



Joe Z Foster

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

FROM
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TO
STALIN

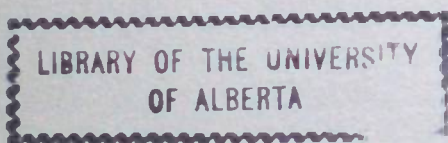
INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

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D331.8
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Second Printing, July 1937



PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.
COMPOSED AND PRINTED BY UNION LABOR

Anonymous
SEP 26 1957

OCT 7 1957 DGD

Pol. Sci.

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PREFACE

IN the earlier stages of its development the world capitalist system played a historically progressive role. Based upon a more advanced method of production than feudalism which preceded it, capitalism raised cultural levels and attained a higher stage of society. It is true that these advances were made at the cost of tremendous exploitation of the working masses in all countries; yet this era of capitalism constituted a definite step forward to a richer and fuller life.

But capitalism has now exhausted its progressive role; it is no longer a stimulus to social advance but a brake upon it. Caught in a hopeless contradiction between an expanding productive apparatus and shrinking markets, this social system has fallen into an acute state of degeneracy and reaction.

The economic crisis, widespread and devastating, becomes chronic. Tens of millions of workers, jobless and hungry, walk the streets of industrial cities, while great factories stand idle. Millions of farmers are pauperized. Huge armies of middle class people are thrown into bankruptcy. The capitalist class, no longer able to rule these rebellious masses by petty concessions and sham democracy, has recourse to fascist demagoguery and violence. In the capitalist countries democratic liberties are being systematically abolished. Cultural reaction grows and deepens; science is falling into decay, invention has become largely useless for capitalist industry, the most primitive forms of religious superstition are being cultivated, capitalist art and literature is sinking to the lowest levels in their history. And, to climax it all, the great imperialist powers, desperately struggling to capture the last market for their industries, are now swiftly preparing for a great world slaughter beside which all previous wars will seem like minor conflicts.

This is a picture of a system of society in decay, a process

which Marx and Engels so long ago foresaw. Capitalism has outlived its usefulness. Its economic crises, mass starvation, fascist terrorism, cultural reaction and wars are only so many symptoms of a desperate effort to maintain itself in the face of historical circumstances that demand its abolition. The capitalist class will not willingly give up its wholesale robbery, even though its frantic attempts to prolong the rule of capitalism threaten the lives and welfare of hundreds of millions of human beings.

The great lesson of all this, pointed to by a million facts of present-day life, is that capitalism must be abolished. This is a historically necessary task. The huge masses of exploited workers, farmers and lower middle class, in a vast united front, stimulated and led by the Communist Party, must overthrow this monstrous system, organize a Soviet government, take over the great factories, the land and other means of production, and abolish human exploitation by setting up a productive system for use instead of for profit. That is, they must establish Socialism, which is the first phase of Communism. Only in this way can economic crises, unemployment and war be abolished and the human race put upon an upward path leading to prosperity, freedom, culture and peace.

The living evidence of the correctness of this revolutionary solution is to be found in the Soviet Union. Here we see a huge nation of 170,000,000 people, in a country three times as large as the United States, engaged in building Socialism. While the whole capitalist world suffers from industrial decay and social degeneration, the U. S. S. R. strides ahead on every front: unparalleled industrial and agricultural expansion, swiftly rising living standards, a new and growing democratic liberty, a mighty cultural advance, etc. The Soviet Union is the beginning of the new world society of Socialism; it is a trail blazer for the exploited millions of the whole earth.

The writer has for many years been convinced that only along this revolutionary way can the workers and other

exploited masses free themselves from slavery; only thus can society find the road to progress. In this book, I have tried to show those forces which impelled me, an American worker, to arrive at these revolutionary conclusions, to become a Communist.

Two general phases are covered in this book: the earlier chapters deal with my experiences in industry and the labor movement and lead up to my adoption of the principles of Marxism-Leninism; and the later chapters deal with the period after my affiliation to the Communist Party, that is, with the question of applying these principles in the United States. I have paid special attention to the matter of revolutionary trade unionism, to which I have devoted most of my work in the class struggle.

CHAPTER I

BEGINNINGS

My father, James Foster, was born in County Carlow, Ireland, of peasant stock. He was a Fenian and an ardent fighter for Irish independence. Among his nationalist activities he was delegated to enlist in the British Army to agitate among the many Irish soldiers it contained. While at this work he helped organize a projected revolt in which the Irish soldiers were to suddenly seize Ireland, the regular British garrison being seriously weakened at the time by troop removals to India. But this rather desperate scheme was betrayed by a traitor. Consequently, my father, as well as many others, had to flee instantly. A political immigrant, he arrived in the United States in 1868, settling in the Boston district. He never returned to Ireland, although at the time of Queen Victoria's "Diamond Jubilee" he, with many others, received amnesty.

In this country, my father, until his death in 1901, was a worker, being by occupation a carriage washer, or livery stableman. For a short while, without giving up his regular work, he tried unsuccessfully to establish a small store. Although he became a citizen and, like most other Catholics, supported the Democratic Party, he took but little part in American politics. His main interest was in independence for Ireland, and during my boyhood my political meat and drink at home was militant Irish nationalism. In 1887, we moved from Boston to Philadelphia, where I lived until 1900, and during this time our home was a center for Irish patriots, many of whom were Molly Maguires who had fled from the persecutions of the coal barons in the Pennsylvania anthracite regions.

My father was very active and powerful physically. He claimed that in his youth he was champion of Great Britain in three sport events: the broad jump; high jump; and hop, skip and jump. He was a rough and tumble scrapper of local renown and his special predilection was to fight Irish policemen. Being an ardent sportsman, he made our home a rallying point for ball players, runners, boxers, race-track men, cock-fighters, dog-fighters, etc. He was 60 years old when he died.

My mother, Elizabeth McLaughlin, was born in Carlisle, England. She came of English and Scotch ancestry. For generations her family had been textile workers and she was a weaver by trade. She used to tell, from first-hand knowledge, about the terrible starvation conditions that the English textile workers, including her parents, had lived through during the period, so graphically described by Marx and Engels, when the old hand loom was being displaced by the new power loom in the British textile industry. She was a devout Catholic, my father being somewhat negligent religiously, although a professed Catholic. Despite her slender build, my mother was, like my father, of excellent physique and she bore him no less than 23 children. Most of these children, chiefly because of our poverty, died in infancy, only three besides myself, Anna, Mabel, Clara, being now alive. They live on the West Coast.

My mother lived a life of hardship and drudgery, made worse by her excessive child-bearing. Her political activities were nil, although she was quite intelligent. Like my father, who told us many times that he had gone to school only one day and that that day school did not keep, my mother had little or no formal education. Her life was one long struggle against the sea of poverty in which we nearly always lived. She died in 1901 at the age of 53.

I was born in Taunton,* Massachusetts, near Boston,

* It was in Taunton that the flag of revolution was first raised in the United States, in 1776. It was a red flag and was hoisted upon the town "green," or public square. Hezekiah Butterworth says in the opening verse of his poem, *The First Flag of Liberty*, published in Boston in 1886:

February 25, 1881. When I was six years old our family moved to Philadelphia, where for the most part, because of my father's small wages and big family, we lived in slum and semi-slum neighborhoods. From the age of seven to ten I went to school, selling newspapers the while. But at ten, so meager was the family income, I had to quit school and go to work. My first job, in 1891, was with a sculptor, Kretchman by name. He was an artist of many accomplishments, among which were painting, modeling, stone-cutting, wood-carving, die-sinking, electro-plating, etc. He had helped in the construction of the giant statue of William Penn now atop the Philadelphia City Hall.

My job with Kretchman was the first of my 26 years' experience as a worker, an experience which took me into many industries, including chemical, lumber, metal, meat-packing, agriculture, marine transport, railroads, building construction, etc., all over the country from New York to California, and from Florida to Washington. This eventually gave me a broad first-hand knowledge of the workers' life and its hardships. I stayed three years with Kretchman, but the wages he paid were so low (from \$1.50 per week for the first year to \$2.00 for the third) that I quit him. The hard times of the middle nineties were upon us and, with my father and eldest brother out of work, we had to eke out our living by frequent visits to the neighborhood soup kitchen. I had to make more wages somehow. Men could find no work but there were always places for child slaves; so I got a job at \$3.00 per week at the local type foundry of Mackellar, Smith & Jordan, where I worked some three and a half years and learned much of the type-founders' trade.

"The grand years have numbered one hundred and ten
 Since the first flag of freedom ascended the sky,
 And the fair Green of Taunton made heroes of men,
 As men saw the ensign unfolding on high.
 The motto of Union and Liberty rolled
 Out into the suntides of vermilion and gold,
 And loud cried those heroes of liberty bold;
 'We'll defend it with valor and virtue and votes
 The red flag of Taunton that waves o'er the Green.'"

STIRRINGS OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

In these years as a boy worker, denied the opportunity for an education and living in a poverty-stricken home, I early felt the iron of the class struggle sink into my heart. I, of course, had no inkling of what was wrong and who was my real enemy, beyond a vague feeling that the rich were somehow at the bottom of it all. But I deeply resented the poverty in which I had to live; for even my boyish eyes could see that there were many well-off people who apparently did no work, yet lived in luxury.

Meanwhile, my father was exerting all efforts to make an ardent Irish nationalist of me, which my mother aided by doing whatever she could to develop me into a devout Catholic. And both my parents had some success. I took Catholicism earnestly and my first serious political reaction was a burning desire to help free Ireland, to which, in my boyish enthusiasm, I determined to devote my whole life when I grew up. This decision was all the more strengthened as I plunged into reading history, and I drew inspiration from the American and French Revolutions. Especially was I fascinated by the French Revolution and I had read a half-dozen histories of it by the time I was 13 years old. I burned with the desire to participate in a great struggle like that, to deal real blows against the oppressor, and the way I saw to do it was by helping free Ireland from the age-long yoke of England.

MY FIRST STRIKE

But my father's plan to make a militant Irish Nationalist of me eventually failed. The exigencies of my life as a worker decided another fate for me. Suffering under the lash of poverty and exploitation myself and seeing all about me many manifestations of the workers' determination to resist similar conditions, I was instinctively drawn into the American class struggle. I felt rather than knew that I did not have to look to England for the real enemy but must meet him

in the United States. So I began to follow with great interest and sympathy the many strikes and other struggles of the workers in this period.

The first strike in which I actually participated was that of the Philadelphia street carmen in 1895, when I was 14 years old. The strike lasted only about a week, but it was very bitterly fought. The men tied up the whole trolley system in a struggle to defeat a wage cut. The company replied by trying to break the strike with professional strike-breakers and police violence. I, together with other strikers and sympathizing workers, was clubbed and ridden down by mounted police at 15th & Market Streets in a vicious charge of these thugs against a peaceful parade of strikers. The workers replied to such tactics by the firmest solidarity and extreme militancy. They were supported by the broad ranks of the workers, whose hatred of the old horse-car companies had not weakened towards the then brand-new electric lines. Riots broke out all over the city. I remember how the proletarian youths in our neighborhood around 17th and South streets, for several days running, wrecked every car that ventured through that territory.

The strike, I believe, was finally settled by some sort of a compromise. It was my baptism in the class struggle and it exerted a profound influence upon my general outlook. By now, I had become a trade unionist, in theory at least, for I had no opportunity to belong to an organization. I had learned the elementary lesson that the individual worker is helpless against the employer and that only by combining his forces with other workers can he exercise any influence in the vital matter of his wages. From then on I followed the trade union manifestations of the class struggle with an increasing ardor, and my interest in Ireland began to sink into a secondary position. My attention was now definitely centered upon the American class struggle.

CHAPTER II

THE BRYAN MOVEMENT

THE decade when I was a growing lad, from the middle eighties to the middle nineties, was one of active struggle by the workers. In point of militancy it was unequalled for the next 25 years. This was the heyday of the Knights of Labor and the foundation period of the American Federation of Labor. Some of the greatest strikes in the history of the United States took place during this time.

It was an era of rapidly intensifying capitalist exploitation. Its brutal spirit was typified by "the public be damned" Vanderbilt. The capitalists were increasingly robbing both workers and farmers, and their new trusts were already crushing the small business men. Wholesale raids were being made by the railroads upon the great tracts of government-owned farming, timber and mineral lands. The state and national government reeked with open corruption and shamelessly did the capitalists' bidding. Efforts of the workers to organize and to strike against their hard conditions were repressed ruthlessly by the widespread use of the blacklist, troops, Pinkerton gunmen and professional scabs.

The workers did not tamely submit, however, but fought militantly for their living standards, as many bitter struggles testify. Their fighting spirit, animated by a strong class instinct rather than class consciousness, grew out of their resistance to the increasing pressure from a swiftly expanding capitalism. Not a small factor in developing their great struggles was the fact that the later conservative labor aristocracy of skilled workers had not fully developed; and, besides, the union leadership had not yet fallen completely under the sway of the capitalists. Misleaders of labor there were aplenty in this period, such as the notorious Powderly, head of the

K. of L., Arthur, reactionary Grand Chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers; and the infamous Gompers' bureaucracy was already entrenching itself. But such traitorous elements were as yet unable to exert the deadening influence on the trade unions that they did in later years. Many of the trade union top leaders, of the Martin Irons type, were honest fighters, and they gave militant leadership to the masses. Besides, the revolutionary elements, chiefly Socialist Labor Party and Anarchist groupings, working within the existing unions, exerted much influence in stimulating the masses to struggle.

This decade of extreme working class militancy was started off by the great eight-hour strike movement of 1886 centering in Chicago, which greatly stimulated the trade unions everywhere, and which resulted in the legal lynching of its Anarcho-Syndicalist leaders Parsons, Spies, Fisher, Engel and Lingg. Soon this historic struggle was followed by another almost equally famous, the Homestead strike of 1892, when the steel workers, fighting a losing battle against the growing steel trust, drove away the Pinkerton thugs in armed struggle and seized the local steel mills, rifles in hand. Then, in May 1894, in the midst of the great industrial crisis of that time, developed the powerful strike of the American Railway Union led by Eugene V. Debs, which was crushed by a combination of violence by the Federal Government and treachery by A. F. of L. and railroad craft union officials. Meanwhile, in the Rocky Mountain states, among the metal miners, the Western Federation of Miners, with William D. Haywood as its leading spirit, was developing a whole series of the most spectacular and hard-fought strikes in American labor history, many of them being armed conflicts of the workers against company thugs and state troops. And another famous movement of this period was Coxey's national march of the unemployed upon Washington, a movement that profoundly stirred the working class, stricken as it was by the huge wage cuts and unemployment caused by the prevailing economic crisis.

THE BRYAN FREE SILVER CAMPAIGN

While the workers were thus resisting American capitalism so militantly, the small farmers of the Middle West were also in a high state of political discontent. They were suffering many hardships: their erstwhile free homestead lands had become loaded with mortgages, tenancy was rapidly on the increase among them, and they were heavily burdened with taxes and increasingly falling under the pressure of the railroads and various trusts which preyed upon them. To make their conditions unendurable came the great economic crisis of the nineties, which knocked the bottom out of agricultural prices.

There was also much discontent among the urban petty bourgeoisie, or small manufacturers, merchants, etc. They were feeling the crushing power of the growing trusts and monopolies. Already they had succeeded in having the Sherman Anti-Trust Law passed in 1890 in a vain attempt to stifle the growth of monopoly. Their cup of unrest was also filled to overflowing by the deep industrial crisis of this period.

It was upon this general background of discontent of the workers, farmers and city middle class that the Bryan Democratic Party campaign of 1896 developed. It originated in the Populist Party of the farmers, and the farmers remained the backbone of the movement, although large numbers of workers and city middle class elements also participated in it.

The program of the Bryan movement showed that it was basically of a petty bourgeois character, a fruitless attempt to stem the swift advance of the trusts and finance capital and to maintain the traditional competitive system and civil liberties. Its central plank, the free coinage of silver at the rate of sixteen ounces of silver to one of gold, was an inflationary scheme of the farmers to rid themselves of their increasing debts by creating cheap money, an illusion that still prevails among them. Other planks of Bryan called for government ownership of the railroads and telegraphs, abolition of the national

banks, tariff for revenue only, graduated income tax, postal savings bank, government loans on real estate, popular election of U. S. Senators, initiative and referendum, Australian ballot system, one term for the President, eight hours for government employees, abolition of detective agencies, restriction of immigration, abolition of injunctions in labor disputes. But the center of the whole movement was "free silver," the rest of the program being largely ignored in the election agitation.

Although many of Bryan's proposals were of importance to Labor, the mass of the workers did not rally to them. True, the A. F. of L. gave Bryan a roundabout endorsement and Debs, already widely known from the A. R. U. strike, supported him openly. But the great bulk of workers, who had no organized mass party and who for the most part felt their grievances to be economic rather than political, were caught by the McKinley big capitalist slogans of sound money, high tariffs, high wages and the full dinner pail. Bryan was overwhelmingly defeated by the combined big capitalist forces of the industrial East and the Middle West, who boldly announced they would close their factories if Bryan were elected. Thus the door was flung still wider open for the retreat of the middle class and the advance of triumphant monopoly capital.

MY FIRST POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

I was profoundly stirred by all these great events. Especially was I interested and aroused by the bitter strikes of the period. It is true that I knew of 1886 only from the older workers, but it was then still a strong tradition among them and I eagerly absorbed it. The A. R. U. strike of 1894 I remember quite distinctly and I read with close attention the newspaper reports of the fierce strikes of the Rocky Mountain metal miners and also of the many struggles of the coal miners in the neighboring anthracite districts of Pennsylvania. My sense of solidarity with the workers was actively aroused.

I followed with bated breath the march of Coxey's Army, and on my way to work I used to linger around Coxey's recruiting office at 13th and Filbert Streets to read the displayed bulletins from all over the country as to the progress of the various detachments of the Army. When the movement came to its absurd anti-climax, by Coxey's being arrested for walking on the Capitol lawn, it was for me a personal tragedy. But the greatest effect of all upon my awakening class feeling was produced by the great Homestead strike of steel workers. I was only 11 years old at the time but I remember how I shared my father's indignation at the sending of the Philadelphia National Guard regiments to Pittsburgh and his protests at the news that a National Guard soldier, Henry Iams by name, had been hanged by the thumbs for several hours by his officers because he had called for three cheers for the man (the Anarchist, Alexander Berkman) who had just shot Frick, head of the Carnegie Steel Company.

