

## **WORKERS' REVOLT: TRACING THE ARC OF UNION INFLUENCE IN THE TAPESTRY OF DEMOCRACY**

**Jonathan Michael Whitman**

University of Huddersfield, UK

---

### **Abstract**

This article surveys the history of newswriters' trade union formation in the United States and Canada from 1865 to 1997. It argues that the digital-era "unionization movement" is part of a longer history of newswriters organizing for better working conditions and a more democratic media.

**Keywords:** Newswriters' unions, Digital-era unionization, Predigital age, Trade union formation, United States, Canada

---

### **Introduction**

More than 7,500 news media workers organized trade unions in the United States and Canada between 2015 and 2022, among them reporters, editors, and tech workers (Cohen & de Peuter, 2020; Fu, 2021; Salamon, 2022a, 2023). They include workers at digital-first media outlets and traditional publishing and broadcasting companies, such as Gawker (now Gizmodo Media Group), MTV News, Vice, BuzzFeed, the *Los Angeles Times*, Hearst Magazines, Minnesota Public Radio, and WHYY. They have joined legacy unions that have been representing workers in publishing and broadcasting since the early 20th century: The NewsGuild (TNG); the Writers Guild of America, East; the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists; and the Communications Workers of America (CWA) Canada. Some writers have reported an increase in newswriter union representation due to this digital-era "unionization movement" (Fu, 2021), especially since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (Fischer, 2021), and suggest that "media unionization 3.0 is also a rebranding of an old story" (Chen, 2015, para. 12).

This article surveys this longer history of newswriters' trade union formation in a predigital age. It is grounded in a case study of unions in the United States and Canada from 1865, when newswriters first unionized internationally—until 1997, when newswriters had formed cross-craft international unions.

This article critically evaluates histories of journalism, labor, and critical political economy of communication

Copyright © 2023 (Errol Salamon, E.Salamon@hud.ac.uk). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at <http://ijoc.org>.

literature, integrating secondary research on newswriters' trade union formation. It identifies two dimensions of labor convergence that are underdeveloped in these studies: first, treating labor convergence as an ideology, a set of values, rather than only a range of trade union processes; and

second, accounting for a long historical perspective on trade union labor convergence. First, researchers typically refer to labor convergence as the merging of workers' unions across different crafts, industries, and countries while uniting organized and unorganized workers (McKercher, 2002; Mosco & McKercher, 2008). Conversely, researchers refer to labor convergence as a temporary organizing tactic, uniting community groups and leveraging public support (Salamon, 2022a, 2022b). This article contributes a new conceptualization of labor convergence as a set of trade union ideological values linked to newswriters' organizing processes.

Second, this article addresses the lack of a comprehensive long historical perspective on newswriter unions' labor convergence in the context of cross-border tensions between American and Canadian unions during international organizing efforts (Deck, 1988; Glende, 2012; Leab, 1970; Mari, 2018; McKercher, 2002; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Nerone, 2022; Örnebring, 2020; Salamon, 2022a, 2022b). Extant research has focused on a specific union, a particular occupation, or a short period of time, leaving gaps in understanding newswriters' trade union-organizing efforts across various occupations and industries over time. This article aims to fill these gaps, providing a more comprehensive analysis and proposing a new framework for periodizing labor convergence of newswriters' unions in the United States and Canada between 1865 and 1997. By adopting a broader scope, the article provides insights into the complex dynamics and transformations of newswriters' organizing processes among newspaper print workers and journalists over time.

To better understand how and why newswriters organize in the present and their relationship with trade union ideological values, this article aims to understand the continuities and discontinuities over time in newswriter union histories (Nerone, 2022; Örnebring, 2020; Salamon, 2022a). It asks the following research questions:

*RQ1: How can we periodize labor convergence in the United States and Canada based on histories of newswriters' union formation and reformation between the 1860s and 1990s?*

*RQ2: What trade union ideological values are associated with the processes of labor convergence?*

Next, this article considers how newspaper print workers' craft unions converged internationally across the United States and Canada in the 19th century. Second, it traces a history of the converged blue-collar printers and white-collar journalists' unions, attempting to build industrial unions in these countries from the 1890s to the 1930s. Third, the article traces a shift to divergence in the 1930s, when North American journalists formed autonomous unions and converged with other white-collar front-office newswriters through the 1980s. Fourth, it outlines the process of union reconvergence in the news industry between the mid-1980s and 1990s, reuniting blue-collar and white-collar newswriters who were previously members of the same union, and union divergence among some Canadian newswriters. The conclusion discusses how a new framework for periodizing labor convergence, and understanding the associated ideological values, could offer a necessary framework for future research on media workers' union-organizing efforts at digital media outlets.

