ORGANIZED LABOR'S TWO CONVENTIONS

BY WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

The Conventions and the War

THE second imperialist war is L raging on with increasing fury and unparalleled destruction. British, German, French, Italian and Japanese imperialism are locked in a death struggle for a redivision of the world. American imperialism, in a more or less well-defined military alliance with Great Britain. is steadily marching into the war. Among its major war objectives are the aims to establish its imperialist rule throughout Latin America; to cripple Japan's control and to extend its own in the Far East; to prevent the establishment of а powerful German imperialism; to share in the loot of the shattered French, Dutch and Belgian empires; and to set up a receivership over the collapsing British Empire. While pursuing these imperialist foreign policies, Wall Street and its Roosevelt government are also seeking by various devices to foist the huge cost of this war program onto the shoulders of the workers and other toilers.

For the masses of the American people, the continuation of this whole complex of imperialist policy can bring only wholesale impoverishment, political reaction and military slaughter. First, on the decisive question of this country's foreign policy, the main task confronting the A. F. of L.'s sixtieth convention at New Orleans and the C.I.O.'s third convention at Atlantic City, in order to protect their members' interests, may be briefly stated under three main points: (a) to repudiate the Roosevelt government's prowar program and to join with the people's peace forces of the country generally in a struggle to keep America out of the war; (b) to insist upon the dissolution of the alliance between the United States and Great Britain, which is daily taking on more of a war-like character; (c) to demand the reorientation of American foreign policy upon the basis of developing a peace collaboration with the Soviet Union, China, India, Latin America, and the other democratic and oppressed peoples of the earth.

The responsibility of the two great divisions of the labor movement to take this clear line regarding American foreign policy was all the greater because there is no broad Labor Party to which the masses of workers could look for guidance. As for the A. F. of L. convention, dominated by reactionary bureaucrats, it not only failed completely to provide the working class with the necessary leadership in the growing war crisis—it gave the wrong lead. Instead of con-

demning the war, the A. F. of L. blessed it and gave full allegiance to the war policies of the Wall Street government. The A. F. of L. leaders suported the Anglo-American military alliance by praising Great Britain as "the last outpost in the Old World in defense of democracy," and by calling for all aid to that country. They also gave a blanket endorsement to American imperialism's policies of aggressive conquest in all parts of the earth. As little even as the big capitalists themselves did these labor bureaucrats favor peace collaboration with the U.S.S.R. Hailing Wall Street's "national unity" fraud, they did everything possible to make the labor movement an integral part of the war machine of American imperialism. About their only worry was that the labor bureaucracy is not being given fuller representation by the Government in carrying out the war program.

In line with this reactionary policy, the A. F. of L. convention added its weight to the rising tide of war hysteria in the country by a full endorsement of the F.B.I. and the Dies Committee, by demanding that the Communist Party be ruled off the ballot, and by vilifying the Soviet Union. The A. F. of L. Executive Council, among its other anti-Soviet lies, actually had the brass to declare that Germany and the U.S.S.R. had had a working alliance in the Spanish war.

To make doubly sure that the A. F. of L. convention would plump for the war program, the Government launched a big concentration of warmongers there. The President himself sent a pro-war letter, and

to the same effect Secretaries Stimson and Perkins appeared in person. Representatives of the American Legion were also on hand. Star warmongers also were Citrine and Stampfer, labor bureaucrats of Great Britain and Germany, who presented European Social-Democracy's arguments as to why our workers should sacrifice their lives and liberties for the American capitalists in the war.

As against this deluge of chauvinism and warmongering, not one strong voice was raised at the convention to expose the imperialistic character of the war and the warlike nature of our Government's policies—a situation which emphasizes afresh the need of a progressive opposition throughout the A. F. of L. to give expression to the will of the membership, as against that of the ultra-reactionary leadership.

In contrast to the unrelieved warmongering of the A. F. of L. bureaucrats in New Orleans, the C.I.O. convention took an essentially antiposition. The Government war agents, captained by Sidney Hillman, did not succeed in roping the C.I.O. convention into the pro-war "national unity." Although the C.I.O. by no means grasped the full significance of the war, it reflected, in the main, the peace wishes of its membership and the American people. The convention refused to endorse the war as a fight for democracy, but instead condemned it (although all too vaguely) as imperialist in character. The convention expressed a determination to stay out of the hostilities and gave no endorsement to the war policy of "all aid to Great Britain," or to

other warlike foreign policies of American imperialism. Furthermore, although it did not condemn the armament program as such, it warned the American people against dangers in the huge militarization now going on, and urged them to protect their democratic gains and living standards from the rapacious profiteers and war-makers.

