

tional issues on which the United States and Europe have failed to see eye to eye. “In a solid bloc,” Mathews says, “the European Union (EU) approved, and the United States did not, the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, the ban on antipersonnel land mines, the biodiversity treaty, and a verification mechanism for the Biological Weapons Control Treaty.”

These differences amount to more than the familiar “quarrels among friends” of years past. They stem from changes in Europe since the end of the Cold War and the unwillingness of the United States to compromise in the international arena. During the Cold War, Europe often deferred to the United States, but with its end, the focus on both sides has shifted more to economic matters and other domestic concerns. Europe’s integration into a common market, though halting, has not only increased its global economic clout, but also, says Mathews, has “allowed Europeans to acquire day-to-day experience—and hence a level of comfort—with exactly the kind of painful compromise, frustrating negotiations, and less-than-perfect outcomes” that characterize major international agreements.

The United States, by contrast, has repeatedly taken a “me-first” view on international issues. Take Washington’s reason for opposing the ICC: “that U.S. military personnel might be arbitrarily prosecuted for war crimes.” Such an argument means little to Europeans, who “also regularly send troops abroad on peacekeeping missions.” Further, it undermines the authority for international sanc-

tions that America wants to impose on countries such as Iran, Libya, and Cuba.

The United States increasingly finds “itself on the wrong side of lopsided international judgments.” The breach is widest over environmental issues, such as the regulation of genetically modified foods and the reduction of greenhouse gases. Europe is now taking the lead on brokering many global agreements, such as the 1997 Kyoto climate accords. But it is also using its economic might to increase its global influence in other areas, as evidenced by its diplomatic mission to North Korea last May and its lead role at last fall’s Durban conference on racism. The EU now boasts a gross domestic product roughly equal to that of the United States. It pays a bigger share of the United Nations’ core budget (37 percent versus the United States’ 22 percent). All of this means that Washington no longer can count on “a community of Western democracies and Third World dependents ready to fall into line behind U.S. leadership.”

For its part, concedes Mathews, “Europe needs to outgrow its knee-jerk criticism of the United States for either doing too much or too little and its addiction to feel-good international agreements without regard to their content or actual ability to solve problems.” (No European country has met its Kyoto Protocol commitments.) But “leaders on both sides of the Atlantic will have to adapt if they hope to close the widening gap that not only threatens the United States’ ability to achieve its international aims but also greatly reduces the likelihood that global challenges can be met.”

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Labor’s Pains

“The Six-Year Itch” by David Moberg, in *The Nation* (Sept. 3–10, 2001), 33 Irving Pl., New York, N.Y. 10003.

In 1995, the upstart John Sweeney seized the helm of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) with talk of a new beginning for organized labor. But the labor movement is still in trouble. A decades-long decline in union membership was briefly stemmed in 1999 but

resumed in 2000. Only about nine percent of private-sector workers—and 13.5 percent of the total work force—now carry union cards.

There have been other blows. Al Gore’s loss in the presidential election cost labor a champion, as well as a number of prolabor measures pushed by the Clinton administration. And

this past March, the 500,000-member carpenters union pulled out of the AFL-CIO.

Moberg, a senior editor of *In These Times*, isn't inclined to blame Sweeney for all these woes. Since Sweeney deposed the lackluster Lane Kirkland, organized labor has become "noticeably more effective in giving workers a voice in American life." For example, union households cast 26 percent of the votes in the 2000 elections, up from 19 percent in 1992. The big problem, according to Moberg, is "a lack of consensus within the labor movement, especially on organizing." Organized labor is not well organized. The problems begin with the AFL-CIO itself, a relatively weak federation of 64 independent unions, many with their own powerful state and local organizations.

The big challenge for labor is signing up new recruits. In 2000 it enlisted only 400,000, down by a third from the year before. Kirkland always insisted that the federation had no role in organizing and that it was up to each union to enlist new members. Sweeney disagrees. What kind of role AFL-CIO should play, however, remains unclear. Should it help particular unions? Act as labor's grand strategist? Or focus on creating a political climate friendlier to unions? The federation's strategic efforts to coordinate multiple-union campaigns in various cities have produced mixed results. Getting commitments to any kind of organizing is not easy. Sweeney is forced to cajole union presidents to follow his lead, and they themselves are often dependent on the union locals, which control half of the labor movement's resources. Many



The AFL-CIO hoped this poster would help recruit Latinos.

are cool to costly organizing campaigns. Meanwhile, some unions eagerly seek out members wherever they can find them, ignoring Sweeney's argument that each union should build membership strength (and therefore bargaining power) in its core industries.

Moberg sides with those who argue that organizing has to be linked with political activism. He thinks, for example, that the AFL-CIO didn't show sufficient enthusiasm in joining protests against the World Trade Organization. He wants to put more pressure on politicians. Some labor activists even favor seeking out opponents to run against labor-backed officeholders who fail to deliver the goods.

Unions must engage "their members as active organizers and campaigners," Moberg argues. They must project "a broad vision of social justice, democracy, economic fairness, and worker rights . . . that inspires members, allies, and the public." With "energy from below" and a grand vision, organized labor may be able "to resolve many of the internal conflicts that seem so intractable now."

Good-bye Glass Ceiling?

"The Gender Gap in Top Corporate Jobs" by Marianne Bertrand and Kevin F. Hallock, in *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (Oct. 2001), 201 ILR Research Bldg., Cornell Univ., Ithaca, N.Y. 14853-3901.

There are more cracks in the corporate glass ceiling than most social commentators have noticed, and pay equity is now pretty well established in the executive suites, the authors of this statistical study of 1,500 companies conclude. That's the good news. The bad news is that women occupy less than four percent of the top

jobs in corporate America—though that percentage tripled in a recent five-year period.

In what they describe as "the first detailed description of the relative position of female top executives in the 1990s," the authors found a lot of change. Only 5.4 percent of the firms studied had a woman among their top five exec-