### **The Rise of Newswriters' Convergence: Craft Unionism Versus Industrial Unionism**

This section contends that newspaper print workers first organized *craft unions* in particular locales in the United States and Canada, converging internationally in the 19th century and then diverging

based on specialized craft interests within print work (Demers, 1988; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Nerone, 2022; Salamon, 2022b). A *craft unionism* ideology refers to a collective organization of workers who share a particular trade or skillset within a particular industry, such as printers or journalists. By contrast, an *industrial unionism* ideology refers to a collective organization uniting workers within and across industries, regardless of craft or skillset. Until the 20th century, the United States-based International Typographical Union (ITU) was the parent craft union representing newspaper printers in various cities across the United States and Canada. The ITU was founded in 1852 as the National Typographical Union (NTU). It was renamed in 1869 to accommodate Canadian union expansion, which included locals in Saint John (1865), Toronto (1866), and Ottawa and Montreal (1867; Kealey, 1986). Print workers unionized before other professional news employee roles had become firmly established (Nerone, 2022). For instance, by 1830, newspapers employed correspondents who worked for more than one publication, were amateurs, or had other occupations, rather than full-time professional reporters. Thus, there was not yet a common craft identity to facilitate unionization beyond the printers.

By contrast, the Knights of Labor, founded in 1869 by tailors in Philadelphia, represented the first successful attempt to establish a proconvergence “class-based” industrial union in North America, aiming to unite various unorganized occupations (Mosco & McKercher, 2008, p. 96). The Knights of Labor started as a secret organization that criticized craft unions like the ITU, which aimed “to create a better society by reforming the workplace rather than the other way around” (Mosco & McKercher, 2008, p. 101). Over time, the Knights expanded to Ontario, Canada, in 1875, playing a vital role in workers’ struggles regardless of their union affiliations (Kealey, 1980; Kealey & Palmer, 1982). Moreover, the Knights of Labor was significant for being first to organize journalists in Canada and the United States. For example, the Knights Victor Hugo local in Toronto (1886–1895) was predominately composed of journalists. However, the Knights struggled to effectively counter the power of rapid industrialization, the concentration of capital, and a backlash against organized labor, contributing to factionalism and leading to membership decline in the 1890s (Mosco & McKercher, 2008).

Despite benefiting from cross-border craft convergence, the ITU’s control over print workers was challenged during this period. In the late 19th century, printing companies integrated new technologies, including the linotype machine (Kealey, 1986; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Nerone, 2022). The linotype, introduced into newsrooms in 1886, enabled faster mechanical typesetting, creating the potential to displace printing jobs. However, rather than resisting this change, the ITU adapted its strategy and advocated for a new hourly pay rate system, shorter workday, and reskilling on the new machines, thus maintaining relative control over printing labor. Nevertheless, technological advancements also led to craft diversification and specialization among printers, fostering internal divisions within the ITU.

In response, some printers seceded from the ITU and asserted their autonomous professional identity (Kealey, 1986; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Salamon, 2022b). For example, 13 ITU press workers’ union locals established the International Printing Pressmen’s Union (IPPU) in 1889. Bookbinding

workers formed the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders (IBB) in 1892. Over the next two decades, more print workers left the ITU and organized autonomous unions, including the Lithographers and Photoengravers of America and the International Stereotypers' and Electrotypers' Union. These developments marked a process of labor divergence among print workers' unions. Nevertheless, amid these shifts, some unorganized newswriters unionized in the late 19th century, leading to more convergence within the industry.

