

Trade Union Unity Convention

By WM. Z. FOSTER.

I.

THE Trade Union Unity Convention, to be held in Cleveland, Ohio on June 1 and 2, will be one of the most important gatherings in the history of the working class in this country. It marks the beginning of a new era in the American labor movement.

The convention confronts many vital tasks. It will serve as a central rallying point for the revolutionary and progressive elements in the working class to fight against the developing war between the United States and Great Britain, against the attacks upon the Soviet Union, and against the intensified speed-up set afoot in the industries by the employers. It will especially prove a means to unite the workers for struggle against the corrupt A. F. of L. and S. P. leadership, tools of American imperialism. It will add great impetus to the left wing drive to organize the unorganized. But the fact that will lend the convention the greatest significance historically is that it will be the starting point for a new trade union center in the United States.

Basic Industries Unorganized.

For forty-eight years the American Federation of Labor has laid claim to being the center of working class resistance against the employers, to being the "bona-fide" labor movement. But it has utterly failed to make good this claim. Today, after all these years of "organizing work," hardly more than fifteen per cent of the organizable workers are within its ranks. And these are mostly skilled workers in the competitive industries. The great basic, trustified industries are almost completely unorganized.

But unmeasurably worse than its failure to draw the masses of workers into its ranks is the fact that the A. F. of L. has not functioned and does not now serve the purpose of a class union. The record of its leadership is one long story of treachery to the working class, a history of treason hardly equalled in any other country in the world.

A Capitalist Prop.

But never was the A. F. of L. more bankrupt than it is now. Never was its leadership more subservient to the capitalist class, more violently hostile to all programs of struggle. Never were its policies of class betrayal and treason more brazen and flagrant. Never was the claim of the A. F. of L. to be the organization of all the workers more empty than now. More than ever the A. F. of L. has become the unashamed tool of American imperialism. It is the instrument of the capitalists to put over their rationalization and war programs among the workers. It is a prop of the capitalist system.

For more than a generation, not to go back farther, whenever A. F. of L. unions have been moved to acts of class solidarity and have waged bitter struggles against the bosses, it has been against the wishes and policies and in the teeth of the sabotage of the reactionary leaders, who have been traditionally tools of the employers. Since the T. U. E. L. came into existence eight and one-half years ago it has been the leader and organizer of these rank and file revolts. It has become wildly hated by every crooked labor leader in the United States.

To Organize Masses.

The struggle in the old trade unions, especially those containing the greatest masses of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, occupied the major attention and efforts of the T. U. E. L. But now the situation develops so that the T. U. E. L. devotes its greatest efforts to the masses outside the old unions.

The vast armies of unorganized workers, especially the unskilled and semi-skilled in the key and basic industries, are beginning to stir and to resist under the bitter speed up, widespread unemployment, wage cuts and generally worsening conditions confronting them. It is the great task of the T. U. E. L. to organize these super-exploited masses and to lead them in struggle.

The A. F. of L. will not defend the interests of these workers. Its settled policy is one of betrayal of the semi-skilled and unskilled, of surrendering them to the employers for intensified exploitation, in return for fat positions for the leaders and a few crumbs for the skilled workers. Many bitter experiences prove this. Hence it would be worse than folly to try to draw these masses, now just awakening to the need for organization and struggle, into the A. F. of L. unions, even if these inert organizations could be sufficiently galvanized into life to "organize" them.

New Unions Must Be Built.

Manifestly new unions must be formed for these workers; unions built upon an industrial basis, headed by militant fighters, and animated by the spirit of the class struggle. This is the course being followed. Any other would be a deadly error. Already such fighting industrial unions have been established in the mining, textile and needle industries, with more now building in the automobile, shoe and marine transport, and other industries.

By the same token that it would be wrong to try to draw these individual workers into the corrupt A. F. of L. unions, so it would be incorrect to try to affiliate them collectively through the new unions

A New Trade Union Center

(This is the first of a series of four articles by William Z. Foster on the Trade Union Unity Convention to be held in Cleveland June 1 and 2. In these articles Comrade Foster will deal with the factors that make the Trade Union Unity Convention necessary, the organizational and ideological preparations for the convention and its tasks. The other articles will appear in successive issues of the Daily Worker.)

to the A. F. of L. The A. F. of L. leadership does not want such revolutionary unions and even if it should in any case accept them it would only be to destroy them. To propose the affiliation of the new industrial unions to the A. F. of L. would be to invite them to submit to the treason and slaughter of Green and his associate labor fakers.

