census published in December 1971 details the number of workers in each department, but it does not include workers’ gender or race. See “Census of Yale Employees on December 31, 1971,” September 13 1972, Accession 1980-A-032, Box 1, Folder 20, Yale University Office of Institutional Research Records (RU 173), Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University Library.

⁷⁹ Vincent J. Sirabella to all bargaining unit employees and their families, May 24 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder Labor Relations ’71, Subfolder 10.4 Negotiations – 1971, LMR.

the workers around as they pleased."⁸⁰ In a June 2 letter, he wrote that Yale's negotiators "are trying to break our Union now, so they can break your backs later on."⁸¹

Part of Sirabella's concern with his leadership, the union's institutional interests, and bread-and-butter benefits might have been a reaction to the Yale administration's campaign against Local 35. Yale's strike strategy consisted reminding employees of the benefits they already enjoyed, the benefits they might enjoy if Local 35 accepted their offer, and guilt-tripping. The student issue was a particular sticking point. "Where would this University be without students? They are the reason we are all here. If it were not for the students, none of us would have jobs at all," wrote Marcus in one letter, with more than a hint of a threat.⁸² Furthermore, the University claimed that Local 35 would strike as long as it pleased on student employment alone, to the detriment of Yale employees and their families.⁸³ "If you feel that preventing students from carrying their own trays is not worth striking for, say so. Tell the Local 35 leaders how you feel," Marcus wrote.⁸⁴ Other letters, personalized for different departments—power plants, grounds maintenance, and Thornburn's custodial services, among others—detailed the University's stance on negotiating issues, such as tool replacement and reduced subcontracting,

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Vincent J. Sirabella to all bargaining unit employees and their families, June 2 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder Labor Relations '71, Subfolder 10.4 Negotiations – 1971, LMR.

⁸² Leonard Marcus to all bargaining unit employees and their families, "Yale Students," May 22 1971, 10.4 Negotiations - 1971, Labor Relations '71, Labor-Management Relations, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. Without University jobs, Marcus contended, Yale's working-class students, who were becoming an increasingly large fraction of the student body, would be unable to attend the school. Marcus added that Yale students would not be strikebreakers because they had not yet broken ranks for this strike. Marcus declined to mention that Yale continued to pay financial aid students in bargaining unit jobs during the strike and requested that they not report to work (see Kingman Brewster to Yale University Community, April 30, 1971, 10.4 Negotiations - 1971, Labor Relations '71, LMR.)

⁸³ Leonard Marcus to all bargaining unit employees, "You and the Strike by Local 35," June 1 1971, Box 9, 10.4 Labor Relations '71, 10.4 Negotiations - 1971, Labor-Management Relations, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

⁸⁴ Leonard Marcus to all bargaining unit employees, "Self Bussing," June 10 1971, Box 9, 10.4 Labor Relations '71, 10.4 Negotiations - 1971, Labor-Management Relations, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

that mattered most to those departments.⁸⁵ Such statements served to isolate Sirabella from the rank-and-file by hinting that Local 35's leadership resisted change and was disconnected from its members.

The exact number of students who contributed to the workers' struggles is unclear, but it was likely few. One University document indicated that ten people showed up to a pro-worker rally; another, written by a Yale police officer ordered to snoop on the rabble-rousers, claimed that just ten students attended an organizing meeting in the Branford College Common Room.⁸⁶ (He did not indicate whether it was the same ten who attended the rally.⁸⁷) Those who did participate—mostly members of Students for a Democratic Society—connected the strike to four big “-isms”: racism, sexism, capitalism, and imperialism (e.g., the Vietnam War). “[Yale’s] employment practices show what kind of ‘leaders’ [Brewster] wants Yale students to become: anti-working class, racist, male chauvinist ‘leaders’—in other words, bosses,” one post read.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ H.M. Kutz to all plant employees, May 15 1971, 10.4 Negotiations - 1971, Labor Relations '71, LMR; Thomas D. Neville to all power plant employees and their families, May 14 1971, *Ibid.*; Mark Newgarden to all grounds maintenance personnel, May 15 1971, *Ibid.*; James G. Thornburn, Jr. to custodial services personnel, May 15 1971, 10.4, *Ibid.* Yale administrators knew that, for most jobs, the University offered wages below the New Haven market average and vastly below those offered by nearby colleges and universities. A confidential Yale-conducted labor market survey produced for the 1971 union negotiations reveals that, for example, custodians, who made \$2.44 an hour at Yale, earned an average of \$2.89 at other northeastern colleges and universities and \$3.24 an hour at local utilities and manufacturers (“Yale University 1970/71 - Labor Market survey of service and maintenance jobs. Confidential,” Box 9, Folder Negotiations - 1971 - B.M. Material, Subfolder Bargaining Book 1971, LMR). This trend held for skilled as well as non-skilled ones. The only industry that paid its employees consistently less than Yale's was “Local Service” (*ibid.*).

⁸⁶ Flyer with note attached, undated, Series I, Box 9, Folder Labor Relations (1B) U.O.D. - Current NLRB Proceedings, Subfolder 10.1 Students for a Democratic Society (1) and other groups, LMR; Memo by Officer August Lewis to Chief Louis Cappiello, March 30 1971, Folder Labor Relations '71, Subfolder 10.4 Negotiations - 1971, LMR.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Flyer reading “Fight racist unemployment!” before May 1 1971, Folder Labor Relations (1B) U.O.D. - Current NLRB Proceedings, Subfolder 10.1 Students for a Democratic Society (1) and other groups, LMR. With regards to the Vietnam War, the same poster continued, “Drive U.S. Imperialism out of Asia now! While workers in the U.S. fight against racist unemployment, speedup, wage cuts, and inflation, the workers and peasants of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos continue their struggle to drive the U.S. imperialists (the bosses and the government) and their local puppets out of Indochina... My Lai was only one incident — the real criminals are the capitalists of the U.S., the same class that exploits workers here.”

Some students participated in the strike by joining workers to picket a University power plant on Ashmun Street. By blocking the plant, they hoped to shut down University operations and direct the Yale community's attention towards its workers. At midnight on May 4, 1971, Yale attempted to deliver fuel to its power plant.⁸⁹ The students and workers tried to block the fuel truck from entering the power plant, but Yale Police moved the picketers out of the way and let the truck in.⁹⁰ Students mulled around the plant until about 3 a.m., when the New Haven Police, Dean of Undergraduate Affairs John Wilkinson, and Special Assistant to President Brewster Jonathan Fanton were called in to calm the protestors.⁹¹ At least one picketer attempted to fight the police officers and was arrested.⁹² The scuffle inspired a flyer, attributed to SDS and "Yale workers," blasting Sirabella for his absence at the incident.⁹³ "What really broke the militancy of the picket line was the union and student misleaders who clamored to collaborate with the police," it read.⁹⁴ "Why didn't you [Sirabella] come down and stand in front of that gate to show some of that dedication the workers elected you for?"⁹⁵

For his part, Sirabella was not the greatest fan of Yale students. He reminded his fellow workers that students scabbed during the 1968 strike and assessed that Yalies would be scabbing during the present conflict if Yale neglected to pay them for staying home.⁹⁶ "The vast majority of students at Yale couldn't care less about the Union, its members, or your jobs. Most students are from out of State and have no concern about New Haven people. Any Increase In Student

⁸⁹ "For information center only — not for release or quotation," May 4 1971, Series II, Box 319, Folder 5, Kingman Brewster, Jr., President of Yale University Records (RU 11), Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University Library (hereafter KBJ).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Thomas Kent, "Truck Rushes Picketers; Officers, Students Scuffle," *Yale Daily News*, May 4 1971, 1.

⁹³ "Whose side is Sirabella on?," Series II, Box 319, Folder 5, KBJ.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Vincent J. Sirabella to all bargaining unit employees and their families, May 24, 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder Labor Relations '71, Subfolder 10.4 Negotiations – 1971, LMR.

Employment Is a Serious Threat To Your Job and Your Future as a Yale Employee,” he wrote.⁹⁷

This student-worker divide, framing leftist activists against each other, demonstrates how the early Seventies’ labor coalitions conflicted with one another, just as they acted in the same context—a Black Panther-fueled, second-wave feminism-bred torrent of labor activity.

Sirabella’s tactics complicate historians’ narratives of the Seventies’ labor rebelliousness. Brenner, Winslow, Moody, and Cowie’s dichotomy between cozy, institutionally-inclined traditional management and structure-smashing worker rebels does not capture how these categories borrowed rhetoric and organizing tactics from one another when they faced contemporary political expediencies.⁹⁸ Sirabella, a union business manager for fourteen years by the Yale strike of 1971, appealed to left-leaning members of the New Haven and Yale communities by incorporating racial overtones into his public anti-Yale rhetoric. To Local 35’s workers, he emphasized the institutional arrangements that he believed necessary to negotiate for better benefits in the first place.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Robert Brenner, “The Political economy of the Rank-and-File Rebellion,” in *Rebel Rank and File*, ed. Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Cal Winslow (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2010), 74. Brenner wrote that “the [union] organization and its paid officials can survive, and prosper, even while the members suffer the serious deterioration in their condition” (*ibid.*, p. 42). Cal Winslow, in the same collection, wrote that “The unions, for the most part, were obstacles in the paths of rank-and-file workers” (“Overview: The Rebellion from Below, 1965-81”, 31). Kim Moody argued that “the growing insularity of business unionism’s industry-by-industry, company-by-company focus on wages and benefits, along with the racism and sexism that dwelt in the house of labor, blinded it to the potential of the new workers.” (“Understanding the Rank-and-File Rebellion in the Long 1970s,” *ibid.*, 117). Jefferson Cowie wrote that “the existing power brokers believed they had built a perfectible system and, accordingly, did most of what they could to ensure the failure of those who challenged it...Unlike any previous upheavals in American labor history, during this one, the labor question already had its solution, and there was a host of institutional interests invested in maintaining those solutions exactly how they already existed” (*Stayin’ Alive*, p.72).