The numerous strikes were rapidly developing my proletarian class instinct. I was all for the workers in their fight and I wanted to participate in the struggle. My earlier dreams of one day actively helping to free Ireland sank further and further into the background. I was only 15 years old when the Bryan campaign of 1896 came. But I went for it enthusiastically. Of course, I was quite unable to judge of the middle class political content of Bryan's platform, but it looked to me like a real fight against the great trusts that were oppressing workers and farmers in common; so I gave the movement such support as a lad of 15 years might. I attended political meetings. I went to hear Bryan speak. I saturated myself with the campaign arguments pro and con, I marched in the torchlight processions. And when Bryan was defeated it came as a heavy blow to me. I got my first taste of the great political power possessed by the ruling class and their ruthless way of using it. Altogether this campaign had for me a big educational effect.

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIALIST PARTY

FORCES were at work which were rapidly developing my native proletarian instinct into genuine class consciousness. I was fast outgrowing the petty bourgeois limits of the Bryan movement and was on the way to a revolutionary outlook.

For one thing, my experience in industry was broadening. By the end of 1900 I had added to my previous jobs three years' work in the fertilizer industry, working in plants in Reading, Pennsylvania, and Jacksonville, Florida, where I had become a steam-fitter, stationary engineer and an expert fertilizer mixer. I had also worked in Florida peonage lumber camps, put in two months as a brakeman on the P. & R. railroad and spent six months as a trolley car motorman on the Third Avenue line in New York City. It was at the latter occupation that I joined my first union, the Street Carmen. Conditions were abominable on the New York cars, the men being completely unorganized and the company arbitrarily dictating wage and working conditions. I decided to try to change all this. I went to see Herman Robinson, A. F. of L. organizer. Then I had my first experience with an A. F. of L. bureaucrat. Robinson refused to help us, and was even reluctant to take our little group's applications to join the union. We got so far, however, as to set up secretly union groups in several car barns; but the movement was exposed by a spy and the leaders, including myself, were summarily discharged. The incipient union was thus destroyed.

From personal experience and my reading I had had it knocked into me that in their greed for profits the employers rob the workers ruthlessly and are quite indifferent to their sufferings or that of their families. All of which greatly stimulated my fighting spirit and determination to resist such

tyranny. Rapidly I was losing the illusions about capitalism that had been so assiduously drilled into me at school, in church, through the newspapers and in the factories. Thus my school-boy conception of the government got many disastrous shocks. The sending of the National Guard to Homestead; the use of troops in the A. R. U. strike; the "embalmed beef" outrage in the Spanish-American war, which, among others, almost killed my brother John, a soldier of the Third Pennsylvania regiment; Mark Hanna's brutal attack upon the workers in the 1896 elections; the vicious use of troops and police everywhere against striking workers, etc., were smashing my youthful notions of the impartial rôle of the government. I distinctly felt, even though I did not know just how, that the government was in the hands of the bosses and was an enemy of the workers.

At the same time, I was also rapidly losing faith in the religion which my Catholic mother had so carefully taught me. This was partly because of my hard practical experience as a worker, but mainly through omnivorous reading in my favorite fields of history and science. The first anti-religious book I read was Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*. This shattered my faith in the Bible. Next I read Lecky's *History of European Morals* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, books which destroyed my belief in the holiness of the Papacy and the Mother Church. Then, late in the nineties, in my incessant reading I came to Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*. These books, which I read with amazement, introduced me to the theory of man's evolution from lower animals and definitely ended my belief in human immortality. After Darwin I read Spencer's *Data of Sociology*, with its theories of the origin and evolution of god, the devil and religion in general. All this made me a conscious Atheist. It only required my later years' reading of Marx and Lenin to teach me the rôle of religion as a weapon of the exploiting classes and to give me the theoretical foundation for a materialist scientific outlook on life and death.

I BECAME A SOCIALIST

This whole process of disillusionment with capitalist economics, government and religion was preparing me for my transformation into a Socialist, which came with dramatic suddenness. One night, in the summer of 1900, I was walking along at Broad and South streets and, noticing a street speaker, I stopped to listen. He was a Socialist, evidently of the Socialist Labor Party, but his name I never learned. It was my first actual contact with the revolutionary movement. Previously my knowledge of Socialism and Anarchism had been derived from vague, distorted and misleading articles in the capitalist press and from similar sources. I had never even encountered a Socialist book or pamphlet, despite my wide reading.

I listened entranced by what the speaker said. I remember he sharply assailed Bryanism, but I found myself in complete agreement with him. His arguments and analysis seemed to give real meaning to all my experience in the class struggle. His proposals for the workers to take over the government and the industries and to abolish the profit system appealed to me as the only real solution of the workers' problem, and my 35 years of later experience in life have only confirmed this first opinion. The speaker was a good one and I drank in his words eagerly. I left the meeting in great enthusiasm, later eagerly reading a couple of pamphlets I had bought at the time. Although with as yet only an inkling of the great world outlook comprised under the term Socialism, I began to count myself, from that time on, a Socialist. That street meeting indeed marked a great turning point in my life.

Now I began to read Socialist literature in earnest and to become more acquainted with the movement. In the fall of 1900 I was working in a fertilizer plant at Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, near Reading, when the elections came on. Debs and Harriman were the Socialist candidates. Although only 19 years old and too young to vote myself, I walked six miles with another worker, my brother-in-law, George

McVey, to "help" him cast his vote for the Socialist ticket. The following year I joined the Socialist Party, then just being formed out of the split-off from the Socialist Labor Party.

AN INTERLUDE

From 1901 to 1904 my revolutionary development suffered a rude interruption. The two and a half years I had worked with lead in the type foundry as a child worker had undermined my health. The three years following in the fertilizer industry, where we usually toiled totally unprotected, in dense clouds of poisonous dusts, so broke me down further that the doctors pronounced me a consumptive. I was in a fair way to go to an untimely grave grinding out profits for employers, as vast armies of workers had done before me.

It so happened, however, that I was without family responsibility. My parents were both dead and my two elder sisters were married. So I quit my job, pulled up stakes and headed for the West. With twenty dollars in my pocket I took a steamer to Galveston, Texas. There I quickly went broke. I managed, however, to earn a small road stake at a nearby railroad construction camp (where I developed into the second cook) and then I hoboed my way on the Southern Pacific R. R. the 3,000 or more miles to Portland, Oregon, via Los Angeles. This trip was a harrowing experience, what with hunger, sleeplessness, dodging city police and railroad "bulls" and the hardships of train riding. I had several narrow escapes and learned at first hand the dangers and difficulties of the worker beating his way over the railroads. In the next dozen years, in the course of my work as a revolutionary agitator, I made six more such coast-to-coast hobo trips, as well as a couple from Chicago to the Pacific coast. All these trips I made in the winter, except one. Several times I was arrested, twice I nearly froze to death, and on dozens of occasions I barely missed being ground beneath the wheels. I acquired thoroughly the hobo's knack of beating

the road, learning to ride everything—passengers and freights, inside and outside, trucks, tops, rods, blinds, bumpers, etc., everywhere except, as the saying went, “in the hog-head’s (engineer’s) whiskers.” These trips gave me a wide knowledge of the army of “floating” unemployed workers, as well as of the criminal elements drifting over the railroads. They were instructive experiences.

Arrived in Oregon on my first trip, I worked for a few months on the local docks, and in neighboring logging camps and railroad construction jobs. Then, one fine day early in the winter of 1901, I shipped out of Portland on an old square-rigged sailing vessel. She was the *Pegasus*, a British four-masted bark, and bound around Cape Horn for Cape Town, South Africa, with a cargo of wheat. Thus opened my period as a deep-water sailor, my most interesting and unforgettable experience as a worker. During this time I sailed one and a half times around the world. Twice I doubled Cape Horn and once the Cape of Good Hope. I served “before the mast” in four typical hungry British merchant “lime-juicer” square-riggers, the *Pegasus*, *Black Prince*, *Alliance* and *County of Cardigan*, and became a full-fledged able seaman. All told, the voyage, counting considerable stays on the South African, Australian and South American coasts, lasted almost three years and covered some 50,000 miles. It gave me a real taste of hunger, hardship, low wages and danger, and it exposed me to the rawest and most callous exploitation. It helped very much to steel me in my growing revolutionary convictions.

My last ship, the *County of Cardigan*, paid off at North Shields, England, and I took steamer for Philadelphia. There I joined the Atlantic Coast Seaman’s Union, intending to work as a sailor on the coast. But again I listened to the siren song of the West, where one of my sisters had gone. So once more, I hoboed my way across the country, this time directly from New York to Portland; for, of course, my three years at sea had yielded me practically no money with which to pay my fare. I arrived in Oregon early in No-

vember 1904, just in time to vote for Debs for President.

In this knocking about for three years my health had greatly improved. Apparently my tuberculosis was cured or checked and I was interested when, thirty years later, doctors in a Moscow hospital informed me that their x-ray examination showed old tuberculosis lesions in my lungs had healed over.

I BECAME A PARTY WORKER

From 1904 to 1907 I worked in the Portland area and began to take an active part in the Socialist Party. I paid up my dues in the local branch and began to read the Party literature. I read the pamphlets of Wayland, Work, Richardson, etc., and then branched out to read substantial material, such as the *Communist Manifesto*; *Wage-Labor and Capital*; *Value, Price and Profit*, and other works of Marx and Engels. I also eagerly devoured the first volume of *Capital*, which appeared in America about that time. I read nearly all of De Leon's pamphlets and books and many of those of Lafargue, Plekhanov, Kautsky, Bebel, etc. But of Lenin I never heard a word or saw a line.

My activities centered in the Portland branch, then dominated by one Tom Sladden. I avidly participated in the many discussions and activities of the local. I was an ardent supporter of the *Appeal to Reason*, a member of its famous "Army." My growing revolutionary knowledge and enthusiasm was greatly stimulated by the fragmentary reports we received of the Russian Revolution of 1905. The formation of the I. W. W. in 1905 I looked upon with great interest, but I failed to join it as I did not agree with the anti-parliamentary tendencies it was already manifesting. The arrest and kidnaping of Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone in 1906 shook the labor movement and stimulated great defense activity among us Socialists. Their acquittal in 1907, directly forced by the mass pressure of the metal miners and masses of other aroused workers, we hailed as a tremendous victory. By this time I considered myself a full-fledged Socialist, but

it turned out that I had yet many hard revolutionary lessons to learn.

During these three years I worked in many local industries characteristic of the Pacific Northwest: farming, logging, sawmills, building, metal mining, railroad construction, railroad train service, etc. I became a pretty typical Western floating worker. At this time the tail-end of the great generation's long national homestead movement was still on, there still being free government land of poor quality in the Western states, and many workers were taking up claims either to become real farmers or to make "easy" money. So my brother-in-law and I took up a homestead and timber claim apiece, 320 acres for each. Our claims were in Oregon, in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. It was a wild country, heavily timbered and full of fish and game, back of the famous Hood River apple district and some 15 miles from the railroad. We built ourselves log cabins and for three years spent two or three months each summer on the place grubbing land and becoming acquainted with the highly interesting backwoods life. The remaining nine or ten months per year we put in as workers in various Oregon industries. Finally, we "proved up" on our places and I then sold mine for a few hundred dollars. In later years this homestead district, unfit for farming, was deserted by the homesteaders and it reverted back to the wilds. It was the first and last time I ever owned property of any kind. I have never seen the place since.

Meanwhile I had secured a job as fireman on the O. R. & N. on the Portland-Umatilla division. This was tough work, what with too heavy trains, engines in bad repair and the miserable "real estate," as we called the inferior coal we had to burn. Although the firemen were selected for strength, every man on our division had at one time or another been taken from his engine en route, too exhausted to proceed further. After six months of this gruelling work I made application to join the B. of L. F. and E., having decided to work up to an engineer. But then came the sharp industrial

crisis of 1907, which swept me out of work and wrecked my plans.

The crisis broke with dramatic suddenness. A week before it hit, every industry was booming, workers were in great demand and wages were at record levels. But two weeks later the bottom had fallen out of everything; industry simply folded up and armies of unemployed appeared as if by magic. All banks closed at once, and to keep them shut the Governor, for a month, declared each succeeding day a legal holiday. No money was to be had, all "cash" transactions being carried on by means of "wheat checks" issued by the Portland Chamber of Commerce. Similar conditions prevailed in the other Western states. It was an economic hurricane, a graphic example of the insanity of the capitalist system of production and distribution.

THE INTERNAL FIGHT IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

During these several years my revolutionary understanding and enthusiasm were rising. I was a very ardent supporter of the Socialist Party, which was torn by a bitter and growing internal struggle in the Pacific Coast States. In order to understand this fight it is necessary to give something of its background.

The decade in question was one of growing working class organization and class consciousness under the fierce pressure of expanding American capitalism. It was a period of many bitter strikes, of which the bloody 1905 Chicago teamsters' strike, in which 21 were killed and 415 wounded, was an example. Since 1898, the A. F. of L. had increased its membership from 270,000 to 1,550,000. The movement for a more effective type of unionism, industrial instead of craft, was also developing and it finally resulted in the formation of the I. W. W. in 1905, with great acclaim on the part of revolutionary and progressive forces in the labor movement.

The Socialist Party also reflected this rising tide of working class organization and struggle. Its membership ran up

from a few thousands in 1901 to about 42,000 in 1909, and its vote increased accordingly. Its main proletarian strength came from the foreign-born workers; but it also had a thick sprinkling of American skilled workers, many of whom occupied official positions in the trade unions. Some of the strongest sections of the S. P. were in such agricultural states as Oklahoma, Texas, California, Oregon, Washington and Nebraska, former Populist strongholds, where the more radical Populist remnants, betrayed by Bryan, joined the S. P., attracted by its program of government ownership and other immediate demands, which many of them conceived as Populism under a new veneer of Socialist phraseology.

The Socialist Party also attracted many radical elements of the city petty bourgeoisie who were feeling acutely the pressure of the trusts upon the middle class and who had no faith in the two old parties. Hence, the Party became infested with a horde of lawyers, doctors, priests, preachers, etc., and many small manufacturers and businessmen, with an occasional "millionaire" Socialist thrown in. Such were the Hillquits, Bergers, Works, Wallings, Spargos, Russells, Myers, Waylands, Simons, Harrimans, Bensons, Stokes, etc. Ultra-vocal and very energetic, these non-proletarian intellectuals had seized leadership of the S. P. and controlled its policy; and their like do so until the present day.

Domination of the S. P. by these middle class intellectuals condemned the Party to a policy of opportunism. Their conception of the Party's rôle was to serve as an instrument of the petty bourgeoisie against the advancing big capitalists; which meant a near-Bryan movement under a new guise. They attempted to subordinate the working class into supplying the fighting troops of the middle class. Their maximum program was a thin gruel of government-owned industries duly bought from the capitalists and called Socialism. Their solid Party control was vigorously used against every effort of the proletarian members to give the S. P. a revolutionary program and to make it the real leader of the workers in the class struggle. The S. P. leaders refused to fight the reac-

tionary Gompers' trade union bureaucrats; they sabotaged the struggle for industrial unionism; they suppressed every effort to carry on revolutionary agitation among the masses; they systematically cultivated illusions of a gradual and peaceful transition from capitalism to Socialism.

The revolutionary worker members of the Party deeply resented this petty bourgeois intellectual control and opportunist régime. Especially acute was the discontent in the West, where many factors had combined to make the workers long the most revolutionary in the United States; this section being the home of the fighting Western Federation of Miners and I. W. W., and also of the most advanced sections of the S. P. and A. F. of L. Many of the militant workers got disgusted with the S. P. opportunism, quit the Party and drifted into the syndicalistic I. W. W. Others stuck in the S. P. and began an organized struggle against the reformist leadership. This was the fight, an inner-Party phase of the general class struggle, that was developing in the years I spent in the Portland local, 1904 to 1907.

Not unnaturally, I took an active interest in this factional struggle and at once found myself in the left wing of the Party. All my experience and reading in the class struggle had tended to make a militant of me. I had learned the elementary lesson that the class struggle is indeed a fight. I was profoundly convinced that the reformist plan of gradually turning capitalism into Socialism by a series of reforms was futile; that the ruthless capitalist class could never be talked, voted or bought out of power; but would yield only to the superior force of the toiling masses. So I joined definitely with the proletarian elements that wanted to make of the Socialist Party a revolutionary organization.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAGE WORKERS PARTY

THE internal fight in the Socialist Party eventually developed throughout the country, and reached a head in the struggle led by William D. Haywood and the Marcy-Kerr *International Socialist Review* group in 1912. But in the years I am dealing with, its most advanced phases were to be found on the Pacific coast; and its main center there was in Seattle, Washington. The leader of the opposition, Dr. Herman F. Titus, was editor of the local paper, the *Seattle Socialist*. Titus was a brilliant speaker, a forceful writer, an energetic agitator and one of the outstanding Marxians then in the United States. His greatest weaknesses were an incurable "leftism" and a strong tendency to bureaucratic arbitrariness. The Titus group had many forces and connections throughout Washington and in parts of California, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.

It so happened that the industrial crisis of 1907 uprooted me in Portland and, job seeking, I had made my way to Seattle. Here I worked mostly as a building laborer and in the local sawmills during 1907-9. I at once became affiliated to the Titus opposition group and also took an active part in the work of my A. F. of L. local union, the Building Laborers.

THE SPLIT OF 1909

When I arrived in Seattle the S. P. internal fight was already acute. The state organization was in the hands of typical opportunist intellectuals, led by a slick dentist, Dr. E. J. Brown, who in later years became Mayor of Seattle on a fusion ticket. The majority of the Party membership favored the left opposition.