National Center Necessary.

Just as it is clear that the new unions must be formed in order to organize the unorganized workers, so it is clear that a national center must be established to coordinate the new unions, to enable them to make common cause against the bosses and the labor misleaders. To create such a center will be a basic task of the Cleveland convention. This center will be the reorganized and expanded T. U. E. L., the Amer-

ican Section of the Red International of Labor Unions.

In the past the T. U. E. L., while maintaining its central national organization under its proper name, has conducted its struggle under other names in the various industries; such as the Save-the-Union Committee, Progressive Committee, Amalgamation Committee, etc. It was T. U. E. L. sections in the Mining, Textile and Needle industries that led the struggle in these industries which led to the formation of the new unions among these workers. But now, coming forward under its own name (which will be doubtless somewhat changed by the convention), the expanded and reorganized T. U. E. L., to which the new unions will be affiliated, will directly lead the struggle in the various industries. The coming conven-

tion marks a new stage in the development of the T. U. E. L.

Fight in Old Unions.

Does the formation of the new unions and their concentration into a national center imply that the T. U. E. L. will give up its work in the old unions, that the new center will claim to be the whole labor movement and will ignore the existing mass trade unions? Does it call for an exodus of the left wingers from the A. F. of L. unions? By no means. On the contrary, the T. U. E. L., with added strength from its new affiliations, will redouble its work in the old unions. It will struggle to revolutionize them, to smash their reactionary leadership, and to bring them into closest cooperation and eventual affiliation with the revolutionary unions.

The reorganized T. U. E. L. will be the national center not only for the new unions but also for the left wing in the old unions. It will be the concentration point and organizer for all revolutionary trade union forces both without and within the A. F. of L.

Workers! unorganized and organized, send delegates to the National Convention of the T. U. E. L. Build a powerful organization that will defeat the bosses and their agents, the A. F. of L. leaders. Be represented at the Cleveland convention.

SINCLAIR GOES TO JAIL

By William Gropper



New Scottish Miners Union Formed

By W. M. HOLMES.

LONDON, (By Mail).—At a conference in Glasgow recently, the new Scottish Miners' Union, the "United Mine Workers of Scotland" was formed.

The conference was most successful and enthusiastic. One hundred and twenty-three delegates were present from all counties in the Scottish coal field, including delegates from 25 branches of the new union that have already been formed.

Alexander Kirk, of West Lothian, a working miner was in the chair. In his opening speech he referred to the complete breakdown of the old county unions in Scotland, the open alliance of the old reformist leaders with the coal owners, their damping down of the miners' struggle and their consequent policy of disruption, splits and the expulsion of militants. Kirk castigated in strong terms the shameful part played by Cook, who, he said, has now completely turned against the rank and file and joined hands with Mondism.

All for One Union.

Resolutions on the mining situation (stressing the fact that a period of intensified struggle is opening) and the formation of the One Union for Scotland were agreed to unanimously.

Only one voice was raised against the immediate formation of the new union; and that was the voice of Philip Hodge, the general secretary of the Fife Miners' Union. Delegate after delegate from Fife, however, rose to explain that Hodge's viewpoint was not that of the Fife mi-

ers. The draft rules of the new union were approved with incidental amendments. William Allan (Lanarkshire), was appointed provisional general secretary and a provisional executive of 14 was appointed.

The conference instructed the provisional executive to get into touch with the M. F. G. B. and the individual district miners' union with regard to the termination of the district agreements.

Agree on Program.

A program of immediate demands was agreed to by the conference. This included the seven-hour day, a national wage agreement, a five-day week and time and a half for overtime, a minimum wage of 12 shillings a shift for miners (the present minimum in Scotland is eight shillings, four pence), 11 shillings for other underground workers and 10 shillings for surface workers.

Child Labor

By JACK SCOTT

(A 15-year-old member of the Young Workers League)

A million and more curses are borne upon the air
The cries of children who have worked from the age of three.
And the bodies of those children are terrible to see
A million and more prayers go up to "god" who doesn't care.
The god of money, Mammon, is more powerful than the children's "god,"
For I see weakened eyes and stunted bones;
I hear their curses, followed by their groans,
But thousands more are silent; they are under the sod.
I walk into a factory, I am choked by the dust and burnt by the heat,
Can one work in such a place? Yet children are there.
Capitalists, parasites, when their time comes, you beware!
For their vengeance will be long and sweet.