
TRENDS IN THE A. F. OF L.

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I

THE main purpose of this article is to show what is happening within the various organizations of the A. F. of L., the trends that are developing within the A. F. of L. as a result of the whole impact of the war and the changed composition and growth of the A. F. of L. It is important to see how the membership of the A. F. of L. is reacting on the most vital issues before our country and the labor movement on such essential win-the-war issues as the Second Front, international labor cooperation and the unification of our trade union movement. It is necessary to draw lessons from the important changes and developments within the A. F. of L. for the purpose of strengthening those trends that make for labor's full and more active role in the war effort. It is also our objective to show how the Left and progressive forces in the A. F. of L. today can play an important role in helping to determine the course of the A. F. of L., once they fully understand what is happening in it, and boldly to take up their responsibilities.

It is impossible, however, not to mention and deal at least with the

highlights of the Toronto convention of the A. F. of L. which has just come to a close. We have as yet not had the opportunity to evaluate fully the work of the convention, to examine all the reports and resolutions, or to profit by a collective discussion on the results of the convention. Therefore, these remarks on the A. F. of L. convention perforce must be only of a fragmentary and preliminary character. But even such a view of the Toronto convention, we feel, will contribute to a better understanding of what is happening in the A. F. of L. and will help emphasize some of the issues and problems confronting the organization. At the same time we feel that only by bearing in mind the basic developments within the A. F. of L. as developed in the latter part of this article can a full appreciation of both the positive and negative features of the convention be obtained and a one-sided view avoided.

In viewing the positive side of the convention, the win-the-war character of many of the speeches and decisions, we would be making a mistake if we underestimated the meaning of the failure of the convention to break the stranglehold of

the Hutchesons and Wolls on such an important question as international labor unity, as well as the failure of the convention, in the face of the crucial stage of the war, to come out in support of the immediate opening of the Second Front. But, also, it would be a serious mistake not to take note of the many important contributions of the convention to the war effort and not to see beneath the surface the forces that are striving for dominance in the A. F. of L.

No single characterization of the convention can adequately describe its decisions. It was neither wholly reactionary nor wholly progressive. It cannot be said to be a model win-the-war convention; yet it cannot be denied that many of its decisions will greatly contribute toward winning the war. The convention did not reflect the wishes and desires of the millions of the A. F. of L. membership, and yet in many instances, and in a number of decisions, this will was partially reflected, even though too often incompletely and in a distorted form.

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The 500 delegates to the convention, representing close to five and a half million dues-paying members, were composed almost exclusively of top officials of the various national and international unions, presidents, secretaries and vice presidents. No workers at the bench and only a handful of lower officials were there. The great changes in the A. F. of L., the shift to more basic and war production industries, were not as yet reflected either in the delegations or in the control

of the convention which remained largely in the hands of the Hutchesons and Wolls. Such important unions as the machinists with 400,000 members, the painters, hotel and restaurant workers, the I.L.G. W.U., the electrical workers and others, where the mass of the membership is more and more showing a progressive trend and helping to influence the course of the leadership, are not given the role in the organization and leadership of the convention to which they are entitled by their membership.

While the Hutcheson-Woll clique is united, bold and determined and is thus able to exert an influence on the convention far beyond its actual strength, the pro-Roosevelt supporters, who include the majority of the A. F. of L. unions and leaders, remained unorganized and divided. The fact that such leaders as Tobin of the teamsters—the most powerful of the A. F. of L. unions—and Dubinsky, head of the large I.L.G.W.U., joined with or capitulated to the anti-Soviet Hutcheson-Woll clique in opposing unity with the Soviet trade unions in international labor cooperation, gave a powerful weapon to this clique which it did not fail to utilize for purposes of control of the convention on other issues.

President Green, partially because he represents no union of his own and because of the failure of the other pro-Roosevelt forces to stand together, not only retreated before the Hutcheson-Woll clique, but often, as was the case in his reply to the British delegate, Jack Tanner, who urged the Second Front and

the formation of the Anglo-American-Soviet Trade Union Committee, became their tool.

But despite this condition within the convention, despite the fact that the convention stubbornly refused to establish international trade union cooperation and to come out for the Second Front, the Hutcheson-Woll clique did not succeed in blocking the convention from supporting many of the policies of the President, nor preventing the further development of united action between the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O.