Figure 1. A Yale physical plant worker criticizes Local 35's proposed 1968 contract. Tom Pechinsky, Local 35's business manager at the time, is the bald frowning man on the left. Many workers were dissatisfied with the 1968 contract. Paul Taylor and Gideon Gordon, "Union Votes to End Strike Chaos Reigns At Meeting," *Yale Daily News*, May 9, 1968, 1.



Figure 2. Vincent Sirabella, Business Manager of Local 35. David Kusnet, "Yale Management, Union Prepare for Negotiations," *Yale Daily News*, February 18 1971, 1.

III. YNFAC

In 1968, as Yale walloped Local 35 and Sirabella was soon to be tapped to lead its ranks, the striking union was the University's only formal bargaining unit. But Local 35 only encompassed the University's service and maintenance workers—people such as dining hall workers, security, and groundskeepers. In October of that year, some disgruntled clerical and technical school employees had had enough. They wanted higher wages, standardized promotion and grievance procedures, improved benefits, and free child care.⁹⁹ And so the Yale Non-Faculty Action Committee (YNFAC) was born: five employees wanted a union.¹⁰⁰ All but one were women.¹⁰¹ They set up committees—on parking and paychecks and publicity.¹⁰² They met with the University's Director of Personnel.¹⁰³ They aired their grievances and demands an irregularly-published newsletter—the only documents besides some posters that the grassroots activists produced, in contrast to the much larger literature generated by Local 35, a recognized union. They initially attempted unionize the clerical and technical employees of the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health.¹⁰⁴

Yale's clerical and technical workers were overwhelmingly female; 80 percent, or almost 1,750 out of nearly 2,200 clericals and technicals, identified as such.¹⁰⁵ Nearly 90 percent of the workers were white, and most worked in the professional schools (38 percent, mostly at the School of Medicine), followed by Academic Services (25 percent, which included library and

⁹⁹ YNFAC newsletter volume 1, number 1, June 20, 1969, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 1, Folder 3, Local No. 35 of the Federation of University Employees Records (RU 488), Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University Library (hereafter Local 35).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ YNFAC newsletter volume 2, number 3, March 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 1, Folder 2, Employee Unions and Strikes Records, Yale University (RU 105), Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University Library (hereafter EUS).

¹⁰⁴ YNFAC newsletter volume 1, number 1, June 20, 1969, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 1, Folder 3, Local 35.

¹⁰⁵ "Confidential: Distribution and Composition of Yale's N.L.R.B. Eligible Voters," October 5 1971, Series III, Box 339, Folder 4, KBJ.

health services personnel) and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (22 percent).¹⁰⁶ About half the workers were younger than 35—thirty percent were younger than 25—and nearly seventy percent had been employed by Yale for fewer than 5 years (85 percent had been at Yale for less than ten).¹⁰⁷ Almost 70 percent of the workers held one of just fifteen jobs, even though in 1971 there were over 130 job classifications at Yale.¹⁰⁸ The most frequently held positions were “Secretary B”—20 percent of the total—and “Assistant in Research Med/Sci.”—8.93 percent of the total.¹⁰⁹ Women working as B-level Secretaries, a grade 4 position on Yale’s 17-point labor scale, were paid \$2.44 an hour.¹¹⁰ Assistants in Research—a grade 7 position—were paid \$2.91 an hour.¹¹¹ Thus, a secretary at Yale working 37.5 hours per week for 52 weeks a year would make \$4,758 per year before taxes, about \$600 above the poverty line for a family of four and worth \$27,812 in 2014.¹¹² In contrast, the median American family with two household earners made \$6,834 (\$39,947 in 2014 dollars) per year, and a similarly-situated white family brought home \$7,192 (\$42,039 in 2014 dollars) per year.¹¹³

Yale lobbied against YNFAC, but it was not the only organization to do so. Labor also attacked its fellow insurgents: Local 35 and Local 217 of the Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union, AFL-CIO filed NLRB briefs *against* the formation of YNFAC.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*; Appendix I of Yale Employees Manual, Series II, Box 55, Folders 17-18, The United Automobile Workers of America, District 65 Records (WAG.006), Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University (hereafter UAW).

¹¹⁰ Comparison of Yale wage increases from 1968-1971 with Consumer Price Index increases in “Confidential: Collective Bargaining Negotiations - 1971 Bargaining Manual,” Accession 2005-A-129, Box 9, Folder Negotiations - 1971 B.M. Material, Subfolder Bargaining Book - 1971, LMR; Appendix I of Yale Employees Manual, Series II, Box 55, Folders 17-18, UAW.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² U.S. Census Bureau, “Historical Poverty Tables - Average Poverty Thresholds,” accessed February 7, 2015, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/historical/thresholds.html>; U.S. Census Bureau, “CPI Inflation Calculator,” accessed February 21, 2015, <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.

¹¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, “CPS Population and Per Capita Money Income, All Races: 1967 to 2013,” accessed February 7, 2015, <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/people/>; Bureau of Labor Statistics, “CPI Inflation Calculator,” accessed February 21, 2015, <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.

Local 217, which represented regional hotel and restaurant employees, was led by Vincent Sirabella. Local 35 argued that YNFAC was not a labor organization because without a constitution, bylaws, or mandatory dues, it was not organized enough to take on the responsibilities of bargaining.¹¹⁴ Local 217 argued that traditionally, only University-wide bargaining units negotiated with the University.¹¹⁵ Their arguments won: the NLRB ruled that although YNFAC was a labor organization under federal law, the employees of a particular university department were not a sufficiently separate bargaining unit worthy of negotiating privileges.¹¹⁶

Local 35's institutional interests likely influenced its decision to lobby against YNFAC. A footnote to the August 1970 NLRB decision mentioned that Local 35 wanted all campus clerical and technical employees to be considered a part of its current maintenance and service employees unit.¹¹⁷ The NLRB dismissed Local 35's request because it found no "community of interest" between clericals and technicals and maintenance and service employees.¹¹⁸ The NLRB also noted that if Local 35 were to gain representation privileges over clericals and technicals, then those clericals and technicals would have never had the opportunity to pick their representative.¹¹⁹ Yet if Local 35 gained responsibility for Yale's clerical and technical employees, it would also gain their dues and more power at the bargaining table, since more workers meant a more crippling potential strike.

Thus, in New Haven, although some rebellious labor organizers such as Sirabella rose up by taking on the union leaders they felt were complacent, once the rebels entered positions of

¹¹⁴ Yale University and Yale Non-Faculty Action Committee Unit No. 1. Cases 1-RM-756 and 1-RC-10826 184 NLRB No. 101, August 11 1970, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 1, Folder 1, Local 35.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

power, their newfound institutional interests pushed them against fellow insurgents. No doubt a “rebellious” labor leader in the style of the scholars contributing to *Rebel Rank and File*—after all, he swept to power following worker unrest over labor leadership’s coziness with management—Sirabella nonetheless suppressed an attempt by his fellow workers to rise up. Unfortunately, not enough of Local 217’s records exist to determine whether its opposition of YNFAC exemplifies traditional union leadership suppressing a neighboring rank-and-file rebellion—perhaps in order to extinguish the flames of upheaval before they spread too far—or another recently-rebellious labor organization realizing its own interests at the expense of YNFAC’s. Regardless, when the outburst of national labor unrest played out in New Haven, Elm City unions’ interests sometimes diverged, causing their organizing to collide—even when one was struggling against the largest employer in the city.

Some historians might say that Sirabella sold out. They could claim that although Sirabella might have ridden worker discontent to power, once the Italian was in a position of power, he prioritized the perpetuation of the institutional arrangements that favored him rather than the policies that workers more yearned for. After all, as Robert Brenner wrote, “the [union] organization and its paid officials can survive, and prosper, even while the members suffer the serious deterioration in their condition.”¹²⁰ Along similar lines, Jefferson Cowie has argued that during the late 1960s and early 1970s, “the labor question already had its solution, and there was a host of institutional interests invested in maintaining those solutions exactly how they already existed.”¹²¹ Although these characterizations capture Sirabella’s suppression of YNFAC, they do not fully describe how complexly Sirabella used his power. Sirabella borrowed traditional labor tactics by subduing a nearby insurgency, but he also incorporated rebellious labor strategies by

¹²⁰ Robert Brenner, “The Political Economy of the Rank-and-File Rebellion,” 42.

¹²¹ Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive*, 72.

undermining the status quo. During the strike of 1971, Sirabella himself *subverted* the traditional solutions to the “labor question” that had been standard at Yale during the 1950s and 1960s by attacking the Yale administration publicly. Furthermore, Sirabella accepted YNFAC’s support one year later, while Local 35 was on strike—making the enemy of his enemy his friend, taking what he could as Local 35 toughed it out against Yale.¹²² Both labor traditionalism and labor rebelliousness could be present within the same figure, playing out depending on the particular situation. On the ground, these labor organizations’ alliances reflected not just solidarity but also political expediency, fractured and re-mended as circumstances allowed.