The fight, centering around the main question of proletarian versus petty bourgeois control of the Party, developed into a struggle for power with many ramifications. The right wing, with the full support of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, tried to suppress every revolutionary tendency in the Party. They attempted to turn the Party into a sort of local public ownership league and petty reform movement. Everything was sacrificed for vote-catching. The left wing, on the other hand, tried to make the Party a fighting organization. It circulated Marxian pamphlets, making wide use of the newly-appeared *Road to Power* by Kautsky. It supported the general line of the *International Socialist Review* group, gave coöperation only to left wing speakers and tried to extend real aid to the struggles of the I. W. W. and other militant unions. The Party fight grew hotter and hotter. The factions began to expel each other's members from the various branches.

The situation climaxed in the Party state convention held in Everett early in 1909. Both sides made the most strenuous efforts to elect delegates. The left wing was supported mostly by lumber workers, city laborers and semi-proletarian "stump" farmers. The rights had the backing of the petty businessmen, intellectuals, skilled workers and better-off farmers. Doubtless the left wing actually polled the majority of votes, but when the convention assembled the right wing had managed to collect a substantial majority of the delegates.

The left wing at once made the charge, with justice, that the rights had utilized their control of the Party machinery to pack the convention. Good tactics, however, would have required that the lefts temporarily submit to this manufactured majority and then use the situation to organize the struggle further locally and nationally. But the impulsive, "leftist" Titus was too hasty for that. Under his leadership the left wing refused to participate in the convention, withdrew its delegates, held its own convention and elected a State Secretary. There were thus two Socialist parties in Washington. Whereupon, the opportunist-controlled Na-

tional Executive Committee of the Socialist Party went into action. Without further ado, it pronounced the left wing convention illegal, recognized the right wing State Secretary and gave the left wingers the option of rejoining the Party as individuals, provided they could pass muster under the sharp scrutiny of the victorious Dr. Brown and his allies. In general, the left wingers refused to accept these harsh terms. Few ever went back to the Socialist Party. The result was that that organization crashed on the rocks in Washington and lost the greater part of its strength.

Expelled from the Party, what were we next to do? At first we tried to keep going our version of the Socialist Party. But this policy could not continue, because there was a great disinclination to use the hated name of the Socialist Party. We had, therefore, to cast about for a new form of mobilizing our forces.

THE SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

For one thing, we considered joining the Socialist Labor Party. This organization, which had not yet degenerated into its present status as a narrow, counter-revolutionary sect, but then still had a revolutionary spirit, was completely dominated by Daniel De Leon, intellectually and otherwise. His theories constituted the program of the S. L. P.

De Leon, born in Venezuela, was an intellectual, trained in the universities of Holland and Germany. He was a devoted and tireless fighter for the revolution as he understood it. He was also a brilliant writer and from 1890 until his death in 1914 he exerted a greater theoretical influence upon the revolutionary movement than any other American intellectual before or since.

De Leon's greatest contribution to the revolutionary movement was his elaborate and persistent exposure of right opportunism. His criticisms of the A. F. of L. officials and the petty bourgeois leaders of the S. P. were scathing and won for him the undying hatred of these reactionaries. But beyond

this criticism of reformism and the revolutionary spirit with which he carried it through, there was little valuable in the teachings of De Leon. When he attempted to develop a program, he fell into the grossest errors. He was a narrow sectarian dogmatist and his theories, although containing elements of political action, led straight to the development of Syndicalism. In fact, De Leon may be properly called the intellectual father of American Syndicalism.

The theoretical system of De Leon, as I have said, recognized a certain need for political action. But its fundamental trend was in the direction of Syndicalism by its systematic underestimation of the rôle of the Party and overestimation of the labor unions before, during and after the revolution. This syndicalist tendency expressed itself in many ways.

First, De Leon denied the utility of the everyday struggle for partial, immediate political demands. "Not sops," said he, "but unconditional surrender of capitalism—such is the fighting cry of the proletarian revolution." Concessions won were only so many "banana peelings under the feet of the proletariat." Such a conception had the effect of reducing the Party in the pre-revolutionary period to simply a talking machine; the real everyday fighting, which was for economic demands only, being delegated to the industrial unions.

Secondly, De Leon naïvely believed that the revolution could be brought about simply by the Party's building up a majority of votes in the national elections through a gradual process of education. Faced by the workers' majority, the over-awed capitalists would yield, thought De Leon; but if by any mischance they did not, then the workers would call into play their real fighting organizations, the industrial unions, which would proceed to finish off the capitalists by "locking them out"; De Leon had no conception of the fierce and violent struggle the capitalists always make (illustrated by Russia, Germany, Spain, etc.), before they can be defeated by the revolutionary proletariat led by its fighting Party using every weapon at its command, nor did he under-

stand the rôle of the capitalist state as the defender, by force of arms, of the power of the ruling capitalist class.

Thirdly, De Leon taught that once the revolution was accomplished the Party would instantly dissolve itself and turn the management of the presumably immediately peaceful society over to the industrial unions. This was a further glorification of the rôle of the unions and minimizing of that of the Party. It was also an expression of De Leon's misapprehension of the transition period from capitalism to Socialism, the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat and a time of acute class struggle against the remnants of the defeated classes. Characteristically syndicalistic was De Leon's statement (in a speech made in 1905): "Industrial unionism is at once the battering ram with which to pound down the fortress of capitalism and the successor of the capitalist social structure itself."

In line with De Leon's main trend towards Syndicalism was his notorious dual unionism and utopian speculations with ideal forms of industrial unions. De Leon looked upon the old craft unions as a sort of conspiracy of the capitalists and conservative labor leaders against the working class. With this sectarian conception, De Leon vigorously led several secessions of revolutionary elements from the A. F. of L. and attempts to build up utopian dual unions, among which were the S. T. & L. A. (1895), I. W. W. (1905), and W. I. I. U. (1908). All three were failures, the only substantial effects of De Leon's dual unionism being to disastrously weaken the A. F. of L. left wing and thus to leave the Gompersites more firmly in control of the trade unions.

The essentially syndicalistic character of De Leon's whole outlook is clear. In his theories the basic organs of the working class are the labor unions. As for the Party, its rôle is only a secondary one, instead of one of central, decisive leadership. The whole revolutionary struggle is reduced practically to a trade union question. It was, therefore, only a short step for the true Syndicalists of the I. W. W., St. John, Haywood, Trautmann, etc., all reared on De Leon's

theories, to eventually sweep aside De Leon's thin ghost of a Party conception and to set up instead a full system of Syndicalism by leaving theoretically the industrial unions alone in the field. It is true that De Leon fought bitterly against these "direct actionists," but that was because he lacked the logic of his own premises. He was in the sad predicament of a hen who has hatched out a lot of ducklings and then watches in great alarm as they swim in the inviting water.

De Leonism is not Marxism. It is basically Syndicalism in the making. It has nothing in common with the Marxist-Leninist conception of the Party, so brilliantly justified by the experience of the Russian revolution, of the workers' party (the Communist Party) as the leader, organizer and vanguard of the working class and its allies in their daily battle under capitalism for minor demands, in their revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system, and in their construction of a Socialist society.

De Leonism leads not to the revolution, but away from it. Its end-product, the present-day S. L. P., is a counter-revolutionary group, the very worst expression of the American sectarianism that Marx and Engels noted long ago. It is an enemy of the Soviet Union and of everything vital and revolutionary in the labor movement. It is the most isolated, sterile and futile national party ever produced by the American working class; a pitiful monument indeed to the sincere and courageous fighter, De Leon.

WE FORM A NEW PARTY

With the 1909 split on our hands in Washington, we had to make a decision as to our next step organizationally. Most of us, like left wingers generally in that period, were saturated with the semi-syndicalist theories of De Leon. But we finally decided not to join the S. L. P. Its crass sectarianism repulsed us; we felt De Leon's dogmatic utopianism rather than analyzed it. We decided to form a new party, and we did.

After much travail, the new party was launched in Seattle on February 25, 1910. Joseph Biscay was chosen secretary. The new organization called itself the Wage Workers Party. As we shall see, the organization was short-lived; consequently it made only desultory formulations of policy and it made no real crystallization of its actual and potential organizational forces. No statistics of its membership were collected.

The W. W. P. was a sort of hybrid between the S. L. P. and the I. W. W. It put in the center of its program its main demand in the fight within the S. P. That is, the W. W. P. sought to solve the question of proletarian versus petty bourgeois control of the Party by restricting its membership solely to wage workers. It called itself "a political union," and its membership provisions specifically excluded "capitalists, lawyers, preachers, doctors, dentists, detectives, soldiers, factory owners, policemen, superintendents, foremen, professors and store-keepers." It barred "all with power to hire and fire," but it evaded reference to farmers.

The program placed the greatest stress upon industrial unionism, which in those times meant the I. W. W. It opposed the formation of a labor party. Its manifest anti-parliamentarism was but thinly veiled. It outlined no immediate political demands and showed no conception of the rôle of the Party in fighting for such demands, in defending the workers' standards now and in educating and organizing the masses for revolutionary tasks ahead; the program contented itself with saying vaguely that it would support all struggles of the workers. The whole stress of the party work was placed upon industrial union action and revolutionary agitation and propaganda for the abolition of the capitalist system.

There was no place in the class struggle for such an organization as the W. W. P., so it died as soon as it was born. The period from its formation to its collapse was only a few months. It got out only one issue of its paper, *The Wage Worker*, and then this died. The sudden split had confused our forces in Oregon and California and even in Washington.

The relatively few workers actually supporting the new party also soon dropped out. Hardly any of the leading elements rejoined the S. P., or affiliated themselves to the S. L. P.; some like Harry Ault, became A. F. of L. bureaucrats; but the bulk, like Joe Manley (who later was to become my son-in-law), Floyd Hyde, Joe Biscay, myself, and many others, joined the I. W. W. Our De Leonist training had led us to a logical conclusion, Syndicalism.

A few remnants of the former W. W. P. group remained around Titus and advocated the shorter work day as the way to end capitalism. They soon split into two factions, one demanding the four-hour day and the other the three-hour day. Titus himself decided to become a proletarian. He gave up his physician's practice and for the next 20 years his occupation was that of an elevator operator. For several of these years Titus hoboed all over the country speaking to A. F. of L. locals and pledging them to declare a general strike on a given day, years in advance, for the four-hour day.* He died in a New York hospital of cancer in 1931.

As for myself, as I have said, I cast my lot in with the I. W. W. My failure to return to the Socialist Party was perhaps the greatest political mistake of my career. Although the S. P. as a whole was not a revolutionary party, neither in the U. S. nor abroad, as was soon to be graphically demonstrated by the events of the war and post-war years, nevertheless, through its left wing, it was the chief bearer of the seeds of the eventual revolutionary party, the Communist Party. Thus it was out of the loins of the Second International that the Communist International was born. My abandonment of the S. P., therefore, cut me off from the main stream of revo-

* Titus' naive four-hour day pledge, which many thousands of workers signed, read: "Beginning May 1, 1925, I hereby agree not to work for wages more than four hours in any 24-hour day, or more than 24 hours in any calendar week. With the understanding that three-quarters of the wage workers of America shall do the same." There was to be organized, "a universal, individual strike . . . for a working day short enough to abolish the capitalist system." Of course, when the fateful May 1, 1925, came, no workers struck. The thousands of workers who had signed the pledge in Titus' long agitation had probably forgotten it.

lutionary development, the S. P. left wing, and sent me wandering for a dozen years in the sterile desert of Syndicalism.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WAGE WORKERS PARTY

The W. W. P. was important in that it was one of the earliest crystallizations of the S. P. left wing, a forerunner of the big fight of 1912 and the eventual national S. P. split of 1919. It was a local skirmish in the world-wide fight of the revolutionary elements inside the S. P. against the reformist leadership. Already in old Russia the reformists had been decisively defeated (1903) by the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin, and a decade later, also under his leadership, the world struggle against the crippling reformism was to result in the formation of the Communist International.

The W. W. P. was also important in its giving a picture of the ideological development of the left wing at this stage of its development. Its program was naïve and ultra-left. Heavily influenced by De Leon's teachings, it saw in the Party only an organization of revolutionary agitation and propaganda, instead of the leading fighting organ of the workers; it raised no immediate political demands and it was saturated with anti-parliamentarism; it was full of the current over-estimation of the rôle of dual industrial unionism, and it ignored even the poor farmers, potential allies of the workers. There was a broad streak of Syndicalism in its whole outlook.

Characteristically, the W. W. P. also found a leftist solution to the question of the petty bourgeois intellectuals in the Party of the toilers by excluding them altogether from membership. Thus it followed along the wrong path blazed by Bakunin and Proudhon many years before in the First International when they advocated, against Marx's bitter opposition, a similar policy. To break on principle with all intellectuals of bourgeois origin is incorrect and sentences the party to theoretical sterility. There must be a distinction made between those intellectual careerists who try to use the Party for reformist purposes and those revolutionary intel-

lectuals who have identified themselves with the proletariat and who are carrying out the fundamental task of developing the revolutionary theory of the workers. On this question Lenin says in his famous pamphlet, *What Is To Be Done*:

The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness; i.e., it may realize the necessity for combining in unions, to fight against the employers and to strive to compel the government to pass necessary social legislation, etc. The theory of Socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals. The founders of modern scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia.

The W. W. P. also displayed leftism in its concept of the revolutionary elements in the working class. Tom Sladden, in an article in the *International Socialist Review*, entitled "The Proletarian," gave voice to the prevailing misconceptions in this respect. He pictured the workers who would build the Party and the revolution as necessarily quite homeless, familyless, jobless, penniless, godless and voteless. Such a conception, however, was simply a reflection of the well-known floating workers of the West who, full of revolutionary spirit, dominated the whole western labor movement, but who were by no means representative of the broad working class. Such narrow concepts of the revolutionary forces as the W. W. P. had, would, of course, cut the party off from whole sections of the poorer farmers and petty bourgeoisie, and even from the bulk of the working class itself.

CHAPTER V

THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

I WAS not greatly enthused over the formation of the Wage Workers Party, and even while it was being launched I was turning my attention to the Industrial Workers of the World. Specifically, I went from Seattle to Spokane in the fall of 1909 to report the free speech fight there for Titus' *Workingman's Paper*, formerly the *Seattle Socialist*.

The Spokane free speech fight was one of the very bitterest of the many such fights conducted by the I. W. W. The city authorities, to prevent the I. W. W. from reaching the crowds of idle itinerant workers who lined the sidewalks, had passed a strict anti-street speaking ordinance and the I. W. W. was trying to break it down by mass violation. There was issued a national call for volunteers, and hundreds had come to town to go to jail. The police met all attempts at speaking by brutal clubbing and wholesale arrests. In the early months of the struggle the I. W. W. fighters refused to work out the 34-day sentences on the rockpile, whereupon they were put upon a bread and water diet and lodged in the freezingly cold Franklin School. This was a terrible régime, the ration consisting of only two ounces of white bread morning and evening. Result: serious intestinal disorders and actual starvation. A 34-day complete hunger strike would have been less disastrous than the horrible white bread diet. Three men were so sickened that they died shortly after their release. About 600 were arrested in the fight, which lasted until March 1910.

Immediately upon my arrival in Spokane I joined actively in this struggle. I heartily endorsed the splendid fighting spirit of the I. W. W., which contrasted sharply with the wishy-washy S. P. I was arrested and served two months.

While in jail I joined the Syndicalistic I. W. W. Upon my release I was placed at the head of the committee which negotiated the settlement of the struggle. This resulted in an almost complete victory for the I. W. W., as the hated ordinance was killed.

THE BASIS OF AMERICAN SYNDICALISM

Before proceeding further with my experience in the I. W. W., it may be well to explain what Syndicalism is and why there has been so much of it in the American labor movement. Let me quote from an article of mine in *The Communist*, November 1935:

In its basic aspects, Syndicalism, or more properly, Anarcho-Syndicalism, may be defined very briefly as that tendency in the labor movement to confine the revolutionary class struggle of the workers to the economic field, to practically ignore the state, and to reduce the whole fight of the working class to simply a question of trade union action. Its fighting organization is the trade union; its basic method of class warfare is the strike, with the general strike as the revolutionary weapon; and its revolutionary goal is the setting up of a trade union "state" to conduct industry and all other social activities.

Chief among the weaknesses of Syndicalism are:

(1) failure to provide the closely-knit organization of the most developed revolutionary elements (which must be the Communist Party) indispensable for uniting and leading the less developed masses; (2) failure to utilize the many political methods of struggle vitally necessary to carry on the workers' daily fight against the state and the capitalists for the eventual overthrow of capitalism, and for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) failure to establish a basis for the unity of the workers with the poorer sections of the farmers and petty bourgeoisie against the capitalists, a unity fundamental for effective struggle against capitalism; (4) failure to work out a practical plan for the operation of the workers' society after the abolition of capitalism.

Thus, briefly, by preventing the revolutionary political organization of the workers, by hindering their developing political

struggle, by alienating their natural class allies, and by confusing them regarding the future order of society, Syndicalism demobilizes the workers politically before the attacks of the capitalist state, and it leads inevitably to the defeat of the working class in its revolutionary struggle.

The American labor movement has been long and deeply afflicted with this anti-political Syndicalism, very much more in fact than either Germany or England, comparable industrial countries. Beginnings of Syndicalism were already to be seen in the great eight-hour movement of 1886, with its general strike theories and anti-parliamentarism. Many of the dual industrial unions of the next 20 years displayed similar tendencies to exalt economic action and to play down political action. But the Syndicalist tendency received its fullest expression in the Industrial Workers of the World, organized in 1905. A few years later came a lesser organization, the Syndicalist League of North America. The long-continued hostility of the old trade unions to working class political action was a product of the basic forces that produced the general Syndicalist trend.

The Syndicalist tendency also showed itself very strongly in the left wing of the Socialist movement by trends towards anti-parliamentarism, glorification of the daily rôle of labor unionism, whittling down the rôle of the Party, theories of a trade union state after capitalism is overthrown, etc. The S. L. P. and the left wing of the S. P. collaborated in founding the Syndicalistic I. W. W. The three outstanding revolutionary leaders of the period displayed strong Syndicalist characteristics. De Leon, as we have seen, was the theoretical father of American Syndicalism; Debs shared many of De Leon's Syndicalistic illusions; and Haywood became an outright Syndicalist. A striking illustration of the power of Syndicalist tendencies in the S. P. was the fact that in the split of 1909 most of those leaving the Party joined the I. W. W., and this was equally true of the far larger national S. P. split of 1912. In the big 1919 S. P. split that gave birth to the Communist movement, the left wing was still afflicted with Syndicalist tendencies and if it did not degenerate into

outright Syndicalism it was because of the presence of corrective influences which I shall consider shortly.