As one of its first acts, the Toronto convention, through the speech of President Green, gave its full approval to the efforts of President Roosevelt to stabilize and control prices, to extend rationing as a means of strengthening the war effort and block inflation. It came out in full support of the War Labor Board. Without necessarily agreeing with every phase of the resolution or the motives of some of its supporters, it must be said that the convention's decision in support of the centralization of war production, procurement and rationing is an important step forward by the A. F. of L. The action of the convention in support of the Geyer-Pepper anti-poll tax bill under a special order of business for the purpose of influencing the vote in Congress is of great significance.

One of the most important developments at the convention appears to be the fact that the attempts of the Hutcheson forces to bring Lewis into the A. F. of L., and thus torpedo the coming unity

negotiations between the C.I.O. and the A. F. of L., received a serious setback. While this danger has not completely disappeared, from the speeches of President Green, and especially his direct remarks in answer to Lewis and in his speech following his reelection in which he spoke hopefully of the success of the unity negotiations, it would appear that the conditions exist for decisively defeating the Hutcheson-Lewis maneuver.

The sharp criticism of President Brown of the machinists of the policies and intrigues of Hutcheson, the abstention of the majority of delegates from voting on the jurisdictional dispute between the machinists and the carpenters, as well as the critical remarks of President Tobin against those who called for amendments to the Wagner Act on the ground that it is being administered in the direction of aiding industrial unions and the C.I.O., show that there are sharp differences within the A. F. of L. Council and that important changes are maturing.

The response of the convention to the speeches of Assistant Secretary of the Navy Bard, and Assistant Secretary of War Patterson, both of whom paid glorious tribute to the Soviet Union and the Red Army, the fact that both William Green and Meany have joined with others as sponsors for the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, as well as the impressions created by the speeches of the British delegates, can be used now after the convention as a basis for greatly strengthening the movement for interna-

tional labor unity, for the strengthening of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. alliance, for developing the United Nations' offensive. The speeches of President Green on the Second Front, despite their limitations, also can be used effectively to further the movement for the Second Front in the A. F. of L. unions.

The decisions of the A. F. of L. convention on trade union unity, the statements of President Green that both the rank and file of the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O. desire unity and cooperation, the call for an "armistice" in jurisdictional conflicts, help furnish the basis for immediately strengthening the joint activities of the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O. and for the mobilization of the A. F. of L. membership to assure that the Hutcheson-Lewis attempts to block unity will be defeated.

All the decisions of the A. F. of L. convention in support of the President's economic program, decisions basically in line with the policies of the C.I.O., furnish the basis for the A. F. of L. organizations everywhere to intensify their efforts toward increased war production, for the development of joint labor-management committees, for the struggle against inflation, for full participation of labor in all government, economic, production, labor and rationing boards, and for the speedy solution of the pressing manpower problem in a democratic and effective manner.

The failure of the A. F. of L. convention, as a result of the influence of certain reactionary and business-as-usual forces, to deal adequately

with the problems of the Negro workers and the women workers, only emphasizes the necessity for the various international unions, the local organizations and city and state bodies of the A. F. of L. to give the most immediate attention to these and the other vital win-the-war problems.

In general, the convention emphasizes the urgency for the Left and progressive forces in the A. F. of L. to come boldly forward with proposals called for by the war and already supported by the membership, and through the organized effort of the workers to strengthen those forces and trends in the A. F. of L. that are moving in a progressive, in an anti-fascist direction and to isolate and defeat the defeatists and reactionaries.

II

The present war is effecting basic changes in the life of the American people. As the war situation becomes more acute, the role of the people is felt more and more as they develop greater initiative in attempting to influence the basic strategy of the war.

The most far-reaching developments are seen among the workers, especially the organized labor movement, including the A. F. of L. The trade unions are emerging as the most conscious and most advanced section of the population, taking upon themselves ever greater responsibilities in providing the means for the more effective conduct and prosecution of the war.

