Marshal Logan Scott and the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations

by Richard P. Poethig

In the past century, Christian churches have developed a variety of responses to the urban-industrial transformation of U.S. society. Within the PCUSA, Marshal L. Scott played the primary role in helping the church initiate an educational response to this change in the post–World War II era. It was through the agency of the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations, created in 1945, that Scott trained more than 3,000 seminarians and pastors to recognize and understand the society being created by rapid urban-industrial change—and to help the church develop ministries relevant to the human consequences of this transition. This is the story of the work of Marshal L. Scott and the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations.

The names of Marshal Logan Scott (1909–1991) and the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations are forever linked in Presbyterian Church history. Marshal Scott appeared on the scene just as the national Presbyterian Church was searching for a way to prepare clergy and laity for the modern industrial development emerging out of World War II. General Assembly reports prior to World War II provided minor references to the dramatic urban and industrial changes that had become major forces in the world. A review of the life and ministry of Marshal Scott gives some clue as to how the transition from a rurally based consciousness to an urban-industrial one became part of the history of the Presbyterian Church. Scott's instrument for aiding this transition was his leadership of the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations (PIIR) from 1945 to 1970. PIIR, as it became known, was a training program designed to immerse ministers in the realities of the urban-industrial world and encourage ministries related to the life people were living in the midst of the twentieth-century technological revolution.

I

In reviewing the role Marshal Scott played during this period, we begin with the social context of the church leading up to the Second World War. Like many of his contemporaries serving the Presbyterian church, Scott came out of the rural and town culture that had provided much of the church's leadership. He was born on a farm in Decatur County in southeast Indiana and lived there for the first fifteen years of his life. Both his parents were of Scotch-Irish background and were members of the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPNA). Rev. William Wallace McCall, an uncle who was also his pastor in Indiana, played a major role in his early religious development. These early influences provided the background for the personal values that were to guide him in his view of ministry.

When Marshal's father lost their farm in Indiana, the family moved to New Concord, Ohio, the original home of his mother. In New Concord, Marshal Scott attended Muskingum College, a UPNA-affiliated school, where an experience in his freshman year opened up his worldview. During Christmas vacation, he attended a Student Volunteer Quadrennial Convention in Detroit, where the speakers were John R. Mott, Sherwood Eddy, and Reinhold Niebuhr—who, at the time, was pastor in a Detroit industrial parish. During his years at Muskingum, Scott moved away from the more conservative theology of his familial church and became active in a PCUSA congregation in nearby Cambridge, Ohio. By his senior year, he had become a member of

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the PCUSA, and with scholarship help from the Cambridge congregation, he chose to attend McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago.[1]

Marshal Scott studied at McCormick during the early years of the Depression, from 1931 to 1934. After graduating in 1934, he returned to his rural roots by accepting a call to a small farm parish in Prattsburg, in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. He identified with the struggles of the hard-pressed farmers, recognizing the common economic issues that he had experienced in industrial Chicago. Scott ministered in Prattsburg for six years before the allure of the city called him to the First Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Ohio, in 1940. His move to an urban setting became a renewal of his search for social change.

First Presbyterian Church, one of the oldest churches in Columbus, had gone through its own pains of transition by the time Marshal Scott arrived. In 1900, the church had moved out of central Columbus to one of the more wealthy residential suburbs. By the late 1930s, the former suburb had changed, and many of its people had moved further away. First Presbyterian Church had again become an inner-city church, with all the problems of neighborhood change.[2]

First Presbyterian Church in Columbus laid the foundation for what was to become the transformation of Marshal L. Scott. In Columbus, he became enmeshed, for the first time, with industrial problems. It was here, also, that he became acquainted with the status of African Americans in the urban north. His world grew beyond his rural orientation to learn firsthand the issues of organized labor. One of his first acquaintances was the local head of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), a former churchman who had left the church when he could not get the religious support and the medical help he needed at the time of his daughter's death from a brain tumor. Scott also befriended the leader of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in Columbus. Through the local ministerial association, Marshal Scott met Anson Phelps Stokes, the pastor of the downtown Episcopal Church. Stokes was later to become the Bishop of Massachusetts—and widely known for this three-volume classic on church-state relations. Scott and Stokes were drawn together by a similar interest: to find a way to meet with the labor-union leadership of the city.[3]

The occasion for meeting with labor-union leadership came through the transfer of a member of the United Steelworkers of America to Columbus, Ohio. John Ramsay, a Presbyterian elder, was on the staff of the steelworkers' union with the special responsibility of bringing together labor-union and religious leadership.