The persistent and widespread Syndicalist tendency had its roots in basic American conditions, in a whole series of economic, political and social factors, operating over a long period, European Syndicalist influences being only a minor cause of it. These many American factors, by hindering the growth of class consciousness and checking the development of independent working class political organization and activity, tended to restrict the struggle of the workers to the economic field and thereby to create the objective conditions favorable to the development of Syndicalism.

There was, first, the more favorable economic situation which checked the class consciousness of the American masses. This was evidenced by such deterrent factors as the existence of plentiful government free land during several generations, the traditionally higher wage and living standards, the development of a very large and conservative labor aristocracy and corrupt trade union bureaucracy, the passage of large numbers of workers into the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie and many even into the big bourgeoisie during the long period of rapid industrial expansion, etc. These many economic factors tended powerfully to blur class lines, to create bourgeois property illusions among the workers, to stifle the class struggle of the masses and to predispose them to Syndicalism.

Then there must be added the widespread bourgeois-democratic illusions among the masses, set up by the fact that the American bourgeois revolution accorded the workers a relatively high degree of formal democratic rights of free speech, free press, free assembly, the right to organize and strike, the right to be elected to any office, the fiction of legalized social equality, etc. These rights had been won by the workers many years before, and no longer provided the cause for acute political struggle. Thus, the American workers, unlike those of Germany, Austria, old Russia, etc., were not aware of burning, immediate political grievances suffi-

cient to serve as the basis for a mass political party. The grievances that the workers had, and they were many and urgent, loomed up to them chiefly as economic—questions of wages, hours, working conditions, etc. In the given historical situation this is why the American workers have made their fight mainly on the economic field, why they were unable to build a mass Socialist or Labor Party; and it formed an important basis for Syndicalism.

A number of other important factors also tended to check the American workers' political activity as a class and to encourage Syndicalism, such as: the decentralized character of the American government, which scattered the political efforts of the workers; the presence of great masses of disfranchised immigrants and floating workers interested chiefly only in economic questions and subject to strong non-political and anti-political moods; the heterogeneous character of the working class—many nations, races, religions, traditions, etc.—which made class solidarity difficult; the notoriously corrupt American politics * which disgusted many workers with political action generally; the ultra-reactionary régime in the A. F. of L. which repelled revolutionary workers from the old unions; and last but not least, the petty bourgeois control and reformist policies of the S. P. which drove many workers (myself included) out of the Party and into Syndicalism, as we have seen in the splits of 1909 and 1912.

All the foregoing factors constituted the native soil in which the persistent deviation, Syndicalism, grew in the United States. But of themselves they only created the objective possibilities for Syndicalism. The actual development of American Syndicalism into a system was directly caused by another, a subjective factor, the theoretical weakness of the left wing. *This was the historical "left" sectarian tendency of not struggling against these anti-political forces, but of adapting itself to them and restricting its revolutionary*

* This acute political corruption originated principally in the wholesale bribery of legislators in connection with the stealing of the public domain, one of the special features of capitalist accumulation in America.

struggle to the economic field. There was no Lenin in America who could, in face of the many factors making against political action, hammer out a revolutionary political policy; nor was the American left wing even informed regarding Lenin's work. As we have already seen, the left wing's most outstanding leaders over a period of 30 years—De Leon, Debs, Haywood—could do no better than help it lose itself in the Syndicalist swamp.*

In the previous chapter, dealing with the S. L. P., I have discussed the main theoretical errors of the left wing which tended to the development of Syndicalism. Briefly, these were: (1) a great underestimation of the rôle of the Party, especially by De Leon, which led straight to a repudiation of the Party altogether by Haywood and other true Syndicalists; (2) exaggeration of the rôle of labor unions and Syndicalistic speculations of bringing about the revolution by utopian dual industrial unions; (3) misconceptions of the rôle of the state, especially the dictatorship of the proletariat, and also the elaboration of Syndicalistic notions of conducting the future Socialist society through a trade union state.

Although the Syndicalist tendency persisted long and vigorously in the United States, it has finally shrunk to a very minor factor. This is because the theoretical confusion upon which it was based has been mostly cleared up. The experience of the Russian revolution and the consequent popularization of Lenin's writings through the Communist International exploded the old-time American Syndicalist fallacies by demonstrating in practice the revolutionary rôle of the Party, the subordinate function of the trade unions, the nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc. These basic truths, learned in the daily struggles, in the seizure of power and in the building of Socialism in the U. S. S. R., were confirmed by the post-war revolutionary upheavals in Germany, Austria, Hungary, China, etc. The genuinely revolutionary forces in the United States were able to learn these

* As we shall see later, unfortunately I did my share to help increase the Syndicalist confusion.

lessons. Hence, with the organization of the Communist Party in 1919, which incorporated these fundamental political lessons in its program, American Syndicalism suffered a mortal blow. The best revolutionary elements from the S. P., S. L. P., I. W. W., S. L. of N. A., Anarchists, etc., rallied to the Communist Party. The anti-political I. W. W. began to shrivel up. Other factors greatly helped this theoretical clarification to hasten the decline of the I. W. W., such as its dual unionism, overestimation of spontaneity and under-estimation of organization, decentralized form, over-emphasis on anti-religious propaganda, tendency to function more as a propaganda body and fighter for free speech than a labor union, placing of impossible demands in strikes, rigidity of tactics, sectarian refusal to learn from its own mistakes, and its counter-revolutionary attitude towards the Soviet Union, which alienated from it the most revolutionary workers. With the decline of the I. W. W. the Syndicalist tendency generally passed rapidly into decay. And since that period the objective situation in the United States has also greatly changed; the whole class struggle has become more political, all of which facilitates organized class political action by the working class and checks the Syndicalist tendency. But of that more in a later chapter.

AN I. W. W. LOOKS AT EUROPEAN LABOR

Now let me resume my personal experiences in the I. W. W. It was chiefly disgust with the petty bourgeois leaders and policies of the S. P. that had made me join the I. W. W.; the above-analyzed weaknesses I could not see at the time. It was an easy step for me to conclude from the paralyzing reformism of the S. P. that political action in general was fruitless and that the way to working-class emancipation was through militant trade union action, culminating in the general strike. This conclusion was a serious error, my confounding political action as such with S. P. opportunism, and thus casting aside the political weapons of

the working-class. It took me many years to correct this basic mistake.

I was also drawn positively to the Syndicalist point of view by the influence of the militant I. W. W., and likewise as a result of the spectacular success of the General Confederation of Labor (C. G. T.) of France. This Syndicalist organization was at that time conducting a whole series of local and national general strikes that were stirring the workers in every country. Its theories of militant action, sabotage, general strike and of a new society operated by the trade unions appealed to me as the last word in revolutionary policy. I decided to go to France and study French Syndicalism at first hand. So, early in 1910, with a hundred dollars in my pocket, I hoboed my way to New York and soon landed in Paris.

I stayed six months in France and intensely studied the labor movement, gaining incidentally a speaking and reading knowledge of French. The C. G. T. leaders welcomed me, every door of the unions was open to me, and I read widely in Pelloutier, Griffuelhes, Kritsky, Pouget, Hervé, Sorel, Bergson and many other Syndicalist writers. I was in daily contact with such leaders as Jouhaux, Yvetot, Monatte, Merheim, all of whom at that time vied with each other in radicalism but who later on nearly all developed into war jingoists and reformists. I actively participated in the great railroad strike of 1910, broken with troops by the ex-Socialist Premier, Briand, and I attended the C. G. T. Congress in Toulouse.

I drank in the French Syndicalist theories of sabotage and general strike then being effectively applied by the labor unions. I heartily endorsed the bitter war of the C. G. T. militants against the S. P. and political action generally. The prevalent anarchistic theories of spontaneous action and decentralized organization of the workers appealed to me as a corrective to bureaucratic control of the trade unions by reactionaries. In short, I became a thorough Syndicalist.

I was deeply impressed by a basic feature of French Syndicalism, new to me and quite contrary to I. W. W. policy.

This was the tactic of boring-from-within, the policy of militant workers penetrating conservative unions, rather than trying to construct new, ideal, industrial unions on the outside. By this means the Anarchists, beginning with their famous "raid" on the unions in the nineties, had defeated the reformist Socialists and captured almost the entire French trade union movement. And in doing so they had transformed themselves as well as the unions. Instead of their original Anarchist policy of individual action, they adopted the trade unions and mass action; they acquired some conception, however confused, of the class struggle; they took part in the daily fights of the workers; they glorified sabotage and looked forward to the general strike to end capitalism; they achieved their theories of a future society based on the trade unions. In short, Syndicalism, or more correctly, Anarcho-Syndicalism, was born.

The policy of boring-from-within was based in the C. G. T. upon the theory of the militant minority. According to this conception the most revolutionary elements among the masses, the natural leaders of the workers, organized themselves into definite groups, *noyaux*, within the broad trade unions. These groups enabled them to function as a unit in formulating their policies and putting them into effect. It was through this organized militant minority that the revolutionary Syndicalists controlled the French trade unions.

It seemed to me that the boring-from-within tactic and the theory of the militant minority were highly intelligent and far superior to the I. W. W. policy of building dual industrial unions and also to its naïve theory that there were no leaders in the organization, all the members being leaders. So I resolved to raise these two questions in the I. W. W. when I returned to the United States, and the sequel showed that they were to play a very large part in my future labor activities.

From France I went to Germany, where I also stayed six months, intensively studying the labor movement and incidentally the German language. I lived at the home of Fritz

Kater, head of the German Syndicalist union. I read constantly histories, programs, convention reports, etc., of the trade unions and the Social Democratic Party. I frequented mass meetings, strike meetings and conventions, becoming acquainted with most of the outstanding Party and union leaders, including the later-to-be renegade Karl Kautsky and the eventual revolutionary hero, Karl Liebknecht.

At that time, early in 1911, the German Social Democratic movement, facing a stalemate in its fight to win the franchise for the masses by parliamentary means, was considering the possibility of securing the right to vote through a general strike. The mass pressure for such a strike was great, under the powerful influence of the general strike of the 1905 Russian revolution in the east and the dramatic general strikes of Syndicalism in the west, in France. A bitter inner-Party fight took place over this issue and in this struggle the reformists, who were inspired by Bernstein and led by Legien and who dominated both the Party and the unions, won so fully that they even forbade the discussion of the general strike in the trade unions.

This course of development convinced me that the German Social Democracy and all its subordinate organizations and similar parties in other countries were a definite obstacle in the way of the revolution, and I so wrote in articles to the I. W. W. press. And my opinions in this respect were to be confirmed only a few years later by these Parties' support of the war and their violent suppression of the post-war revolutionary upheavals. With such an opinion of the Social Democracy, I wrongly criticized the policy of the left wing led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, for their not repudiating the S. D. P. altogether and launching a Syndicalist movement on the French model.

My experience in Germany fortified my Syndicalist opinions. The manifestly non-revolutionary Social Democratic Party and the conservative mass unions and coöperatives under its control convinced me further of the necessity of a revolutionary Syndicalist policy. Furthermore, the sectarian isolation of the German Syndicalist union convinced

me that by withdrawing from old unions, on the I. W. W. plan, they were simply turning the mass trade unions over to Legien's deadly control and that good tactics required the use of boring-from-within methods. I was led to conclude that the policy of dual unionism was wrong not only in Germany, but also in the United States.

Having finished my scheduled six months' stay in Germany, I was hastily picking up a reading knowledge of Italian and Spanish preparatory to spending six months each in Italy and Spain, when I was cabled by Vincent St. John, General Secretary of the I. W. W., to represent that organization at the meeting of the International Trade Union Secretariat (forerunner of the Amsterdam International) to be held in Budapest, Hungary, August 10 to 12, 1911. As I was broke I had to walk 150 miles of the way there, from Nuremburg to Dresden, Germany. In Dresden I attended the national congress of the German trade unions, and saw Legien's iron-clad bureaucracy in action.

The A. F. of L. had sent Vice-President Duncan as its delegate to Budapest and I was instructed to challenge his credentials upon the basis that the A. F. of L. was not a revolutionary organization and that Duncan was a member of the National Civic Federation, and to demand the seating of the I. W. W. as representing the American labor movement. Carl Legien was chairman of the conference and he tried to rule out all discussion on my rather leftist proposal. But I forced the matter before the house, a bitter full day's debate ensued, and I was finally voted down, only the two delegates of the C. G. T., Jouhaux and Yvetot, supporting my motion.

That night, as I had no funds for food or lodging, I was arrested for sleeping in a moving van on the outskirts of Budapest. However, I managed to talk myself out of this scrape on the basis that I had lost my expense money. The French delegates pressed a small loan on me and in a day or two I received a cable from St. John to come home immediately to attend the forthcoming I. W. W. convention, which I did.

THE QUESTION OF BORING-FROM-WITHIN

I was determined to raise the question in the I. W. W. of boring-from-within the old trade unions and of giving up the traditional left wing policy of dual unionism. But this was tackling a hard problem, for at that time the notion was deeply entrenched that no revolutionary work could be done inside the reactionary A. F. of L., and that the only way to create revolutionary unions was by building new and independent organizations. Since about 1895, when De Leon founded the dual Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, all sections of the left wing—left Socialists, Anarchists, Syndicalists—had clung to this theory of dual unionism with the most positive belief. The right wing Socialists, although many worked within the old unions, were also infected with the same idea. Indeed, even liberal intellectuals reflected it.

It is difficult now, when boring-from-within is a generally accepted left wing policy, to realize the terrific grip the erroneous dual union theory then had upon the revolutionists. The question was simply a closed one, undiscussable; even to raise it branded one as a rank opportunist. De Leon, Debs and Haywood, the three big left leaders, continually flayed the old trade unions in unmeasured terms and declared as a matter of profound revolutionary strategy that the path to militant revolutionary unionism lay through independent industrial unions.

But, plainly, the experience of the class struggle did not bear out either this pessimism towards the old unions or the current boundless left wing faith in the ideal industrial unions, of which the I. W. W. was the shining example. On the one hand, this experience taught clearly that where real efforts had been made in the old unions the workers had responded, notwithstanding their corrupt leaders. In 1886, for example, the great eight-hour day movement had been organized by a handful of revolutionists working on the basis of stirring up and building the old unions. Debs himself had also been a real power in the railroad craft unions before

he split from them in 1893 and embarked upon his course of dual unionism. And De Leon had likewise exerted a powerful influence in the K. of L. and A. F. of L. in the nineties, notwithstanding his leftist dualist tendencies. Haywood, too, years before had had no great difficulty in becoming the real leader of the militant Western Federation of Miners. And even at the period of which I am writing the Socialist Party, despite being heavily afflicted with dual unionist tendencies, was making substantial progress in the A. F. of L. This, however, was mostly the work of its opportunistic right wing which had its eyes fastened on official positions and vote catching. The Socialists had already secured control of such unions as the Brewery Workers, Bakers, Machinists, Needle trades, and the Vice-President of the militant U. M. W. A. was a Socialist. In the 1912 A. F. of L. convention the Socialist candidate polled 5,073 votes against Gompers' 11,974. This American experience, which emphasized the correctness of working within the old unions, was further borne out by the experience of the revolutionary movements in France, England, Germany, Russia, etc.

Undoubtedly, the lack of a definite policy of boring-from-within, based on a militant fight for the workers' daily demands, prevented the S. P. from securing the leadership of the trade unions in the pre-war years. Sufficient proof of this was the substantial progress made in this direction by the opportunist right wing, although the powerful left was in dual unionist opposition; and even the right wing itself was skeptical of actually "capturing" the A. F. of L., and was constantly paralyzed by the conflicting policies of the two wings of the Party. Another major mistake preventing the rise of Socialist leadership in the trade unions was the refusal of the Socialists to raise the slogan of a Labor Party based on the unions and their sectarian insistence upon endorsement of the S. P. itself as the party of the trade unions.

Further discrediting the dualist theory, many attempts to found dual industrial unions had failed to develop mass organizations. Time and again De Leon, Debs, Haywood and

other left wing leaders had pronounced the old trade unions dying or even dead; and this was an easy conclusion to arrive at, in view of their reactionary leaders and policies, craft forms, high dues and initiation fees, exclusion of the unskilled workers, and their general unfitness to cope with modern, trustified industry. But the workers, although they readily supported the radicalism that developed within their old unions, stubbornly refused to turn their backs on these organizations, with their traditions and practical benefits; they would not respond to the alluring appeals of the "perfect" revolutionary dual industrial unions. So De Leon's S. T. and L. A. became a dismal fiasco; Deb's A. R. U. perished; the Western Labor Union and its successor, the American Labor Union, also failed, and many other independent industrial unions in single industries died out, despite heroic efforts of devoted left wingers to breathe the breath of life into them. And at the time in question, the I. W. W., in spite of all efforts, had steadily declined from 55,000 members in 1905 to about 6,000 in 1911. It had split in 1908 (the De Leon faction launching a new I. W. W.), and it was evidently traveling the usual path of the revolutionary dual unions to defeat.

The general effect of this dual union policy, which prevailed as a dogmatic left wing gospel for 25 years, was to pull the militants, the most active workers, out of the mass trade unions and to isolate them in sterile dual union sects. The result was to leave the Gompers' reactionary clique in uncontested control of the craft unions and to kill progress in these organizations at its source by depriving them of their best fighting blood. This ill-advised left wing policy was a disastrous mistake and it did very much to check the growth of radicalism generally in the United States by reducing it to sectarianism.