This new sense of responsibility,

and the tremendous tasks labor has set for itself, is effecting changes, not only in the relationship between labor and other sections of the population and government, but also in fundamental changes in labor's approach toward some of its own problems, such as the organization of the unorganized, trade union forms, methods, structure and organization, as well as the approach toward new sections of the working class, Negroes, women workers, youth, the Second Front, labor unity, international cooperation, independent political action, etc.

To the extent that organized labor fully appreciates its new responsibility, it manifests growth and more widespread influence in the life of the nation.

New Trends

The membership figures released by the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. show a growth in one year of close to a million new members, raising the membership to almost six million, the highest in its entire history.

This phenomenal growth in membership both of the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O. shows a new development in the American labor movement, in contrast with the last war. In 1917-18 the leadership of the A. F. of L. agreed to a "status quo" position for the duration of the war. The labor leaders affixed their signatures to a policy that no "combination of workmen shall undertake during the war period to 'close' an 'open' shop," and that "the continuance of such conditions shall not be deemed a grievance."

This agreement prevented organization of the unorganized and gave the employers an opportunity to build up company unions which they later used to smash the trade unions. In the present war the changed relations of forces, labor's new position in the life of the nation, its stake in the war, its initiative in advancing production and the entire war effort of the nation, make it possible for labor to protect the basic conditions of the workers, to intensify its organizing activities, its growth and consolidation, despite the fact that it voluntarily gave up its right to strike. In contrast to the wave of "outlaw" strikes in 1917-18, we now witness a growing spirit of cooperation between labor and management, dramatized in the movement of Labor-Management Production Committees.

These new developments stem from the people's character of the present war and the role of labor as the most advanced anti-fascist section of the people.

The character of the industries now being organized by the A. F. of L., their role in production and the composition of the new workers recruited is of great significance.

The new recruits in the A. F. of L., in the main, come from the basic war production industries—Metal Trades, Shipyard, Aircraft—in contrast with the past, when the bulk of the A. F. of L. members were skilled workers. Secretary Meany's report to the A. F. of L. convention records an increase of 107,000 in the Machinists' Union. The Boilermakers more than doubled their

membership, from 42,000 to 90,000. While the Federal local unions increased their membership by 250,000.

This turn from craft to basic war production industries, stimulated by the achievements of the C.I.O. and the expanding war economy, resulted in a change in the composition of the A. F. of L. membership. It is breaking down the bars against women workers and Negroes. It is forcing unions to put aside apprenticeship restrictions against young workers. The Boilermakers Union, one of the oldest of the craft unions, through a referendum vote decided to admit women workers to union membership on an equal basis with the men workers, by a two-thirds majority. About 5,000 women already are employed at welding and other lighter work in shipbuilding, and thousands more are to be hired.

Local 727, International Association of Machinists, Seattle, admitted Negroes to full membership. Local 727, International Association of Machinists, Burbank, California, initiated some 300 Negroes employed in Lockheed Aircraft.

In the West Coast Kaiser plant, under a closed-shop agreement, the refusal of the union to admit Negro workers to membership has precipitated a crisis. Through the intervention of the Manpower Commission, the Negro workers won the right to work at skilled jobs, over the objection of reactionary leaders of the union. The very urgency of the war and the demand for manpower is forcing many unions to change their attitude and to abandon their discriminatory practices, or to endan-

ger war production and their closed-shop contracts.

The changing attitude toward Negro workers was reflected in a statement by President Green on the eve of the convention. In commenting on the refusal of the Boilermakers Union to admit Negroes into the Kaiser plant, he stated: "I will insist that locals practicing discrimination will be ordered by the parent organization to act as an American organization." Similar statements have been made by other leaders.

Another indication of this new trend is the adoption of an anti-poll tax resolution and the introduction of anti-discrimination resolutions at the national convention.

This indicates a new attitude in the approach of A. F. of L. leaders who until now evaded the issue by contending that admission of Negro workers is a matter to be decided by individual autonomous unions.

The Federation's War Effort

The infusion of new blood from the new workers in the basic war-production industries is having its effect on the general policies and activities of the A. F. of L., especially in its lower bodies, whose leaders are in closer contact with the rank and file. This is seen in the contribution of the A. F. of L. workers in the national war production effort. Thousands of A. F. of L. workers in war industries, like the workers of the C.I.O., have distinguished themselves by admirable production records. Here are a few instances:

The performance record in the

production of Liberty ships is headed by the Oregon Shipbuilding Corp.—A. F. of L. Metal Trades.

