

Immediate Tasks of the T. U. U. L. and the Revolutionary Unions



Resolution of Executive Buro, Red International of Labor Unions

AFTER hearing and discussing Comrade Hathaway's report on the position of the Trade Union Unity League, and acquainting itself with the most important documents on this question (resolution of the T.U.U.L. Plenum, Comrade Foster's report, etc.) the Executive Bureau of the Red International of Labor Unions notes:

The T.U.U.L. has increased its activity during the last twelve months, and has led considerable groups of workers in struggle (March 6, May Day demonstrations, unemployed demonstrations on September 1st, leadership of several strikes, etc.). Nevertheless, the revolutionary unions and the T.U.U.L. have been declining in numbers, and have lost considerable positions in the ranks of the working class during recent months, as a direct consequence of a number of defects and mistakes in their work (Philadelphia marine workers' strike, the extreme weakening of the textile organization in the South, indifference to A. F. L. workers' militancy in Reading, the Illinois miners' strike, the situation in the metal and shoe industries, etc.).

Although the November Plenum has brought about some improvements, particularly in the sphere of organization of the growing revolutionary unemployed movement and in the situation of various unions, these improvements still are only a very small beginning. The situation is extremely serious. It is essential to call the attention of the entire League and its affiliated unions and supporters, sharply to this state of things, in order that drastic improvements in the content and methods of work be carried out, and concrete results achieved in the shortest possible time.

The position of the League all the more urgently calls for attention because the objective situation is favorable for revolutionary work to an unprecedented degree. The capitalist economy of the United States is stricken with an unparalleled and still sharpening crisis in industry and agriculture, leading to the closing of plants, sharp reduction of output and considerable numbers of bank failures, while tens of thousands of farmers have been ruined. More than ten million workers and employees are jobless, and millions of the agricultural workers are in a state of complete impoverishment and starvation. The American bourgeoisie seeks a way out of the crisis by lowering the costs of production and reducing the standard of living of the American working class. The widespread offensive against the so-called "American standards" is under way. By means of short working time with wage reductions, the stagger system, the direct lowering of wages by dismissals and re-employment on worse conditions, the entire American working class is being forced down to a new economic and social level.

In tens of strikes, militant conflicts with the police, and revolutionary demonstrations of the unemployed and farmers (Arkansas) the working class has proved that it is willing and able to fight against this capitalist offensive. The fascist and social-fascist trade union bureaucracy of the American Federation of Labor, of the so-called "independent" unions, and likewise of the Socialist Party and the Musteites, are systematically seeking to prevent and suppress these struggles by open strikebreaking, or by skillful "left" maneuvers, taking hold of the strike movement at its outset in order to crush it at the first convenient opportunity, as in Danville, Virginia.

The fundamental weakness of the T.U.U.L. is the fact that at a time so favorable for revolutionary work, it is still failing to organize the workers in struggle for their daily demands and needs. As a result, it has found itself to a considerable extent detached from the wide masses because it has been unable to establish itself as the leader of the daily struggle. The expression of this detachment is (1) the substitution of general slogans ("Don't Starve, Fight," "Don't Freeze, Vote Communist," as the slogans in the fight for the draft social insurance bill) for the practical leadership of the daily struggle of the workers, with concrete slogans. (2) Looseness of organizations (the unemployed and unions), bureaucracy and formalism (inner-union life), and confusion (the question of shop committees). Of exceptional importance is the failure to put forward partial demands, applicable to local situations, and to concrete disputes in factories and industries. Such demands are the essence of the building of mass trade unions, and are particularly necessary today in the period of acute crisis, because the workers have on many occasions, shown their readiness to fight stubbornly for such demands. The result of these weaknesses and mistakes is the considerable decline in membership of the T.U.U.L. just at the time when it ought to be growing.

This basic weakness is of a particularly dangerous character in the strike strategy and tactics of the League. Again and again such mistakes in strike activity can be observed as (1) the selection of inappropriate or general political slogans of struggle, instead of those connected with the demands agitating the particular body of workers concerned. (2) The publication of slogans and demands without sufficient preliminary work among the masses, collection of the workers' own proposals, etc. (shoe workers of New York, Reading). (3) Declaration of strikes, even without the slightest preliminary drawing of the masses into strike preparations (Philadelphia marine workers' strike). (4) Failure to concentrate on the important sections of the industry (food and shoe workers). (5) Unskillful conduct of the strike itself (Flint strike, New Orleans marine strike). (6) Failure to organize united front committees of struggle from below and to conduct systematic recruiting. As a result of these mistakes, the revolutionary unions can rarely record an increase of membership and influence after strikes, and numerous strikes take place without the participation and over the head of the revolutionary unions.