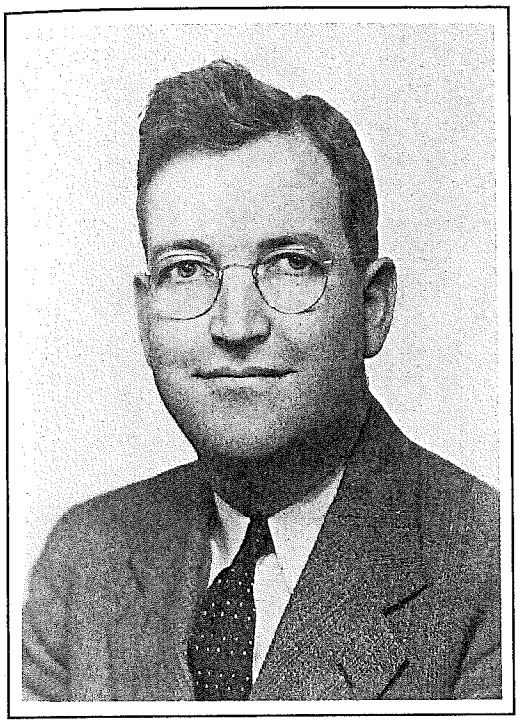
Rev. Marshal L. Scott (RG 414, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia).

Through Ramsay's union connections, once-a-month luncheon meetings were established to develop conversations between the local labor-union leadership and the religious leaders in Columbus. When these meetings became public knowledge, the industrialists in Columbus invited the local clergy to a major dinner, at which they brought in a speaker to present the agenda of the National Association of Manufacturers. At this time, in the early 1940s, Marshal Scott had become president of the minister's association, further broadening his base of contacts within the public life of Columbus.

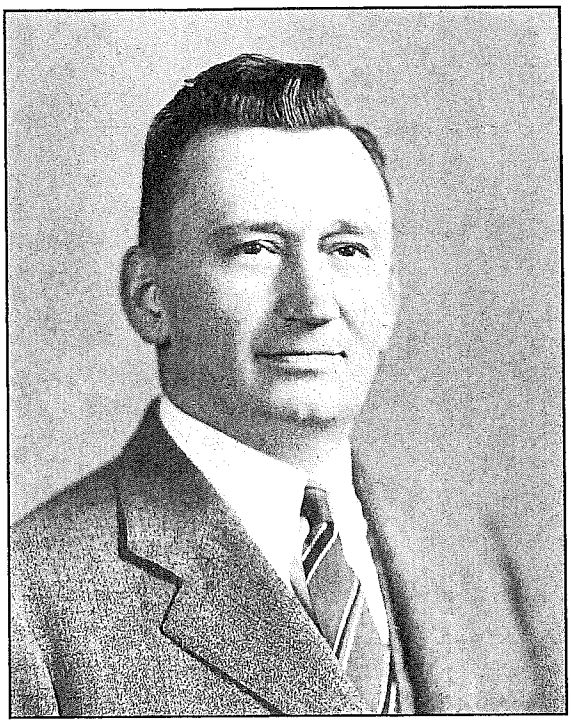
In preparation for the growing intensity of his work in an industrial situation, Scott began taking courses at Ohio State University. One of his professors in American history was Foster Rhea Dulles, cousin of John Foster Dulles. Scott wrote a paper for Dulles on "The Effects of the Industrial Expansion on Protestant Churches in America from 1875 to 1914." This paper was to be Scott's entry into the new world of the Presbyterian Church's engagement in industrial relations in the postwar period.

II

The Presbyterian Church in the USA had moved deliberately, but cautiously, into the industrial world



Rev. Cameron P. Hall (Board of Christian Education photo, Prebyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia).



Rev. Dr. Jacob A. Long (Publicity Department, Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in the USA. RG 414, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia).

of the twentieth century. In 1903, the Board of Home Missions established an office directly related to work among laboring people. The Workingmen's Department, later to be renamed the Department of Church and Labor, was the first such office created by a Protestant denomination. The person called to that work, Charles Stelzle, went on to develop, in his ten years of tenure, a series of innovative programs meant to awaken the consciousness of church people to the issues of working people in the industrializing United States. As effective as Stelzle was in his promotional and educational approaches, deep-seated resistance to social ministry existed at the base of a theologically conservative denomination. Stelzle resigned from his official duties with the Board of Home Missions in 1913.[4] By the time of the Depression in the 1930s, there still existed a wide gap between the business-oriented leadership of congregations and the masses of unemployed workers who walked the breadlines of U.S. cities.