### **Newswriters' International Labor Convergence Across Crafts**

This section asserts that newswriters converged in one big craft union in the late 19th century across the United States and Canada, bringing together the ideologies of *white-collar* and *blue-collar unionism*. While some journalists had briefly organized with the Knights of Labor (Kealey, 1980), journalists remained mostly unorganized until then. Journalists' drive to unionize was marked by tensions between their white-collar professional ideology and class consciousness, which manifested in a professional orientation and economic orientation (Salamon, 2022a). The characteristics of journalists' professional ideology included individualism, competitiveness, and a commitment to the craft of journalism rather than the collective interests of other workers. Journalists typically identified as "middle-class professionals" or "craftsmen" (Leab, 1970, p. 8) whose professional commitment to their "mental labor" superseded an interest in monetary gain (Mosco & McKercher, 2008, p. 46). Journalists also desired fame, enjoying "the romance of newspapering" (Leab, 1970, p. 8) and "the glamor of the industry" (Deck, 1988, p. 17).

Yet, newswriters set off a wave of labor convergence in 1891 when editorial workers joined the ITU. Journalists eventually realized they were also distinct class with similar economic interests (Leab, 1970; Salamon, 2015, 2022a, 2022b). In unionizing, journalists advocated for higher wages and better working conditions. By the 1890s, a wage disparity between unorganized journalists and the organized newspaper print workers initially led journalists to organize in Pittsburgh, Denver, Sacramento, and New York. Additionally, newspaper work was insecure, as editors and publishers would fire employees at will. This white-collar unionism of aspiring middle-class journalistic workers was typical of other aspiring middle-class professionals. However, white-collar unionism stood in contrast to the blue-collar unionism of working-class printers, who prioritized their manual labor, fair pay, and other workers' collective interests, potentially contributing to wider economic justice and increased political influence (Kealey, 1980; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Salamon, 2022a).

With this growing recognition of their employment conditions, the ITU organized 59 newswriters' locals in more than 40 cities in the United States and Canada between 1891 and 1923, suggesting that newswriters were shifting toward industrial unionism (Leab, 1970; Murasken, 1937; Nerone, 2022; Salamon, 2015). The ITU organized journalists to prevent them from doing replacement work during strikes and to get the union favorable press coverage. Additionally, newspaper employees tended to shift jobs from newspapers' mechanical departments to editorial departments, so they were familiar with printers' long tradition of unionism and urged the ITU to organize newswriters. Most newswriters' locals were formed in the United States and lasted fewer than five years. Spreading to Canada, the ITU initially chartered newswriters' locals in Ottawa (1902–1903), Dawson, Yukon

Territory (1903–1906), and Montreal (1904– 1906). However, ITU newswriters vice-president John F. O’Sullivan had reported in 1901 that newswriters sought to withdraw from the ITU to form an independent organization to better serve journalists’ interests. By 1906, the ITU demonstrated that its interest in the newswriters had also waned when members voted to amend the union’s constitution to remove newswriters from the union. These feats perpetuated the tensions between white-collar and blue-collar unionism, solidifying the self-perceived differences between newswriters and print workers.

Such union-organizing efforts were based on newswriters’ narrow articulation of industrial unionism. By contrast, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) demonstrated a clearer and explicit expression of industrial unionism. Founded in Chicago in 1905, the IWW expanded into Canada in 1906, aiming to unify the working class across the globe and overthrow capitalism (Cole, Struthers, & Zimmer, 2017; Mosco & McKercher, 2008). The IWW pledged to replace craft unionism and organize workers neglected by other unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), regardless of their craft, skillset, or ethnic, racial, gender, or national identities. While ITU newswriters locals expanded to Canada, it became clear that such labor convergence was based on newswriters’ prevailing parochial craft ideology and the tensions between white-collar and blue-collar unionism, rather than the IWW’s expansive iteration of industrial unionism.

Nevertheless, the ITU amended its policy to resume granting charters to newswriters in 1911, but it arguably reinforced the ITU’s narrow craft unionism and the tensions among different newswriter crafts (Demers, 1988; Murasken, 1937). Fearing jurisdictional disputes over the newswriters with the AFL, the ITU chartered Canadian newswriters’ unions in Vancouver (1913–1916), Montreal (1919–1923), and London, Ontario (1919–1921). Despite their efforts, these newswriter locals faced staunch employer opposition to unionization, leading some employers to form nonunion company associations. According to an ITU report, the employers argued that union organizing would “result in the writers developing class prejudice and distorting the news in favor of the labor movement, thus curtailing the freedom and fairness of the press” (as cited in Murasken, 1937, p. 13). To gain support, the newswriters collaborated with ITU printers’ locals. Yet, ITU’s larger membership generally favored relinquishing jurisdiction over the newswriters because they were unwilling to adapt their rules and membership requirements to journalists’ unique needs, including hours of work, seniority, and apprenticeships. These struggles exemplified the tensions between white-collar unionism, represented by professional journalists’ skilled and mental labor, and blue-collar unionism, prevalent among manual laborers in other craft-based unions.