Because of the failure to respond to the daily needs of the masses and to the main issues which agitate them, there are in the T.U.U.L. strong tendencies towards formalism and failure to establish a wholesome inner-life based on mass activity. The development of the revolutionary unions depends upon the active participation of the masses in their daily life, so that they should look upon the union as their

own organization. There are in the United States, a considerable body of R.I.L.U. supporters who are not members of the revolutionary unions or leagues. In the T.U.U.L. we find frequently that policies and decisions of higher bodies are carried out formally, without due discussion by members of the unions, and frequently without knowledge of the work of plenums and conferences (apart from reports of the leadership). In a number of unions, there are no regular meetings of locals, and there are no reports of their activity in the press. Union Secretaries and other officials are changed without any explanation to the membership. Closely connected with the question of trade union democracy is the question of organization. (The small number of district committees and central departments of the T.U.U.L. which function regularly, great laxity in financial questions, particularly collection of dues, without

but around a positive program of action based on the immediate tasks of the League. The aim of this discussion must be to mobilize all the members and supporters of the League and revolutionary unions in a struggle for concrete improvements in the work of the T.U.U.L. immediately. The Executive Committee considers it essential that special attention be given to the following tasks:

1.—The Fight Against Unemployment. Mobilization and organization of the workers in the fight against unemployment is the main immediate central task of the League at the present time. The improvements in this respect in recent weeks must be regarded as an additional incentive for further concentration on this question. The revolutionary unions and the T. U. U. L. must play the leading part in organizing the movement of the unemployed. Their members should be the driving force in

self into a discussion of the slogans and methods of this campaign. Particularly acute at the present time is the question of unemployment insurance. In the course of the mass campaign for this, it is advisable to build special committees for social insurance, with the widest possible appeal, going beyond the unemployed councils, to give the movement as wide a basis as possible. Secondly, it is necessary at the same time to develop the sharpest possible struggle against and exposure of the counter-proposals of the bourgeois parties, the social fascists, etc., exposing their inadequacy, their mercenary character and the purpose which they pursue, namely, of establishing capitalism.

3.—Immediate Tasks, the Fight for the Shorter Working Day, Against Wage Cuts, Speed-up, etc. The T. U. U. L. must now more resolutely and skillfully take up the fight against wage cuts, speed-up, combined wage cuts and speed-

adherents, must now carry out systematically wide agitational campaigns in the principal industries, on the issues arising out of the capitalist offensive, and seriously undertake the organization of strike struggles around the issues raised in our agitational campaigns.

The capitalist offensive has already called forth strikes which show the growing determination of the workers to resist the attacks on their living standards. These strike movements will involve increasing numbers of workers. The T. U. U. L. must strive to stimulate, organize and lead these developing strike movements. The T. U. U. L. can organize and lead these struggles only if it applies in practice the resolutions and decisions of the Fifth R. I. L. U. Congress. It is necessary that all leading cadres acquaint themselves with these decisions, and that they be given wide circulation among the masses. Especially must the T. U. U. L. adherents learn and apply the lessons of the important strike struggles of the international revolutionary and trade union movement of the past year, and the lessons of the strike struggles in the United States (Flint, Philadelphia, New York garment workers, etc.).

First of all, strikes must be prepared by drawing in the largest numbers of workers affected, to the leading organs of the strike movement. The harmful practice of a few R. I. L. U. adherents calling strikes and appointing the strike leadership from above, must be stopped. This method must be replaced by the election of strike committees by the workers themselves. The selection of slogans and the putting forward of specific demands, and the election of the strike leadership, must at all times be preceded by the widest possible preliminary discussion. The most active recruiting must be carried on during strikes.

4.—Building the Revolutionary Unions. In the concentration on particular industries and areas, we must keep the building of the revolutionary unions and strengthening the organization in the very forefront of our activity. It is essential to carry on an ideological campaign to convince all members and supporters of the T. U. U. L. of the need for attention to the daily issues of the capitalist offensive, and for the activation of the members on the basis of trade union democracy.

The internal life of the unions must be radically transformed, paying particular attention to work at the bottom — regular meetings of union locals, printing and discussion of reports of plenums and conferences, discussion of the most important resolutions of the leadership of the unions, the T. U. U. L. and R. I. L. U. There must be a fight for regular collection of dues payments and the complete consolidation of the financial system. It is necessary to secure the functioning of the principal departments of the T. U. U. L. Bureau and of at least five or six of the most important district committees.

