

FOR THE UNITY OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

On the Way to Trade Union Unity in the Countries of the Pacific.

By A. Lozovsky.

On the initiative of the trade unions of Australia, and mainly of the New South Wales Trades Council, a Congress of the Trade Unions of the countries of the Pacific was convened in Sydney for the end of July last. Invitations to this Congress were issued to the trade unions of China, Japan, the Soviet Union, India, South Africa, Java, the Islands in the Pacific, and to South America, Canada, the United States and Great Britain.

This action on the part of the trade unions of Australia was the result of the decision of the II. Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions on the necessity of establishing trade union unity in the countries of the Pacific. In convening this Conference the Australian comrades somewhat underestimated the question of distances. They sent out their invitations in February and fixed the time for holding the Congress at the end of July. As they feared that they would not succeed in getting into contact with the organisations in question they in some instances sent their own representatives to convey invitations. At the time fixed for the Conference the situation was as follows:

All letters and telegrams addressed to the Left trade unions in Japan had been sent back by the Japanese police; in Japan only the reformist trade unions received the invitations, but the reformist trade union leader, Bundshi Suzuki replied that he could not attend the Conference as Australian legislation was directed against yellow workers. The Indian Trades Union Congress heartily welcomed the convening of the Congress but could not take part in it as the time was too short. The trade unions of Indonesia, China and of the Soviet Union and some of the trade unions of Mexico, pronounced themselves to be in favour of the Congress, but owing to the enormous distances and the difficulties caused by the police, and in certain cases owing to financial difficulties, it was impossible for all those organisations who wished to take part in the Conference to send their delegation in good time.

When the representative of the Red International of Labour Unions and of the Central Council of the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union came to the Conference, it appeared from the reports of the delegates sent by the Australian trade unions that the Congress could not take place at the time originally fixed. The delegates present (Australia, R. I. L. U., A. U. C. T. U., Minority Movement, New Zealand), after becoming acquainted with all the material and discussing the situation that has arisen, adopted the following decision:

"In view of the impossibility of many delegates arriving in good time and in view of the difficulties of a general nature connected with the convocation of a Conference in Sydney, the preliminary Workers' Conference of the workers of the Pacific Ocean have decided:

1. To postpone the convening of the Conference to the 1st May 1927 and to hold the Conference in Canton immediately after the Trades Union Congress of China has been held.

2. To enter into negotiations with the Chinese trade union federation regarding the question of jointly carrying

out the preparatory work for the convening of the Conference.

3. To submit the following agenda: a) report of the organisation Committee; b) reports of the delegates from the various countries; c) the International Labour Movement and the situation in the countries of the Pacific; d) the activity of the trade unions and the fighting tasks in the Far East (legalising of the trade unions, social legislation); e) questions of emigration, of the coloured workers etc.; f) organisatory questions, methods of contact etc.; g) election of a trade union secretariat for the countries of the Pacific."

We consider the new arrangements for holding the Congress, both as regards time and place, to be quite correct. To unite the workers of the countries of the Pacific is one of the most important historical tasks of the immediate future. It is hardly necessary to point out that the Pacific Ocean will in the near future be the scene of tremendous encounters and conflicts, which can only be prevented by a close union of the workers of all countries of the Pacific. It was for this reason that the Red International of Labour Unions, already in the year 1922, raised the question of bringing together the workers' organisations of all the countries of the Pacific. And it was for this reason that the trade unions of Australia quite rightly took up the initiative in this question.

It must be mentioned that the trade unions of Australia clearly perceive those difficulties which the labour organisations of the countries of the Pacific are bound to encounter in the near future, and that they are therefore endeavouring to do everything that lies in their power in this respect. Very characteristic and deserving the greatest attention in this connection is the decision of the 3rd Trades Union Congress of Australia, which was held at the beginning of August 1926 in Sydney, in the question of international trade union unity. This decision is as follows:

"In view of the fact that:

1. competition and the struggle for markets and sources of raw material in the countries of the Pacific Ocean — the last resort of the decaying capitalist system of the world — are becoming more intense;

2. that competition in armaments by sea and land will, if it is not prevented by an active and class conscious labour movement, inevitably lead to a new war;

3. that the labour movement is split internationally and in many countries also on a national scale, whilst the capitalist forces directed against the workers are undergoing a tremendous process of concentration;

4. that the revolutionary labour movement in the Far East, particularly in China, is growing and thereby greatly altering the situation of the countries of the Pacific,

the 3rd Trades Congress of Australia resolves:

1. to take active part in the struggle for establishing trade union unity on an international scale, and to urge the convocation of an international Unity Congress of all trade unions;

2. to elect delegates to attend the Trades Union Conference of the countries of the Pacific which is to be held on the 1st May 1927 in Canton;

3. to direct an appeal to the workers of all countries of the Pacific, pointing out the necessity of uniting all forces in the fight against international capitalism and against preparations for war;

4. to send a message of congratulation to the awakening working class of China and to their trade unions;

5. to accept the invitation of the All Union Council of Trade unions to send in the near future an official delegation to the Soviet Union."

This resolution bears witness to the high political level of the trade unions of Australia. Many European leaders of the Amsterdam International, including Purcell, have not yet arrived at such an understanding of the immediate tasks of the International Labour Movement, and instead of the slogan of a world Congress, issue the slogan of the "entry" of the trade unions of the Soviet Union into the Amsterdam International.

The Trade Union Federation of China, at its meeting of 10th September in Canton, confirmed the decisions adopted by the preliminary Conference and decided to do everything necessary for the approaching Trade Union Congress of the countries of the Pacific. The Presidium of the Central Council of

the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union decided at its meeting of 6th October to take part in this Congress of the trade unions of the countries of the Pacific, in view of the extreme importance which the unity of the trade unions of the countries of the Pacific Ocean will have for the establishment of international trade unity and for the fight against imperialism.

It is the task of all labour organisations, both of those which are affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions and those which are outside it, to do everything in their power in order, by means of the unity of the Trade Unions of all countries of the Pacific, to set up a bulwark against imperialism and, along with the trade unions of the new countries and of the new Continent, to establish an all-embracing Trade Union International which will be capable of fighting.

It would be childish not to see the enormous difficulties that lie in the way of the unity of the Labour Movement of the countries of the Pacific. It suffices to point to the antagonisms that have been called forth by the treatment of the yellow races by the imperialists. It suffices to call attention to the different standards of culture, to the exceptional laws against the coloured races, to the hostility of the white workers towards the workers with a lower standard of living and to the whole medley of national, racial and religious antagonisms at present prevailing in the Pacific countries. The difficulties are very great, but they will be overcome, for we are following the way which will lead to their practical solution. And that is the chief thing...