The dual unions obviously had theoretically more correct policies, a better union structure, superior leadership, etc., than the old craft unions. To dual unionists, therefore, it always remained pretty much of a mystery why the masses did not flock to their ideal unions rather than stick to the

obsolete and conservative craft unions, with their corrupt officials. Yet the reasons were quite clear. The more important of them may be briefly summarized as follows: (a) the politically undeveloped masses of workers, full of capitalist illusions, were not ready to rally to the revolutionary slogans of the dual unions; (b) the employers were inclined to make compromises with the conservative trade unions, whereas they fought the revolutionary unions to a standstill; (c) the government was less hostile to the trade unions than to the radical dual unions; (d) the A. F. of L. enjoyed the important prestige of being the traditional labor movement of the country; (e) the masses, animated by a basic sense of labor unity, gravitated towards the large mass organization, rather than towards the small dual groupments; (f) and last but not least, the old trade unions had the vital advantage of speaking the same language as the broad masses in respect of religion, patriotism and general American traditions, while the dual unionist revolutionaries were usually anti-religious, anti-patriotic and altogether scornful of American traditions in general.

The basic advantage of boring-from-within as a method over dual unionism was that the militants, by being inside the old unions, negated altogether the adverse effects of several of the above strong mass opinions and predilections and greatly modified those of the rest; with the general result that the militants had a better approach to the workers and were thus enabled to win to their side large and ever decisive masses of them for policies of class struggle.

THE FIGHT BEGINS

I arrived in Chicago in time for the sixth convention of the I. W. W., which was held in September 1911, and I at once took up the question of winning the I. W. W. for a policy of boring-from-within. When I later put my proposition into print, it read as follows:

The I. W. W. shall give up its attempt to create a new labor movement, turn itself into a propaganda league, get into the

organized labor movement and, by building better fighting machines within the old unions than those possessed by our reactionary enemies, revolutionize these unions.*

I began an active campaign in favor of this fundamental change of policy, and the existing situation in the I. W. W. was favorable to my agitation. The glowing hopes of the 1905 convention had not materialized. The organization had gradually dwindled in numbers and influence—the convention had only 31 delegates. Ideologically the I. W. W. had narrowed down pretty much to a small group of hard-boiled anti-political, anti-religious sectarians. Debs had quit it and De Leon likewise, both having split off when the I. W. W. rejected political action. Pessimism was rampant in the organization and the question, “Why don’t the I. W. W. grow?” was a live issue.

At once I won over to my view J. W. Johnstone, Earl C. Ford and two or three other delegates. Frank Little (later lynched in Butte for opposition to the war during a strike of 27,000 workers led by Bill Dunne) expressed sympathy with our plan. But the top leaders, whom I interviewed one by one, St. John, Ettor, Thompson, Trautman, etc., were all a stone-wall against it. Some time later Bill Haywood agreed “in principle” that the I. W. W. should exempt some industries from its dual union program, but we could not agree on a practical application. I proposed as a start towards a correct policy that the I. W. W. dissolve its dual unions in mining, building, metal, printing and railroads and go to work inside the old unions in these industries, but “Big Bill” would concede only building and printing.

We deemed it inadvisable to bring our proposal before the convention in resolution form on such short notice and without preparation and thus get a black eye for it by a sure defeat. We would first agitate it among the membership. Our chance to do so came when the “decentralizer” faction of the West nominated me for editor of the *Spokane Industrial Worker*, to be elected on referendum vote. As my platform, I

* *Solidarity*, November 4, 1911.

called for a discussion of the boring-from-within policy. The leadership, who had called me back from Budapest, now turned all their guns against me. The discussion aroused the whole organization.* But the official vote count showed that I lost by a few votes. Later on I learned that administration supporters had "padded" their vote sufficiently to defeat me.

Meanwhile an important event was developing, one that effectively crippled the budding boring-from-within agitation in the I. W. W. This was the famous I. W. W. Lawrence strike in January 1912, of 23,000 textile workers. It was hard-fought, well-led and resulted in a real victory for the workers. I. W. W. stocks went skyward again everywhere and it grew rapidly. Within a short period afterward, the organization conducted a whole series of important strikes in Paterson, Akron, Little Falls, Lytton, Mesaba iron range, Washington lumber districts, etc.

This sudden wave of strikes, many of which won concessions, brought the I. W. W. to what Brissenden calls its "crest of power." † Pessimism vanished and the I. W. W. militants were jubilant. St. John declared enthusiastically: "The victory in the Lawrence mills means the start that will only end with the downfall of the capitalist system." In such a situation our question of "Why don't the I. W. W. grow?" fell flat. A new wave of dual unionist sentiment spread in all sections of the whole left wing. Only a few of us looked upon the spurt of the I. W. W. correctly as but "a flash in the pan." The question of boring-from-within had received a body blow at the very outset. But this was not to be the end of the fight. We were to carry it on for another ten years in the left wing generally until finally it scored a smashing victory.

* Occasionally the discussion took a humorous turn, as witness the following verses from a "poem," entitled "Holiness," by McClintock:

"The proper way," said Jay the Fox,	"Agreed," cried Mr. Foster.
"To start the revolution	"I have my gimlet ready,
Is just to bore a hole or two	My arm is long, my hand is strong,
In existing institutions."	My nerves are cool and steady."

† In reality, however, the I. W. W. reached a higher membership total in 1917, when it officially claimed 130,000 members.

CHAPTER VI

THE SYNDICALIST LEAGUE OF NORTH AMERICA

DURING the I. W. W. convention we had held several meetings and resolved upon the following course: We would carry on a wide campaign in the I. W. W. to win it to the policy of boring-from-within; Chicago was selected as our natural center and I as National Secretary of the militant minority groups that were to be formed.

In pursuance of this plan I made a 6,000 mile hobo trip through the West in the dead of winter, speaking to I. W. W. locals. I froze my face and hands and several times narrowly escaped death under the car wheels. However, at several points important militants were won over and local Syndicalist groups formed within the I. W. W.

But just as I was in the midst of this tour came the Lawrence strike and with it the greatly renewed I. W. W. enthusiasm. Thenceforward our agitation in the I. W. W. was quite barren. The revival of the I. W. W. dual union sentiment caused a change in our tactics. Our newly formed groups began to split off from the I. W. W. and to join the A. F. of L. to work there. The first to take this course was local Syndicalist League No. 1, in Nelson, B. C., which had been formed by J. W. Johnstone. It was only a short while afterward until we had similar groups within the A. F. of L. in Kansas City, Omaha, Chicago, Minneapolis, Vancouver, B. C., St. Louis, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Tacoma, Denver and several other cities in the Middle West and West.

As for myself, I paid my last dues to the I. W. W. in February 1912. I was working as a railroader and I joined the A. F. of L. union of my craft, the Brotherhood Railway Carmen of America, in Chicago.

The few forces with which the new movement began its work came, as we have seen, almost entirely from the I. W. W. We had practically no contact with the left wing of the Socialist Party, which was saturated with I. W. W. dual union sentiment. But we did get some very important recruits from the proletarian wing of the dwindling Anarchist movement, including Jay Fox, Joe Manley, S. T. Hammersmark, etc. Fox brought his paper, *The Agitator*, with him. He was a veteran Chicago labor fighter, dating back to Haymarket days. As for the petty-bourgeois, bohemian, Emma Goldman Anarchist group, they, with an eye to the experience of the Anarchist "raid" on the unions in France, tried to take the wind out of our sails by starting a Syndicalist league of their own. But nothing came of the attempt.*

One of the Anarchists who joined our movement was Esther Abramowitz, who in 1912 became my wife. She was born in the old Russian province of Kovno and came to the United States in her early girlhood, where she long worked in a factory under sweatshop conditions. All her adult life she has been a most ardent revolutionist. She is one of those to whom the workers' struggle is the very breath of life. By an earlier marriage she had three children: Rebecca, Sylvia and David. She joined the Communist Party in 1921. An intelligent and devoted comrade, she has been my constant companion and a tower of strength to me in all my labor activities for these many years.

Our new movement was too weak to call a national conference or convention. So, in agreement with the outlying groups, the Chicago local league acted as the national body. It selected an executive board and elected me as National

* In *Mother Earth*, September 30, 1912, a manifesto signed by A. Berkman, W. Sanger, Margaret Sanger, H. Havel and E. Byrne, proposed the establishment of a Syndicalist league: "The aim and object of the League should be the reconstruction of society upon a cooperative basis by a system of federated groups with the widest possible liberty for the individual in contradistinction to State control of industry. The method of propaganda should be direct action and the general strike and be distinctly non-political, using the word political in the sense of parliamentary."

Secretary. The organization was formally called the Syndicalist League of North America, this international title being due to the fact that the League included groups in Canada and hoped to extend its activities also into Mexico. Thus was born the first definite organization in the United States for boring-from-within the trade unions by revolutionaries.

The League adopted a structure calculated to organize the militant minority in the old trade unions. It set up local general leagues in the various industrial centers. These leagues were based upon individual memberships, the members sub-dividing themselves into craft or industrial groups of militants, according to the structure of their respective unions. True to our theories of decentralization, these local groups were highly autonomous. The various groups collected what funds they saw fit, issued their own journals, and worked out their local policies. The national office received no per-capita tax, but depended upon the sale of its journal, pamphlets, collections, etc., for revenue. I got no salary; I worked at my trade as a car inspector, 12 hours a day, seven days a week.

THE PROGRAM OF THE S. L. OF N. A.

The formal statement of the S. L. of N. A. program was contained in two documents: the first a brief outline of principles and constitution adopted by the Chicago League, and the other the pamphlet *Syndicalism*, written by Earl C. Ford and myself. The program was further elaborated in the rather extensive S. L. of N. A. press, which included its official organ, the *Syndicalist*, published semi-monthly in Chicago and edited by Jay Fox; the *Toiler*, a monthly of Kansas City; the *Unionist*, a weekly of St. Louis; the *International*, a monthly of San Diego; and the *Unionist* of Omaha. Besides this press, the S. L. of N. A. militants widely used the columns of the trade union journals for propaganda articles.

In the main, the S. L. of N. A. program followed the general lines of French Syndicalism. While aiming at the over-

throw of the capitalist class and the confiscation of the industries, it also strove to win all possible current concessions from capitalism. It fought for higher wages, shorter hours, and better living and working conditions. It advocated the six-hour day. To win its immediate demands, the S. L. of N. A. relied not only on the partial strike but also laid great stress upon sabotage in all its forms, from passive resistance and go-slow tactics to active impairment of products and disablement of industry. At that time sabotage was looked upon among Syndicalists generally as a most powerful weapon and the official journal of the S. L. of N. A. ran a special column, under the heading: "Society Notes," giving detailed information to workers on how to sabotage their respective jobs and industries during strikes.

The major weapon of the S. L. of N. A. program was the general strike. It advocated the general strike to force partial concessions directly from the bosses and the government, to put an end to war and as the revolutionary means that would finally overthrow capitalism.

The S. L. of N. A. was strongly anti-parliamentary. It opposed participation in elections and in the government. Parliamentary action it considered as a waste and misdirection of the workers' forces. To win both its economic and political demands it relied solely upon the economic power of the workers, expressed through strikes, sabotage, etc. It aggressively opposed the S. P. and all other workers' political parties.

The S. L. of N. A. advocated industrial unionism, but it laid less stress upon this organization form than did the I. W. W., which made a fetish out of the question of union structure. The S. L. of N. A. depended more upon raising the militancy of the workers who would then, by force of their spontaneity, create solidarity of action regardless of the organization form of their unions and the conservative nature of their officials. The S. L. of N. A., which favored the decentralized form of union, proposed to bring about revolutionary industrial unionism by the amalgamation of

related craft unions, the breaking down of high dues and initiation fees, the organization of the unorganized, the elimination of the conservative leadership and the revolutionary education of the rank and file.

The League based itself upon the strategy of boring-from-within the conservative mass trade unions. Its membership was confined to members of these organizations. It resolutely fought the dual unionist policy of withdrawing the militants from the mass conservative unions and isolating them in "perfect," but skeleton and sectarian, dual industrial unions.

The working principle of the S. L. of N. A. was that of the militant minority. It sought to create organized groups of the most conscious revolutionary elements in all the trade unions. It declared: "The militant minority is the thinking and acting part of the working class. It works out the fighting programs and takes the lead in putting them into effect." The organized militants were the little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump.

The foregoing principles of the S. L. of N. A. were generally in line with French Syndicalism, but in one important respect our League deviated from the French. This was in the matter of the role of the trade unions in the new society. The French formula (which fitted essentially with that of the I. W. W.) had it that "the fighting unions of today will be the producing groups of tomorrow." This the S. L. of N. A. disputed vehemently, arguing that trade unions are quite unfitted for carrying on industry. We asserted that industry has a distinct organization of its own, the combined workers, engineers, etc., which we called the "Producing Organization." We argued: "The superiority of the Producing Organization to the Labor Union as a producing force is apparent at a glance. The Producing Organizations are especially designed to carry on production.... The Labor Unions, on the other hand, are built for entirely different purposes. They are essentially organs of combat." * We contended that the Producing Organization of technicians, work-

* *The Toiler*, March 1914, Wm. Z. Foster and J. A. Jones.

ers, etc., spontaneously developed by capitalist industry, would survive the revolution and be the basis for the organization of the industry of the new society.

The S. L. of N. A. program shows that, together with the influence of French Syndicalism, the organization drew many of its conceptions from Anarchist sources. In fact, we defined Syndicalism as "Anarchism made practical." The League consciously considered itself the continuer of the traditions of the great struggle of '86, led by the Anarcho-Syndicalists, Parsons, Spies, *et al*, and we were in constant touch with many of the veterans of that heroic fight, including Lucy Parsons, at whose home we gathered and where we maintained the League's address. As for myself, during this period I fared far afield into Anarchist and semi-Anarchist writings. While I still accepted, or believed I did, the revolutionary economics, class struggle and historical materialism of Marx, I quibbled with his revolutionary strategy, organizational system and proposals for a Socialist society. Correct answers to these questions I thought were to be found in the major works (all of which I read) of such writers as Bakunin, Kropotkin, Nietzsche, Max Stirner, Lester F. Ward, etc., as well as the Syndicalist writers previously mentioned. My ideological development took a definite sag in the direction of Anarchism; I became, in truth, an Anarcho-Syndicalist.

ACTIVITIES OF THE S. L. OF N. A.

The S. L. of N. A. lasted two years, from 1912 to 1914. This was a period of growing struggle by the workers, under the impact of the prevalent industrial crisis. The A. F. of L. unions grew rapidly and conducted several important strikes; the I. W. W. had a heyday of growth and struggles; the S. P. increased its membership from 41,479 in 1909 to 118,045, and in 1912 its vote was the largest in its history. And all this in spite of Roosevelt's efforts to demoralize the toiling masses with his "Bull Moose" campaign.

The strongest point of the S. L. of N. A. was in Kansas

City, where it had practical control of the Cooks, Barbers, Office Workers and other unions. The League militants there conducted several very successful strikes, marked with much militancy and sabotage. Their prestige rose so much that soon they virtually controlled the Central Labor Council. They conducted a general organizing campaign, a "labor forward" movement that brought in large numbers of members and built several new A. F. of L. locals. In their war against the labor fakers, an auditing committee headed by Earl Browder, present-day General Secretary of the Communist Party, submitted a report that compelled Nelson, the crooked Gompersite head of the labor council, to leave town between suns.

In St. Louis the League was headed by J. A. La Bille and it led several militant A. F. of L. strikes of taxi drivers, waiters, etc. In Omaha, with B. McCaffery and D. Coutts leading, the League became a power in the local labor movement but did not gain control. In Nelson, B. C., the League forces, with Jack Johnstone at their head, practically controlled the A. F. of L. locally. In Chicago the League gained a broad influence in many unions, such as the Railway Carmen, Painters, Barbers, Retail Clerks, etc., and laid the basis for a group of militants that was to play a very important role in the Chicago Federation of Labor for many years. In various Pacific Coast cities the League had forces, and in Seattle many of its militants played leading parts in the general strike of a few years later.

Nationally, the S. L. of N. A. actively participated in the Illinois Central-Harriman Lines shop crafts strike of 38,000 workers, stretching from Chicago to the Gulf and the Pacific. This great strike, pushed forward by a strong rank and file minority close to the S. L. of N. A. and headed by Carl Persons and C. A. Hawver, was extremely hard fought. It began in September 1911, and when it was called off four years later in June 1915, there were still pickets around the I. C. shops in Chicago. The strike, fought for the right of the shop crafts to federate, was broken, but the sequel showed that

the right of federation had nevertheless been won on the railroads generally.

The S. L. of N. A. stoutly defended the McNamara boys, arrested for dynamiting the Los Angeles *Times* building, October 1, 1910. How these loyal fighters were tricked by their friends, relatives, lawyers and labor officials into making a courageous but ill-advised plea of guilty in order to save the trade unions from attack and many union leaders from prosecution is one of the most tragic stories in the history of the American labor movement. Today, 25 years later, J. B. McNamara, one of the bravest and most loyal fighters ever developed by the working class (and with him the bold Matt Schmidt) is still wasting away his life behind the grim walls of Folsom penitentiary. Is it not high time that the workers secured the release of these indomitable militants?

The S. L. of N. A. conducted a rank and file movement among the iron molders. Our leader was Tom Mooney, then a young militant but later to become famous as a brutally victimized political prisoner. Together, Mooney and I attended the Milwaukee convention of the Molders in 1912, he as a delegate, to bring forward the League program of industrial unionism through the organization of machine molders and laborers and the amalgamation of the metal trades. At the convention Mooney organized the National Molders Section of the S. L. of N. A., later putting out charters for local groups, issuing dues stamps, etc.

One of the important activities of the S. L. of N. A. was the national tour of Tom Mann in 1913, which was a great success. Mann was fresh from the recent huge strikes of miners, dockers and railroad men in Great Britain. He had been brought to the U. S. by the S. P. left wing, but when they saw that he endorsed the S. L. of N. A. boring-from-within program they dropped him cold, whereupon our League organized his tour. Tom Mann took issue with Debs, Haywood and others on the question of dual unionism. Thenceforth, the S. L. of N. A. remained in close touch with the Industrial Syndicalist League of Great Britain of which he

was the head, and we sent a delegate to the abortive international Syndicalist conference in London.