In response, the AFL attempted to form a national newswriters’ union. In 1923, the ITU relinquished jurisdiction of newswriters to the AFL, except for locals in Milwaukee and Scranton, which remained ITU affiliates (Bernstein, 1969/2010; Leab, 1970). The AFL chartered newswriters locals in seven cities between 1923 and 1930, but by 1933, only Boston and Chicago locals had survived. Many locals had ties to the labor movement, contributed to the labor press, or were labor news reporters seeking access to other unions’ members and events. Notably, the AFL chartered only one newswriters’ union in Canada, a local in Montreal (1926–1927; Murasken, 1937). Despite these developments, journalists in



North America eventually recognized they needed to organize autonomous unions to address their unique issues as white-collar mental laborers.

### **International Labor Divergence and Convergence Among White-Collar Newswriters**

This section affirms that journalists facilitated labor divergence by forming autonomous unions in the United States and Canada. They also gradually adopted white-collar international labor convergence as an organizing strategy, uniting more groups of white-collar newswriters between the 1930s and 1950s. Journalists had faced challenges in building solidarity with blue-collar pressroom workers (Denning, 1997/2010; Leab, 1970; Salamon, 2022a). However, Great Depression economics contributed to market instability, leading New Deal legislation to facilitate a wider industrialization and unionization of cultural workers in the United States. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 contained codes of fair competition to aid the country's economic recovery during the Depression. The Act also supported employees' rights to organize trade unions and bargain collectively. Yet, the New Deal exempted some editorial workers from maximum work hours and minimum wages legislation, regarding them as professional workers. In response, journalists founded the American Newspaper Guild (ANG) in the United States in 1933 due to their shared individualistic professional ideology. The ANG's successful early organizing efforts were also fueled by the passing of the National Labor Relations Act of 1935. This legislation guaranteed employees' rights at private sector workplaces to organize trade unions and engage in collective bargaining. By forming the ANG, journalists illuminated that autonomous "white collar unionism" (Leab, 1970, p. 3) could address their unique demands, including better pay, hours of work, and job security.

During its early years, though, the ANG's union-organizing efforts revealed tensions within journalists' white-collar unionism ideology, reflecting broader divisions in the labor movement between craft unionism and industrial unionism. The ANG initially became a site of conflict for left-wing activists who envisioned labor organizing as part of larger social movements and political initiatives during the 1930s and 1940s (Denning, 1997/2010; Glende, 2012; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Salamon, 2022a). The ANG joined the larger labor movement, becoming members of the craft unionism-oriented AFL in 1936 and the more militant Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1937. As the rival labor federation to the AFL, the CIO pushed an industrial unionism ideology. Notably, ITU's president was the CIO's first secretary. The ITU had been barred from the AFL until 1944 for espousing industrial unionism. Nevertheless, such leftist politics in the ANG created intraunion tensions, becoming a barrier to the union's growth until radical CIO-affiliated leaders were removed from ANG office by the 1940s. The CIO's defeat in the ANG solidified the ANG's white-collar ideology and identity as a middle-class professional organization that aligned with the AFL's craft unionism ideology. Despite these tensions, the ANG's longstanding white-collar unionism demands became clearer through its international craft-oriented organizing efforts throughout the 20th century.

However, white-collar international labor convergence was tenuous during the ANG's early years. In 1936, the ANG started organizing editorial workers in Canada (Deck, 1988; Murasken, 1937; Salamon, 2015). A small group of editorial workers at Toronto newspapers, many of them women, initially aimed to unionize the city's four dailies, launching the Toronto Newspaper Guild (TTNG). Editorial workers

