

Sidelights on the I.L.G.W.U. Convention Held in Chicago

Resolutions Dealing With Basic Problems Killed in Committee

By ROSE WORTIS

On May 28th the convention of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the third largest union in this country, took place at a time when masses of workers have become disillusioned with the N.R.A., have become tired of the promises and the delay which have deprived them of the right to organize and which have given the bosses an opportunity to drive close to five million workers into company unions.

It took place at a time when the government, unable any further to keep down the workers by fake promises, is resorting to the most brutal force to crush the rising strike wave of the workers and when the workers on many battle-fronts of this country are fighting against the armed forces of the government, for their right to organize into unions of their own choice, for the right to decent living conditions.

The opening of the convention was greeted by a parade in which several thousand workers participated. The workers who know that the gains they have made did not come through the good will of the N.R.A. but as a result of their organized strength, came out on the streets of Chicago with militant slogans and banners, calling for struggle against the attacks of the bosses.

Tear Down Banners

But at this very first demonstration the deep cleavage existing between the rank and file and the bureaucrats in control of the organization, became evident, even to the casual observer. The official arrangements committee instead of greeting this militant demonstration of the workers acted in the capacity of police. In the most brutal fashion they tore the placards with these militant slogans from the hands of the workers and destroyed them.

After the demonstration, a mass meeting was held. The main speakers were Victor Olander and Oscar Nelson, representing the mayor of Chicago. These very same people only one day before attended an exposition in the office of the National Guard where new tear gas bombs and other implements of war to be used in strikes were shown to them. Here they expressed an enthusiasm for the wonderful improvements that are being made in developing the instruments for fighting mobs.

These were the honorary guests who opened the convention of a union whose rank and file has been in the front ranks of the struggle of the American working class for many years and has distinguished itself by its militancy. The presence of these hirelings of the bosses was the greatest insult to the militant rank and file of the I.L.G.W.U., which surely would not have been tolerated had the convention really been representative of the rank and file.

Officials Praise N.R.A.

Beginning with Monday up until the middle of the second week the delegates were treated with a series of speeches which showered praise on the N.R.A., the Roosevelt government, and the New Deal.

The so-called progressives, headed by the Lovestonites, went into ecstasy every time a labor bureaucrat or a government official was introduced to the convention, even going to the extent of singing "Solidarity" for Alger, the impartial chairman in the cloak trade.

The attitude of this machine picked convention to the problem of the Negro workers showed the caliber of the majority of the convention and their attitude toward the most vital problems involving

thousands of workers in the trade. Throughout the entire first week of the convention the Negro delegates were discriminated against in the most shameful way. While on the floor of the convention the bureaucrats made high sounding condescending speeches with regard to the Negro workers, it was through the pressure of left wing delegates that they were forced to take a stand and to move the convention from the aristocratic Medina Hall.

Use Steam Roller

After ten days of merrymaking, of beer parties, banquets, of throwing bouquets at each other, the I.L.G.W.U. convention finally got down to business and the steam roller began to work at full speed.

The left wing delegate, Esther Schweitzer, being the spokesman at this convention for the tens of thousands of rank and file workers, presented a series of resolutions dealing with the policies and tactics of the union. These resolutions as well as an analysis of the N.R.A., the conditions in the trade, the problems and tasks confronting the workers were embodied in a declaration sent with the left wing delegation elected at the recent national conference. When this declaration was denied the floor, the declaration was distributed among the delegates at the convention.

Most of the resolutions dealing with the real problems of the workers, were killed in the committee rooms and never even saw the light of day. Instead, the committee reported its own resolutions, which in many instances were complete evasions of the real problems raised and in other instances open defiance of the will of the membership. With the steam roller at work hardly any discussion was permitted on these questions. The delegates were hardly aware of the content of the resolutions before they were declared accepted by the chairman. Those few resolutions that came up for discussion met with the same fate.

After a half hearted discussion on week work, the question was left to the respective joint boards. When we consider who is in control of these joint boards we can readily see that week work will be taken up only by a determined struggle of the rank and file under the leadership of the left wing.

The resolutions to strike for the enforcement of the agreement, to fight the bosses' wage cutting schemes were similarly treated. Despite the mass unemployment that prevails in the ladies' garment industry, the resolution endorsing the Unemployment Insurance Bill H. R. 7598, was rejected.

Instead the Convention lined up with all the reactionary forces in endorsing the Wagner-Costigan Bill, which throws the burden of the unemployed on the shoulders of the employed workers.

Bar Militants from Amalgamation

The resolution for the amalgamation of the needle trades unions was modified by excluding the Industrial Union. Thus these bureaucrats who profess to be against dual unionism have openly shown their intentions of keeping the ranks of

Most Despicable Role Is Played by Lovestone Renegade Group

the workers split by barring out the militant Industrial Union from amalgamation. Other resolutions were sent for burial to the general executive board.

The most elementary rights of the members were wiped out with the stroke of a pen by this reactionary convention as it moved in the direction of fascization of the unions. Yearly elections in the local unions provided for in the constitution since the union came into existence was abolished. In addition, the machine carried through a resolution giving the general executive board authority to supervise all elections to prevent any rank and file worker who in any way disagrees with the dominating clique from finding his way into any of the leading bodies. They also defeated every proposal for referendum vote on officers. Rank and file representation on the leading bodies of the union was also defeated.

The class struggle preamble was rejected on the ground that it would antagonize the courts. The policy of expulsion and discrimination were reaffirmed by upholding the decision of the administration in eliminating the left wing leadership from Local 9. All amendments to the constitution, giving more control and power to the rank and file went down to defeat.

Donate to Counter-Revolution

The black counter-revolutionary character of the convention was shown when it donated \$500 to the counter-revolutionists in the Soviet Union; additional funds to the counter-revolutionary press, while at the same time refusing to act on a resolution of greeting to the Soviet government for establishing an autonomous republic in Biro-Bijan.

The same cowardly action was taken with regard to the resolution for the release of Thaelmann.

To sum up this whole convention, whose decisions were crammed into not more than three days out of the two weeks, it was nothing but a rubber stamp for the class collaboration policies of the ruling bureaucracy, a good time for their supporters, and an occasion to hand out honors to loyal hangers on, Zimmermann among them, by electing them to the general executive board whose number was increased to 23. The bureaucracy attached itself to the chariot of Roosevelt's New Deal and gave its unequivocal endorsement to the strikebreaking N. R. A.

The protest sent by the rank and file committee of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers to the convention asking this labor convention controlled by the Socialist Party bureaucrats to reject Johnson's strikebreaking speech, was suppressed and was not even known to the delegates.

(To Be Continued)

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