The California Shipbuilding Corporation, Wilmington, California, holds second position for the number of ships produced—A. F. of L. members.

The Richmond Shipyard, Richmond, California, holds second place in total number of ships built—A. F. of L. members.

Boeing Aircraft factory—Seattle—received the Army's production flag—Local 751, I.A.M.

A. F. of L. workers by the thousands have raised their voices in support of a concerted military offensive against Hitler Germany, in support of the President's agreement with Soviet Foreign Commissar Molotov on the urgency of opening a Second Front in 1942, for labor unity, and international co-operation with the labor movements of Great Britain and the U.S.S.R.

Throughout the entire country, numerous local unions, central bodies and local officials have not only spoken out in general support of the war but have recognized their responsibility in influencing the major line of war strategy. Despite the propaganda of the defeatists to leave all matters to the military "experts," these leading bodies and officers, representing a cross-section of the organized A. F. of L. workers, spoke up. Here are but a few examples representing a cross-section of the country:

Amalgamated Butcher Workmen, Local 623; San Francisco Machinists Lodge, Local 68; Masters, Mates and Pilots' Ass'n., Local 90; San Francisco

Culinary Workers, Local 110; Aero Mechanics Lodge, San Diego, Cal., Local 1125; Food and Candy Workers, Local 20120; International Ladies Garment Workers Union, Local 96; Musicians, Los Angeles, Local 47; International Ass'n of Machinists, Local 79; Carpenters and Joiners, Local 1408; Bookbinders, Local 4; Screen Cartoonists Guild, Local 852; Firemen and Oilers, Local 63; Cooks Local 209; International Jewelry Workers, Local 23; International Ass'n of Machinists, Local 758; International Ass'n of Machinists, Local 727; Typographical Union No. 6; Painters District Council No. 9, New York, New York State Culinary Alliance, Hotel and Restaurant Union—Joint Board, San Diego (California) Trades and Labor Council, Seattle Federation of Labor, San Mateo (California) County Central Labor Council, Jamestown (N. Y.) Central Trades Council, Joint Board Culinary Alliance, Maryland State Federation of Labor, Washington State Federation of Labor, Painters State Federation, N. Y.

Northwest A. F. of L. Leaders Sign Plea for Second Front

At the Illinois State Convention, 40 delegates introduced Second Front resolutions. In Wisconsin fifty. In Seattle forty A. F. of L. leaders issued a public statement to the same effect.

Of special significance were the State A. F. of L. conventions. Thirty-eight State conventions took place during the summer months. The open defeatist forces, led by

Hutcheson, did not dare to show their hand among these loyal and patriotic delegates representing millions of organized Americans. The war was the dominant issue at these conventions. Full support was given to the President's domestic policies. Some advanced steps were taken in recognizing the importance of organizing the women workers. Many of these conventions spoke up boldly against Negro discrimination, against the fifth columnists, for unity and support to our allies, the Soviet Union, Britain and China.

Still another group of conventions, such as Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Washington, swayed by the argument of leaving the Second Front to military specialists, expressed their readiness to increase production and make all necessary sacrifices in support of offensive action when the military authorities are ready to launch an offensive. These conventions, too, adopted resolutions on international labor unity.

The most important state conventions, such as Ohio, New York, Connecticut and New Jersey, where the Left-progressive forces are more consolidated, also adopted resolutions calling for the opening of a Second Front in Europe.

The Left-progressive forces played a decisive role. The character of these conventions and their decisions depended to a large degree on the strength, organization and initiative of the Left-progressive forces. Wherever real decisive leadership was given, the mass of the delegates responded with the greatest enthusiasm.

Problems of Leadership

These new developments are gradually beginning to reflect themselves in changes in the leadership, the emergence of new elements from the ranks of the workers. This is especially true in the local unions where hundreds of young militant, progressive leaders are coming forward. These changes are also affecting the attitudes of some of the older leaders, like Tom Lyons, President of the New York State Federation of Labor; Murphy, of Newark; Higgins, Secretary of the Connecticut Federation; Beck, of the West Coast teamsters, and numbers of other union officials.