at Montreal newspapers also formed an ANG local in 1937. Yet, unions had limited legal protection, allowing companies to use pressure tactics and intimidation to resist unionization. In 1937, for example, a Toronto newspaper fired 41 union members. Due to strong employer opposition, the TTNG and Montreal locals failed to negotiate contracts, leading the ANG to revoke their charters in 1943. Journalists and other white-collar newswriters eventually played a pivotal role in broadening the scope of newswriters' union convergence throughout the 20th century. Labor legislation made possible union certification and compulsory collective bargaining, such as the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 in the United States and British Columbia's Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1947 and Ontario's Labour Relations Act of 1948 in Canada (Deck, 1988; Denning, 1997/2010; Leab, 1970; Salamon, 2015; Stonebanks, 1986). This legislative framework enabled the ANG to resume organizing editorial workers in Ontario by 1947, leading to significant progress for the union. The union revived TTNG in 1948, garnering strong support at the *Toronto Daily Star*. In 1949, the union achieved its first successful contract for *Star* reporters and photographers, securing a monumental pay increase that underscored the profound impact of newswriters' convergence. Throughout the 1950s, the ANG extended its organizing efforts to editorial workers, for instance, at the *Toronto Telegram*, the *Globe and Mail*, and other *Toronto Star* departments, encompassing circulation, delivery, advertising, accounting, and maintenance employees. These developments transformed journalists' unions into organizations with diverse memberships, marking a notable shift toward white-collar labor convergence and espousing newswriters' craft-oriented industrial unionism ideology.

As the ANG's membership continued to converge internationally outside the United States, the union's Canadian members sought special recognition. In 1951, Canada was established as a "region" in the union (Deck, 1988, p. 29). In the 1960s, the Victoria Newspaper Guild (VING) mobilized ANG members to remove "American" from the union's name to reflect its Canadian membership (Stonebanks, 1986, pp. 26–27). The VING submitted several motions to the ANG's international conventions to adopt a new name, including the "North American Newspaper Guild," "International Newspaper Guild," and "The Newspaper Guild." In 1971, the ANG convention adopted The Newspaper Guild (TNG). As a result, the union committed to opening a Canadian office and appointing a Canadian director (Deck, 1988). This special recognition was a significant step toward international labor convergence, aiming to address the longstanding tensions between newswriter union members in the United States and Canada.

Meanwhile, newswriters' unions in the United States faced unique struggles, with government legislation such as the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 limiting collective bargaining and labor convergence (Marjoribanks, 2000). In the 1970s, publishers capitalized on such labor legislation and First Amendment arguments to thwart unionization, citing concerns about press freedom. Strikes in the 1980s became emblematic of a broader "corporate offensive against unions" (Rhomborg, 2012, p. 7), eroding collective bargaining and New Deal-era worker protections. Concessions from TNG-represented publications resulted in wage cuts, benefit reductions, and no-strike clauses in contracts.

A decline in newspaper union representation, from 21% in 1983 to 10% in 2000 (Stanger, 2002), raised questions about unions' collective bargaining power and the uneven paths toward convergence.

By contrast, some newsrooms in Ontario, Canada, became unionized only in the 1980s (Deck, 1988; Salamon, 2015). In 1979, TTNG adopted a new name, the Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild (SONG), signifying its expanded subnational organizing goals beyond Toronto. A year later, the SONG aimed to organize (1) unorganized departments in workplaces where it already had members, (2) unorganized workplaces in regions where the union had bargaining units, and (3) new locals. The SONG successfully unionized white-collar newswriters at various daily and weekly community newspapers, including the *Hamilton Spectator*, *Maclean's*, *Metroland*, and Thomson Newspapers, leading to convergence and expansion throughout the 1990s. They embraced a white-collar ideology, aiming to attain higher wages and professional standards for newswriters. The SONG's union-organizing efforts illuminated that labor convergence could refer to organizing unorganized newswriters at the subnational level. These developments in Canada further indicated that the process of labor convergence was not uniform across the newspaper industry, the United States, Canada, or within a local region.

### **Labor Union Reconvergence and Divergence**

The aforementioned TNG organizing campaigns unfolded as newspaper unions formally adopted a labor convergence strategy in the 1950s, which this section calls *labor reconvergence*. This section is also focused on how some newswriters' unions in Canada wanted more national autonomy, adopting a *labor divergence* strategy. As media chains grew, became more powerful, and implemented a strategy of corporate convergence, newspaper unions merged with other media and communication workers' unions, consolidating their contract negotiations to strengthen their collective bargaining power (McKercher, 2002; Mosco & McKercher, 2008). TNG, the ITU, and the CWA—a 600,000-member media and telecommunications workers union—discussed plans to formally merge and organize workers across industries. Their newspaper and broadcast news members worked in editorial and production departments in the United States and Canada, illuminating newswriters' expansive industrial unionism ideology that could unite white-collar and blue-collar unionism internationally.

