

MAY DAY FINDS WOMEN IN THICK OF STRUGGLE

By Rose Wortis

May 1st, 1929, turns a new page in the history of women workers of this country. The inter class war raging in all parts of the world reached out to the United States—the capitalist world capitalism—where the women workers are the most exploited section of the working class. They are coming out in open revolt against the rationalization speed-up system introduced by the capitalists of this country in order to compete more effectively with the European countries for world markets.

For years the bureaucracy of the American Federation of Labor, deaf to the cry of organization of the unskilled workers, has maintained that women workers are not responsive to trade unionism. For years they have given mere lip service to the question of organizing women on the occasions of their conventions. The attempts of the progressives to organize the unorganized, particularly the women workers, were met with expulsions and persecutions. To show some pretense of doing organization work among women, they have occasionally appointed one of their women lobbyists as organizer, whose chief activities were lobbying in the capitalist legislative houses.

The senile Women's Trade Union League, the organization which was to have served as the vehicle for organizing the unorganized women, has not even attempted to deal with the problems confronting the millions of women workers and is today obsolete.

The mass revolt of women workers in the textile industry in the North as well as the South, in Passaic and New Bedford, the present South Carolina revolt; the militant struggles of the dressmakers, the millinery workers and the other women in the needle trades, the strike of the cafeteria workers, and the spontaneous unorganized revolts of women in almost every other trade in every section of the country, give the lie to the contention of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy that women do not respond to trade union organization.

The women workers of this country are awakening and are beginning to realize that their salvation from industrial slavery lies only in organization, and that only the Left wing in the trade union movement is making a real effort to lead them in the struggle for better conditions. In the recent strike of the dressmakers conducted by the new Industrial Union, in the struggles of the textile and mining industries, the women workers, under the leadership of the new unions, have proven to be the most militant and persistent fighters. The new unions, organized on the basis of class struggle and pledged to the organization of the great mass of the unorganized workers, have given new hope to these millions of exploited women workers and have shown them the possibilities for freeing themselves from the yoke of slavery.

The coming Trade-Union-Unity-Conference in Cleveland will see many women workers, fresh from the battlefields, sitting side by side with the men workers and deliberating on the present problems confronting the entire working class. Together with the men they will take their place in the great struggle against exploitation, against the impending imperialist war, against the open shop and speed-up system, and the treacherous bureaucracy of the American Federation of Labor, which has become an adjunct to the capitalist class.

On May 1st, 1929, all class-conscious women will take heart in their past accomplishments and will prepare themselves for greater struggles, until such time when the women of the United States, just as the women workers of Russia, will have gained real equality, real freedom, only possible under a government of workers.