In some instances, where the old-line, reactionary, business-as-usual elements refused to follow the course of progress, they were swept aside and replaced by younger, more aggressive leaders, as in the Ohio State Federation of Labor where the old reactionary machine was voted out of office and replaced by a new leadership. We witnessed the same developments in the central bodies, in Baltimore and Los Angeles. Of course, the process of change is much slower in the central bodies.

An outstanding example of a central leadership that is not representative and is out of harmony with union developments is the New York City Central Trades and Labor Council. The executive committee and officers of that body come from the most insignificant unions. Murtha, its president, comes from the Stage Hands representing a small local of a few hundred mem-

bers. The largest unions, such as needle, food, printing, have no representation. Such a situation cannot logically continue much longer as the trade union movement begins to assume greater responsibilities.

III

Labor Unity

Since America's entry into the war, we have seen a growing unity of action, policies and program between the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. The abortive "unity" conspiracy of Lewis and Hutcheson, which was devised to turn the labor movement from its course of winning the war, was defeated mainly through the alertness of the leadership and membership of the C.I.O. The recent action of Lewis in withdrawing from the C.I.O., the talk in the A. F. of L. lobbies and in the press about Lewis coming back to the A. F. of L. bring into the open the original purpose of the Lewis-Hutcheson "unity" scheme. It was intended, in the main, to open the door to Lewis to reenter the A. F. of L. and strengthen the defeatist forces within that organization. We hope that the win-the-war forces will not be tempted to gain an "advantage" over the C.I.O. by the readmission of Lewis. Such a move on their part would only strain relations with the C.I.O., endangering and possibly wrecking the new unity negotiations before they have even begun.

Until the A. F. of L. convention,

it was generally assumed that the unity negotiations, which were to begin in the near future, would take place in a friendly atmosphere. At the New York State Federation of Labor Convention, Secretary Meany, in speaking of unity, said: "Our committee will enter the conference room without any prior commitments, without any qualifications, in a sincere desire for genuine organic unity. We of the American Federation of Labor mean just one thing—one solidified, united labor movement in America."

Since the unfortunate incident during the miners' wage dispute before the War Mediation Board last November when the A. F. of L. representatives broke with the C.I.O. and precipitated a crisis, there is full harmony between labor's representatives on all issues before the Board as well as all other government agencies.

Both the C.I.O. and the A. F. of L., though after some delay on part of the latter, endorsed and fought for the President's seven-point program. Both agreed on the President's anti-inflation program, price control, rationing, taxation and the creation of the National Economy Board.

As a result of this common action, labor was able to defeat the anti-labor measures, such as wage freezing and the establishment of the open shop.

These anti-labor measures, sponsored by the defeatists, were discredited and rejected in Congress through public pressure stimulated by the organized labor movement. Recent legislation in Congress makes

secure collective bargaining, the Walsh-Healy Act, etc. Through united action, labor won the support of the public for its just demands. The Little Steel award, giving the workers a 15 per cent wage increase to make up for the increase in the cost of living, is a ruling now generally accepted as a guide by the WLB. This is also true of the "union maintenance clause."

Joint A. F. of L.-C.I.O. action helped establish the WPB under the leadership of Donald Nelson. The current changes in the war production set-up promise greater labor representation on the production boards. Labor-management committees are the direct results of united labor action. Through these committees labor will have a better chance to make its contribution toward all-out production and a better planned and centralized war economy. The appointment of John Green, president of the Shipbuilders Union of the C.I.O., and Fenton, general organizer of the A. F. of L., to the super-Production Board, are steps which point in the right direction.

There are still many unsolved, aggravating problems, such as the need for adjustment of wages for lower-paid workers and more adequate allocation of contracts to provide jobs for the thousands of unemployed, etc. The prospects for the speedy solution of these problems are brighter only because labor stands united.

Jurisdictional disputes have practically been eliminated, despite the fact that both trade union centers have intensified their activities in

organizing the unorganized workers.

The basic issue, which brought division into the ranks of labor, namely, industrial form of organization, is being eliminated by life itself, despite the rantings of the Hutchesons. The A. F. of L. has come to recognize—even if only *de facto*—industrial unionism and the C.I.O. as realities.