The C.I.O. sessions were not cluttered up with Government and outside Social-Democratic warmongers, unlike the A. F. of L. gathering. The Government was depending on Sidney Hillman to line up the C.I.O. behind its program. Mr. Hillman has his hand-picked Labor Policy Advisory Committee of the National Defense Committee-a committee which was not officially delegated or endorsed by either the A. F. of L., the C.I.O. and the Railroad Brotherhoods, but which is nevertheless presuming to speak in the name of all organized labor. The A. F. of L. leaders more or less automatically dovetail with Hillman's war committee, so his big job was to bring the C.I.O. under its control.

Despite its basically anti-war stand, there were serious weaknesses in the C.I.O. convention's actions on questions of foreign policy. If uncorrected, these shortcomings can lead to surrender or to defeat at the hands of the warmongers. They can lead eventually to an endorsement of the war, as we see in the case of the C.I.O. in Canada.

First, the convention, although refraining from endorsing Roosevelt's foreign policies and his program of "national defense," did not fully expose their war character. Notably the convention did not go so far as Lewis did in his election speech, when he declared categorically and correctly:

"Those . . . who have studied the public addresses of the President . . . will understand his motivations and his objective. It is war. His every act leads one to this inescapable conclusion."

Secondly, the convention did not clearly enough warn against dangers of the so-called "national unity," but, instead, demanded participation and representation in the various war boards. Murray's postconvention plan to have the unions guarantee war production is a dangerous step in the wrong direction.

Thirdly, the convention's antiwar program, so far as it related to foreign policy, had too much of a negative, isolationist character. It was too restricted to a reiteration of the generality that we should stay out of the war; it lacked a fundamental and detailed criticism of the Government's foreign policy. Also, it gave only a faint suggestion of peace collaboration with the democratic forces of the world and it ignored altogether the vital question of American-Soviet cooperation for peace.

Fourthly, the convention made dangerous concession to the а Dies-Green-Hillman **Red-baiters** and warmongers by adopting the anti-Communist resolution. This resolution, by lumping together fascism and communism and by condemning communism as "inimical to the welfare of labor" is a gross falsification on its face. No clearer proof of this is necessary than the loval and effective work of the Communists in helping build the

C.I.O. One of the basic reasons for the success of the C.I.O. is precisely that it has generally refrained from Red-baiting. The chaos caused in the United Automobile Workers Union a couple of years ago by the notorious Red-baiter and company agent, Homer Martin, should be a warning not to allow this disease to develop in the C.I.O., not to permit reactionaries in the C.I.O. to use the resolution for this purpose.

The anti-war position of the convention constituted a defeat for the pro-war Hillman forces, who, speculating on differences among the C.I.O. leadership over the recent elections, hoped to stampede the convention for Roosevelt's war program. The decisions of the C.I.O. convention regarding the Government's war trend, despite their many weaknesses, should be supported by the workers in their fight to keep this country out of the imperialist war. But the C.I.O.'s antiwar program must be supplemented along the lines of the stated criticisms. Especially is it necessary to oppose the developing imperialistic war alliance between the United States and Great Britain and to strive to reorientate American policy on the basis of a friendly peace collaboration with the U.S.S.R., China, and other anti-imperialist forces throught the world.

Organized Labor's Domestic Policies

The domestic phase of the Government's war program, which, broadly stated, is to tie labor to the war chariot and to load the war costs upon the toilers, requires the breaking down of the resolute peace sentiments of the American people and the regimentation of the workers in the interests of the profiteering greed of the capitalists. Hence, the growing attacks upon the democratic organizations. economic standards. social legislation and civil liberties of the people, including current vigorous the assaults upon the right to strike, the growing efforts to establish compulsory arbitration, the attempts to undermine the Wage-and-Hours Act and to wipe out all restrictions upon the length of the working day. the continued persecution of the trade unions under the anti-trust law, the efforts to castrate the Na-Labor Relations tional Act bv amending it and by placing Dr. Harry A. Millis at the head of the Board, the further jettisoning of the W.P.A. and the national health program and social services generally, and the intensified drive to outlaw the Communist Party.