In 1913-14 the International Union of Timber Workers conducted a general strike movement in the Pacific Northwest for the eight-hour day to become effective on May 1, 1914. In this union League forces were strong; Jay Fox, our national editor, was a Vice-President, and I myself became an organizer of the union for a few months in the summer of 1914. I was in the midst of one of my periodic hobo agitation trips and was induced to help in the eight-hour day campaign in the woods and mills, which our forces had done much to stimulate. The work had progressed well, but a few months previously the promising movement had been wrecked by a maneuver of the right wing Socialist Party in Washington. Just as the workers were streaming by thousands into the union, preparatory for a general strike on May 1st, the S. P. introduced an eight-hour bill in the state legislature. Then the S. P. forces in the union started a referendum endorsing the bill and rejecting the general strike, arguing that it was useless for the timber workers to strike for the eight-hour day when they could get it simply by voting. Local after local declared for the bill and against the strike. Whereupon, the union officials, instead of adopting the necessary course of supporting both the general strike and the eight-hour bill, called a special convention which voted off the strike. This was disastrous. Not only was the strike killed but the eight-hour bill was also later overwhelmingly defeated. In consequence, the lumber workers were demoralized and the union eventually destroyed.

Another important situation in which the S. L. of N. A. had some hand was the revolt of the Butte miners against the reactionary Moyer bureaucracy of the Western Federation of Miners in June 1914. The miners seized the Butte local, drove the company-controlled officials out of town, and proceeded to set up a new union. Passing through Butte at the time, I had a conference with "Mucky" McDonald, Thompson and other rank and file leaders, and I argued with them

that with the key Butte local now in their hands they could easily, by staying inside, take over the whole W. F. of M. But, filled with I. W. W. dualism, they would not listen. They launched their new union, the inevitable fratricidal struggle between the two unions took place, and soon Butte, long a citadel of trade unionism, became an open shop camp. A tragic example of the folly of dual unionism.

The S. L. of N. A. kept up a ceaseless struggle against the deeply rooted dual union illusions that crippled the whole left wing and turned over the trade unions, uncontested, to the Gompers machine. We were inveterate enemies of this policy of withdrawing the militants from the mass unions and placing them in "perfect," but skeleton, sectarian dual industrial unions. We were in constant hot water with the I. W. W. and the S. P. left wing on this point. One of our major controversies was with Debs, who was an ardent dual unionist. Although he, just a few months before, had endorsed the "Detroit" I. W. W., he then suddenly reversed his attitude towards that organization and came out with still another plan for a general secession from the A. F. of L. (which never materialized). He said, in the *Miners Magazine*, May 7, 1914:

It is vain to talk about the I. W. W. ; the Chicago faction, it now seems plain, seems to stand for anarchy. So be it. Let all those who oppose political action and favor sabotage and the program of Anarchism join that faction. The Detroit (De Leon) faction, for reasons not necessary to discuss here, will never amount to more than it does today. A new organization must be built, with the miners, the leading industrial body, at the head of the movement.

Despite its considerable activities, the S. L. of N. A. did not succeed in becoming a mass organization. Also, it never penetrated the industrial East, being almost entirely located in the territory west of Chicago, the traditional I. W. W. stronghold. It was composed chiefly of skilled workers, mostly native-born. No accurate statistics were kept, but its actual membership of militants was estimated at not to exceed 2,000, although the unions led by these militants easily

counted ten to twenty times that many workers. The League's influence, especially in view of its relatively large press, was far greater than its small membership would indicate. After two years of life the S. L. of N. A. fell into decline. In the summer of 1914 its national center was liquidated and the movement crumbled away into disconnected groups of militants working here and there in the trade union movement.

CRITICISM OF THE S. L. OF N. A. PROGRAM

The S. L. of N. A. program exhibited the basic flaw of the Syndicalist movement in general: that is, it constituted a great over-simplification of the workers' revolutionary problem in both theory and practice. The Syndicalist over-simplification takes the form of trying to ignore the capitalist state by disregarding the workers' need for a revolutionary political party and for political action; and by seeking to cramp the whole organization and struggle of the working class within the scope of trade union action. Thus the class struggle front of the workers is narrowed down and the workers are crippled in their fight for democratic rights, social insurance, etc.; they are denied the advantages of parliamentary election struggles, the use of the government legislatures as tribunes from which to speak to the masses, and the ideologically clarifying effect of the general political struggle; they are prevented from setting up alliances with potential allies among the farmers, petty bourgeoisie and the oppressed Negro people. In short, Syndicalism politically disarms the workers and emasculates their struggle in the face of the capitalist enemy. Ample experience teaches that in practice it leads either to defeat in open struggle or to surrender through opportunist reformism.

A fundamental aspect of Syndicalist (including I. W. W.) over-simplification is to be found in its general strike theories: its notion that the workers can stop a war or carry out the revolution by a "folded arms" strike. Thus the S. L.

of N. A. program said: "The power of the workers to control industry is the greatest force in modern society. The workers would have but to temporarily cease work as a class to overthrow the master capitalist class and free themselves." But the Russian, German and other revolutions made clear the fact—and recent fascist developments clinch it—which Marx, Engels and Lenin demonstrated long ago, that the capitalist class can never be finally defeated except by the superior force of the workers and other toilers. The general strike can and must be used effectively in war and revolutionary situations, but of itself it cannot bring about the revolution. Syndicalist and reformist Socialist theories of folded arms general strikes can only lead the workers to surrender or to slaughter.

The S. L. of N. A.'s Syndicalist theories of decentralized organization and spontaneous action by the workers were also wrong and a hindrance to the development of solid organization and persistent struggle. Furthermore, its heavy stress upon sabotage would open the union doors to provocateurs and tend to substitute the action of a few daring individuals for broad mass action. Also the S. L. of N. A. leftist direct attacks upon the workers' nationalistic feelings and their religion also needlessly alienated the masses of workers afflicted with such illusions and made for sectarianism.

The League's theory of the militant minority, however, had a sound core and was a big advance over the current I. W. W. conceptions. But the Syndicalist militant minority, hamstrung by the limitations of "direct action" theory, organization and practice, inevitably remains only a feeble forecast of the true vanguard of the working class, the Communist Party, with its broad political program and its organized groups of fighters, not only in the trade unions but also in the shops, farms, army, schools, government, etc.

The boring-from-within policy of the S. L. of N. A. was basically correct and vastly superior to the prevalent left wing, dual union fantasies. But the S. L. of N. A. sometimes

applied it too narrowly by failing to work systematically within such dual unions as were existing at the time.

The S. L. of N. A. theory of the Producing Organization that would operate industry in the new society was also an advance over the current Syndicalist conception that the future industries would be operated by the trade unions. In the Soviet union today the industries are conducted by economic bodies under the direction of the state, and somewhat akin to our Producing Organizations, while the trade unions, insofar as they deal directly with the industrial processes, play only an auxiliary role in production. Early in the revolution, the Syndicalist theory of the unions running the industries proved itself futile.

Although our Producing Organization theory contained an element of truth, there was also a two-fold error in the League's conception. This was: (1) a failure to understand the role of the Party and Soviets under the dictatorship of the proletariat and (2) a naive underestimation of the capitalist resistance to the revolution, evidenced by the League's assuming that the capitalist economic organization, with minor changes, would go on over into the new society. The fact is, as the U. S. S. R. now shows clearly, the whole economic organization has to be rebuilt into a Socialist industrial organization of industry and agriculture, the creation of a new technical personnel, the carrying on of struggles against bourgeois engineer sabotage, etc., and it constitutes one of the very greatest tasks of the revolution.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE S. L. OF N. A.

The programmatic defects of the S. L. of N. A. were basic factors in preventing its growth into a mass organization which could play a permanent role in the class struggle. These defects all tended in the direction of narrowing down the League's field of operations, of isolating it from the masses, of condemning it to the sectarianism that afflicted the left wing generally at the time.

A major factor in the defeat of the S. L. of N. A. and its final liquidation was its inability to recruit a sufficient group of militants, because of their obsession with the dual union theory. As I have already indicated, during the S. L. of N. A. period the I. W. W. was on the upswing and it was hypnotizing the whole left wing, including the militant elements in the Socialist Party, with the glitter of its sparkling industrial union utopia.

At that time a big struggle of the left wing was developing in the Socialist Party. The fight, which was a continuation and intensification of our fight of 1909 in the S. P., was led by Bill Haywood and the *International Socialist Review* group. It climaxed around the two Syndicalist issues of dual industrial unionism and sabotage. On both issues the left wing was defeated. On the question of industrial unionism, the S. P. convention of 1912, controlled by preachers and lawyers, adopted a typical opportunist resolution. It endorsed industrial unionism in principle but did not explain how to secure it, whether by transforming the old unions or by building a new union movement. Thus the Party was left without a policy; which meant that the lefts would go on with their usual dual unionism and the rights with their opportunist vote-catching and job-hunting in the A. F. of L. On the question of sabotage, the lefts were badly beaten: Haywood was forced out of the National Executive Committee, and the advocacy of sabotage was prohibited on pain of expulsion by a change in the Party constitution.*

This historic defeat of the left wing resulted in a major exodus from the Party and an intensification of dual unionism. Led by Haywood himself, thousands quit the Party. The great bulk of these militants, heavily Syndicalist in ideology, went to the I. W. W., either as members or sympathizers. They passed by the S. L. of N. A., with nothing but contempt for its boring-from-within, which they looked upon

* Its notorious "Article 2, section 6," read: "Any member of the Party who opposes political action or advocates crime, sabotage or other methods of violence as a weapon of the working class to aid in emancipation shall be expelled from membership in the Party."

as the grossest opportunism and a betrayal of the working class. They, however, were not especially repelled by the League's sectarianism since they and the I. W. W. which they joined were even more afflicted with the traditional American left wing sickness. The whole trend of the left wing of the period was against the S. L. of N. A. and its program.

Despite its short life, the S. L. of N. A. left its mark upon the left wing, however, and it must occupy an important position in American revolutionary history. It stands as the first organized effort of revolutionary workers to wrest the leadership of the trade unions away from their reactionary leaders. In this it represented a great step forward over the crude dual unionism to which the left wing was then wedded. The only earlier serious efforts by revolutionaries to win leadership in the trade unions was that of Spies, *et al*, in 1886, and by the revolutionary pioneers in the early days of the S. L. P. But this was in the period before the left wing became afflicted with its long sickness of dual industrial unionism. The League led the first serious assault upon this paralyzing policy.

The S. L. of N. A. also deserves its place in labor history because its boring-from-within policy constituted a conscious fight against the general besetting sin of the American left wing, sectarianism. Marx and Engels long ago noted this American weakness, from which the left wing even until the time I write this, 1936, is still struggling to free itself. The League, by seeking to bring the militant workers out of their isolation and into the mass trade unions, struck at the very heart of this destructive disease of sectarianism.

It is true that the S. L. of N. A. failed to overcome its general Syndicalist outlook, which it had inherited from the I. W. W. and the left wing of the S. P., but it nevertheless contained in its program of penetrating the old unions the germ of a correct revolutionary policy, a policy which, as we shall see later, eventually has come to the widest adoption by revolutionary workers in the United States, and which is in line with world labor experience.

CHAPTER VII

THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION EDUCATIONAL LEAGUE

THE failure of the S. L. of N. A. to establish itself permanently in the labor movement was a facer to our small group of Syndicalists. It did not, however, shake our faith in the correctness of the policy of boring-from-within. So, hardly had the S. L. of N. A. collapsed than we began to move to organize a new national organization. This effort crystallized in a conference held in St. Louis, January 17, 1915, consisting of a dozen delegates from Chicago, St. Louis, Omaha and Kansas City. At this conference was set up the International Trade Union Educational League. Chicago was chosen as national headquarters; a small National Board, with representatives from our four main points, was selected, and I was picked as Secretary.

The organizational structure and boring-from-within policy of the I. T. U. E. L. followed the general lines of the old S. L. of N. A. The National Board was only advisory, the local groups deciding upon their own structure and policies. There was no national dues system, a provision chiefly to protect the League from charges of dual unionism. The Syndicalist principle of decentralization and autonomy ran all through the League. The I. T. U. E. L. was to extend its organization into Canada.

At this time the old S. L. of N. A. papers, *Omaha Unionist* and *San Diego International*, were still surviving. But it was decided to launch a new national organ, in Chicago. Eventually this was done in the shape of the *Chicago Labor News*, edited by Max Dezettel, formerly a leader of the Kansas City S. L. of N. A.

As its program the conference gave temporary indorsement to the old S. L. of N. A. pamphlet, *Syndicalism*. But our

opinions had recently undergone radical changes and I was instructed to incorporate our new ideas in another document, which I eventually did in a booklet entitled, *Trade Unionism: The Road to Freedom*. This was the only formal statement of policy ever issued by the I. T. U. E. L.

THE PROGRAM OF THE I. T. U. E. L.

Although basically Syndicalist the I. T. U. E. L. program, as expressed by my pamphlet, had significance because of its wide deviations from orthodox Syndicalist theory, the beginnings of which deviations were to be found in the S. L. of N. A. program. The most significant of these new conceptions was the far less stress the I. T. U. E. L. laid upon the importance of class consciousness among the workers. We took the position that the trade union movement, whether animated by a revolutionary theory or not, is by its very nature driven on to the revolutionary goal. We held that in all trade union movements, conservative as well as radical, there is going on a double-phased process of strengthening their forces and increasing their demands accordingly, and that this process of building constantly greater power and making bigger demands inevitably pushes the unions on, willy nilly, to the overthrow of capitalism. This was indeed faring far afield from the narrow leftist sectarianism of the I. W. W., and it constituted a sag into right opportunism.

I was responsible for this theory and based my conclusions primarily upon the lessons of the Great British strikes of transport workers, railroaders and miners in 1910-11. But we saw the same process at work in the American labor movement, although at a slower tempo. My pamphlet thus explains the first principle of my theory; that is, the spontaneous development by the trade unions of sufficient power to overthrow capitalism:

Four and a half years ago the gigantic Federation of Transport Workers pulled its scattered forces together and declared a general strike throughout Great Britain. This monster strike set

all British capitalism atremble. The Shipping Federation, strongest employers' association in the world and for many years absolute dictator of English maritime affairs, crumbled in two days' time from the attack of the labor giant. Even the British Government itself was panic-stricken. A profound fear seized the ruling class.

This fear turned to consternation when the railroad men joined the general walkout. Something had to be done and that at once, unless the rapidly awakening workers were to take charge of the situation entirely. So the railroad men were speedily placated, and, a little later, the transport workers were sent back to work with one of the greatest victories ever won by Labor anywhere in the world.

These big strikes were hardly over when Great Britain was stricken by one still more terrific. This was the nation-wide walkout of the 1,000,000 coal miners. So paralyzed was British society by this immense strike that it was truthfully said that England had never been in such a critical situation since the days of the Spanish Armada. The strike ended by the proud British Government being compelled to do the bidding of the Coal Miners Union.

But even these society-shaking movements do not by any means exhaust the possibilities of trade unionism. Since the war began the British transport workers', railroaders', and miners' federations have combined themselves into one gigantic offensive and defensive alliance. This great body, numbering over 1,500,000 workers, is already famous as the "Triple Alliance."

Now the question arises: if the three federations in the Triple Alliance, striking singly, could bring terror to the heart of capitalism and prove themselves a match for the Government, what will happen when all three strike together? The probability is that when the Triple Alliance strikes, and it is only awaiting a favorable opportunity to do so, it will prove itself the strongest element in British society. The trade unions will at last have the upper-hand. But if such should not be the case, "Far greater combinations than even this monster are latent in the working class and only awaiting development."

Thus, by a process native to all trade unions, the latter would go on building up greater and greater labor combinations and strikes until finally they would find themselves dominant in society by virtue of their ever-expanding and invincible power. And then—here is the second principle

of the I. T. U. E. L. theory—once they felt themselves masters of the situation in a general strike they would inevitably proceed to expropriate the capitalists and take command of society. They would do this, even though their general strike demands had been originally only of a minor nature; because, I argued, the basic policy of trade unions, whether “radical” or “conservative” in outlook, is always to make demands according to their strength, increasing these demands as their strength grows. My pamphlet explains:

The truth is that the trade union movement acts always upon the revolutionary policy of utilizing its power to the utmost in forcing the employer to grant it concessions. Its method is to take all it can, and it often over-reaches itself, as many lost strikes eloquently testify.

It is idle to say that the trade unions will rest content with anything short of complete emancipation. For they are as insatiable as the veriest so-called revolutionary unions. In the measure their strength increases so do their demands. They have sent wages up: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 dollars per day, and hours down: 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6 per day with all kinds of other concessions sandwiched in between. And now they are more radical in their demands than ever before in their history. Permanently satisfied trade unions under capitalism would be the eighth wonder of the world, outrivalling in interest the famous hanging gardens of Babylon. They would be impossible. With its growing power Organized Labor will go on winning greater and greater concessions regardless of how profound they may be. It is purest assumption to state that the trade unions would balk at the overthrow of the wages system.

All this constituted a theory of the spontaneously revolutionary character of trade unionism as such, regardless of its expressed conservative ideology. Consequently, we discounted such conservative A. F. of L. slogans as “A fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work” and “The interests of Capital and Labor are identical,” as being only so much protective camouflage designed to obscure the basically revolutionary tendencies of the movement. According to the I. T. U. E. L., the task of the militant minority was not to *make* the trade unions revolutionary through educational work; the most it could do

was to *hasten* their natural revolutionary development. As I stated this same theory four years later in my book, *The Great Steel Strike and Its Lessons* (p. 259):

The trade unions will not become anti-capitalist through the conversion of their members to a certain point of view or by the adoption of certain preambles; they *are* that by their very makeup and methods. The most that can be done is to clarify their aims and intensify their efforts towards freedom.

Logically, from this argumentation, I concluded that the main revolutionary task was the building of mass trade unions. All else was subordinate to that. The question of revolutionary propaganda was a secondary matter. With developing mass organization, the workers would proceed more or less spontaneously to the revolution. Of course, they would make many mistakes and many times they would be betrayed by conservative leaders; but the basic trends of the trade union movement, (a) to build up greater and finally irresistible combinations of unions and strikes and, (b) to take from the bosses all they had the power to take, would surely carry even conservative workers on to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in spite of all obstacles.