After its initial NLRB defeat, YNFAC went for all or nothing—organize *all* of Yale’s clericals and technicals or dissolve trying. This first involved affiliating with a union national. On January 28, 1971, YNFAC members unanimously voted to seek affiliation with a union.¹²³ On March 2, they voted to affiliate with District 65 of the National Council of Distributive Workers of America (NCDWA), a union separate from the AFL-CIO.¹²⁴ District 65 was radical from its origins. Originally a Jewish workers union, it split from the CIO and refused to swear non-communist statements under the Taft-Hartley Act in the 1940s.¹²⁵ Because it opposed the Vietnam War, District 65 left the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union to found the National Council of Distributive Workers of America.¹²⁶ By 1971 it represented an ethnically heterogeneous mix of white-collar workers.¹²⁷

¹²² Flyer entitled “Local 35 to YNFAC: We Need You,” Series I, Box 9, Folder Labor Relations ’71, Subfolder 10.6 Communications - Union (1971), LMR. For its part, YNFAC, reeling under Yale’s assault, probably couldn’t afford to isolate itself from Local 35 or any other source of support.

¹²³ Matthew Coles, “YNFAC Gives Approval to Affiliation Negotiations,” *Yale Daily News*, January 29 1971, 1.

¹²⁴ John Geesman, “Union Affiliation Voted By YNFAC Members,” *Yale Daily News*, March 3 1971, 1.

¹²⁵ “Guide to the United Automobile Workers of America, District 65,” Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University, http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/tamwag/wag_006/.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Such an affiliation suggested that YNFAC was attentive to the concerns of women and minorities. Contained in the NCDWA's files on Yale is a copy of the NCDWA's constitution, intended as a model for locals.¹²⁸ The constitution shows how the NCDWA enthusiastically aligned itself with the civil rights and feminist movements, as well as fights against poverty and the Vietnam War. The constitution's very first section declared that the NCDWA would organize minorities and the working poor, "do all in our power in the struggle for peace and against war in our nation and in the world," and work "to win equal economic, social and political rights for all workers without regard to sex, national origin, color, religious or political beliefs or affiliation, age, or language differences."¹²⁹ Furthermore, the union would strive to realize "true democracy" within its organization by choosing a board representative of the gender and racial identities of its rank and file.¹³⁰ It is difficult to imagine more explicit overtures for minorities, women, the poor, democratic decision-making, or requirements that locals conform to the national organization's ideals.

YNFAC's first few actions promised as much, since at first the organization married gender issues with economic ones, sometimes emphasizing the former over the latter. In December 1970, YNFAC formed a committee to investigate discrimination among non-faculty workers at the university, and filing a complaint with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.¹³¹ A 1970 leaflet focused on women's issues, emphasizing the working-class struggles of many of Yale's clerical and technical workers: "MAYBE Yale thinks that women workers work ONLY for pin money. MAYBE Yale forgets that many women workers are the sole

¹²⁸ "Draft Constitution," July 29 1970, Series II, Box 55, Folders 17-18, UAW. The constitution proclaimed that all locals would "share the objects of this Union and... shall observe all of the provisions and requirements of this Constitution."

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Flyer entitled "YNFAC Holds Hearing: HEW Investigates Discrimination," undated, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 1, Folder 3, Local 35.

support of their families.”¹³² Alongside “equal pay for equal work,” day care services, and paid maternity leave—all women’s issues—YNFAC expressed its desire for more traditional benefits, including job training, better pay and benefits for part-time employees, and job security.¹³³

Soon after it began, YNFAC let gender demands recede and traditional bread-and-butter issues take center stage. YNFAC’s anti-discrimination committee disappeared from later YNFAC newsletters.¹³⁴ An YNFAC newsletter from September 1971 exemplifies this change. “The function of a union is not merely to fight for wage increases,” YNFAC’s Coordinating Committee wrote.¹³⁵ “It also attempts to improve the quality of their lives. Historically this has meant struggling for health care, job security, adequate pensions, and educational and training programs.”¹³⁶ YNFAC thus highlighted greater wages and benefits to solve Yale laborers’ woes. “I want more money,” one secretary said when asked by YNFAC why she joined the organization.¹³⁷

YNFAC’s shift towards traditional labor values was reflected in a variety of YNFAC newsletter cartoons. These cartoons revealed the organization’s contradictory solution to workers’ struggles and women’s liberation, sometimes presenting women as empowered or powerless. A drawing on the 1970 leaflet championing women’s issues depicted a female clerical worker imprisoned by typewriter keys, an essential tool of the clerical trade (see Figure 3 below). The picture exemplified what Jefferson Cowie has called the “iconic conflict of seventies working-class history, bringing focus to simmering issues of alienation, industrial boredom, and

¹³² Flyer entitled “...But She Worked for Yale,” undated, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 1, Folder 2, EUS.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ YNFAC’s March 18, 1970 issue also touches upon issues of discrimination. See “Grievances on the Job,” YNFAC newsletter volume 2 number 3, March 18 1970, Series I, Box 9, Folder 10.5 Labor Relations (5) Org. Drives Past, Subfolder 10.5 YNFAC Literature, LMR.

¹³⁵ “Unions and the Wage Price Freeze,” YNFAC newsletter, September 1971, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 1, Folder 3, Local 35.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

the failure of postwar collective bargaining to take into account the quality of work life.”¹³⁸ The worker was depicted alone and trapped by her work—not by economic dependence by an ennui bearing down upon her, suggested in her gaze downwards. It seems that the image is supposed to inspire female workers to action—otherwise, why include it in a newsletter for an aspiring union?—but it channels this inspiration through the image of a powerless woman, unable to fend for herself against the Bad Employer. As YNFAC was organizing University workers, it was forced to confront a tension between unionism and feminism. In order to justify why Yale’s overwhelmingly female clerical and technical employees needed a union, YNFAC articulated that the employees were powerless against the University. But this played out in a way that often did not give women space to demonstrate positively their own power as women.



Figure 3. A drawing on a YNFAC leaflet about discrimination at Yale. From “YNFAC Holds Hearing: HEW Investigates Discrimination.” Undated. Local No. 35 of the Federation of University Employees Records (RU 488), Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library. Series II, Box 1, Folder 3.

A cartoon from YNFAC’s first issue suggests a different but equally complicated portrait of women. Here, the artist depicts the bottom half of a woman wearing high heels, holding a

¹³⁸ Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive*, 42.

frying pan, and chasing after a bulldog (Figure 4 below). A caption reads, “It’s a privilege to work for Yale...But who can eat privilege?”¹³⁹ The picture suggests that Yale’s female clerical workers can take charge and beat back oppressive Yale—in contrast with the previous image, which portrayed a female protagonist powerless against her work’s dulling entrapments. But the woman’s high heels and dress—traditionally feminine garb—as well as her weapon of choice—the frying pan, part of the woman’s kitchen—suggest that its author did not imagine women playing a qualitatively different role in the workplace or in the insurgent labor struggle. Women could earn living wages and fight autonomously against Yale, but they had to experience these benefits in the context of their traditional roles—homemaker and sex object.

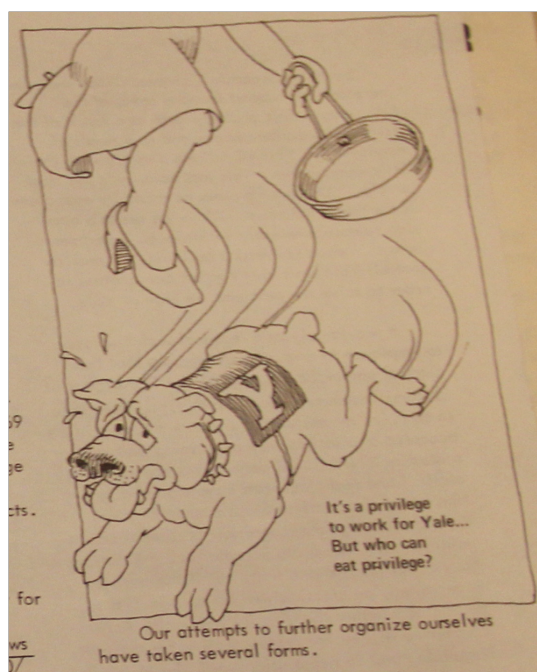


Figure 4. YNFAC newsletter. Vol 1., No. 1. June 20, 1969. Local No. 35 of the Federation of University Employees Records (RU 488), Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library. Series II, Box 1, Folder 3.

YNFAC’s institutional interests sometimes clashed with other progressive causes at Yale. The most prominent of these in 1971 was Kingman Brewster’s expansion of financial aid for

¹³⁹ YNFAC newsletter volume 1, number 1, June 20, 1969, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 1, Folder 3, Local 35.

low-income students. YNFAC opposed this policy for the same reasons Local 35 did, and it echoed these sentiments in a poster released approximately in June 1971, demonstrating how grassroots movements' interests sometimes clashed with one another.¹⁴⁰ YNFAC depicted these interests contradictorily. Unlike Local 35, YNFAC did not explicitly blame the students for their scabbing: "These bursary students, because their education is at stake, could be pressured into doing Local 35's jobs during any future strike," the poster read.¹⁴¹ According to the *text*, then, it was Yale's fault for pressuring students to work; the students were not taking advantage of workers' hardship but were fellow victims of Yale's financial coercion.