Even with these early beginnings of an industrial ministry, the general tenor of Presbyterian thinking was still oriented toward town-and-country culture. The Board of National Mission Reports of the 1930s, and into the 1940s, reflected a rural consciousness about the nature and work of the Presbyterian church. A chapter in the 1943 General Assembly annual report entitled "The Backbone of the Nation" stated "In the Presbyterian Church as a whole, from 65 per cent to 70 per cent of the churches may be designated as rural." In support of the rural character of Presbyterianism, the report further stated:

> The great reservoir of a nation's strength is its agricultural hinterland. Our country has always depended upon its rural people not only for sustenance but also for reinforcement of the great national ideals of freedom, neighborliness, and democratic rule. It has been among rural folk, from the days of Amos through those of Joan of Arc and Abraham Lincoln, that the germs of liberty, truth and justice have seemed to be most richly nourished.[5]

The 1943 report contained no section on urban and industrial work and made mention of only two "industrial projects"—both in West Virginia. Nor was there any section on urban and industrial work in the 1944 report. But with the massive growth of industrial production in pursuit of the war effort, there was a growing recognition that the church needed to pay

more attention to the impact that industry was having upon the daily lives of the churches and their people.

One of those who were sensitive to this impact was Cameron Hall, who, in 1939, was called to head the Department of Social Education and Action of the Board of Christian Education. The Department of Social Education and Action had been the agency assigned to alert local congregations to the central social issues facing the churches. Its study materials were used in young adult groups, men's groups, Bible classes, women's circles, and midweek meetings. Besides its production of study materials, the department's main instrument was *Social Progress,* a monthly publication. During the 1920s, the early social publications of the department had concentrated on the issue of temperance. Under the leadership of Cameron Hall, the content moved toward discussions of the economy and international relations.[6]

In 1944, as the Second World War drew to a close, Hall saw the need to pay attention to the issue of labor-management relations in the postwar economy. He called for the creation of an advisory group of the Social Education and Action Department—with the approval of the General Assembly—to develop a policy paper dealing with the church's role in an industrial economy. Under the wartime economy, government policy urged cooperation between management and labor in pursuit of victory on the war front. Would the same cooperative relationships last during peacetime? It was in pursuit of this question that Hall brought together a committee composed of thirteen persons from business, labor, and the public sector—and three clergy representatives. The committee produced a document called "The Church and Industrial Relations" and brought it to the 156th General Assembly meeting in Chicago in May 1944. The report focused on the growing role of organized labor in the U.S. economy and called upon the Church to pay more attention to actual labor-management relations within business and industry. The report went on to detail processes for educating the Church, both laity and clergy, about its responsibility for just conditions within industrial society. Industrial relations, the report asserted, are a proper concern of the Church. The General Assembly affirmed its findings and passed it on to PCUSA congregations for study and action.[7]

As Cameron Hall assumed leadership of the Department of Social Education and Action, a transition was taking place in the Department of City, Immigrant and Industrial Work of the Board of National Missions. The department's efforts had long been the domain of William Shriver, who had been called to the work in 1910 when it was created as the Department of Immigration. Shriver had taken his position at a time when European immigration into the United States was at its highest. Shriver's thirty-year tenure had seen a dramatic shift in immigration into the United States. For four years in the 1930s, more immigrants were returning to their homelands than were entering the United States.[8]

By the time Shriver retired in 1941, the stream of immigration into the United States had diminished. The work related to the immigrant population, which had been the focus of the program for a generation, was dropped from the department's name. The program was renamed the Unit of City and Industrial Work, and Jacob A. Long was called to be its new secretary. Jake Long, as he was known to his colleagues in ministry, was a second-career pastor. He had begun his work life as a building contractor in Philadelphia, but had aspirations for higher education and a sense of a call to ministry. He completed college and went on to Princeton Seminary. His first call after Princeton was to new church development in Norristown, Pennsylvania. This work was to dramatically shape his vision of the Church's future in the postwar period. His energies were recognized early and he was soon called to the executive staff of the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

III

When Jake Long moved from the Presbytery of Philadelphia to take over the renamed Unit of City and Industrial Work, the U.S. had entered the midst of a global conflict. The war had brought dramatic change to the cities of the United States. Internal migration had increased from the south and Appalachia into northern industrial cities. Long saw this movement as a major mission opportunity for the church. In a speech Long gave on November 2, 1942, before the Presbytery of Detroit, he cited conditions in Detroit as an example for the work of the Church in other U.S. cities. His analysis was to become the basis of his unit's program:

> Here in Detroit...you have your newer industrial communities. You have your trailer parks; and you have war workers moving into older sections of your city. These people have come from northern Michigan and all parts of the Country. From the South you have received not

Doorway of the Labor Temple in 1948 (*Presbyterian Life*, October 30, 1948).

