

The International Labor Organization

An American View

WALTER GALENSON

In 1980, the United States rejoined a major United Nations agency—the International Labor Organization (ILO)—from which it had withdrawn in protest in 1977. When the U.S. formally withdrew from the ILO, it charged that the agency had become embroiled in politics. Other UN agencies have suffered from the same malaise, however, without provoking U.S. withdrawal. Why did the U.S. take such drastic action in the case of the ILO? Why has the U.S. perceived conditions as having changed sufficiently to warrant its rejoining? What is the value of this organization to the U.S., which supports a quarter of its cost of operation?

These are some of the questions addressed by Walter Galenson. He presents an insider's analysis of the problems and major functions of the ILO in a work that will appeal to scholars and students of international affairs, of U.S. foreign policymaking, of economic development, and of international labor matters, as well as to policymakers themselves and to corporate executives.

Since the major dilemmas have not been resolved, the critical question is whether the U.S. will remain a member of the ILO, and for how long. The organization will doubtless change as the balance of power in policy-making bodies shifts in favor of the less developed nations. Meanwhile, the author presents his recommendations for the proper U.S. role in ILO affairs, in order to make relationships more productive during this second phase of U.S. participation.

Walter Galenson, Professor in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University, is the author or co-author of nine books on international labor studies, including *Trade Union Democracy in Western Europe*. Over a span of two decades, he served as a consultant to both the ILO and the U.S. delegation to the ILO.

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