This attempt to form one big union of newswriters initially failed, arguably due to the enduring tensions between white-collar and blue-collar unionism. TNG and the printing trade unions had informally discussed plans to unite at AFL-CIO conventions in 1957 and 1959, but in 1960, TNG and the ITU formally announced their goal of forming "one big union" (McKercher, 2002, pp. 58–62). These merger plans fizzled by 1962 because they were unable to agree on what "one big union" would mean in practice. Different principles and policies guided each union's organizational structures, which would have been difficult to reconcile. These challenges resembled newswriters' struggles with ITU print workers in the early 20th century.

Newswriters' unions had two additional concerns between the 1960s and 1980s, limiting their ability to adopt an industrial unionism ideology. First, they thought their jobs would be displaced when companies introduced new technologies (Deck, 1988; McKercher, 2002). The ITU was a craft union that had been losing members due to the introduction of computerized typesetting. Automation was



streamlining the production process and deskilling newspaper workers' labor. In 1975, the unions issued a joint declaration of principles outlining their common interests in the face of a changing news industry. In 1982 and 1983, merger committees proposed deals to their respective unions, agreeing that the unions should establish a new Media Workers International Union—ITU/TNG. At the 1983 TNG convention, delegates voted to support the proposed merger, but ITU members were divided on the deal. Some ITU members wanted their union to merge with the Teamsters, which had organized about 150 printing companies, claiming it could offer them more benefits and bargaining power. The ITU held a referendum in 1985 to merge, with most members voting against it. These outcomes reinforced the longstanding divide between the mental labor underpinning white-collar unionism and the manual labor guiding blue-collar unionism. Second, the newswriters' unions were concerned that increasing media ownership concentration would limit their collective bargaining power in the early 1980s, which was facilitated by relaxed government regulation on cross-media ownership (Hébert, 1981; McKercher, 2002; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Salamon, 2022b). Bigger media companies might have more resources and leverage in contract negotiations, giving employers more control over wages but leaving workers with fewer alternative job opportunities outside these companies. Accordingly, the CWA initiated a labor convergence union strategy around 1980, attempting to increase their collective power to put pressure on employers by including more members across occupational lines and industries. ITU members finally voted to merge with the CWA in 1986 and established the CWA's Printing, Publishing, and Media Workers Sector in 1987. This labor convergence strategy demonstrated that printing newswriters could unite with other media workers due to their shared commitment to manual labor and blue-collar unionism. However, their craft-oriented and reformist iteration of industrial unionism was still different from the IWW's expansive and radical industrial unionism that also targeted the capitalist economic system itself (Cole et al., 2017).

Left on its own, TNG explored other merger and divergence options between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, raising questions about how newswriters could reconcile a cross-craft industrial unionism ideology with an international convergence strategy. In 1993, TNG acknowledged it was losing bargaining leverage due to its small membership in the face of increasing multimedia ownership and newspaper/information publishing industry convergence (McKercher, 2002; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Salamon, 2022b). In 1995, TNG members endorsed a merger with the CWA. TNG retained its autonomy but benefited from the expertise and enhanced power of a bigger union, which had become vital due to technological and corporate convergence. TNG also granted its remaining Canadian members autonomy, founding TNG Canada (now CWA Canada), which could still access TNG benefits, including the union's defense fund. TNG officially became a CWA sector in 1997. This labor convergence strategy confirmed that newswriters could overcome the deep-seated divisions between white-collar and blue-collar unionism and the perceived American domination over Canadian unions. It further illuminated that newspaper unions had shifted from articulating an autonomous craft unionism ideology, exemplified by the ITU and the ANG/TNG, to espousing a collective craft-oriented industrial unionism ideology as captured by the CWA.