It is necessary to speed up the development of new cadres. For this purpose, it is necessary to lay the greatest stress on the fearless promotion of new forces to leading committee of the unions, into the leadership of struggles, etc., particularly in the heavy industries. The youth and Negro workers must be resolutely drawn into the leadership. Special measures must be adopted, such as the setting up of a national T. U. U. L. school, the organization of week-end courses for workers in the districts, etc.

The development on a much wider scale than before of the cultural activities of the unions is essential (the establishing of educational features in the work of the individual unions, the utilization in this connection of workers' educational conferences, the setting up of study circles, the organization of conferences of worker correspondents, etc.).

While some improvements are noticeable in Labor Unity, it is essential that it give more direction to the struggles while at the same time becoming still more popular, consolidating its corps of worker correspondents and organizing systematic distribution in the factories. At the same time, it is essential for the unions in the industries selected for immediate concentration, to make the utmost efforts to revive, stabilize, and extend their own press.

The neglect of work among women, particularly in textile, metal, and other basic industries, must be overcome. An active committee for work among women must be set up at the national headquarters of the T. U. U. L. and in those districts selected for concentration. In the unemployment movement, special emphasis must be placed upon organizing the women and particular demands be worked out in cooperation with the unemployed women themselves.

5.—Work in reformist unions, the building of revolutionary oppositions, in the A. F. of L. unions, the Railway Brotherhoods, etc. is an immediate task of the T.U.U.L. This task is all the more urgent because of the developing attack on the wage scales and working conditions of the members of these unions which the official leadership is helping to prepare. By united front tactics the T.U.U.L. must fight to wrest this leadership of the struggle of these workers from the bureaucracy. The Bureau of the T.U.U.L. must take up as a special order of business the situation in the A.F. of L. railway unions, work out a plan of immediate action and issue a statement directed to the workers who are members of these unions. The plan of action must include concrete and immediate organizational measures for building revolutionary oppositions in these unions and the application of the united front tactics. The T.U.U.L. Bureau is charged to report to the R.I.L.U. Executive the plan of action and the steps taken to carry it out, within two months.

6. Work Among Negroes. Negro work still continues to be the weakest phase of our movement. We have little or no organizational contact with the Negro masses, even in those industries where they have actively participated in the strikes led by the revolutionary unions. In the South, especially in the main industries and in the agricultural districts among the farm laborers, organizational measures must be adopted and concrete plans mapped out for correcting these weaknesses at an early date.

The following measures must be taken: (1) the national Negro department of the T.U.U.L. must become a working and directive center; (2) joint committees of Negroes and white workers must be set up in each union for work among the Negro masses; (3) a mass campaign should be started by the T.U.U.L. for each national union to extend work among the Negro masses in the respective industries; (4) the T.U.U.L. must now carry on a more determined struggle against white chauvinism within the revolutionary unions and the unemployed movement. Labor Unity must give more space to

"Holy" Water Won't Quell the Growing Flame

By BURCK



which no real mass unions can be built up, inattention until quite recently to the organization of the unemployed.

The daily work of the League in the factories is extremely weak. In addition to the general defects above mentioned, this is a direct consequence of the confusion existing in the ranks of the League on the question of organization, particularly as regards shop committees and the united front from below. The opinion is widespread that shop committees are shock groups or committees of the revolutionary unions (e. g., needle trades, textile workers, metal workers, and publications of the National Bureau) and that if a group of the revolutionary union is formed in an undertaking and recruits workers for the union, carries out League campaigns, etc., the workers require no other organization. Similarly, correct attempts to set up groups of members of the revolutionary unions and yellow unions in the factories are incorrectly regarded as shop committees (needle trades). The result of this confusion is that not only do we fail to carry out elections for committees representative of the workers in the shop, but we likewise fail to build branches of the unions in the shops and factories, and secure a loose organization that is neither a shop committee nor a union branch.

A very weak spot in the work of the T.U.U.L. is the organization of oppositions in the reformist unions—a branch of work which has almost completely disappeared. There is a widespread ferment among the members of these unions, forcing their leaders to have recourse to all kinds of "left" maneuvers (conferences of bureaucrats in the Railway Brotherhoods and Metal Unions about the reduction of working hours, leadership of some strikes in the South by "left" elements of the A. F. L.). The A. F. L. is spreading broadcast the watchword of reduction of working hours and the stagger system, behind the demagogic screen of "dividing work with the unemployed"—a maneuver intended in reality to carry out a severe reduction in wages. However, all these maneuvers are very feebly exposed by the League, and in many cases are not even mentioned in its press. For this reason, the social-fascist policy of deceiving the workers and creating confusion does not meet with effective resistance.