A trade union movement intelligently and loyally defending the interests of its membership necessarily would have to come into conflict with this whole domestic program of American imperialism. However, inasmuch as the foreign and domestic phases of American imperialism's war program are all of one piece, the reactionary A. F. of L. convention, having fully endorsed Roosevelt's foreign policy. inevitably accepted in substance his domestic policy. It enthusiastically subscribed to the capitalistic prowar "national unity." But the A. F. of L. convention, however subservient its leaders may be to the Government and Wall Street, could not frankly accept the many plans of the employers to increase the economic exploitation of the workers. This would have constituted a dangerous affront to the increasingly militant mass of A. F. of L. members. Seeing the cost of living mounting and the employers making huge profits, these workers want their wages raised, the speed-up system checked, the attacks upon the unions and upon the right to strike halted, and the scuttling of the Government's social security program stopped. They are very much in a mood to defend themselves, and their fighting spirit is stimulated by the activities of the C.I.O.

So the A. F. of L. high moguls in convention, in their role as labor lieutenants of the capitalists, felt compelled to cover up their policies of surrender to the Governmnt and employers on the domestic field by some formal pretenses of opposition and by thick layers of demagogy. One would be naive indeed to take at its face value the A. F. of L. convention decision that it will fight against Government contracts going to violators of the National Labor Relations Act. or to believe William Green's wordy defense of the workers' right to strike. Such stuff is for rank-and-file consumption. The real policy of the A. F. of L. bureaucrats. expressed by many actualities, is that the workers, in the interests of "national defense," must make sacrifices in their standards of living and civil liberties. That these leaders themselves, however, propose to make no sacrifices was made clear by the salary boost of Meany and Green from \$10,000 to \$12,000 and \$18,000 to \$20,000 respectively.

The letters and speech of Presi-

dent Roosevelt, Secretaries Stimson and Perkins, and other Government officials calling upon th A. F. of L. workers to make "sacrifices" were received sympathetically by the convention of high-paid bureaucrats. This showed their true policy. Also, with the spokesmen of the Government and the employers demanding that the work-week be extended to fifty or fifty-five hours, the A. F. of L. leaders, defending the forty-hour week, tongue-incheek, expressed their readiness for the workers to work ten or twelve hours per day "if necessary." And when the capitalist press, outraged by the Vultee aircraft strike, was clamoring for the abolition of the right to strike in "defense" industries, Green at the convention exposed his true policy by condemning such strikes and proposing what was compulsory arbitration. virtually While giving lip service to democracy, the convention and its leaders worked closely with the twin Gestapos-the F.B.I. and the Dies Committee. And similarly when, emboldened by the spreading war hysteria, the employers are increasing their assaults upon the workers' right to organize, the A. F. of L. convention made it a special point to press its reactionary amendments to the Wagner Act.

The manner in which the A. F. of L. convention leaders covered up their actual surrender policy with demagogy was illustrated in a statement made by George Meany, Secretary-Treasurer of the A. F. of L., a gem carried by the Associated Press on November 13. Said Mr. Meany: "The A. F. of L. is prepared to make sacrifices to hasten the de-

fense program, but at the same time we will fight to retain the gains we have won." Thus, Mr. Meany wonderfully proposes at once to retreat and to stand his ground. Which end of Meany's self-contradictory policy the A. F. of L. leaders are actually putting into effect is evidenced by their course of subordinating the workers to the Government policies. Just as in the case of the foreign policies, so the domestic policies expressed by the realities of the A. F. of L. convention are in violation of the interests of the workers. Only by mass pressure against their leaders can the A. F. of L. workers advance their desire for peace and protect their working, living and civic standards.

As in the case of the A. F. of L. convention, there was also a harmony between the foreign and domestic policies adopted by the C.I.O. convention, but in a reverse sense. For, notwithstanding some shortcomings, the C.I.O.'s policies in both spheres were directed against the war.