THE ERRORS OF THE I. T. U. E. L. PROGRAM

This theory of the I. T. U. E. L. is subject to the same general criticism made of Syndicalism in previous chapters. It had in it, likewise, traces of Bernsteinism, which erroneously concludes that trade unions can permanently improve the workers' conditions under capitalism, a theory that has been thoroughly exploded by the recent decline of the workers' living standards in all capitalist countries. But its basic weakness was the characteristic Syndicalist over-simplification of the revolutionary problem, by assuming that the overthrow of capitalism could be brought about by trade union action alone. And it worsened this over-simplification by minimizing the necessity of revolutionary class consciousness, of revolutionary theory.

The I. T. U. E. L. theory of an automatic trade union revolution, like Syndicalism in general, grossly underestimates the violence of the resistance made by the capitalist class. Its perspective of a more or less peaceful revolutionary general strike has no basis in reality. The experience of the whole post-war period of capitalism—the many revolutionary struggles, the rise of fascism, etc.—has demonstrated clearly, as Marx pointed out long ago, that the capitalist class will fight desperately with its state power and otherwise against the rising revolutionary proletariat and its allies, and that it can be defeated only by the superior might of the revolutionary masses.

The I. T. U. E. L. also failed to make the vital distinction between the native class instinct which enables undeveloped workers to carry on a trade union struggle for concessions to lessen the rigors of capitalism, and the cultivated class consciousness which is necessary to dispel the many capitalist illusions obsessing the workers and to lead them along the revolutionary path to overthrow capitalism. This clear class consciousness is especially indispensable for the organized revolutionary vanguard of the workers upon whom falls the task of leading the less-developed masses to the revolution and without whom the masses become hopelessly lost in the capitalist jungle.

Lenin, in his fight against the Russian "Economists" at the turn of the century (although we then knew nothing of this), clearly pointed out the dangers of underestimating revolutionary consciousness. He declared that without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. He showed the inability of trade unions as such to break through the capitalist encirclement. He said: "The spontaneous labor movement is able by itself to create (and inevitably will create) only trade unions and working class trade union politics, or precisely class bourgeois politics." * Lenin also demonstrated that the underestimation of revolutionary understanding sets up a bar to the revolution when he declared: "the belittling of the role of 'the conscious element,' of the

* *What Is To Be Done?*

role of the Social Democracy (written before the Party split, *W. Z. F.*) means, *whether one likes it or not, growth of bourgeois ideology among the workers.*" * And the experience of the Russian and other revolutions has amply confirmed Lenin's analysis by showing the indispensable revolutionary role of the conscious proletarian vanguard organized in the Communist Party.

The I. T. U. E. L. theory also underestimated the counter-revolutionary role of the reactionary trade union and Socialist Party bureaucracy. The theory, while it recognized the strike-breaking effects of these bureaucrats, believed that they would be unable to halt the elemental move forward of the trade unions. The error of such a conclusion has been since exemplified in many countries, notably in Germany in 1918, when the reactionary Socialist labor leaders, because of their organizational and ideological grip upon the masses of workers, were able to defeat the revolution even where the armed forces of capitalism had failed to do so.

Life eventually explodes false theories, and it seemed to take particular pains to wreck that of the I. T. U. E. L., and under my very eyes. As I have stated, it was around the Triple Alliance of transport workers, miners and railroaders in Great Britain that we developed our theory of spontaneous trade union revolution. Well (to run ahead of our story a bit), it fell to my lot to be in London in 1921 when the Triple Alliance, upon which I had placed so many hopes, faced its great strike test. The post-war crisis was on, with the bosses slashing the workers' wages. The coal miners had struck all over the country, and they called upon their affiliated transport and railroad workers to strike with them. It was the great movement long looked forward to by Syndicalists; the huge Triple Alliance was about to deliver its crushing blow. But the capitalists did not spend their time bemoaning their fate; on the contrary, they got busy through their labor lackeys, the MacDonalds, Clynes, Hodges, Thomas, *et al.*, and had them betray the workers' struggle. These mis-

* *Ibid.*

leaders managed to prevent the railroaders and transport workers from striking. The miners were thus left to their fate and British Labor had its "Black Friday." The results were that the Triple Alliance collapsed completely and was soon dissolved, and the workers suffered one of the greatest defeats in their history.

Then, as if to make still clearer the futility of the I. T. U. E. L. Syndicalist theory, life also proceeded to smash those "gigantic combinations of conservative trade unions" which we foresaw in the event that the Triple Alliance was unable to put an end to capitalism by its general strike. Thus, the great British general strike of 1926, which counted 4,000,000 workers. Surely, if there was anything to our theory that conservative trade unions, striking for partial demands, would smash capitalism, now was the supreme opportunity for it to demonstrate itself. But the capitalists disposed of this great trade union strike without too much difficulty. Although they had mobilized their armed forces to apply violence against the strikers they did not have to use them. Once again, their labor lieutenants, the reformist trade union and Labor Party leaders, did the strikebreaking job successfully. They used every means to prevent the workers developing the strike into a real fight and, finally, they called the strike off altogether. Result: another disaster, even more far-reaching than that of "Black Friday" in 1921.

Manifestly, what was needed to win the British Triple Alliance and general strikes was a strong Communist Party and mass trade union opposition able to wrest the leadership of the struggles from the control of the Labor Party misleaders and to develop them into a real political struggle; but the British C. P. and minority movement were too weak to do this. Altogether, both situations were graphic illustrations of the futility of over-estimating the role of conservative trade unionism in the class struggle, of neglecting the fundamental role of revolutionary consciousness and of the organized revolutionary vanguard of the workers, which is the Communist Party.

In order to criticize the I. T. U. E. L. theory of a spontaneous trade union revolution, I have somewhat anticipated my narrative. Of course, in the days of the I. T. U. E. L., I was quite unaware of this analysis of our program and the disastrous British experiences contained above. To us, let me repeat, the big thing was to build the trade unions. Then, with a constantly developing organization and even greater demands, the workers would more or less automatically, even without revolutionary theory, proceed to overthrow capitalism. All that the militant minority could do was to hasten this basic revolutionary trend of trade unionism. This erroneous conception, an enormous exaggeration of the role of conservative trade unionism, dominated my activities for the next several years. As we shall see, it led me, on the one hand, to perform some of the most effective organizing work I have ever done and, on the other hand, to make one of the greatest political mistakes in my life.

THE WORK OF THE I. T. U. E. L.

The I. T. U. E. L. was born a few months after the beginning of the World War, in the midst of the 1914-15 industrial crisis and just on the eve of the great war boom. It was a time of rapidly rising cost of living and of spreading discontent among the workers. The workers were in a militant mood, but their organizations were giving them no fighting lead and there were few struggles. The A. F. of L. unions were stagnant in the industrial crisis, the I. W. W. had declined after its upshoot of two years before and the S. P. was still suffering heavily from the big split of 1912.

Objectively, the situation was favorable for I. T. U. E. L. work, which translated itself chiefly into efforts to organize the unorganized. But the I. T. U. E. L. never succeeded in developing into a national movement. I made a 7,000-mile agitation tour through the West, hoboeing it in winter time as usual, trying to build the movement. Here and there local militants endeavored to set up groups. But without avail.

The I. T. U. E. L. secured less spread nationally even than had the S. L. of N. A. It finally simmered itself down pretty much into a local League in Chicago; a group, however, which was fated to play an important role in the general labor movement.

The reasons for the failure of the I. T. U. E. L. to grow were pretty much the same as in the case of the S. L. of N. A. There were the usual Syndicalist weaknesses. Then there was the traditional left wing opposition to boring-from-within. Although the I. W. W. was in a slump, dual unionism remained the unchallengeable and undiscussable gospel of the I. W. W., the S. L. P. and the left wing of the S. P. The dual union theory was at the time drawing sustenance from resentment against the deepening corruption in the A. F. of L. and its impotence in trustified industry, as well as from the growth of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, an independent union split-off from the United Garment Workers. Another factor that drove a wedge between the I. T. U. E. L. and the body of the left wing forces was the right opportunist conception of Syndicalism that we had developed. This clashed violently with the leftist, sectarian conceptions prevalent generally in the left wing and tended to further isolate our forces from the general revolutionary movement.

THE CHICAGO LEAGUE

The Chicago group of the I. T. U. E. L. was noteworthy because it was instrumental in setting on foot many militant movements and it was a prime factor in eventually making the Chicago Federation of Labor the most progressive labor council in the United States, through its initiative in starting the great stockyards and steel industry campaigns of 1917-19, activity in the Labor Party movement, support of the Mooney-Billings case, etc. It was not a large group in I. T. U. E. L. days; probably all those who might be classed loosely as "members" did not exceed 100. But its members were very militant and influential, including Jack Johnstone, Joe Man-

ley, Max Dezettel, J. A. Jones, Ed W. Rice, etc. It had its main basis in the Painters, Railway Carmen, Carpenters, Machinists, Barbers, Retail Clerks, Tailors, Ladies Garment Workers, Metal Polishers and Iron Molders. Many of its members were local union officials. As for myself, in the latter part of 1915, while working in Swift's car shops in the Stockyards, I was elected Business Agent, or more properly, Organizer of the Chicago District Council of the Railway Carmen, by a referendum vote of the 13 affiliated locals, a job at which I gained much valuable experience as an organizer.

Through 1915 and 1916 we were building up a strong I. T. U. E. L. delegation in the Chicago Federation of Labor. Our policy was to make a sort of informal united front on many questions with the Fitzpatrick leading group. Although we considered John Fitzpatrick quite innocent of any theoretical knowledge of the class struggle, we sized him up as an honest and courageous man who made the best fight he knew how for the workers. A few years earlier the progressive Fitzpatrick-Nockels-Dold faction had beaten the notorious "Skinny" Madden building trades gang of crooks and won the control of the Federation away from them. This fight, followed up by Fitzpatrick's support of the bitterly fought "outlaw" Chicago printing trades strike and of the earlier fierce struggle of the garment workers which gave birth to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, had brought the Fitzpatrick leadership into sharp conflict with the Gompers national machine, with the result that the C. F. of L. lost its charter a couple of times.

This fight against Gompers suited us and we were for pushing it on all fronts. We also endorsed Fitzpatrick's desultory war upon the S. P., and favored sharpening this, too. We drew a line, however, against Fitzpatrick's politics, which were the characteristic A. F. of L. non-partisan support of "friends" of labor on the two old party tickets. We were against all such political activity, pinning our entire hope on economic struggle.

The I. T. U. E. L. Chicago group took an energetic part in all the local strikes of the period, making it a special point to work with the "educational" or sabotage committees of the locals involved. We came into sharp collision with the growing gangster control of the unions, making bitter enemies of the Murphy and O'Donnell gangs and other forerunners of the lurid Al Capone era.

The I. T. U. E. L. also branched out nationally with its agitation. We sent many articles to the trade union journals embodying our viewpoint and we circularized thousands of local unions, pushing a distribution of our pamphlet, *Trade Unionism: the Road to Freedom*.

A very important action of the Chicago I. T. U. E. L. was to secure the adoption by the C. F. of L. of a proposal to form a Chicago Railroad Council, to be made up of locals of all railroad unions. The heads of the railroad craft unions fought this as a dangerous rank and file movement. Gradually, however, long after the I. T. U. E. L. had died, the movement took root especially among the shop crafts, until in 1919, when, under the leadership of L. M. Hawver, with whom we had worked closely since the days of the I. C. strike in 1911, it waged the "outlaw" shopmen's national strike of 200,000 workers.

During 1916, the S. P. put out a national eight-hour bill. This our Chicago group fought tooth and nail, advocating instead a general strike to win the eight-hour day. We were defeated on this in the C. F. of L., John Fitzpatrick supporting the eight-hour bill. He had small faith in the strike as a weapon, and I remember what fine scorn he poured out upon our direct action arguments. What chance is there, for example, he said, for the poverty-stricken, oppressed, trust-ridden and demoralized packinghouse workers to get the eight-hour day any other way than through legislation? Yet, curiously enough, it was only a couple of years later when Fitzpatrick and I, standing at the head of a great national movement of 200,000 packinghouse workers, helped establish the eight-hour day by trade union action, not only for Chicago,

but throughout the whole packing industry of the United States.

The Chicago group eventually developed a split over the question of working with Fitzpatrick. Dezettel, editor of our *Labor News*, after legally intrenching his control of the paper, gradually began to make alliances with the corrupt officials of the Building Trades, Flat Janitors, Moving Picture Operators, etc., and increasingly he took a stand against Fitzpatrick. Consequently, this course of his developed a break between Dezettel and us. The *Labor News* later continued to drift to the right and into deep corruption. By the time the United States entered the war it had degenerated into a typical patriotic, anti-red, Gompersite grafting labor sheet. Dezettel made stacks of money, even boasting that he cleared \$50,000 in the year before he died. Every morning, for his personal expenses of the day, he would write himself a check for \$100. He was finally killed, after a night of debauch, during an accident in a "scab" yellow taxi. His paper lingered on for several years, a parasite on the workers.

Objective conditions were against the establishment of the I. T. U. E. L. on a mass basis: its own policies were defective and the left wing generally was still thoroughly saturated with dual unionism. The loss of the Chicago *Labor News*, which we had hoped to develop into an instrument that would intrench us nationally in the labor movement, was the last straw for the I. T. U. E. L. The decay of our organization was hastened; so that by the Spring of 1917 the Chicago group dropped the name of the I. T. U. E. L., and consisted thereafter simply of a scattering of influential militants meeting each other only occasionally in the course of their work in the unions. The I. T. U. E. L., as a formal organization, perished after two and a half years of life and followed its predecessor, the S. L. of N. A., into history, although its erstwhile members were soon to play a big role in Chicago. Thus ended the second episode in our long struggle to establish a boring-from-within policy for the American revolutionary movement.

CHAPTER VIII

THE A. F. OF L.: THE MEAT PACKING CAMPAIGN

THE WORLD WAR

FOR the first two and a half years of the World War the American capitalist class was in the highly favorable position of seeing its international rivals gradually destroying each other, while it sold them the necessary ammunition, captured their markets and leaped ahead to a position as leading imperialist power of the world. About the beginning of 1917, however, the danger appeared that Germany might win the war. This would never do, for the United States, besides fearing the loss of its war loans, needed the crushing of the rapidly rising German imperialist power almost as urgently as England did. So, President Wilson, casting aside as junk his pacifist election slogans, was skillful enough to find war pretexts and on April 6, 1917, the United States entered the slaughter.

The great masses of workers were not in favor of the war. This was manifest by their overwhelming refusal to volunteer, which forced the government almost immediately to apply the compulsory draft. Naturally, the A. F. of L. leaders, as faithful labor lieutenants of capital, were not slow to leap in as recruiting agencies for the government. Even before the war, on March 12, 1917, they already assured Wilson of their support, by their statement that the trade unions "hereby pledge ourselves in peace or in war, in stress or in storm, to stand unreservedly by the standard of liberty and the safety and preservation of the institutions and ideals of our people." Then, as the war developed, these leaders entered solidly into the war activities on every field (except the battle-field). They also bound themselves not to conduct strikes and not to organize the workers in the open-shop industries.

In general, the revolutionary movement adopted a stand against the United States' entry into the war, although its opposition took largely the form of pacifism. The S. P., under the pressure of its left wing, adopted an anti-war resolution. But the American opportunist Socialist leaders, like their brothers in Europe, were pro-war. While such fighters as Debs and Ruthenberg were going to jail for anti-war activities, the Hillquits, Oneals, etc., were busy sabotaging the Party's anti-war policy, and another big group of them, the Wallings, Spargos, Russels, etc., quit the Party altogether and joined up with Wilson's and Gompers' pro-war campaign. The best fight against the war was made by the I. W. W. under Bill Haywood's leadership. The I. W. W., growing swiftly, conducted an aggressive strike policy in various industries, and only its lack of forces prevented its calling a general strike against the war. Its militants suffered the severest war-time persecutions of any organization.

As for my own attitude, I was, of course, opposed to the World War and also to the United States' participation therein. Both the S. L. of N. A. and the I. T. U. E. L. had condemned capitalist war in general and the world war in particular. We made the Syndicalist argument that if the European workers had met the declaration of war by calling a general strike the war could have been stopped. We correctly charged that the opportunist leaders of the Socialist Second International, affiliated in sympathy and interests to the bourgeoisie of their respective countries, were the ones responsible for breaking down the workers' resistance to the war and for leading them to be massacred for the capitalists' profit.

At the time the U. S. entered the war I belonged to no organization, except my union, the Railway Carmen. The I. T. U. E. L. had already disintegrated. And as for the I. W. W. and the left wing of the S. P., I was quite out of contact with them and their anti-war activities, because I had been at loggerheads with them both for several years past over the questions of political action and boring-from-within.

Moreover, I had quite a different viewpoint about the war situation and the main tasks confronting the revolutionary movement. My views may be summarized as follows:

I was convinced that capitalism was shooting itself to pieces in the war. I felt sure that it was so weakening itself that it would be overtaken by the proletarian revolution either before the war's end or shortly afterward. I greeted the Russian revolution of March 1917 (and later that of November in the same year) as the beginning of the end of capitalism. But I doubted if Russia was industrial enough for its revolution to lead directly to Socialism; so I looked rather to the more industrialized countries, especially Germany and England, for a lead.

What organization would bring about the revolution in Europe? I was positive that the Socialist Party would not do so, nor was I mistaken in that. I took my viewpoint from the old I. T. U. E. L. theory to which I still firmly adhered, and looked to the trade unions as the revolutionary force. Thus, the trade unions would carry through the overthrow of capitalism, even though they were not expressly revolutionary in their philosophy. In all the industrial countries, including the United States, the unions were at the time growing very rapidly and they soon reached by far the highest point in their history. I was certain that the day was not distant when the swiftly expanding labor unions would become so powerful that they would push over the tottering capitalist structure and take charge of society.

With such a conception, I logically arrived at the conclusion that the main revolutionary task in the war period was the building of trade unionism, the organization of the millions of unorganized. Everything else was to be subordinated and sacrificed for the accomplishment of this central objective. At all costs the unions, the eventual destroyers of capitalism, must be built, and my plan to do this was by taking the fullest advantage of the great war-time demand for labor power to recruit the unions through organization campaigns and strikes. Thus, in line with what was taking place in Eng-

land, Germany, France, etc., the workers would construct of their unions a great revolutionary weapon which, with ever growing power and demands, they would surely use to smash capitalism.