The agreements of the top leadership of the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. consummated in the establishment of the Labor Victory Board have helped to stimulate united labor action throughout the country. Labor Victory Committees have been organized in many cities. Joint Victory Rallies are taking place in many localities and there are even agreements to recognize each other's membership books. In Ohio, for instance, the opening of the A. F. of L. State Convention was greeted by a joint A. F. of L.-C.I.O. parade.

Thus we see general agreement by the C.I.O. and A. F. of L. in support of the war and ever-growing unity on a program of action for labor. In face of these basic agreements, unity is not only desirable but becomes a possibility. The urgent need for unity in the present crisis cannot be overemphasized.

The millions of new workers who are being drawn into industry today come from various sections of the people: some with a middle-class background, others from the rural communities, often dominated by reactionary anti-labor forces.

Among these are large sections of women, former housewives, Negro workers and youth. Government re-

ports show that there are already 1,750,000 women in industry today. The plan is to increase their number to 6,000,000 next year. This new section of the proletariat has no trade-union background and many prejudices have been systematically cultivated among them by the reactionary press, which often gives them a Pegler version of the labor movement.

Continued division in the labor movement and competition for these new workers feed these prejudices and cause confusion among them. The open-shoppers are not slow in exploiting these backward tendencies among these new workers.

There are already danger signals in the revival of company unions. It is no accident that just at this time the so-called independent unions, which in reality are company unions, organized a national conference and are planning a convention to set up a "new center." This is a new effort of the diehard employers, who have never reconciled themselves to collective bargaining with their employees. They are now trying to dress up the old defunct bosses' contraptions as "independent" unions, and to use them to undermine the conditions of the workers and prevent further organization. There are already indications that John L. Lewis is flirting with this so-called "independent" movement.

These open-shoppers also have a long-range perspective. They are fondly looking back to the post-war period of 1917 when, through their union-smashing, open-shop offensive, they almost destroyed the la-

bor movement. Approaching all problems of present-day life in their business-as-usual manner, they see the outcome of the war in the light of 1917 and are trying to gear their company unions to repeat the history of 1917. Labor must see to it that this shall never happen again. The guarantee that they will never return is a united labor movement.

A united labor movement could make greater utilization of the experiences in mass organization and more easily develop new methods of organizing the large numbers of women workers, Negroes and young workers; integrate them more rapidly into the life and leadership of the unions and build a labor movement powerful enough to act as guardian of the interests of the workers while serving the common cause of the nation. A united labor movement will create the necessary conditions for labor to emerge as an independent political force, contributing its full share to victory and to reconstruction and collective security after the war.

IV

As an integral part of unity in the ranks of labor, national unity and unity with our Allies is the question of international solidarity and collaboration of the trade unions for the prosecution of the war to victory and for a people's peace. The fraternal delegates from the British Trade Union Congress came to the convention to make a fervent plea to the A. F. of L. to put aside its past prejudices and join the British

trade unions and the unions of the Soviet Union to build an unbreakable chain of unity among the toiling masses of the United Nations.

In eloquent speeches Delegate Jack Tanner and others spoke of the heroic, self-sacrificing spirit of the organized workers of the Soviet Union, who on the home front and in the Red Army are giving their last ounce of energy—their very lives—for the common cause of all mankind.

Tanner told the delegates of the experience of the British trade union movement in its relationship with the Soviet trade unions, who under conditions of a socialist society are functioning as free democratic unions.

"We are proud to be associated with that brave people through our trade union organization," Tanner went on. "And if we are told that the character and spirit of their trade unions is different from that of the British trade unions, I can only reply that the character and spirit of the Soviet trade unionists in the fight against Hitlerism is also somewhat different from what our own has been to date.

"To say that the trade unions in the U.S.S.R. are nothing but appendages of the state machinery is to leave out of account the nature of the state and whose interests its activities foster and serve. In our two countries we cannot pretend that it is the workers' interests which will triumph in any issue, unless we put up a strong and organized fight.

"It is only by realizing the full weight of that fact—the ownership of the means of production by the workers—that we can understand

the relations of the trade union movement to the Soviet state. Might I say that one of the objectives of any union is the control of industry in the interests of the community.