Likewise, some unions adopted autonomous Canada-made labor reconvergence and divergence strategies. In 1992, three unions merged, forming the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP): the Communications and Electrical Workers of Canada; the Energy and Chemical Workers Union; and the Canadian Paperworkers Union (McKercher, 2002; Salamon, 2015; Swift, 2003). The CEP had 15,000 members in its media section. Notably, the ANG's pioneering Canadian union local, TTNG, left TNG in 1994, affiliating with the CEP. This national union strategy further demonstrated that labor reconvergence and cross-craft industrial unionism extended beyond the news industry. By leaving a United States-based union, one big national union could potentially leverage more collective power to not only put pressure on employers but also advocate for prolabor legislation in the country.

### **Conclusion**

This article took a long historical perspective on the formation of newswriters' trade unions, developing a novel framework for periodizing the processes of labor convergence in the United States and Canada from 1865 to 1997. Additionally, it introduced an innovative conceptualization of labor convergence, defining it as a collection of trade union values associated with newswriters' organizing processes. This article argued for two key propositions, addressing how unions' labor convergence has been underdeveloped in communication and journalism studies literature. First, labor convergence should be examined from a long historical perspective to better understand its evolution as a process. Second, labor convergence should also be understood as an ideology, encompassing a set of values that go beyond the nature of union organizing processes.

Regarding RQ1, four dominant periods of labor convergence were revealed through the long historical perspective of newswriters' international union organizing and formation. The first period (1865–1892) witnessed newspaper print workers organizing autonomously and forming the NTU/ITU across the United States and Canada. However, some print workers later left the ITU to establish autonomous unions. In the second period (1891–1933), journalists formed newswriters' union locals in the ITU in both countries. The third period (1933–1986) saw journalists seceding from the ITU to create autonomous unions, initially the ANG/TNG, and later organizing other noneditorial white-collar workers internationally. During the fourth period (1987–1997), newspaper print workers, journalists, and other noneditorial white-collar newswriters reunited in the CWA, with TNG becoming a CWA sector and TNG/CWA Canada becoming autonomous within the union. Yet, the SONG joined the Canadian-based CEP/Unifor. These findings illustrate the varied processes and paths that newswriters have adopted in labor convergence, highlighting the close connections between convergence, divergence, and reconvergence (McKercher, 2002, pp. 6–11). They also illuminate the cross-border union tensions shaping international organizing efforts.

Concerning RQ2, labor convergence should be redefined as not only an organizing process but also a collection of craft-oriented trade union ideological values closely intertwined with newswriters' organizing processes. Newspaper print workers' and journalists' unions initially struggled to converge into one big union in the 19th and 20th centuries due to the tensions between print workers' blue-collar unionism ideology and journalists' white-collar unionism ideology (Glende, 2012; Kealey, 1980;

Leab, 1970; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Salamon, 2022a, 2022b). Blue-collar unionism was embraced by the working-class printers, who emphasized manual labor and issues such as fair wages, workers' collective interests, and the pursuits of economic justice and political influence. White-collar unionism was adopted by the middle-class journalists, who privileged mental labor over material gains, individualism, competitiveness, and a dedication to the craft of journalism rather than workers' collective interests. In the 20th century, newswriters' unions merged in response to broader institutional and technological changes in the news industry. These mergers aimed to decrease the level of separation between printers, journalists, and other front-office workers, espousing a *craft-oriented industrial unionism ideology*. However, their version of industrial unionism still prioritized craftsmanship and individual professions, diverging from the IWW's more radical international industrial unionism, which also sought to challenge the capitalist economic system directly (Cole et al., 2017; Mosco & McKercher, 2008).

Researchers should situate contemporary digital media organizing actions within this historical context and organizing ideologies of workers' continuous efforts to improve working conditions, defend their rights, advocate for social justice, promote journalistic professionalism, and respond to technological change (Cohen & de Peuter, 2020; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Salamon, 2022a, 2023). As shown in this article, international unions in the United States and national unions in Canada have adopted diverse organizing strategies and ideologies. Some newswriters have organized by craft, whereas others have organized craft-oriented industrial unions. Future research could test the historical framework and conceptualization of labor convergence outlined above to gain insights into media workers' union-organizing efforts in a digital age, identifying continuities and changes in labor experiences and institutional and structural conditions.