The *image* on YNFAC's poster implied the opposite. It implied that the bursary students acted in malicious self-interest to take already-meager salaries away from the downtrodden Local 35 worker. A cartoon on the right side of the poster, included below as Figure 5, depicted a university affiliate—no doubt symbolizing Yale—standing on top of a Doric pillar, dropping sustenance into the bucket of a Local 35 employee.¹⁴² A bursary student, his face betraying trickery, hid behind the pillar to catch Yale's sustenance for himself before Local 35 could catch it. The university graduate's eyes were closed, suggesting that Yale was unaware of bursary student's theft. The cartoon plainly characterizes bursary students as self-motivated and self-interested, engineering benefits at the expense of University workers. Thus, in the same source, YNFAC characterized students as innocent and malicious, coerced and self-interested. As different New Haven labor camps drew upon the same New Left causes and confronted the same tensions, they came to sometimes different and often two-pronged or contradictory solutions. Sirabella's harnessing of the bursary issue contrasted the suffering workers with apathetic, out-of-town, self-interested students. YNFAC also depicted Yale students as self-interested, but

¹⁴⁰ "Why is Local 35 on Strike?", Series I, Box 9, Folder 10.4 Labor Relations (1) '71, LMR.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

sometimes, it depicted them as coerced rather than malicious or detached. Furthermore, it did not portray them as alien—perhaps because some claimed YNFAC imposed itself from out of town.

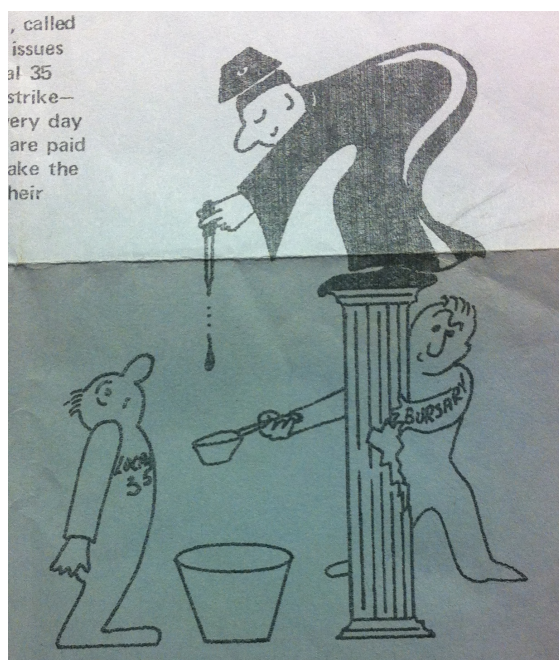


Figure 5. From “Why is Local 35 on Strike?” Folder 10.4 Labor Relations (1) ’71, Box 9, Accession 2005-A-129, Labor-Management Relations.

YNFAC encountered some active but limited resistance from the very workers it was attempting to organize. This dissent revealed fears that an outside organization, District 65, was imposing itself among the workers. One leaflet by a female Peabody Museum employee claimed that “There are no guarantees on either side of the debate... We are discontented with Yale’s attitude toward their employees and their handling of employee relationships, but... [w]hy should we have to pay an outside organization to speak for us?”¹⁴³ The pamphlet situated its claims in democratic terms by calling for rank-and-file employees—not alien organizations—to negotiate working conditions. Another eight female employees circulated a three-page point-by-point critique of YNFAC’s claims, charging YNFAC with misrepresenting Yale’s positions and being

¹⁴³ Untitled leaflet, undated, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 1, Folder 2, Local 35.

out-of-touch with the real attitudes of University clerical employees.¹⁴⁴ Neither document emphasized wage or gender issues. In New Haven, then, YNFAC, a rebellious labor organization, had to address hostilities from its target audience as well as from other insurgent laborers.

Yale management echoed these concerns in its campaign against YNFAC. In a flurry of letters to Yale employees, University administrators insinuated that NCDWA, YNFAC's national, was an out-of-town, out-of-touch, autocratic organization taking advantage of unreasonable worker discontent to collect more dues. "The history and traditions of the NCDWA have had little to do with the needs and aspirations of clerical, technical, and administrative employees in general," one letter concluded, suggesting that NCDWA could not attend to the needs of Yale's secretaries and laboratory assistants.¹⁴⁵ Another began, "Why [would] a New York based, industrial union would be interested [in Yale's clericals]... The unusually high unemployment rate for NCDWA members has caused severe financial problems for the union since its principal source of income, like any union, is members' dues," implying that NCDWA was imposing itself on the Yale workers merely for financial gain.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ "Read Carefully - Vote Intelligently," undated, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 1, Folder 2, Local 35.

¹⁴⁵ Leonard Marcus to Yale Employee, October 22 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder 10.5 Labor Org. Drives Law, Subfolder 10.5 U.O.D. Letters to Employees, LMR.

¹⁴⁶ Leonard Marcus to Yale Employee, November 5 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder 10.5 Labor Org. Drives Law, Subfolder 10.5 U.O.D. Letters to Employees, LMR. Other letters argued that "A university is a special form of community with an unusual interdependence on a person-to-person level between all those who are a part of it... [if you vote for YNFAC], this unique atmosphere we now share may be affected" (Charles K. Bockelman to Yale Employee, October 15 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder 10.5 Labor Org. Drives Law, Subfolder 10.5 U.O.D. Letters to Employees, LMR). Another letter contrasted "NCDWA promises against Yale realities," "who best represents your interests... you or this Union," "the international union's needs for more members," "the costs to you in terms of money and more important, in terms of individual freedom, of a ... NCDWA victory," "the relative worth of seniority and ability under a union contract," and "the serious consequences of strikes" (Leonard Marcus to Yale Employee, November 14 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder 10.5 Labor Org. Drives Law, Subfolder 10.5 U.O.D. Letters to Employees, LMR). The drafts of the letters were even more explicitly anti-YNFAC: "Yale does not believe that the selection of Local 104-District 65 (YNFAC) will service your best interests or [Yale's]... We believe that you value your independence... We feel that you are not interested in paying Union dues, fees, fines, and assessments and that you would prefer not to walk picket lines or engage in strikes" (October 8, 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder 10.5 Labor Org. Drives Law, Subfolder 10.5 U.O.D. Letters to Employees, LMR).

YNFAC's solution to these criticisms was to organize democratically, structured in a way that facilitated leadership and coordination among the rank-and-file. In this way, it countered assertions that it was autocratic, alien, and misrepresenting its positions by attempting to converse and build personal relationships with potential members. A coordinating committee ran the organization's day-to-day business, while representatives of different departments were intermediaries between the coordinating committee and membership.¹⁴⁷ On-the-ground organizing efforts consisted of three full-time organizers—one each for medicine, the sciences, and main campus—coordinating YNFAC members' efforts in those areas.¹⁴⁸ Individual buildings and departments had their own small groups of volunteer organizers to ensure that all potential members were spoken to. YNFAC emphasized that potential members ought to sign membership cards and prioritized one-on-one interaction: "All eligible employees must be contacted. Questioned must be answered, objections countered, fears erased."¹⁴⁹ YNFAC further emphasized the democratic aspect of its union on its posters, urging potential members to get involved. One poster exclaimed this particularly clearly:

All the bad things people hear about unions usually happen because of the apathy of their members who give up their say in the making of union policy out of indifference and laziness. This is an open invitation to an unscrupulous minority to take over. Unions are as good as people want them to be. We can have a Strong, Democratic Union at Yale if we are willing to work to make that so.¹⁵⁰

The implication: unions are grassroots, not distant and autocratic. YNFAC's shift to traditional bread-and-butter labor demands was also in part responding to Yale's assertions that it paid its clerical and technical employees sufficiently. After all, to counter the University's claim that "when you view the whole package [of wages and benefits]...Yale look[s] like a pretty good

¹⁴⁷ "What is YNFAC?", undated, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 1, Folder 2, Local 35.