"Now it is perfectly certain that this type of struggle, in which the trade unions of Britain play a leading part, has had no place in the Soviet war effort. There has been no time and effort wasted in having to reconcile the conflicts between private and national interests; there have been no practices which hinder output, and as was demonstrated by the moving of great industries to new areas behind the Urals, as also by the heroic scorched-earth policy, nothing has stood in the way of the Soviet war effort for which every man and woman feels 100 per cent responsible.

"A beginning has already been made to bring about Allied labor unity and I fervently hope and would strongly urge that the greatest efforts be made to join together the workers of Britain, Russia, the United States — The A. F. of L., C.I.O. and Railroad Brotherhoods — the workers of Latin America, Canada and others of the United Nations in firm solidarity and practical unity.

"Let us remember that the principal aim of Goebbels and his gang is to split the allies, and particularly the working people of our countries. The attainment of Allied labor unity will be a serious defeat for Hitler."

Tanner's speech struck a responsive chord. It certainly expressed the widespread urge for unity of the rank and file, which will go forward irrespective of the action of the convention.

Friendship between the American

trade union movement and the Soviet unions and people dates back to the period of the revolutionary movement against tsarism. Friendship with the people of Russia is a tradition of long standing—temporarily interrupted—especially since Hitler came to power and started his world-wide anti-Bolshevik campaign aimed at dividing the advanced democratic nations of the world.

One need but quote from the official records of the A. F. of L. to show what hope and enthusiasm the establishment of Soviet Power aroused among the organized workers of America. In November, 1917, when the Soviet Government came to power, President Gompers, in speaking of Russia, said as follows:

"Does not every American feel that assurance has been added to our hope for the future peace of the world by the wonderful and heartening things that have been happening within the last few weeks in Russia? Russia was known by those who knew it best to have been always in fact democratic at heart, in all the vital habits of her thought, in all the intimate relationships of her people that spoke their natural instinct, their habitual attitude towards life. The autocracy that crowned the summit of her political structure, long as it had stood and terrible as was the reality of its power, was not in fact Russian in origin, character, or purpose; and now it has been shaken off and the great, generous Russian people have been added in all their naive majesty and might to the forces that are fighting for freedom in the world, for justice, and

for peace. Here is a fit partner for a League of Honor."*

Now, when the lies, the slanders, the calumnies against the Soviet Union, its people, its government and its institutions have been swept aside, now when the entire civilized world amidst blood and fire can see the Soviet Union, its leaders, its people, its Red Army, as the advance guard in the struggle for national freedom and liberty, it is high time that the American Federation of Labor put aside its past prejudices, resume its past ties with the Soviet people, extend the hand of friendship and solidarity in the interests of our common cause, in the interests of mankind, in the interests of destroying Hitlerism.

The proposal of the Executive Council for a joint A. F. of L.-British Committee and liaison relations with the Soviet trade unions has been rejected by the Soviet trade unions. It was considered inadequate by the British trade union congress, and was protested by the C.I.O. It was also indignantly rejected by the Railroad Brotherhoods.

Both the latter organizations called for the full cooperation of all sections of the American labor movement with the British-Soviet Trade Union Council. Not only these organizations, outside of the A. F. of L., but large sections of the A. F. of L. itself considered the proposal of the Executive Council inadequate and called for the

* Samuel Gompers, *American Labor and the War*, p. 344.

reopening of negotiations and full cooperation.

Hundreds of local unions adopted resolutions and sent messages to the Executive Council urging such a course. More than a dozen of the most important State Federations and a number of International Unions which met in the recent period, such as the Building Service, Teachers, Jewelry Workers, the Pennsylvania, Ohio and Connecticut State Federations, etc., took similar action. At the New York State Convention, the resolution for international cooperation with the Soviet Union was endorsed by 225 of the most outstanding leaders, like Thomas Hickey of the Teamsters, Hanson of the Carpenters, Kirkman of the Electrical Workers, Duffy of the Hotel Trades Council, etc. Similar resolutions were adopted at the N. Y. State painters and culinary conventions. Several resolutions on international unity were also introduced at the recent A. F. of L. convention by the Wisconsin and Connecticut State Federations and by the International Jewelry Workers.

