

2 Labor Conventions -- A Contrast

By Rose Wortis

Two national conventions of needle trades workers took place recently. They represent two distinct trends in the labor movement. One union is led by Communists and the other by Social-Democrats.

The convention of the international Fur and Leather Workers Union, an organization with a membership of 110,000 workers and with Communist leadership, was ignored by the capitalist "free press." The United Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers, made up of some 40,000 workers with Social-Democratic leadership, received wide publicity.

Both conventions met during a period of great crisis in the country and the world. At home, imperialists had become drunk with increased political power accumulated during the war and were developing a strike-breaking offensive against labor with the aid of the Truman Administration. These same imperialists were conspiring to break up the great alliance of the Big Three which won the war against fascism. They wanted a crusade against the Soviet Union and the new-born democracies in Europe and Asia.

THE VITAL TEST

The test of any labor convention during such a period of strain and stress is how it meets crucial issues of the day, what leadership it provides the workers in the struggle to beat back the forces of reaction and to assure greater security and peace.

The executive board of the International Fur and Leather Workers Union came to the convention with a record of splendid achievements in war and in peace. During the war, the union, under extreme provocations of the employers, adhered to its no-strike pledge. At the same time, the economic gain for the workers was spectacular. The fur workers achieved the highest standards in the history of the union.

The leather industry, for many years an open shop industry, has come close to 100 percent organization since its affiliation with the fur workers. Increases in wages ranged from 15 to 24 percent. Job security, closed shop, holidays with pay, shorter hours of work, vacations, health

and insurance funds, guaranteed employment—these are some of the achievements!

UNBREAKABLE UNITY

The greatest asset of the union, which made possible these achievements, is the unbreakable unity of the workers of all races, all religions and political beliefs. This unity was expressed in the composition of the delegates—the large number of Negro delegates, Southern white delegates and Irish-Catholic worker-delegates from New England. It was expressed in the high spirit and enthusiasm throughout the convention. Characteristic of the general spirit of the convention was the speech of secretary-treasurer Pietro Lucchi, known to represent the right-wing trend in the union.

There were no groups or factions at the Fur and Leather Workers convention. On the platform and on the floor, in the committees and in the general executive board, Communist workers and leaders, Social-Democrats, left-wingers, right-wingers, workers who were not associated with any political groupings, and workers of different religious beliefs worked in harmony for the common welfare of their union.

On the crucial political issues such as the Truman anti-strike legislation, the convention went into action at the opening session. On organization of the South, where the campaign is already in progress, the convention not only worked out plans for the industry but pledged full support to the CIO organizing drive.

The convention gave its pledge of full financial and moral support to the PAC, emphasizing in particular the urgent need for labor unity. It hailed the world labor unity symbolized by the World Federation of Trade Unions.

WORLD POLICIES

On international policies, the convention denounced the imperialist ventures of the Truman Administration and called for unity of the Big Three on the basis of realizing the decisions of Yalta and Potsdam to root out fascism and build a genuine United Nations Organization.

The leadership elected at the convention represents every political group in the union, with Ben Gold, Communist, as presi-

dent, and Pietro Lucchi, non-Communist, as secretary-treasurer. It includes such men as Julius Berger, Samuel Butkowitz and Samuel Mindel, who are identified with the so-called right wing. It includes 12 shop workers, three Negro workers, Catholics, Jews and Protestants. It is truly representative of the workers in the industry from the South and from the North.

HAT CONVENTION

What a different picture at the convention of the United Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers!

Instead of unity, there was clique combination and control. The whole atmosphere of the convention reeked with bureaucracy. It was ruled by three men: Alex Rose, Sam Herschkovitz and I. H. Goldberg.

The convention registered a step backward in all questions relating to internal democracy in the union. The center of attack was Local 8 of New York and the Los Angeles Local, which are under progressive leadership. These locals came to the convention with a record of outstanding achievements in improving the conditions of the workers and

organizing the unorganized.

The few progressive delegates to the convention were placed on the least important committees.

The constitution was amended to give locals the right to limit union membership rights for those who incur the wrath of the leadership.

NO-STRIKE POLICY

Truman was characterized as carrying out the Roosevelt program. Only the nationwide revolt of labor against Truman forced the leadership to support a resolution against the administration's anti-strike legislation. The report recommended a no-strike policy for the union. It endorsed the discredited Liberal Party.

The leaders and outside speakers, David Dubinsky, Matthew Woll and Louis Waldman, engaged in an orgy of red-baiting and fulminated against world trade union unity, joined with the other Social Democratic leaders in rejecting the resolution on the World Federation of Trade Unions.

At a time when the reactionary pro-fascist forces in our country are developing a nation-

wide campaign against the Negro and the Jewish people, this convention, whose leadership often parades as the spokesman for the Jewish people, had not a word to say against the Rankins, Bilbos and other race haters who are poisoning the minds of the American people. The convention was too busy denouncing the Communists and the Soviet Union to spare time to act against anti-Semites and fascists.

FRANCO AIDED

One of the most shameful pages in the history of the union was the rejection of the resolution to break relations with Franco Spain. The convention approved the evasive report of the Security Council on this question. Here the so-called Socialists lagged behind even William Green.

While rejecting the appeal of a group of honest workers, for the restoration of their union rights, of which they have been deprived for the 17 years because of political differences with the leadership, the convention elected to the general executive board one Percy Ginsberg, who some years ago during wage negotiations with the employers in Chicago, deserted the union to become manager of the Employers Association and forced through a wage cut.

Since the convention, another union official, Mac Gross, the treasurer of Blockers Local No. 42, accepted the post of executive director of the Eastern Headwear Association. Gross, inspired by the example of Percy Ginsberg, is evidently preparing himself for membership on the union's general executive board. The thousands of progressive workers in New York and in every section of the country have no voice in the leadership of the union. It only helped to perpetuate the stifling clique control of the union.

The Fur and Leather Workers indicate the road labor must take if it is to come forward as a united leading force in the people's struggle for peace and security. The United Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers convention brings sharply to our attention the obstacles which stand in the way.

This poses serious problems before the workers of the unions under Social-Democratic leadership which they must and can solve.

Letters

British Assault on Jews Apes Hitler's Methods

Editor, Daily Worker:

American Jews read with amazement that which is going on in Palestine. Has Great Britain so soon forgotten the contributions of the Jewish people to the defeat of Hitler? Not since World War I when the British promised the Jews a homeland in Palestine have the Jewish people received such treatment—killings and arrests of innocent people. And this under a so-called Labor Government!

Palestinian Jews number 650,000 and their performance as a people has astounded the world. They have established cooperatives and labor unions. The whole country works with a system that many other countries would like to imitate. This is too much for the British. They cannot subjugate

the Jewish people to the status of a colonial people.

The assault on Jewish life is a declaration of a curfew all over Palestine. It is a pattern used by Hitler. How to get rid of the Jews, what methods to use in exterminating them.

P. SEGAL.

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Giant Fan Sees End Of Jimcrow Aid to Team

Manhattan.

Editor, Daily Worker:

As I am, of all things, an eternal Giant fan, I am very disappointed in their "poor" showing this year. It's clear those "bums" need new life and so in the interest of better baseball and, more important, to eliminate white supremacy poison, please reopen the campaign to FREE BASEBALL OF JIMCROW NOW!

A FEMALE FAN.