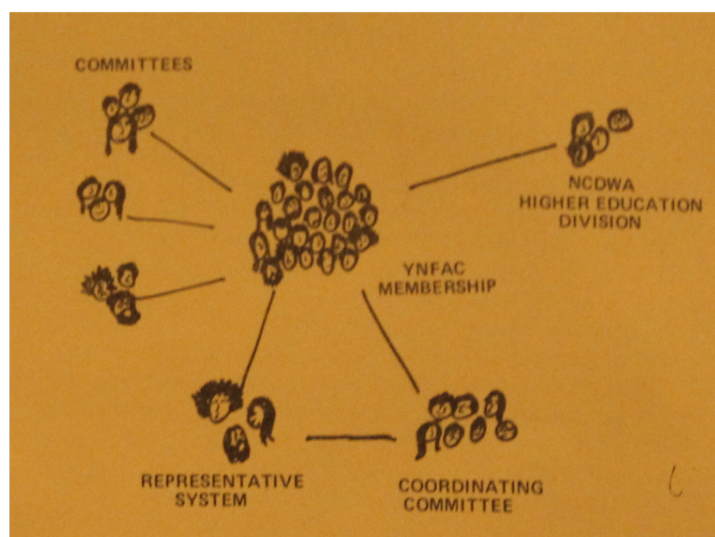
¹⁴⁸ YNFAC newsletter, September 1971, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 1, Folder 3, Local 35.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ YNFAC poster entitled "On the Waterfront?", March 31 1971, Series II, Box 55, Folders 17-18, UAW.

place to work,” YNFAC had to articulate its positions on issues such as hours of work, health insurance, life insurance, and retirement plans, which Yale held up as examples of better-than-average compensation.¹⁵¹

YNFAC and Sirabella confronted similar resistance from the employer they combated. Yale insinuated that both were detached from everyday workers’ suffering and that the workers for whom each struggled were already paid enough. But YNFAC and Sirabella responded to this similar context differently. Sirabella’s solution lay in stressing the union’s power to fight for the workers and calling upon the workers to support their labor leaders during negotiations. YNFAC, taking a different tack, conversed one-on-one with potential members to forge close relationships and publicly challenged the bread-and-butter policy issues that Yale claimed were so patently resolved. These sets of rebellious labor organizers, facing similar struggles and seeking similar ends, nonetheless inched towards those ends differently. The movement was splintered in its responses to employer resistance as much as it was splintered in its precise solutions to the New Left-fervor sweeping the political scene.



¹⁵¹ Kimble M. Williams to Yale Employee, October 19 1971, Series I, Box 9, Folder 10.5 Labor Org. Drives Law, Subfolder 10.5 U.O.D. Letters to Employees, LMR.

Figure 6. A visual representation of YNFAC's structure. Note how the YNFAC membership is in the center, suggesting the organization's commitment to the rank and file. From "What is YNFAC?", undated. Local No. 35 of the Federation of University Employees Records (RU 488), Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library. Series II, Box 1, Folder 2.

Were the dissenters right? From just YNFAC's and the Yale Administration's documents, it is unclear the extent to which YNFAC was a genuinely grassroots labor movement—engendered and sustained by Yale's clerical and technical workers, rather than the leadership of a national organization. District 65's own records provide little evidence that the National Council of Distributive Workers of America supported YNFAC beyond legal assistance. NCDWA lawyers navigated YNFAC insurgents through NLRB regulations on including professionals in a bargaining unit and represented YNFAC during NLRB hearings about the petition for an election.¹⁵² Other papers detailed tactics for distinguishing between professionals and technicals—according to NCDWA organizers, professionals had advanced degrees and specialized knowledge of science or engineering—and included examples of how other firms, such as General Electric, had defined technical employees.¹⁵³ YNFAC did not incorporate NCDWA's language about technical employees into any of its literature. It seems that YNFAC used the NCDWA for their lawyers and little else.

YNFAC problematizes any narrative that accepts the transition from grassroots unionism to race- and gender-focused unionism without explaining why such a transition occurred. Dorothy Sue Cobble and Nancy MacLean have demonstrated one way grassroots labor organizing can interact with the civil rights and feminist movements, but such labor organizing can also play out in many other ways, sometimes in the same social and political environments. In YNFAC, rank-and-file workers, attempting to organize themselves and win better wages,

¹⁵² Untitled documents, Series II, Box 55, Folders 17-18, UAW.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

created a singular class-centered feminist politics that differed from Sirabella's by stressing democratic decision-making and shifting from gender issues to traditional bread-and-butter ones, rather than taking a two-pronged approach. The two labor institutions even fractured along how they responded to like resistance from Yale administrators. Future research must explore why one set of tactics plays out over the other.

IV. YALE BREAK

In December 1969, a picture of a woman in chains circulated throughout Yale. She was smiling and serving coffee. The woman graced the front page of *Yale Break*, “a newspaper for and by women” that popped up on Yale’s campus between 1969 and 1971.¹⁵⁴ Anonymously written by female employees and the wives of Yale affiliates, in its own words it was created because “women at Yale want to speak out.”¹⁵⁵ Consciously associating themselves with the women’s liberation movement, its editors printed, “we have learned to see the situation at Yale as only a reflection of what exists in the larger society...we know that the achievement of the kind of things that we want can only happen when Yale no longer defines itself as the training ground for male leaders.”¹⁵⁶ Their demands emphasized women’s issues—maternity and child care as well as respect for female students and Yale affiliates as equals, not subordinates.¹⁵⁷

The Yale Breakers’ efforts fit into Cobble’s characterization of some labor feminists as “casting their lot with all-female associations defined as much by gender as class.”¹⁵⁸ “You think you are discriminated against for merely being a woman; try being a secretary!” an early issue of *Yale Break* exclaimed, exemplifying how *Break* fused issues of gender and class.¹⁵⁹ These anonymous female employees vented about traditional labor issues: lack of respect, low wages, and lackluster training programs.¹⁶⁰ But they articulated these traditional labor issues in terms of gender—lack of respect *through* workplace treatment (one woman said “we do a lot of the work but all the money and recognition go to the man we work for”), low wages *through* wage

¹⁵⁴ “Why Yale Break,” *Yale Break* volume 1 number 1, December 11 1969, Accession 19ND-A-153, Box 4, Folder 9, Local 35.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 207.

¹⁵⁹ “Yale and the Single Secretary,” *Yale Break* volume 1 number 2, February 10 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

discrimination, and lackluster training programs *because* women were excluded from the programs promising the most upward mobility.¹⁶¹ They also concerned themselves with how Yale males sexualized their work; one worker claimed that a professor told her, “You are pretty sexy for being a secretary,” and a student noted that fellow Black Panther day protestors treated the Women’s Coalition representative “like a sex object.”¹⁶² In Cobble’s words, the Yale Breakers made an “issue of the gendered construction of women’s jobs and claimed that the personal interaction between men and women at work and the ‘sexploitation’ of women’s bodies were as much labor issues as wages and benefits.”¹⁶³

Unlike their colleagues at YNFAC, the Yale Breakers occasionally borrowed a page or two from the Black Panthers. In their issues published during the May Day controversy, an icon fusing Venus symbol with Panther fist appears. The image disappears once the trials conclude, replaced by a more neutral solidarity between man and woman. It thus appears more likely that the symbol represents *Yale Break* taking advantage of New Haven’s Panther fever, rather than being inspired by black activists, as Cobble, MacLean, Freeman, and sociologists might argue.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*; “Behind Every Great Man,” *Yale Break* volume 1 number 3, April 6 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS; “Yale Helps Itself to the Community,” *Yale Break* volume 1 number 2, February 10 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS.

¹⁶² “Yale and the Single Secretary,” *Yale Break* volume 1 number 2, February 10 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS; “The First Year,” *Yale Break* volume 1 number 4, June 1 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS.

¹⁶³ Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 207.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 211; Cobble, “‘A Spontaneous Loss of Enthusiasm:’ Workplace Feminism and the Transformation of Women’s Service Jobs in the 1970s,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 56 (Fall 1999), 26; Joshua B. Freeman, *Working Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (New York: New Press, 2000), 176 and 179; McLean, *Freedom is Not Enough*, 5; Larry Isaac, Steve McDonald, and Greg Lukasik, “Takin’ It from the Streets: How the Sixties Mass Movement Revitalized Unionization,” *American Journal of Sociology* 112:2 (July 2006), 46-96.



Figure 7. An example of the Venus symbol-Panther fist. Yale Break volume 1 number 2, February 10 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS.

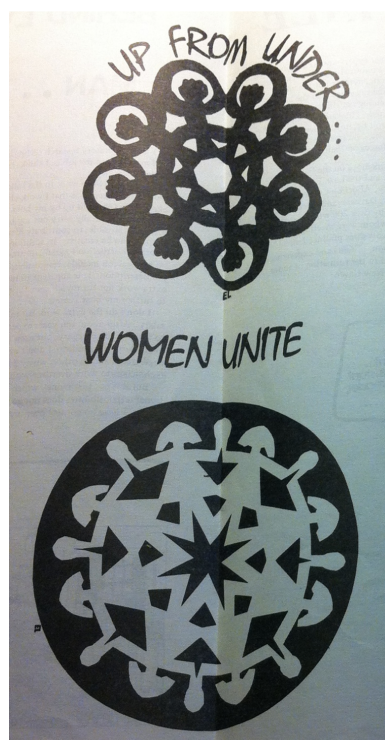


Figure 8. Another example of the Venus symbol-Panther fist. Yale Break volume 1 number 3, April 6 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS.

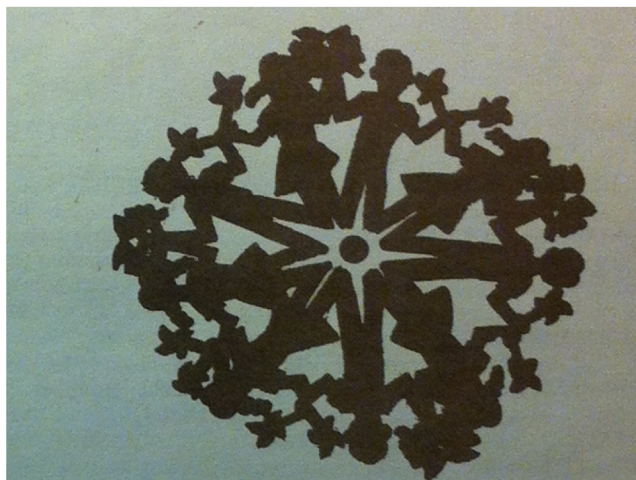


Figure 9. Once May Day was over, *Yale Break*'s familiar "Venus fist" lost its Panther-infused imagery. *Yale Break* volume 2 number 1, January 1 1971, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS.