> only a large number of whites but numbers of Negroes. These hundreds of thousands of people coming into your midst create a serious problem for adequate missionary service to you and to other Protestant Communions of the City. This problem presents an unparalleled opportunity for a constructive ministry of the Christian Church. Here is an unprecedented opportunity to develop a program and method of approach to literally thousands of workers who now reside in your midst. This is true for practically every city in this arsenal of Democracy which is America.[9]

On the basis of what he saw happening in U.S. cities, Long called for a strategy to deal with the new demographics the war was creating. First, there was the dwindling life of inner-city churches and the new people moving into older city neighborhoods. Long recognized that the new residents in the northern cities were not the natural constituency of the Presbyterian Church. Long, nevertheless, told the Presbytery of Detroit in November 1942:

> The time has come when the older city church will have to literally find its life by losing it in the life of the newer populations which have grown up around it....It is the churches' responsibility amid these changing population groups to take the lead in developing them into a community or communities. This will involve in most cases a complete revamping of the program of the church.[10]

Here, Long saw the need for more active engagement on the part of the Presbyterian Church with the growing urban African-American population.

Long was one of the first to recognize the phenomenon of "white flight." He recognized—from his own experience in new church development—the rapid move of white city residents into the suburbs as new racial and ethnic peoples moved into their old neighborhoods. The whites' leaving further drained inner-city churches of members and leadership. Long advised the Presbytery of Detroit:

> Cost what it may, a statesmanlike plan must be devised for church extension in suburban communities. Through comity agreements with Federations or Council of Churches there must be adequate safeguarding against over-churching of the new suburban developments on the one hand and lack of adequate Protestant church ministry on the other. Adequate provision must be made for both physical equipment and leadership.[11]

Long made a third point before the Presbytery of Detroit: the Presbyterian Church needed to assume "responsibility for ministering to and enlisting the service of the large mass of laboring people who to a large extent have remained untouched by the conventional ministry of the Protestant Church and our own Presbyterian Communion in particular."[12] Long saw, pragmatically, the importance of working people from both an economic and a demographic point of view. He suggested that working people and their families made up the largest segment of the U.S. population, and that each year they received a higher percentage of the total national income. "Here is a fertile field to which the Church may minister in the name of

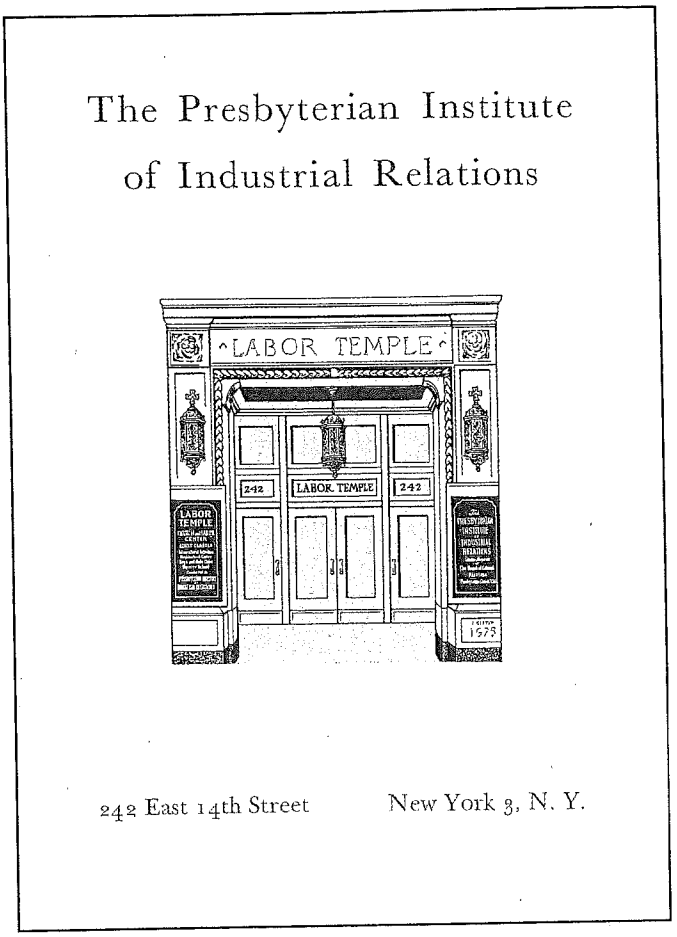
Christ. What is more, it is a fertile field from which the Church should increasingly draw leadership."[13]