## References

- Bernstein, I. (2010). *The turbulent years: A history of the American worker, 1933–1941*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket. (Original work published 1969)
- Chen, M. (2015, September 8). *The unionization of digital media*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/the-unionization-of-digital-media/>
- Cohen, N. S., & de Peuter, G. (2020). *New media unions: Organizing digital journalists*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cole, P., Struthers, D. M., & Zimmer, K. (Eds.). (2017). *Wobblies of the world: A global history of the IWW*. London, UK: Pluto.
- Deck, C. (1988). History of The Newspaper Guild in Canada, 1936–1986. In H. Hiscox (Ed.), *Essays in journalism* (pp. 15–34). London, Canada: University of Western Ontario.

- Demers, F. (1988). *Communication et syndicalisme: Des imprimeurs aux journalistes* [Communication and trade unionism: From printers to journalists]. Montreal, Canada: Méridien.
- Denning, M. (2010). *The cultural front: The laboring of American culture in the twentieth century*. London, UK: Verso. (Original work published 1997)
- Fischer, S. (2021, April 20). *Record number of journalists unionize during COVID pandemic*. Retrieved from <https://www.axios.com/2021/04/20/journalists-unionize-digital-media>
- Fu, A. (2021, July 16). "Not just a wave, but a movement": Journalists unionize at record numbers. Retrieved from <https://www.poynter.org/business-work/2021/not-just-a-wave-but-a-movementjournalists-unionize-at-record-numbers/>
- Glende, P. M. (2012). Trouble on the right, trouble on the left: The early history of the American Newspaper Guild. *Journalism History*, 38(3), 142–155. doi:10.1080/00947679.2012.12062883
- Hébert, G. (1981). *Royal Commission on Newspapers: Labor relations in the newspaper industry* (Vol. 5). Ottawa, Canada: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.
- Kealey, G. S. (1980). *Toronto workers respond to industrial capitalism, 1867–1892*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Kealey, G. S. (1986). Work control, the labour process, and nineteenth-century Canadian printers. In C.
- Heron & R. Storey (Eds.), *On the job: Confronting the labour process in Canada* (pp. 75–101). Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Kealey, G. S., & Palmer, B. D. (1982). *Dreaming of what might be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880–1900*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Leab, D. J. (1970). *A union of individuals: The formation of the American Newspaper Guild, 1933–1936*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Mari, W. (2018). Unionization in the American newsroom, 1930 to 1960. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 31(3), 265–281. doi:10.1111/johs.12177
- Marjoribanks, T. (2000). *News Corporation, technology and the workplace: Global strategies, local change*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

- McKercher, C. (2002). *Newsworkers unite: Labor, convergence, and North American newspapers*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Mosco, V., & McKercher, C. (2008). *The laboring of communication: Will knowledge workers of the world unite?* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Murasken, E. (1937). *Newswriters' unions in English-speaking countries*. New York, NY: U.S. Works Progress Administration.
- Nerone, J. (2022). The labor history of newswork from industrialization to the digital age. In K. Chadha & L. Steiner (Eds.), *Newswork and precarity* (pp. 31–53). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Örnebring, H. (2020). A social history of precarity in journalism: Penny-a-liners, bohemians and larrikins. *Australian Journalism Review*, 42(2), 191–206. doi:10.1386/ajr\_00035\_1
- Rhomberg, C. (2012). *The broken table: The Detroit newspaper strike and the state of American labor*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Salamon, E. (2015). (De)valuing intern labour: Journalism internship pay rates and collective representation in Canada. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 13(2), 438–458. doi:10.31269/triplec.v13i2.573
- Salamon, E. (2022a). Communicative labor resistance practices: Organizing digital news media unions and precarious work. *Communication Theory*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1093/ct/qtac023
- Salamon, E. (2022b). Labor unions in media. In G. A. Borchard (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of journalism* (2nd ed., pp. 912–915). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Salamon, E. (2023). Media unions' online resistance rhetoric: Reproducing social movement genres of organizational communication. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 37(2), 368–395. doi:10.1177/08933189221097067
- Stanger, H. R. (2002). Newspapers: Collective bargaining decline amidst technological change. In P. F. Clark, J. T. Delaney, & A. C. Frost (Eds.), *Collective bargaining in the private sector* (pp. 179–216). Champaign, IL: Industrial Relations Research Association.
- Stonebanks, R. (1986). *The Guild at forty: The struggle continues*. Victoria, Canada: Victoria Newspaper Guild.
- Swift, J. (2003). *Walking the union walk: Stories from CEP's first ten years*. Toronto, Canada: Between the Lines.