Arising out of the existing situation in the T.U.U.L. and with a view to the necessity of bringing about a radical turn of the work of the T.U.U.L. and achieving concrete results as rapidly as possible, the Executive Bureau of the R.I.L.U. endorses in general the resolution on the situation and tasks of the League, adopted at the last Plenum of its National Executive. At the same time, it deems essential that a broad discussion be carried through in the League and revolutionary unions, on the weaknesses which have been pointed out. This discussion must be carried out not merely around weaknesses,

the campaign for the election of committees of the unemployed, local unemployed councils, etc.

The unemployed councils must concentrate on the struggle for unemployment insurance as the central demand. They must fight for immediate relief, against evictions, for free public services to the unemployed workers (electric light, gas, water, free street-car transportation, feeding of school children, exemption from rent payments, opening up public buildings for housing unemployed, for cash relief as against food doles, etc.). The unemployed councils must take the lead in the formation of Tenants' Defense Leagues.

The unemployed councils must conduct a constant wide campaign exposing the exploitation of the unemployed by government agencies, police, etc., and by the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and all other bourgeois bodies, and raising the campaign against all forms of compulsory labor for the unemployed.

In all the work of the T.U.U.L. in the struggle for the demands of the unemployed, every effort must be made to establish the unity of the employed and unemployed, by drawing the unemployed workers into the actions of the unemployed, mass picketing, etc. Every effort must be made through the branches and councils to win the unemployed, particularly those recently thrown out of work, for membership in the revolutionary unions and leagues.

2.—The Fight for Social Insurance.

In the present economic crisis, and in face of the general lowering of the standard of living of the masses, and the maneuvers of the bourgeoisie, the fight for social insurance will play a decisive part in the building up of the revolutionary trade union movement. It is essential that the T.U.U.L. shall come forward before the masses as the only resolute fighter for and champion of social insurance for the workers. This fight should include the demand for social insurance of all workers, including agricultural workers, both native and foreign born, Negro and white, during the entire period of unemployment; for insurance entirely at the expense of the State and the employers; for the complete administration of the unemployed funds by the workers through bodies especially elected for the purpose; for rates of insurance equivalent to full wages; for insurance to cover unemployment, sickness, invalidity, maternity, old age, compensation for accidents and industrial diseases. In addition, every opportunity should be taken to press for enactment or extension of protective legislation of all kinds of workers (particularly in the South), and demands in all these respects should be worked out clearly and popularized. In the popularization, it is necessary to give vivid exposure of the conditions existing in the United States, to explain the social-insurance systems which exist, even in a very stunted form, in other capitalist countries and to draw a sharp contrast between the conditions in the U.S.A. and the complete system of social insurance in the U.S.S.R. Every effort must be made to draw the workers them-

self (stagger system), part time employment, etc. It is essential to put forward the clearest and simplest slogans, capable of mobilizing the widest masses. The main slogans are: (a) Against wage cuts in any form; (b) Full wages for short time work; (c) The 7-hour day without wage reductions (6 hours for the miners, for youth and in injurious trades); (d) Against speed-up and for the abolition of overtime; (e) Equal wages for equal work for Negroes, women, foreign born, etc.; (f) Abolition of injunctions, right to strike, etc.

In the struggle for the reduction of hours, the T. U. U. L. must vigorously put forward the 7-hour day (6 hours for injurious trades and youth) as a central slogan for uniting the struggles of the employed and unemployed. In the South where industries are working the 10- or 11-hour day, the slogan of the 8-hour day must be put forward, taking care not to do so in such a way as in effect to demand the 7-hour day for white workers and 8 hours for Negroes. In industries where the 8-hour day, 5-day week is being worked, the slogan of the 7-hour, 5-day week should be put forward.

The demagogy of the A. F. of L. Railway Brotherhood leadership and the Muste wing centering around the shortening of the work day must be exposed as a method of furthering wage reductions. The question of the length of the working day must not be confined to the general program of the T. U. U. L., but must be embodied in the local slogans for factory struggles against the sharpening of the rationalization drive.