IV

Jacob Long also foresaw a potential revival of the struggles between organized labor and corporate management that had dominated the 1930s. The war, with its wage and price controls under the War Production Board, had brought a time of stability in labor relations. Long, like Cameron Hall, saw that once the war was ended, wage and price controls would be abandoned, and the strife between capital and labor would be resumed. Long raised the question: what was to be the churches' role in this new era? He saw the need for the Church to take a major step toward developing a program of industrial relations that would educate clergy and other church workers to understand the conflict-prone changes taking place in U.S. industrial life.

An opportunity for such a program came in early 1944, when the future of the Labor Temple in New York City was being debated. The Labor Temple, which had been established in 1910 at a vacated Presbyterian church on Second Avenue and Fourteenth Street in New York City, was the Presbyterian Church's major venture into a ministry with working people. By the 1940s, after providing thirty years of dynamic social ministry to its neighborhood, its ministry was judged to be in decline. The neighborhood population had changed and the Labor Temple's original purpose was now being fulfilled by other agencies and institutions. In responding to the question of the Labor Temple's future, Jacob Long presented a proposal for the use of the Labor Temple under the Unit of City and Industrial Work. He saw the possibility of using the Labor Temple as the base for developing an "institute in the field of industrial relations." In his recommendation to the Board of National Missions in April 1944, Long suggested a program at the Labor Temple that would embrace the following:

- a center for acquainting ministers, lay workers and students with basic issues in the field of industrial relations
- a laboratory for experimentation and demonstration
- a common meeting ground for leaders of Church and Labor
- a center from which ministry and lay workers may observe factory conditions, housing, social settlement work and various services offered by churches and social agencies of New York
- a center for the conduct of open forums in the general field of the Church in industrial relations and social problems
- a limited community service, such as visitation, classes for selected age groups, etc.
- a chapel for formal religious services and as a place for individual meditation and prayer.[14]


The Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations

242 East 14th Street New York 3, N. Y.

"The Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations," brochure (New York: Board of National Missions, 1947. Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia).

At this time, the Department of Social Education and Action had placed its report, "The Church and Industrial Relations," on the docket of the 156th General Assembly in Chicago in June 1944. The report

basically asserted the need for the Presbyterian Church to prepare its people and leadership for the postwar period by encouraging better relationships between management and labor. Long took hold of this report as support for his proposal. On June 15, 1944, the Executive Committee of the General Assembly voted to support Long's proposal for an industrial-relations program at the Labor Temple. To balance off a social program that would put the Presbyterian Church into industrial-relations training, the Executive Committee also called for a program to reach blue-collar workers through new techniques of evangelism. At its meeting on November 30, 1944, the Board of National Missions finalized the Long proposal and voted to establish the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations (PIIR) at the Labor Temple in New York City.

Even before the Board of National Missions' action on November 30, Jacob Long had begun his search for potential leadership of the new program. His inquiries had turned up the name of Marshal Scott, who was then pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio. Scott had been recommended to Long by Ralph Mould, a staff member of the Board of Christian Education in Philadelphia and a seminary classmate of Scott. Mould, who had been originally proposed to Long as the dean of the new institute, knew of Scott's special interest in Church-labor relations. He also knew of Scott's leadership in the religion and labor fellowship in Columbus and of his graduate work on the Church and industrialization at Ohio State University with Foster Rhea Dulles. John Ramsay, one of the original founders of the Columbus religion and labor group and a staff member of the United Steelworkers of America, also heard about the new industrial-relations institute the Presbyterian Church was organizing and immediately suggested Marshal Scott to Jacob Long.