Yale Break was remarkably personal. It was humorous and light-hearted, highlighting individual women's lived experiences in biting, sarcastic ways. This approach was unique among New Haven labor activists. Sirabella did not spin individuals' hardships to the press, nor did he incorporate his own colorful background into his advocacy. YNFAC pressed for individual organizing conversations and documented discontented workers' quips in its newsletters, but it did not highlight full stories of workers' injustices or explain how gender discrimination related to workers' private lives. Yale Breakers emphasized that female Yale employees and affiliates had their own interests and abilities that went ignored; this ignorance was illustrated in the boredom of their work and the sexism of their male colleagues. A faculty wife wrote about how she had to sacrifice her own ambitions for her husband's career and how at cocktail parties, the first question people asked her was, "what does your husband do?"¹⁶⁵ Another wrote a long, heartfelt narrative about a fight with her faculty supervisor about who would seal the

¹⁶⁵ "Status Woe," *Yale Break* volume 1 number 4, June 1 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS.

envelopes.¹⁶⁶ The humorous pictures *Yale Break* included functioned as resistance by delegitimizing the workers' oppressors, often portraying men as powerless, flawed, or hypocritical (see figures 10 and 11 below).

Yale Break does not comport with Cobble's story entirely. Its all-female staff did not "break entirely with the labor movement," as Cobble wrote that these organizations did.¹⁶⁷ Rather, *Yale Break* shared a weak but extant relationship with YNFAC. In *Yale Break*'s June 1970 issue, YNFAC ran an advertisement emphasizing its support for unemployment compensation.¹⁶⁸ Another short piece ran in the January 1971 issue.¹⁶⁹ No issues of *Yale Break* published during the Local 35 strike exist, and no *Yale Break* issue mentions Local 35. Since 1970 featured many flare-ups between Local 35 and Yale—including a clash over pay cuts, a declaration for day care, fights over speedup, protests against across-the-board budget cuts, and a consideration to strike in October, leading the *Yale Daily News* to run a front-page story in November entitled "Union Strike Looms for Next Spring"—and *Yale Break* did not mention any of these conflicts, one must imagine that its editors were working outside of the mold of organized labor.¹⁷⁰ 1970 was an important year for YNFAC, too: it was when the insurgent labor organization had its first organizing unit, that of the Medical School's Department of

¹⁶⁶ "Divided We Fall," *Yale Break* volume 1 number 3, June 1 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS.

¹⁶⁷ Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 207.

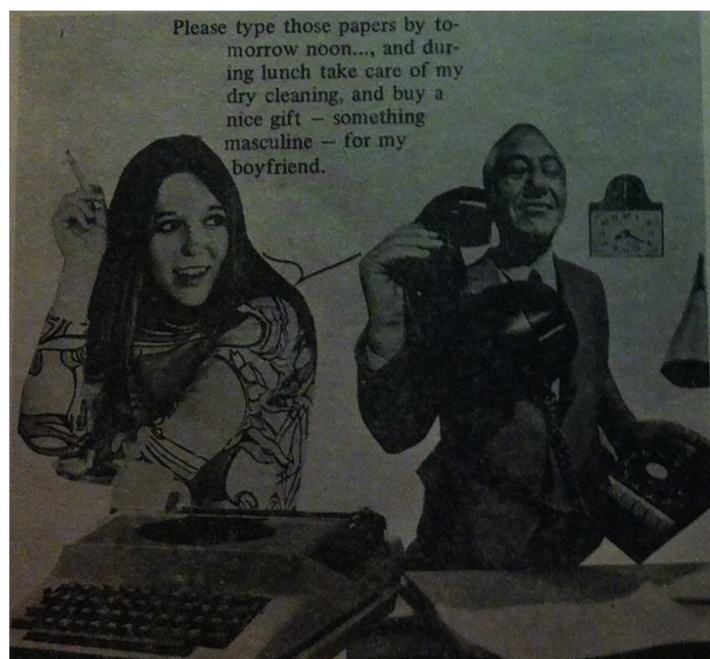
¹⁶⁸ "Shades of Dickens and Pre-New Deal," *Yale Break* volume 1 number 4, June 1 1970, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS.

¹⁶⁹ *Yale Break* volume 2 number 1, January 1 1971, Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1, EUS.

¹⁷⁰ Scott Herhold, "Payment Dispute Resolved," *Yale Daily News*, March 9, 1970, 1; Greg Fullerton, "Yale Union Supports Committee Demands," *Yale Daily News*, April 28, 1970; Scott Herhold, "Employee Relations Plague Yale," *Yale Daily News*, June 1 1970; Scott Herhold, "Sirabella Asks Wage Increase For Next Year," *Yale Daily News*, September 24 1970; Scott Herhold and Stuart Rosow, "Workers Decide Against Walkout," *Yale Daily News*, October 29 1970; Scott Herhold, "Union Strike Looms For Next Spring," *Yale Daily News*, November 17 1970.

Epidemiology and Public Health, rejected by the NLRB.¹⁷¹ Yet *Yale Break* does not write stories on YNFAC's struggles, keeping their involvement with the organization limited to running a couple of ads. Local 35 and YNFAC clashed with one another and with the New Left student activists that sometimes supported them, but *Yale Break* presents a different way these labor activists reacted to fellow advocates. Instead of pursuing interests that conflicted with their fellow laborers, the Yale Breakers stayed out of inter-union and management-labor disputes.

Just as interesting as YNFAC contextualizing *Yale Break* is *Yale Break* contextualizing YNFAC. YNFAC's advertisements in *Yale Break* are evidence that the former insurgents were aware of the latter. But *Yale Break*'s philosophy of women's liberation did not translate into a rhetoric or emphasis of women's issues among YNFAC's ranks. YNFAC was most likely aware of the currents of women's liberation among Yale students and among the very workers it was trying to organize—it just emphasized class-based language instead when crafting its demands.



¹⁷¹ "Briefs Due In YNFAC Dispute," *Yale Daily News*, January 27 1970; Richard Fuchs, "Yale Med Union Rejected," *Yale Daily News*, September 17 1970; John Geesman, "Corporation Denies Meeting Request," *Yale Daily News*, October 12 1970.

Figure 10. *Yale Break*'s cartoons were often humorous, imagining women controlling men in the workplace. *Yale Break* Vol. 1 No. 2, February 10 1970. Employee Unions and Strikes Collection (RU 105), Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1.

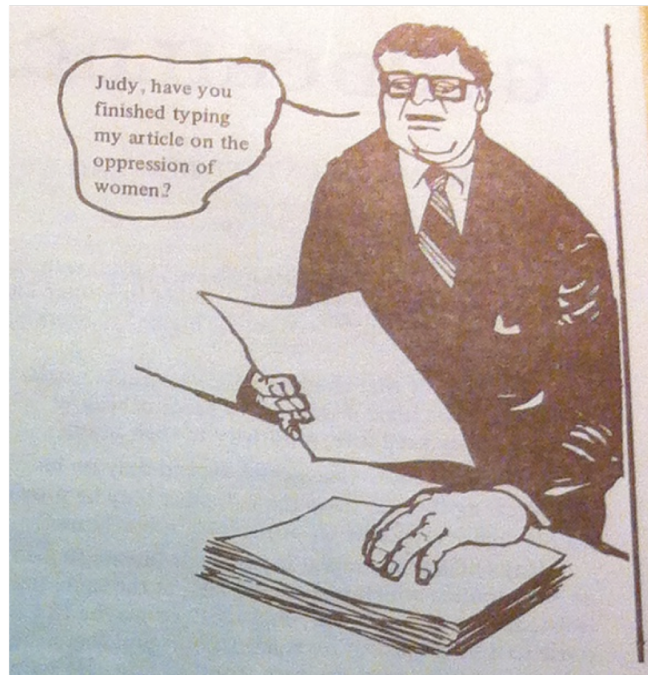


Figure 11. An example of *Yale Break*'s portrayal of Yale's oppressors as hypocrites. *Yale Break* Vol. 2 No. 1, January 1 1971. Employee Unions and Strikes Collection (RU 105), Accession 1987-A-027, Box 4, Folder 1.

Yale Break was a grassroots, female-led effort to earn respect and living wages by publicly criticizing the people and systems that made women's work at Yale depressing. It demonstrates that just because *some* workers were inspired to action by national movements doesn't mean that *all* rabble-rousing laborers were, or that *all* rabble-rousing laborers were inspired similarly. Different activists found different solutions to the national politics that confronted them. Different activists stressed different aspects of their sociopolitical struggle. Some made it funny and personal; others made it lofty and serious.

V. CONCLUSION

Sirabella's militancy won his union's workers higher wages and benefits. With regard to their immediate goals, YNFAC and *Yale Break* failed. YNFAC lost its organizing election in November 1971 by 40 points, with over 90 percent of clerical and technical workers participating.¹⁷² *Yale Break* petered out not much longer after that. A couple more labor organizations—the OPEIU, UAW—attempted organizing drives; they also failed. In 1979, Sirabella left Local 35 for California.¹⁷³ A union would not represent Yale's secretaries and laboratory assistants for another 13 years. Although Sirabella, YNFAC, and *Yale Break* ultimately left New Haven, their solutions to New Haven's 1971 politics reverberated through labor organizers' discourse years later, when Local 34 of the Federation of University Employees launched its clerical and technical drive in November 1980, won its organizing election in May 1983, and went on strike in 1984-1985.

