

Industrial Unionism in the Soviet State

By A. Lozovsky.

The first all-Russian Congress of Trade Unions, laying down the general line of revolutionary policy and the necessity for the closest co-operation and inseparable connection with the Soviets of Workers Deputies, came up against one of the most difficult questions in the theory and practice of the Trade Union movement, i. e., the rôle of Trade Unions in the period of proletarian dictatorship. What is the dictatorship of the proletariat? It is a definite labor system of government, having for its object to destroy the bourgeois Capitalist relations and the state machinery created by them, to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to prepare the conditions and foundations for Socialist construction. Between Capitalism and Socialism there is a distinct historical period during which the oppressed class, taking advantage of the new government machinery which it has created, forcibly establishes new social industrial relations, and, to the extent that these new relations are strengthened, the State power of the transition period gradually dies out; for Socialist society is a non-class society, and where there no classes there is no State. Consequently, to the extent that we depart from Capitalism and approach to Socialism the state as such will disappear, and, as Engels wrote, it will be placed in the museum of history. The state will remain a mere apparatus for the registration of distribution and production, serving the economic needs of Socialist society.

The Soviet is an organ of proletarian dictatorship, and as a definite form of state will disappear with the complete victory of Socialism.

But what will be the fate of the Trade Unions? The Trade Unions have become converted from fighting organizations against Capital into organs of Socialist construction, and to the extent that we advance from Capitalism to Communism the centre of gravity of the work of the union will be transferred to the sphere of organization and administration. The main task of organizing labor and production lies upon the Trade Unions, and the more the Trade Unions are able to cope with this task the more it will become merged in national economy and become part and parcel

of it. In a completely developed Socialist society the Trade Unions as fighting organizations in the class war will disappear, and their place will be taken by an apparatus for registration, distribution, and public production.

But where will this apparatus for registering, distributing, and producing in Socialist society come from? What organization will create it? Evidently it will be created in the transitional period by the Trade Unions and the Soviets. And its importance will grow in proportion to the victory of the social revolution and the strengthening of the new industrial relations. Thus, the Soviets of workers' deputies and the Trade Unions jointly create in the transitional period an organ for managing production (Councils of National Economy and the chief committees for the management of nationalized undertakings). These organs, however, lose their specific character as fast as we advance to Socialism; the whole work of the Soviets and the Trade Unions becomes concentrated upon the organization of labor and production, but their industrial functions disappear. The Trade Unions and the Soviet economic organs merge into one another; a single economic machinery grows out of it, swallowing both unions and Soviets, thus being the synthesis of all the organisations created by the proletariat. Socialism emerges in its perfect form of organisation. This perspective of the development and the rebirth of the existing proletarian organizations gives rise to the idea of "nationalizing" the Trade Unions, and many comrades regarded this possibility as meaning the immediate subordination of the Trade Unions to the Soviet Government. The first all-Russian congress of Trade Unions which advocated the closest co-operation and unseverable connection between the Trade Unions and the Soviet of workers' deputies declared in its fundamental resolution that "in the process of development which has been outlined the Trade Unions will inevitably be converted into organs of Socialist Government, participation in which will be obligatory for all persons engaged in any given in-

dustry." This resolution was taken by some comrades to mean immediate subordination of the unions to the State, and the second all-Russian Congress of Trade Unions held in January, 1919, on the question of the character of the relations between the Soviet organs and the Trade Unions and their gradual merging declared:—

"The task of socializing all means of production and the organization of society on a new Socialist basis demands stubborn, prolonged work on the reconstruction of the whole government machine, the creation of new organs of control and regulation of production and consumption resting upon the organized initiative of the masses of the workers themselves.

This compels the Trade Unions to take a more active and energetic part in the work of the Soviets, by direct participation in all the State organs, by organizing mass proletarian control over their activities, by carrying out separate tasks which might confront the Soviet Government through their organizations, by co-operating in the reconstruction of various State departments, and by the gradual substitution of them by their own organizations by means of using the organs of the union with those of the State.

It would be a mistake, however, in the present stage of development of Trade Unions with the as yet imperfect state organisation immediately to convert the unions into State organs, and to merge the former into the latter or for the unions to arbitrarily usurp the functions of the State. The whole process of complete fusions of the Trade Unions with the State organs (the process which we call statification of Trade Unions) must take place as the inevitable result of their joint close and harmonious working, and the preparation by the Trade Unions of the broad masses of the workers for the task of managing the State machine and all the administrative organs."

The perspective outlined by the Second Congress was subjected to a new test. A year and three months of stern civil war passed, and whatever the trials of the Trade Unions, with the exception of an insignificant minority, they fought shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet Government against the Russian and world counter-revolution. It was this organic connection with the Soviets." The second important resolution lays

Congress advanced in the first instance. "The Trade Unions in Soviet Russia—says the first resolution—practically became an inseparable part of the Soviet system, a necessary supplement and support of the proletarian dictatorship of the Soviets." The second important resolution lays it down that "the Trade Unions are the fundamental basis of the proletarian state, the sole organizers of labor in the process of production and the chief tool in economic construction." These two definitions give an exhaustive description of the Trade Unions in the period of transition from Capitalism to Socialism. The Trade Unions are the foundation and support of the Soviet State—a necessary supplement to the organs of proletarian dictatorship—the Soviets, the chief tool of economic construction and the only organizer of labor in the process of production. These are the functions and the place of the Trade Unions in the proletarian State based on thirty months' experience of joint work and struggle, and this experience was fixed by the resolutions of the third all-Russian Congress.

FORCING DOWN WAGES.

By Nate L. Welch.

Unemployment with attending privations is the growing fear of industrial workers here in Detroit. In spite of reassurances by the Board of Commerce fear is gnawing at the vitals of the workers lest they lose their jobs in the drive of the opulent wealthy to reduce wages and labor standards.

It is estimated that 50,000 are out of work here and many are leaving the city. The most striking sign of unemployment is the number of dwellings available for workers at reduced rates. Until very recently rooms were so scarce that thousands of families were compelled to live in tents on the outskirts and rents were screwed up to the highest point.

From reliable authority it is learned that the General Motors laid off about 30 per cent of its office force and 20 per cent of its shop employees. The Timken-Axle Company is reported to have laid off 20 per cent of its office force and 20 per cent of its shop men. The Packard concern is reported to have laid off 30 per cent of its office force and about 25 per cent of its mechanics. The Morgan Wright Tire Company laid off about 2,000 men.