The opposition to international labor unity at the May Council meeting came from the defeatists led by Hutcheson who oppose everything that can help win the war, Matthew Woll and the diehard social-democrats such as Dubinsky. The latter are poisoned by their narrow partisan considerations and unfounded fears that relations with the Soviet Union may endanger their position as trade union leaders.

They do not realize that in opposing labor unity they are following

in the footsteps of the Municheers who are ready to sell our country to Hitler for fear of the Soviet Union. Such policies give grist to the mill of the defeatists and the Fifth Column, who play on outmoded fears and prejudices against the Soviet Union, and try to prepare the ground for a negotiated "peace" with Hitler. There is a widespread gulf between the members and leaders of these unions with regard to the Soviet Union and even sharp differences among the leaders themselves, some of whom are beginning to appreciate the historic role of the Soviet Union and are abandoning their anti-Soviet position.

Another source of opposition came from some Catholic circles. Here, too, differentiations are developing, not only between the Christian Fronters, the defeatists and the pro-war camp, but within the pro-war camp, in relation to the Soviet Union. Important sections of Catholic workers and leaders and even sections of the clergy are re-evaluating their attitude toward the Soviet Union.

Of great importance is the statement of Cardinal Hinsley, as expressed in his interview with Quentin Reynolds, printed in *Collier's* on September 26, 1942:

"Those magnificent Russian people—they are willing to fight to death to defend their country from the scourge of the invader. Should we not show the same courage? I get impatient with Catholics who still look askance at our Russian brothers. Instead, we too should take an example from them. We should fight by them, side by side

against our common enemy. The Russians do not understand us or our religion; perhaps, if we gave them 100 per cent help and gave them 100 per cent faith, they would understand us and our religion better. A Catholic in America who would not give aid to Russia is not true to his faith. . . .

"Think of this war as a mighty game. It can only be won by all team members, having perfect confidence in one another and with each willing to help the others to the utmost. This is how I feel about our Russian teammates."

The same sentiments were expressed in the speech of William Grogan, leader of the Transport Workers' Union, at the recent Union Square Second Front Rally, sponsored by the Communist Party.

Surely, these developments are influencing large sections of Catholic trade unionists and their attitude toward the Soviet Union and are bringing new supporters to the cause of international trade union cooperation.

A referendum vote on this question would, without any doubt, win the support of the overwhelming majority of the A. F. of L. members. What must be undertaken at the present time, and without any delay, is an effective struggle to unmask and expose the defeatists who obstruct international unity as part of their general opposition to the people's war against Hitler's Axis.

Conclusion

The major task before the A. F. of L. workers, as before all other Americans, is the speediest realization of the Second Front. The peo-

ple of Stalingrad are fighting heroically. Their heroism has no precedent. It proves that where there is a will to fight—there is a way. All the military "experts" (whose conclusions are never to be questioned) declared Stalingrad lost weeks ago, as they did Moscow and Leningrad. Again their predictions are proven incorrect. The people of Stalingrad are fighting *now* harder than ever. So must the members of the A. F. of L. and all workers.

The developments in the A. F. of L. placed special responsibility on the Communists. Red-baiting, a byword in the past, is, with few exceptions, no longer indulged in. Wherever the poison of Red-baiting was raised at recent conventions by the defeatists, it was promptly recognized as an effort of the fascist enemy or his dupes to sow dissension and disunity and was rejected.

This is a beginning of a recognition of the loyal and steadfast role of the Communists in the A. F. of L. and the American labor movement. Our task is to help speed up the progressive developments, help make the A. F. of L. more effective in our national war effort, to help strengthen the unions among the unorganized, to help strengthen the movement for trade union unity, for international labor unity, for a Second Front Now and for Victory. In doing this we must make every effort to develop closest collaboration with other elements and forces traveling in the same direction.

In this connection we make clear to the masses that we Communists are not out for control; we do not

want to dominate unions as the Red-baiters charge against us by misrepresentation. All we want is the same rights enjoyed by other workers. The right to work in the trade unions, to make our contribution toward the nation's war effort, including the building of a more power-

ful trade union movement. American labor is moving forward to its rightful place. Old, outdated formulas and maneuvers on top by defeatists will not hold back its progress. Its future and the future of all Americans are indissolubly linked up with the winning of the war.