On a visit to Columbus in late fall, 1944, Long called Scott to set up a supper meeting at a local hotel and described the new institute's program. He asked Scott if he was interested. In Marshal Scott's words:

> I thought he was inviting me to come to one of the first seminars. When he got through, he told me he wanted me for the job....I told him I wasn't interested in directing it, but I certainly would be interested in teaching. I told him the problem was that, though I thought it was a great idea, I didn't know enough to teach regularly. I remember his answer very plainly: "I know you don't, but nobody else in the Presbyterian Church does and I've got to start somewhere." That's exactly what he said![15]

V

Marshal Scott arrived in New York on January 3, 1945, to begin his tenure as the Dean of the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations. Some differences needed to be ironed out immediately. At the initial meeting at the Board of National Missions, Cameron Hall of the Social Education and Action Department disputed the decision to use the Labor Temple for the industrial relations program. He claimed that the Labor Temple had originally been given to the Board of Christian Education. A friend of Cameron Hall, Marshal Scott worked out an agreement with Hall and gave him membership on the newly organized Labor Temple Advisory Committee. Not everybody on the Board of National Missions supported Long's idea for the new Institute, but strong backing from Henry Sloane Coffin and George Buttrick, both board members, carried the day. Coffin, president of Union Theological Seminary and a former pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, and Buttrick, as his successor, had carried out a ministry related to the working-class neighborhoods of New York's East Side. They recognized the importance of the Church's role in developing a ministry to the working class. Scott recounts an incident from his initial meeting with the Board:

> At the close of the meeting somebody picked up a note that one person on the Board had handed to another. Somebody brought it to Jake Long. The note read: 'Here's where communism enters the Presbyterian Church.' So there were mixed feelings about the program.[16]

Scott recognized from the beginning the challenge he faced in persuading a still rurally rooted and anti-urban church of its responsibility for ministry in an industrial society. He understood this reality from his own rural background. Pastors in inner-city congregations and in churches in industrial communities had little power within the church structures. They were seen as being in dead-end situations with few possibilities of calls to other positions. From the beginning, Scott accepted this call to head the Institute as breaking new ground in helping the Church accept its responsibility for this neglected field.

In the early stages of PIIR, Jake Long had a hand in the shape of the program. Long's initial thought was to establish a graduate school in industrial relations for

Marshal Scott (center) leading pastors in a PIIR seminar class at the Labor Temple library, whose shelves held 1,000 volumes on social issues (*Presbyterian Life*, October 30, 1948).

church-oriented people. Long began a library specializing in the Church and urban and industrial issues. He purchased golden oak tables and chairs to be used for the seminar programs. Long engaged Liston Pope from the Yale Divinity School to provide basic lectures on the Church's role in industrial communities. Pope was among the few Church-related historians who knew firsthand about U.S. industrial labor and its relations with management. His major research, *Millhands and Preachers, a Study of Gastonia*, had become a classic investigative study of the relations between clergy, mill-owners and mill-workers in the textile industry–dominated town of Gastonia, North Carolina. Liston Pope made the journey from New Haven to the Labor Temple on a weekly basis to provide an ethical dimension to the understanding of labor/management/Church relations in U.S. industrial communities. The presence of Pope and others from national and urban church agencies provided the background for the seminar discussions.[17] Long also proposed that the lectures be supported by field experience with visits to businesses, factories, and urban social agencies.

Scott was quick to follow up on Long's initial framework and add his own educational insights to the seminar program. Through Jake Long's office, Scott began working within the structures of the church to recruit participants for PIIR. Scott made contact with the executives of urban presbyteries and synods to promote the long-range goals of the Institute. A primary group he sought out was the leadership in Specially Designated Presbyteries for Big Cities. The executives in those presbyteries were among those who chose attendees for the early Institute seminars.

The seminar style became a benchmark approach for PIIR programs. Marshal Scott decided to dispose of the armchairs Jake Long had purchased and to set the library tables in a U-shape, seminar style, with a small table for the instructor. A large part of the budget went into the purchase of books for research and study. The PIIR library became the central asset of the program, particularly as it became a specialized collection in urban church history and in the church's relation to labor and industrial change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Scott soon realized that his first task was to broaden the understanding of ministry among the participants. Most pastors saw their ministry as confined within the parameters of their congregation. In relating his initial experience, Scott said:

> It only took about three sessions with pastors till I learned that you cannot start, as I did at the beginning, with someone coming in and making a speech. So we devised a plan. The very first session we had, they would talk about themselves, where they grew up, where they went to college.... That was the first evening session. The next morning—and we told them in advance to prepare for this—we had them talk about the neighborhood their church was in, the city where it was, and the locality where it was. Two-thirds of them would only talk about their congregation. They never got the point about talking about their social situation. We hammered away at this. By the time we'd gone around the circle twice with them talking, they were impatient for us to start throwing stuff at them. Then we had a very receptive audience.[18]