Whereas at the A. F. of L. convention the central idea behind the domestic policies endorsed was acceptance of the Government-emplover demand that the workers must sacrifice in the name of "national defense," the C.I.O. convention correctly called upon the workers to defend their economic and political demands. The convention stood on the principle that the first condition for national defense is to enhance the prosperity of the people and to develop American democracy. John L. Lewis expressed the spirit of the convention in the following declarations:

"I associate myself with the fiftytwo million shrunken bellies in this country and I am for them regardless of any consideration, regardless of their creed or color, their previous condition of servitude or anything else....

"I represent that spirit of labor which is dissatisfied with year after year of exploitation, and is determined to fight for labor's rightful share in the bounty."

In this militant vein, and against the resistance and sabotage of the Hillman pro-war minority, the convention conducted its business. The sum total of its work is a program genuinely conforming to the interests of the great democratic masses of the American people. The economic heart of this program is contained in the following five-points presented by Lewis:

"1. The proportion of all income which goes to wages must increase. . .

"2. The cost of living must be protected by the maintenance of a stable and reasonable price structure. . .

"3. Profits must be kept at a reasonable and just level....

"4. The national tax structure needs a vigorous reversal in its now seriously retrogressive character [which tends to place the main burden on low-income groups]...

"5. A further expansion in purchasing power must be made available to beneficiaries under the Social Security program and the unemployed."

Upon this general basis the C.I.O. convention adopted a series of resolutions for improved wage standards, for shorter hours, against the speed-up, for the enforcement of the Wages-and-Hours law and the Walsh-Healey Act, against profiteering, for a broad housing and unemployment program, for expansion of the social security laws, for a national health program, and for a more effective farm program. Altogether, although one may dispute the C.I.O.'s theory of "reasonable and just" profits, this economic program is one that corresponds to the basic needs of the toiling masses in these war times.

The C.I.O. convention, furthermore, sounded a clarion call to the workers and other toilers to defend their threatened civil liberties. In the center of this program is the defense of the workers' right to strike, now so heavily attacked by the employers, the Government, and labor misleaders of the Green-Hillman brand. The convention also insisted upon the enforcement of all social legislation against the war-profiteers; it demanded the revocation of the infamous poll tax laws and the abolition of discriminating practices against Negroes, women, youth and foreign born; it outlined a program for the protection of the draftees in the armed forces: and it demanded the annulment of the W.P.A. amendment discriminating against minority parties.

The C.I.O.'s program of immediate economic and political demands offers a practical platform, not only for its own membership, but for the workers in the A. F. of L. and railroad unions, as well as the huge masses of unorganized. It should have laid more stress, however, on the six-hour day and the thirtyhour week, to counteract the persistent mass unemployment and the present terrific speed-up in the basic industries. The big job now is to popularize and apply the C.I.O. program throughout the labor movement.

The whole political line of the C.I.O. convention was worked out under the active leadership of John L. Lewis. But now Lewis has stepped out of the C.I.O. presidency and the Hillmanites and other Right elements in the organization are jubilant. Philip Murray stands at the helm of the C.I.O. and these reactionary forces are hopefully expecting him to veer sharply in their direction. Upon Murray therefore rests a grave responsibility to live up to the militancy that is the life blood of the C.I.O. It will require determination and foresight on his part to oppose the Government, employer and Hillmanite war-makers amidst the intensifying drive towards war, to protect the right to strike by encouraging the workers to practice it whenever necessary, and to help defend generally the economic and political interests of the workers. It is only by such a militant course that the C.I.O. program can be made into a reality. Any yielding in the direction of the Boosevelt-Green-Hillman foreign and domestic policies would fundamentally jeopardize the policies laid down by the Atlantic City convention by taking the punch out of the wage movements, organizing campaigns, and other mass activities outlined by the C.I.O. And there are many powerful leaders in the coal, automobile, steel, textile, rubber, clothing, and

other C.I.O. unions who are urging Murray to do just this.

Strengthening Labor's Forces

The workers, facing the present menacing American and world situation, have urgent need to strengthen their ranks organizationally, as well as programmatically. How the conventions of the C.I.O. and A. F. of L. handled this basic problem can only briefly be commented upon in this article.