The aspects of Sirabella, YNFAC, and *Yale Break*'s organizing that resemble Local 34's are as differentiated as their solutions to 1971's political and social contingencies. Like Sirabella, Local 34 mobilized community-labor coalitions and performed non-violent civil rights-inspired protest. As Sirabella circulated a petition asking Yale to support its workers in 1971, so John Wilhelm—Local 34's chief organizer and the Italian's protégé—disseminated facts about Yale's finances through the Community-Labor Alliance, which was composed of 55 unions and local organizations.¹⁷⁴ As Sirabella channeled New Left race-conscious fervor into his public pronouncements, so Local 34 cited Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. in its pronouncements

¹⁷² Bruce Howard, "Proposal Loses 1,221-520; Over 90 Percent Turn Out," *Yale Daily News*, November 18 1971, 1.

¹⁷³ Mark Werksman, "Sirabella Resigns Union Post; Wilhelm to Lead Local 35," *Yale Daily News*, May 10 1979, 7.

¹⁷⁴ Herbert Janick, "Yale Blue: Unionization at Yale University, 1931-1985," *Labor History* 28:3, 368; Toni Gilpin, Gary Isaac, Dan Letwin, and Jack McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect: The Clerical and Technical Workers' Strike at Yale University, 1984-1985* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 21.

against the University.¹⁷⁵ Like YNFAC, Local 34 attempted to organize small groups of rank-and-file employees for discussions about the union.¹⁷⁶ And like *Yale Break*, Local 34 had a sense of humor—they performed a skit parodying the Yale Corporation and held a bake sale outside Woodbridge Hall, home to the Yale administration.¹⁷⁷ “There was something about laughing at the Corporation members, who were really out to cut our throats, that was profoundly liberating,” one clerical worker said.¹⁷⁸

Labor historians who have attended to the Long 1970s rightly have recognized the era’s importance, broadened early accounts that neglected non-industrial minority workers, connected the time’s social movements to its economic ones, and distinguished between traditional and rebellious labor leaders. All this is good work. This study of Local 35, YNFAC, and *Yale Break* builds upon this good work by demonstrating that although historians’ categories usefully trace changes in labor organizing up to the early seventies, labor organizers at this time splintered from one another on the picket line and in print along many dimensions not yet explored. The label “rebellious labor leaders” actually designates a host of organizations that devised different politics and organizing strategies under similar political, economic, and social conditions. In New Haven, these conditions included low wages, resistant management, women’s liberation, and Black Panther-inspired race consciousness.

Sirabella’s *two-pronged organizing* took different tacks with the public and with Local 35’s workers. Publicly Sirabella explicitly incorporated race into his union advocacy. To his

¹⁷⁵ Gilpin et. al., *On Strike for Respect*, 64. Local 34 publicly called for a “Nonviolent Witness for Equality at the house of Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti. As part of that Nonviolent Witness, some of us will submit to peaceful arrest, symbolic of our commitment, in the tradition of Gandhi and Martin Luther King.” Local 34 also charged Yale with discriminating against African-Americans and women, just as Sirabella insinuated that the University neglected colored people (Gilpin et. al., *On Strike for Respect*, 45-46. Local 34 organized a “59-Cent Day,” symbolic of their claim that female Yale employees were paid 59 cents for every dollar a man made.)

¹⁷⁶ Gilpin et. al., *On Strike for Respect*, 21-25.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 48.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*.

union's workers Sirabella borrowed traditional labor organizing language, exhorting workers to strike for the union's institutional strength and trust their leaders without stressing race or gender. He also characterized students as apathetic out-of-towers.

YNFAC's *class-based feminism* began by stressing female-specific issues equally alongside class-oriented issues of compensation, then shifted to emphasize the latter over the former. Its predominately female leadership chose not to highlight race issues, perhaps because Yale's clerical and technical workers were overwhelmingly white. As Yale administrators charged that YNFAC was a self-interested alien organization, YNFAC organized according to a democratic grassroots model that stressed individual conversations and collective decision-making, countering claims that it was imposing itself on the workers from the outside for financial gain. Unlike Sirabella's, YNFAC's position on students was largely contradictory, framing them as both victims of management pressure and malicious troublemakers.

Yale Break's gender-centered personal politics placed gender issues at the forefront, framing issues of pay and benefits as extensions of sexism. Whereas YNFAC and Sirabella responded to the administration's critique that they were distanced from rank-and-file workers, *Yale Break* illustrated a different distance—the emotional one its contributors felt between their work and their personal satisfaction. Its exploration of this emotional distance informed most of its pieces, which narrated individuals' struggles through humor instead of stipulating policy demands, as YNFAC did.

These organizations, with their different solutions to the similar issues that confronted them, had interests leading them into conflict. Vincent Sirabella attended acutely to maintaining his union's power, even if this involved attempting to destroy a group of insurgent clericals or prevent working-class students from working their way through Yale. YNFAC, to get workers to

see the value of a union, portrayed women as powerless. *Yale Break* did not discuss the struggles of their employer's service and maintenance employees and only lightly touched upon YNFAC's.

Future research can explore why these divisions occur when they do. Historians' present categories for activist labor organizers, such as "Rebel Rank and File" or "rebellious workers," do not yet capture fully complexity of the terms on which these labor activists organized. Sirabella, YNFAC, and *Yale Break* demonstrate that explaining labor rebels' mobilization and politics only in terms of political, social, and economic trends leaves out parts of the story. One set of political, social, economic, and workplace conditions contributed to many types of labor rebellion; one labor rebellion could draw upon many sets of political, social, economic, and workplace conditions.

Word count: 10,509

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Administrative Services, Yale University, Records of the Director (RU 100). Yale University Library.

Employee Unions and Strikes Records, Yale University (RU 105). Yale University Library.

Kingman Brewster, Jr., President of Yale University Records (RU 11). Yale University Library.

Labor-Management Relations Records, Yale University (RU 977). Yale University Library.

Local No. 35 of the Federation of University Employees Records (RU 488). Yale University Library.

The United Automobile Workers of America, District 65 Records (WAG.006). Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University.

Yale Daily News.

Yale University Office of Institutional Research Records (RU 173). Yale University Library.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Anderson, Linda L. "On Strike Against Yale University." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 8, no. 3 (March 1986): 26–32.

Bass, Paul. *Murder in the Model City: The Black Panthers, Yale, and the Redemption of a Killer*. New York: Basic Books, 2006.

Rich Hurd, "Bottom-Up Organizing: HERE in New Haven & Boston," *Labor Research Review* 1, No. 8 (1986): Article 11.

Brenner, Aaron, Robert Brenner, and Calvin Winslow, eds. *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from below during the Long 1970s*. London ; New York: Verso, 2010.

Cobble, Dorothy Sue. *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America*. Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America. Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Cowie, Jefferson. *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*. New York: New Press, 2010.

- Cupo, Aldo, Molly Ladd-Taylor, Beverly Lett, and David Montgomery. "Beep, Beep, Yale's Cheap: Looking at the Yale Strike." *Radical America* 18, no. 5 (June 1984): 7–19.
- Fraser, Steve, and Gary Gerstle, eds. *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Freeman, Joshua B. "Hardhats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations." *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (July 1, 1993): 725–44.
- . *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*. The New Press, 2001.
- Georgakas, Dan. *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution*. Chicago, Ill: Haymarket Books, 2012.
- Getman, Julius G. *Restoring the Power of Unions: It Takes a Movement*. New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2010. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/yale/Doc?id=10579354>.
- Gilpin, Toni, Gary Isaac, Dan Letwin, and Jack McKivigan. *On Strike for Respect: The Clerical and Technical Workers' Strike at Yale University, 1984-85*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- Hurd, Richard W. "Learning from Clerical Unions: Two Cases of Organizing Success." *Labor Studies Journal* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 30.
- Janick, Herbert. "Yale Blue." *Labor History* 28, no. 3 (Summer 1987): 349–69.
- Kabaservice, Geoffrey M. *The Guardians: Kingman Brewster, His Circle, and the Rise of the Liberal Establishment*. 1st ed. New York: H. Holt, 2004.
- Ladd-Taylor, Molly. "Women Workers and the Yale Strike." *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 3 (Fall 1985): 465–89.
- Lever, Janet. *Women at Yale: Liberating a College Campus*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971.
- Levy, Peter B. "The New Left, Labor, and the Vietnam War." *Peace & Change* 15, no. 1 (January 1990): 46.
- Lichtenstein, Nelson. *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1995.
- MacLean, Nancy. *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace*. New York : Cambridge, Mass: Russell Sage Foundation ; Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Matusow, Allen J. *Nixon's Economy: Booms, Busts, Dollars, and Votes*. Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 1998.