Considering the present forces at the disposal of the T. U. U. L. and the need for achieving substantial results in the most important industries and districts in the shortest possible time, it is essential to concentrate for the immediate future upon five main industrial centers—Chicago, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cleveland and Philadelphia. Six months' plans of work should be drawn up for each of these areas, to ensure concentration on main industries, such as mining, metal, automobile, textile, marine and chemical. A special plan should be drawn up for work in the South for the immediate months. There must be a suitable division of forces to strengthen the district and local leadership of the unions and T. U. U. L. in carrying out these plans. The planned program of work must be used to establish locals of the revolutionary unions and groups or leagues in the industries. The locals of the Red unions, and T. U. U. L. supporters where no local unions exist, must strive to set up grievance committees (as transition forms to shop committees) elected by the workers on the basis of day-to-day issues. The large body of supporters of the R. I. L. U. who do not belong to the revolutionary unions or leagues, must be brought into League organizations. All connections in the factories — readers of our papers, members of workers' clubs and fraternal societies, signers of social insurance petitions, etc. — must be utilized to establish locals of the unions and leagues.

The T. U. U. L. and its unions, Leagues and

Reaction In All Languages

The pope yesterday, spoke in three languages: Italian, French and German. Why didn't he include Polish, too? It was in this language, we understand, that he blessed and encouraged the Czarist white guards and counter-revolutionary army that invaded the territory of Soviet Ukraine in 1920 in an attempt to overthrow the workers' Soviet Power.

The pope was then the archbishop or "big shot" of the Catholic church in Poland. He may have changed the language since then, but he is the same old counter-revolutionary, and while the capitalist papers say he "stresses labor rights" nevertheless, he is really stressing its supposed "duty" not to destroy capitalism.

Well, we guess that the little demonstration of the Spanish workers is getting under the hide and his pontifical hypocrisy is put out in defense. So, regardless of pretty words, we can be sure that the fellow who urged on the armed attempt against the First Workers' Republic in 1920, is just as much a reactionary today.

We Suggest

This problem of King Carol's wife or wives is bothering us. It seems that nothing will be accomplished in Rumania until it is decided whether Queen Helen or Madame Lupescu will finally recline in the royal bedroom.

After worrying about it all week, we finally came to the conclusion that Aimee Semple McPherson should be sent over with the Kemmerer Commission to establish a Four-Square or rectangular gospel out of this tiresome triangle.

We Nominate

We nominate for the Pulitzer prize for the best murder in 1931, the one recounted in the Associated Press dispatch from Blue Mountain, Mississippi, May 6, as follows:

"A farmer, A. W. Carter, whose mind was affected by intense religious fervor, killed his wife, their two children, a boarder and himself in their home near here today."



Rose Clark and W. C. Sandhorn leading the Cincinnati hunger marchers to the Columbus, state capitol, May 10.

this question. (5) The T.U.U.L. must take more initiative in organizing joint defense committees to defend Negro workers against terrorist campaigns

7. Connection With Latin American Workers.

In all the struggles of the unemployed, in the building of the revolutionary unions, in the leadership of their struggles, special attention must be paid in penetrating the great masses of Mexican and Latin American workers in the basic industries in drawing them into leadership and in establishing and maintaining the closest connections with the Latin American Bureau. A definite number of Latin American workers in the U. S. A. must be included in the groups of comrades selected for special training as part of the development of new cadres. Strong connections must be maintained with the revolutionary movement in the Philippines.

8. The Fight Against the War Danger.

All the measures taken in the fight for above program of action are indispensable for the fight against the war danger, building up of mass revolutionary unions, upon the factories and with attention riveted to the daily demands of the workers is the best guarantee that the fight against war danger will keep pace with the growth of the war menace. It is, however, essential that the revolutionary unions, through their press, their meetings and their daily work shall carry on systematic exposure of the plans of American imperialism, the atrocities of American militarism, both in the U.S.A. and in the American colonies, the role of the A.F.L. and social fascists in preparing war, and above all the capitalist preparations for an attack on the Soviet Union, etc.

IX.

Pointing out to the Trade Union Unity League the necessity of a resolute turn to face the masses and their daily struggles, the Executive Bureau of the R.I.L.U. draws the attention of the League to the fact that only in this way can a real struggle be conducted, and a real exposure made of the most dangerous enemies of the working class in its own ranks—the "left" social-fascists of the Muste type and the renegade groups of Lovestone and Cannon. The Executive Bureau of the R.I.L.U. calls upon all members of the League and all its supporters in the U.S.A., on the basis of widespread and frank discussions of the present resolution, to proceed determinedly along the path laid down by the Vth Congress of the R.I.L.U. and by this means, in the developing struggles of the working class, build mass revolutionary unions, capable of leading the workers into decisive battles against capitalism