(a) Organization of the Unorganized: With unemployment decreasing somewhat and the cost of living rising steadily, great masses of workers are predisposed to join the unions, and if organized labor is alert it can readily add several million new members to its ranks during the present period. The C.I.O. convention, announcing a membership of "over 4,000,000" and a substantial recent growth, correctly laid heavy stress upon this question of organization. Active campaigns were outlined for the aircraft, Ford, Bethlehem, lumber, oil, and other industries. The new President, Philip Murray, stated that the C.I.O. would inaugurate the greatest organizing campaign in the history of the United States. The A. F. of L., claiming an all-time record membership of 4.247.443, including the recently re-admitted International Ladies Garment Workers Union, concerned itself considerably, although in its usual planless way, with the recruitment of members. Progressive and Left-wing trade unionists everywhere should lend all possible support to organizing work, especially that of the C.I.O.

unions. Inseparably connected with this fundamental question are the vital issues of defending the strike right and other civil liberties, protecting the living standards of the workers, and developing generally the mass peace opposition to Wall Street's war program.

(b) Trade Union Unity: This basic question also occupied a great deal of attention at the two conventions. Much "unity" agitation came from the Government, directly through the President and also via his labor spokesmen, Green, Hillman, et al. The Government and the employers keenly realize the great difficulty of anaesthetizing the working class with their war demagogy as long as the C.I.O. unions are carrying on a militant struggle, thereby giving stimulus and leadership to the workers everywhere. Hence the eagerness of Government and employer spokesmen for their kind of trade union unity—one which would bring the whole labor movement under deadening control of pro-war leaders of the Green-Hillman type.

Green of the A. F. of L. talked much about labor unity; but behind his glib proposals to negotiate with the C.I.O. on this question "anytime, any place, anywhere," lurked the same old plan of the A. F. of L. bureaucrats to split up the C.I.O. industrial unions into crafts. John P. Frey let the cat out of the bag when he declared at the convention of the A. F. of L. Metal Trades Department:

"There is no conceivable way to which the A. F. of L. metal workers could merge with secessionists from their own organizations and new members recruited by the C.I.O. unions except to absorb them into the existing unions." (*P.M.*, November 13.)

The C.I.O. convention wisely rejected the spurious unity proposals of the Government and the A. F. of L. leaders and reiterated its own genuine plan of achieving unity through the affiliation of the C.I.O. unions in a body to the A. F. of L., with the adjustment later on of jurisdictional problems. Such unity as the C.I.O. proposes, conserving the industrial structure of the C.I.O. unions and maintaining their progressive program and leadership, would give a powerful stimulus to the entire labor movement.

(c) Working Class Independent Political Action: Never was there such a broad mass basis for the workers to develop their independent political action in the general direction of an eventual Farmer-Labor Party as there is now. The workers and farmers are definitely demanding a whole set of economic and political measures that should serve as their independent program, and the two old parties, heading for war and the reduction of the people's liberties and living standards. are in no way representing the interests of the masses. The recent Presidential election showed that the Roosevelt prestige is gradually on the wane. As Earl Browder pointed out at the recent meeting of the National Committee of the Communist Party, never before did the masses vote for the old party candidates with so many doubts, misgivings and reservations. Thus, more and more favorable, therefore, grow the possibilities for a wide third

party that would fight for peace and for other mass demands.

Neither of the two labor conventions met squarely this growing need of the toilers for independent political action leading toward a mass party of their own. The C.I.O., true to its progressive role, went further in the correct direction than the A. F. of L., by stressing the need for labor, on the basis of "a common program with all other progressive elements," to "assure an independent political role for organized labor." But this formulation is too vague and uncertain; the times call for preliminary preparations for a break with the two old parties and the eventual establishment of a new party of the people. As for the A. F. of L. convention, it stuck in the mud altogether. Its leaders reiterated the stale and profitless "non-partisan" policy of "rewarding labor's friends and punishing its enemies."

The progressive and Left-wing forces in the trade unions should raise much more sharply the question of concrete, independent political action than was done at the C.I.O. convention. During the early years of the New Deal, the workers secured some political recognition through the Democratic Party; but that time is now past. The Democratic Party's policies have become virtually identical with those of the Republican Party and have nothing in common with the interests of the great bulk of the people. The labor unions, nine million strong, require imperatively, along with the farmers. the Negroes, the youth and other democratic strata, a political party of their own.