- McCartin, Joseph A. “‘A Wagner Act for Public Employees’: Labor’s Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism, 1970–1976.” *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 1 (June 1, 2008): 123–48.
- . *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike That Changed America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- . “‘Fire the Hell out of Them’: Sanitation Workers’ Struggles and the Normalization of the Striker Replacement Strategy in the 1970s.” *Labor* 2, no. 3 (September 21, 2005): 67–92.
- On Strike for Respect: The Clerical and Technical Workers’ Strike at Yale University, 1984-85*. University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Oppenheimer, Mark. “Bright Union Years.” *American Scholar* 72, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 17.
- Perlstein, Rick. *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*. 1st Scribner hardcover ed. New York: Scribner, 2008.
- . *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan*. First Simon & Schuster hardcover edition. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.
- Rae, Douglas W. *City: Urbanism and Its End*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Rhomberg, Chris, and Louise Simmons. “Beyond Strike Support: Labor-Community Alliances and Democratic Power in New Haven.” *Labor Studies Journal* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 21–47.
- Schulman, Bruce J. *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*. New York: Free Press, 2001.
- Stein, Judith. *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Wilhelm, John. “A Short History of Unionization at Yale.” *Social Text*, no. 49 (December 1, 1996): 13–19.
- Young, Cynthia. “On Strike at Yale.” *Minnesota Review* 45, no. 1 (1995): 179–95.

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

My research for this essay began freshman year. At that time, in the fall of 2011, a coalition of union-backed Democratic candidates for alder swept to power, claiming a supermajority of seats on the Board of Alders and promising a slate of citywide reforms. But not all progressives were united. On Yale's campus, the race between a labor-backed candidate and slick run-of-the-mill progressive tore the undergraduate activist community apart, antagonizing the campus's left-wing labor supporters and mainstream liberal activists alike. There seemed no space to create a united liberal front that would push for issues both sides supported. It stayed that way for two years.

The campus activists' many suspicions dissolved in 2013, when a Republican ran for New Haven's Yale-controlled Ward 1 for the first time in twenty years. Both camps of campus progressives united to fight off the conservative challenger in a remarkable display of solidarity. In the process, we got to know one another and become friends, attending each other's birthday parties and engagement celebrations. Both sides seemed to get along well enough since, collaborating to re-elect Governor Dannel Malloy in fall 2014. But this peace engendered in me a restlessness to answer new questions: where did Locals 34/35 come from? How did they become such a political force? What was Yale's relationship with them? (I knew it had been tense in the past—but just how tense?) If progressives couldn't get along, could unions not get along?

Conversations with friends informed me about Local 34's victories in 1983-1985, and these talks made a 2003 *Times* article I happened across much more interesting. According to the article, Yale's longest strike was in 1977, and the seventies featured three strikes between

Mother Eli and her workers.¹⁷⁹ That seemed like a lot of activity. As far as I could tell, it hadn't been explored much. Why had no one written about this before—especially the 1977 strike, which lasted for more than three months?

There was a very good reason. Most of the relevant documents had not been released until very recently—some as late as January 2015. Other documents were supposed to be released years ago but had not had their restrictions removed. (Arguing about clearance with the University's Manuscripts and Archives staff, which is incredibly talented, is not an experience I hope to reproduce soon.) I felt the thrill of holding my first bargaining book early in the fall, when I dived into Yale's Labor-Management Relations collection and flipped through administrators' playbook for negotiations with Local 35 representatives. The chance to read things that people hadn't intended for you to read—the chance to tell stories with which no one you knew was familiar—the possibility to show that the present was indeed connected to the past, in ways that historians had never previously considered: these were the thrills of research. My notes read, "I CAN'T WAIT TO LOOK AT THIS!!!!!"

Unfortunately, the 1977 strike looked to be a bit of a fluke, essentially consisting of management and labor fact-checking each other about employment policy at every opportunity for 14 weeks. I couldn't find an angle that would connect this strike to the still-nascent historiography on seventies labor movements. One figure kept me connected to this topic: the then-mysterious Vincent Sirabella, Local 35 Business Manager, who seemed to win greater compensation and security for his workers at a time when industrial cities were crumbling and most unions were under assault. If most cities and unions were struggling, I thought, what made New Haven and Sirabella different? How did this Italian man come to coalesce the union's

¹⁷⁹ Steven Greenhouse, "Yale's Labor Troubles Deepen as Thousands Go on Strike," *New York Times*, March 4 2003, B7.

workers behind his cause for months at a time, against New Haven's most powerful employer? Where did he come from?

Researching Sirabella's origins brought me to the 1971 strike. The source that first showed me I found a worthwhile topic was YNFAC's pro-Local 35 pamphlet criticizing Yale students for taking union jobs in order to pay their tuition. I immediately thought back to fall 2011; it became clear that leftists in the past, too, had conflicted with one another when pursuing their individual interests. Further digging uncovered a plethora of Local 35-related sources that examined the strike from a host of perspectives: workers' perspectives; Sirabella's thoughts on Yale; the Black Panther trials; second-wave feminism; the Vietnam War; and student strike support. I suddenly had an overabundance of sources on Local 35's particular struggle and felt the need to zoom out.

I sought secondary sources to contextualize my rich source material. Here most influential for me was Dorothy Sue Cobble's *The Other Women's Movement*, which taught me how organized labor and feminists had intersected throughout 20th-century U.S. history, and Jefferson Cowie's *Stayin' Alive*, which detailed the dichotomy between rebel workers and complacent union management that became so essential to my understand of what happened in New Haven. The collection of essays *Rebel Rank and File* demonstrated the importance of the late 1960s-early 1970s for the labor movement and deepened my understanding of the worker-union management dichotomy I first encountered in *Stayin' Alive*.

I wanted to apply this secondary literature to New Haven in 1971. But I had a problem: what perspectives would I address? I could examine Black Panthers, Students for a Democratic Society, Vietnam War activists, female students and their supporters, the Yale administration, Local 35, New Haven politicians, or New Haven locals—all seemed equally valid. This problem

was reflected in the many collections through which I had to sift to create a complete picture of the time, during, before, and after these events: six boxes in Labor-Management Relations (requests for four more boxes were denied); three boxes in Local 35; four boxes in Employee Unions and Strikes; two boxes in the Office of Institutional Research; two boxes in Administrative Services; and six boxes in the Kingman Brewster collection. Because the sources were so spread out, I often became frustrated while trying to find them, especially when it came to exploring the “unknown unknowns”—trying to discover collections I wasn’t sure existed but that I thought might contain records of perspectives I was not even sure were recorded. If I wanted to find payroll records from Yale but the Human Resources office only went back to 1974, where do I look—is Administrative Services sufficient or should I examine the Administrative Research Office records, too? Do records of Yale’s labor negotiators extend beyond their correspondence with Brewster? If so, would they be hidden in the Provost’s collection or in Corporation files or in something else entirely? Are students’ strike reactions in collections besides the *Yale Daily News* archives? Did I need primary sources for *everything*? Once I located everything, how would I choose what to include or exclude? What would I lose by excluding any of these categories?

Discovering YNFAC and *Yale Break* caused me to realize that this chaos was sort of the point. First reading an YNFAC newsletter and then a *Yale Break* volume, I was struck with just how different they were compared to Sirabella’s approach. They were scrappy, resourceful, and sometimes funny; they pulled no punches criticizing the Yale administration; they focused on entirely different things, or used different language to get at similar things. Instead of struggling to devise a Unified Theory of New Haven Labor in 1971, I embraced the differences I discovered and argued what the sources were telling me—that rebellious labor activists and

institutions devised different solutions to the problems confronting them, even when confronted with similar political, social, and economic contingencies.

Given this framework, my last issue writing this paper was addressing the document disparity. Local 35, being a recognized union, produced much more paper and had more Yale administrators writing about it than either YNFAC, a ragtag crew of grassroots workers, or *Yale Break*, some anonymous secretaries and lab assistants publishing their own newsletter. How could I make the reader feel that she had an equally good handle on YNFAC and *Yale Break* as Local 35? Was that even a desirable goal? Would I have to pad the latter two sections? Ultimately I decided that I shouldn't pad. I had to tell readers the limitations of the documents with which I was working so that they could determine for themselves whether my analysis was valid. The quantity and kind of sources each group produced is as much a part of their identity as the content of those sources; omitting the former would leave my portrait of this period incomplete.

I came to Yale skeptical of how difficult historians' work really was—forgive me, professors. Before, I thought it consisted of many relatively straightforward readings of nicely-arranged documents with some narrative sugar thrown in. This project represents the completion of my conversion. Now I realize that the works of historians I admired seemed easy because they were *good*—the author had such strong arguments, compelling sources, valid inferences from those sources, and a gift for storytelling that the composition of all these parts seemed natural and intuitive. What a dream: to write so well that my argument is intuitive.

I am immensely grateful for the dedication and hard work of my advisor, Professor Beverly Gage, who graciously agreed to mentor me while she was on leave and was balancing the duties of an author, researcher, Director of Undergraduate Studies, public intellectual, and parent. I also

thank Professor Jennifer Klein, who, having never met me and also on leave, kindly directed me towards the most relevant, vigorous, and enlightening secondary sources. Thanks to Professor David Blight for delivering such fantastic lectures that the history major piqued my interest; thanks to Professor Crystal Feimster for leading a freshman seminar so great that I couldn't imagine studying anything else. Finally, I cannot put into words how much the love of my friends and family means to me, especially those that supported me as I gave up weeknights and Saturday afternoons to mobilize on behalf of causes that benefit all of us.