(d) Questions of Leadership: The American labor movement has long urgently needed more honest and progressive leaders. The C.I.O. convention, vibrant with militancy, showed this new type of leadership in the making. Even the bourgeois correspondents out pointed the striking contrast between the young and alert delegates in Atlantic City and the stodgy, fossilized and reactionary bureaucrats who predominated at New Orleans. However, the resignation of John L. Lewis, as a consequence of his election speech. places heavy responsibilities upon the incoming Murray administration. During the past several years. Lewis has made a remarkable reputation for his militant organizational work and political progressivism, a fact strikingly attested to by the repeated, enthusiastic demonstrations given him by the convention delegates. His amazing blanket endorsement of Willkie dealt a heavy blow to his prestige among the masses.

As president of the United Mine Workers, however, Lewis will remain a powerful trade union figure. If he stays out of the Willkie camp and cultivates an independent political role for labor, he can exert a great influence in the whole labor movement, especially because the war orientation of the Government will increasingly demonstrate the correctness of his criticism of the President. While reactionaries generally are gloating over the resignation of Lewis, many of them are afraid that he will continue his role. A spokesman for such elements is G. E. Sokolsky, who, much alarmed, says in the New York Sun of Nov.

27, "John L. Lewis has come out of the C.I.O. convention at Atlantic City even a more sinister figure than he has been in the past five years."

At the A. F. of L.convention, the leadership dabbled about with the question of cleansing racketeering from their ranks. But after considerable pother, in which Dubinsky got much cheap notoriety, they finally sidestepped the issue by adopting innocuous resolution an which passed the buck back to the affiliated unions. Nothing more was to be expected. The A. F. of L. convention was controlled by an organized group of cold-blooded, self-seeking and cynical bureaucrats with hardly more proletarian class spirit than so many capitalists. Strong pillars of their clique control are the hundreds of gangsters and crooks who infest key positions in the Building Trades, Teamsters, Longshoremen, Stagehands, Building Service Employees and many other A. F. of L. unions. Therefore, to expect the A. F. of L. leaders voluntarily to take action against these corrupt henchmen, from whom their power so largely derives, would be naive. The progressive elements in the labor movement will not bide content with the whitewash administered to the gangsters by the A. F. of L. convention. For twenty years the Communists, and for a like number of years before them I.W.W. the and the Left-wing Socialists, have fought against gangsterism and corruption in the labor movement. This struggle, militant workers should now prosecute with renewed energy. Under no circumstances should they allow this important issue to be exploited by such reactionary, antiunion elements as Westbrook Pegler.

The most dangerous figure among the leadership of either of the two conventions was Sidney Hillman, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Mr. Hillman. Social-Democrat and Roosevelt's hand-picked labor "representative" on the National Defense Board, is an obvious aspirant for the role in the United States of a Citrine or Jouhaux, a MacDonald or a Blum. Hillman, banking upon the hope that Lewis' ill-advised election speech would kill his influence, came to the C.I.O. convention with the intention of either splitting it over the Roosevelt-Green fake labor unity proposal, or stampeding the convention for the Administration's war program, or both. But Hillman found a big majority of the delegates enthusiastically supporting Lewis, and learned to his surprise that he himself was on the spot. Especially were the delegates opposed to him because of his sneaking endorsement of military conscription and his shameful surrender to the Government on the issue of alloting war contracts to law-violating companies. So Hillman pulled in his horns and decided to remain within the C.I.O., in the hope of destroying its militancy from the inside.

Mr. Hillman, like other reactionaries when caught in a corner, sought to shield himself by a recourse to Red baiting. While his aides were demanding (in vain, as it turned out), that Communists be excluded from all C.I.O. official positions, Hillman took the lead in attacking the Communist members of the C.I.O. Among other vilifications, he said, "Their loyalty is to an organization outside of this organization. . . Their loyalty is to someone else. They will take orders." Hillman certainly has a crust to make such a charge inasmuch as he himself, selected personally by Roosevelt as his labor agent, was at the very moment slavishly carrying out the orders of the capitalist government, by trying his utmost to ram Wall Street's war program down the unwilling throats of the C.I.O. delegates.

Hillman displayed the characteristic anti-Communist bitterness of a renegade. With his eye on future government promotion and eager to please his conservative friends, Hillman was at considerable pains in the convention carefully to whitewash himself against possible accusations of earlier radicalism by denying that he had ever been a member of the Communist Party. He failed to mention, however, his affiliation with the Red International of Labor Unions and the Trade Union Educational League during the early years of those organizations. Opportunist that he was then, as he is now, Hillman joined up with the R.I.L.U. movement at that time when, by a widespread growth of the T.U.E.L. influence in the trade unions, it seemed like an easy path to power. But later on, when the labor movement began to encounter strong opposition, the opportunist Hillman abandoned it and set his feet upon more facile roads to personal advancement. Now he unscrupulously condemns as foreign agents those fighters who have remained loyal to the proletarian internationalism which he betrayed.

The Conventions and the Perspective

The basic meaning of the present imperialist war is that the world capitalist system is sinking deeper and deeper into crisis and that it is approaching profound economic and political upheavals. Obviously, as the war proceeds, the capitalist system as a whole is growing constantly weaker. The warring powers are destroying one another's industries and cities. Their counter-blockades and mutual holocausts have already brought Europe to the brink of famine. All the capitalist powers have become financially undermined. A whole row of countries have been militarily subjugated and devastated. The French, Dutch and Belgian empires are shattered, while the great British Empire is fighting desperately with its back to the wall. Italian imperialism, decayed and rotten, is tottering in the war with Greece. Japan has seriously sapped its strength while battering its head against the stubborn resistance of nationalist China. German imperialism, also rotten at the heart, and greatly overestimated because of its easily won victories over capitalist states which relied on "appeasement" policies, is vainly trying to tinker together the shaky European capitalist system under Hitler's New World Order. American imperialism is also now feverishly arming itself and hastening along the fatal road to war.

Meanwhile, as world capitalism decays, the world forces of democracy and socialism grow in strength. The great U.S.S.R., standing aside from the murderous imperialist war, is daily increasing its power and prestige. The fighting Chinese people are scoring important victories against Japanese imperialism. The huge masses in India are surging with revolt against British imperialism. In Europe, too, not only in the subjugated and invaded countries, but also in fascist Germany and Italy, there is a growing mass resentment against the war and the capitalist system which spawned it.

Neither the C.I.O. nor the A. F. of L. convention, however, with their leaderships still adhering openly to capitalism. made anvthing approaching a fundamental examination of the world social forces at play, and of the deeper significance of the wars, economic crises, and fascism with which humanity is now being plagued. Nor did either work out a satisfactory long-run program for the stormy days ahead. Nevertheless, both conventions, especially the C.I.O., sensed serious trouble looming during the war period and afterward. John L. Lewis pointed out the danger of an unparalleled economic crash of the present dizzy war economy after hostilities cease. and he insisted upon the need of applying the basic measures of the C.I.O. economic and political program in order to forestall it.

Less disturbed and less far-seeing, William Green took occasion to tell the world that:

"The American Federation of Labor supports our American capitalist system and free enterprise . . . just as vigorously as we support trade unions and the right to organize and bargain collectively." But even into his reactionary and capitalist-lackey mind there had penetrated a fear that all will not be well after the war. Although Green voiced the illusion that the "defense program" will practically wipe out unemployment by 1943, he is afraid of a serious let-down after the war. But he is "confident" that the employers will "accept" a thirty-hour week as the solution for unemployment.

Obviously the superficial analyses of the American and world situations made by the two labor conventions are quite unsatisfactory. Labor cannot find its true path through the deepening world crisis upon the basis of such analysis. It is imperative that the American trade union movement develop a MarxistLeninist analysis of what is happening in the world. Labor must come to realize that capitalism is decaying at the heart, that a broad People's Front government is necessary to protect even the elementary rights of the people, and that only in socialism can the workers look forward to a perspective of peace, prosperity and freedom. To give organized labor its indispensable socialist analysis and perspective is above all the task of the Communists. The time is more than due for the development of an educational campaign in the trade unions and in the shops for socialism, upon the basis of specific American conditions and problems and with the vast socialist experience of th U.S.-S.R. as guide and inspiration.