To me the pacifist outcry to end the war seemed insufficient and futile. The main thing that had to be done was to utilize militantly the war situation to create the only force that could finish off capitalism, the trade unions. And, according to the I. T. U. E. L.'s wrong conception of the role of class consciousness in the struggle, it would suffice for eventual revolution even if these unions were of the so-called conservative type. In the United States mass unions in the great unorganized industries could only be built by struggle, notwithstanding the "tolerance" of the Wilson Government towards trade unionism. Such a strike struggle policy was antagonistic to the government's effective carrying on of the war and I so understood it.

During the war it turned out, as we shall see, that I eventually headed major organization campaigns and strikes in the two key war industries: meat-packing, where the slogan was "Food Will Win the War," and in steel, the heart of all the munitions industries. And in both of them, notwithstanding constant menaces from these powerful trusts and the government and of betrayals by reactionary labor leaders, I carried through, as best I could, the above policy of active organization, based on militant strikes in defense of the workers' demands and in opposition to the government's war interests.

Despite the revolutionary aims I had in mind, this whole war-time policy of mine was grossly incorrect. True it had in it definite elements of antagonism to the war and it was also in sharp conflict with the Gompers' "social peace" policy of no strikes and no organization campaigns—a program that certainly prevented the organization of several million workers during the war period. Nevertheless it was fundamentally wrong. What was wrong with my policy originated in my Syndicalist over-estimation of the role of simple trade unionism in the class struggle. It sacrificed too much for the build-

ing of trade unions. It ignored the fundamental necessity that all working class activities of the time had to center around direct agitation and militant political fight against the war. Building the unions and carrying on militant strikes, of course, were necessarily a basic requirement for an effective struggle against the war, but only on condition that this work was a definite part of the broader political struggle designed, as Lenin clearly showed, to transform the imperialist war into a revolutionary war against capitalism. But my policy of concentrating all attention upon simply building trade unions, in the hope of their eventually carrying through the revolution, involved actually, in spite of my good intentions, an opportunist compromise with the war. And any such compromise inevitably played into the hands of the capitalist war makers.

BEGINNING THE PACKINGHOUSE CAMPAIGN

It was one thing, however, for me to have a theory that the war time presented a big opportunity and imperative need to organize the workers, and quite a different matter to put this theory into practice. I was not so naive as to think that the A. F. of L. bureaucrats would organize the masses. So what was to be done?

When the United States entered the war I was working as a car inspector on the Soo Line in Chicago; for at the expiration of my year's term as Business Agent of the Railway Carmen, some time previous, I had refused the unanimous nomination of our 13 locals for a second term and had gone back to work on the road. While I inspected freight cars I puzzled over what I might do to get some real organization work started. I felt quite helpless, I must say. Our I. T. U. E. L. was gone and there was I working 12 hours a day, seven days a week, and, consequent upon these long hours of work, unable even to attend the meetings of the Chicago Federation of Labor, of which I was a delegate. Finally, however, one day as I was walking to work, and I remember well that

it was July 11, 1917, it struck me suddenly that perhaps I could get a campaign started to organize the workers in the great Chicago packinghouses, whom the A. F. of L. had grossly neglected during many years. Except for the teamsters, they were then totally unorganized, their conditions were frightful, and the demand for workers was strong—a splendid opportunity for an organizing campaign. Perhaps the progressive C. F. of L. could be induced to give its support.

No sooner thought than done. That very night I took the matter up with the Chicago District Council of the Railway Carmen, which was controlled by former I. T. U. E. L. militants. Our craft is a prominent one in the packinghouse situation, because the refrigerator car, which we build, is the basis of that industry; so the Council readily endorsed my proposal. On the 13th, I was one of our committee to the meeting of the half-dead Local 87 of the bankrupt Butcher Workmen. We secured its reluctant endorsement, and on the 15th the two unions introduced a resolution into the Chicago Federation of Labor calling for a joint organization campaign of all trades in the local packing industry. The C. F. of L. unanimously adopted our resolution. Thus, only four days after the plan was born, the campaign to organize the slaves of the great packing trust had got under way.

On July 23rd, we formed the Stockyards Labor Council of a dozen local unions with jurisdiction over packinghouse workers, including Butcher Workmen, Railway Carmen, Machinists, Electricians, Coopers, Carpenters, Office Workers, Steam Fitters, Engineers, Firemen, etc. I was elected Secretary and Martin Murphy, a rank and file butcher, President. Our working plan was that of a federation. We rejected the traditional left wing policy of launching a new "one big industrial union," as such a dual union would have split our forces and wrecked our movement at the outset. We decided to move towards industrial unionism by setting up an industrial federation and by locking the various component craft unions so firmly together under one Council, one Executive Board, one set of Business Agents, etc., as to create a firm

front in the whole industry. The workers accepted this industrial plan readily, as their big 1904 strike had been completely smashed because of disunity and "union scabbing" among the several craft unions organized in the two separate, jangling Councils. We infused our whole movement with the spirit of industrial unionism.*

At the first meeting of the Stockyards Labor Council we decided to base our movement primarily upon the unskilled masses, that is, the foreign-born and Negroes, who made up a majority of the workers. The Negroes, of whom there were 12,000 among the 60,000 Chicago packinghouse workers, presented a thorny problem. Many of the skilled crafts, despite our best efforts, barred them, although the main union, the Butcher Workmen, admitted them. To complicate matters, we faced the open hostility of the Negro intelligentsia, embittered by A. F. of L. discrimination. When we began our organization work we proceeded upon the policy of taking the Negroes into the big mass Butcher Workmen local unions, and we thought that we had thereby solved the problem. But at once the Negro race leaders raised a shout that we were placing the Negroes into white unions where they would be a helpless minority and they demanded separate Negro unions. We naively agreed to this demand, whereupon, almost overnight, the cry of "Jim Crow" went along State Street with devastating effect. We eventually found a solution, however, by adopting the neighborhood principle, that is, by building mass unions in both Negro and white districts and having them open alike to Negroes and whites. This killed the Jim Crow issue and forced the corrupt elements among the Negro intelligentsia, agents of the packers, to come out openly against our organizing campaign generally and to advocate a policy of scabbing. Such a proposal was

* In the *Butcher Workman*, November 1919, Dennis Lane, reactionary head of the Butcher Workmen's Union, declared: "The self-elected parties (meaning us—W. Z. F.) also took it upon themselves, without consulting any of the international unions affected, to draft a set of laws to govern the stockyard workers, laws which would render the laws of the affected international unions null and void (also their craft scabbing—W. Z. F.) so far as their stockyard workers are concerned."

easy for us to beat, however, and the sequel showed that we finally won over the majority of the Negroes and built up the largest Negro trade union membership ever organized in any American city.

But let me come back to the sequence of my story. Where were we to get organizers and money for our campaign? The A. F. of L. national office gave us not a penny and its local general organizer, Flood, was cynical and contemptuous. The ultra-reactionary Butcher Workmen officials, with a moribund union, looked upon us as upstarts and dangerous rivals, and extended us nothing but hostility. The preliminary work was done mostly on a voluntary basis by J. W. Johnstone, myself, and other former I. T. U. E. L. militants. The C. F. of L. was friendly, but its initial financial help consisted in paying only the expenses of our first mass meeting. Upon the recommendation of the C. F. of L. and Railway Carmen's District Council, however, I was most reluctantly appointed by the B. R. C. of A. General President, Ryan, as an organizer for a 90-day period.* After we got well started and our movement looked promising, the C. F. of L. also put on Jack Johnstone as a paid organizer. Eventually, the Illinois Federation of Labor also gave us a couple of Negro organizers, and we scared up the help of occasional Butcher Workmen and other craft union Business Agents. Beyond which, the movement financed itself and produced its own organizers.

John Fitzpatrick, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor, from the first was sympathetic to our campaign, but he was skeptical of its outcome, he being afflicted with the prevailing pessimism in trade union circles to the effect that the packinghouse workers were unorganizable. But as our campaign began to get results he took a more active part, eventually becoming chairman of our national movement. His services were especially valuable in combating the dis-

* This finished for me ten years as a railroad worker, with service on many roads: S. P., N. P., S. A. L., C. N. W., O. R. & N., P. & R., S. P. & S., Soo, etc., and in many capacities: fireman, brakeman, car repairer, airbrake man, car inspector, freight handler, railroad construction teamster, shop laborer, camp cook, etc., in all corners of the country.

ruptive tactics of reactionary A. F. of L. leaders and in carrying on the negotiations with the packers and the government.

AN AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN

We launched our organization drive with great vigor and directed our efforts at the five great Chicago plants of the biggest packers of the huge beef trust. The workers came in large numbers to our meetings to listen but, suspicious from long years of A. F. of L. betrayal and incompetence, few joined the unions. At the end of six weeks of intensive work we had organized only 500 members. Fitzpatrick pronounced this result excellent, as no such showing had been made since the fatal strike of 13 years before. But to me our progress was wholly unsatisfactory: the great packing industry could never be organized by such a one-by-one method. We simply had to find a way to start the workers into the unions *en masse*.

Our little militant leading group was determined that at all costs the workers must be organized, and we were prepared to use drastic methods to this end. We were proceeding on a militant strike policy which had nothing in common with the Gompers war-time "no strike" program and we were convinced that the workers were "strike-minded" and would respond to our efforts if they saw a prospect for strike action in support of the demands (eight-hour day, right to organize, etc.) that we were popularizing. Hence I proposed to our small leading committee a detailed plan whereby our 500 members, after good preparation and with the organized assistance of other industry militants, could be used to strike the great mass of 60,000 workers.

It was a very risky move, but I am still convinced it would have succeeded had we tried it. The organizers agreed with my proposals but, as we were getting ready, fortunately we were able to find a surer way to bring the masses into action by a strike movement. It was so: under the influence of our Chicago campaign and the generally favorable situation, local organizations and strikes had begun to take shape in

various western packing centers. I, therefore, proposed the strategy of calling a national conference of packinghouse workers to prepare demands to be made upon the packers. The leaders of the Butcher Workmen, typical A. F. of L. reactionaries, smelling a possible strike, strongly disagreed with this proposal, even as they violently condemned our whole militant line. But fearing to be swept aside by the rising mass movement, they finally grudgingly agreed. Whereupon, over their protests, we gave the story to the newspapers, stating that the move for a conference would probably culminate in a big national packinghouse strike.

In war time, with the U. S. Government straining every nerve to supply the hungry millions of the Allies with food, this was big news. So next day, as I expected, the Chicago press bore great flaming headlines, "Strike Looms at Yards." And so it was in other packing centers. The whole packing industry seethed over the threatening strike.

The effect upon the discontented mass of workers was electrical. At last they saw the action they wanted, a chance to strike back at their exploiters. Then they fairly broke the doors down in joining the Chicago unions in masses. The feeble Stockyards' organizations grew wildly. For example, the decrepit Local 87, Butcher Workmen, took in 1400 members at its first meeting after the press announcement of the threatening strike. Likewise, the movement grew like a bay tree, in Sioux City, St. Louis, Fort Worth, Omaha, Kansas City, St. Joseph, St. Paul, Oklahoma City, Denver and other big western packing centers. Tens of thousands streamed in the A. F. of L. locals. Our strategy had succeeded better even than we had anticipated. We were over the top in the organization of the great national packing industry, for years considered in trade union circles to be an utterly hopeless task. Meanwhile, we had joined the dozen coöperating packinghouse unions together nationally into a loose committee, of which John Fitzpatrick was Chairman and I Secretary.

However, the packers had not been idle. At first, except for flooding our movement with spies, they had made no hostile

move,* evidently believing that our campaign, like so many A. F. of L. "drives" in the past, would collapse of its own weight. But when they realized we were making real headway, they became alarmed and replied with the usual open shop weapon of discharging active unionists. This discharge campaign spread far and reached its climax when Libby, McNeil and Libby, a Swift subsidiary, fired some 50 of its Chicago workers.

The policy of our militant organizers was to head towards a national strike of packinghouse workers. We figured that only by such a strike could the workers fully secure their demands and establish their unions. We were also convinced that the packers and the government never could stand a great packinghouse strike in war time, in view of the frantic demand for foodstuffs. So the packers' provocations fitted right into our strategy and we replied to Libby, McNeil and Libby by quickly taking a national strike vote, which was almost a hundred percent favorable. Then we began hasty preparation for a strike; but just at this juncture the A. F. of L. stepped in and steered the whole movement into the treacherous channels of a government mediation.

THE GOVERNMENT COMES TO HELP THE PACKERS

The Wilson government, it will be remembered, to side-track the many strike movements and to prevent the extension of the trade unions into the open shop industries, had a policy of making government labor agreements for the duration of the war. Its Federal Mediation Commission was going about the country settling strikes on this basis. The A. F. of L. leadership was, of course, in full harmony with this anti-union policy.

Jack Johnstone, myself and other packinghouse militants were against such government interference. Fitzpatrick also opposed the government's entering; but he had no confidence

* These spies were everywhere. For example, two of our three Polish and Lithuanian organizers in Chicago finally confessed being under-cover men.

in a strike, whereas, the whole strategy of Johnstone and myself was based on the need for a strike to force the packers by direct pressure to sign a union agreement.

But the A. F. of L. brought the government in, in spite of us. It happened like this: As a matter of routine we formally notified the A. F. of L. headquarters of our strike vote, whereupon, without notifying us, they promptly turned the matter over to the government. We were immediately infested with agents of the Federal Mediation Commission. Later, when I protested to Gompers about his bringing the government onto our necks, he lamely excused himself on the ground that he was not in his office when our telegram arrived and that his secretary, Miss Le Gard, had referred it as a matter of course to the Department of Labor for mediation—an explanation which threw a bright light on the A. F. of L.'s war-time no-strike policy.

This A. F. of L. action upset our whole strike strategy. What was now to be done? Could we ignore the government mediators and strike anyhow? The cards were all stacked against such a course. The A. F. of L. leaders would be solidly opposed to it and so, likewise, would be the national officials of all the dozen federated unions in our joint movement. The great weakness of our Chicago Stockyards Labor Council, from first to last, was that, although it gave the whole stimulus and militant leadership to the national movement, the actual control of the international unions involved remained in the hands of reactionary A. F. of L. officials and, alas, we had no organized militant minority to link us up with the rank and file workers in the other packing centers.

About 18 months after this, in the 1919 steel campaign, I faced a somewhat similar situation. Our committee then confronted a demand from President Wilson, President Gompers, and a large majority of the leaders of the 24 steel unions that we should sidetrack our developing strike movement and put our trust in government maneuverings. We

were strongly organized enough to defy this treacherous demand, however, and to go on with the great national strike. But in the packinghouse situation, with our new unions and our lack of national control, such a course would have been folly. So, yielding before superior forces, we had to enter, against our will, into the government mediation and to depend upon the growing strength and militancy of our movement to carry it on to victory in spite of its enemies: the packers, the government and the A. F. of L. top leadership.

THE PACKING INDUSTRY ORGANIZED

After much jockeying around, we finally drew up an agreement with the Federal Mediation Commission in Chicago, in December 1917, which provided for the right to organize, set up shop committees, present grievances, attend union conventions, etc.; it further granted a 10% wage increase, the principle of seniority in employment, no discrimination because of "creed, color or nationality," display of piece work schedules, abolition of arbitrary discharge, abolition of compulsory benefit societies, establishment of proper dressing, lunch and washrooms, etc. Our other six major demands then went to Federal Judge S. Altschuler, Administrator of the packing industry, for arbitration decision.

The national packinghouse arbitration proceedings, held in Chicago early in 1918, were highly dramatic. The five big packers, Armour, Swift, Morris, Cudahy and Wilson, were represented by attorneys Meyer and Condon, and the workers were represented by Frank P. Walsh and John Fitzpatrick. For three and a half weeks we paraded witnesses on the stand—workers, economists, labor leaders (including Gompers)—giving publicity to the horrible working and living conditions of the packinghouse workers and the fabulous profits being made by the packers, Armour himself admitting a war profit of \$40,000,000 in 1917. I must say that I took double pleasure in this exposure and discomfiture of the

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packers, for I personally had felt the lash of the hard conditions in the industry, having worked the winter of 1915 in the Swift & Company car shops for such miserable wages that I was too poor to buy an overcoat to shield me from the bitterly cold weather.

On March 30, 1918, Judge Altschuler handed down his award. With an eye on our militant movement and on the certainty of a national packinghouse strike in case of an unsatisfactory decision, he granted about 85% of the unions' six demands. His award provided for another 10% to 25% wage increase, a basic eight-hour day with ten hours' pay, extra time for overtime, equal pay for men and women doing the same class of work, a guarantee of five days' work per week in slack seasons, and time off with pay for lunch periods in eight-hour shifts. The award was retroactive, the 125,000 workers of the five big packers receiving \$6,000,000 in back pay, or an average of \$40 per worker.

With enthusiasm the packinghouse workers greeted these terms as a great victory. They streamed into the unions all over the country and built solid organizations in every plant. Now our job of mopping up began. We made the hundreds of small packers sign the Altschuler award and then we carried the organization campaign into many subsidiary sections of the industry, such as retail butcher shops, independent soap, washing powder, glue, canning, butterine, fertilizer, cooperage, etc., works. Besides this, many other local industries, such as machine shops, car works, etc., caught the contagion and were organized.

In Chicago, we had dozens of strikes in this follow-up campaign. The most serious struggle was with the Union Stockyards and Transit Company. This powerful concern, owned by the great packers, receives, feeds and distributes the tens of thousands of animals arriving daily at the Chicago Yards. It is the nerve center of the local packing industry. Its autocratic head, a Mr. Leonard, refused to sign the Altschuler award, so we struck his 3,000 stockhandlers on an hour's

notice. Instantly, the transfer of all cattle, sheep and hogs stopped. Frantically, the packers wired all over the West to halt the shipment of stock. Johnstone, Murphy and myself were summoned to the downtown Department of Justice office, where Claybaugh menaced us with jail for obstructing the war. But we stood our ground and insisted that the U. S. & T. Co. come to the unions' terms. Gradually, the huge packinghouses, cut off from supplies of animals, came to a standstill. The menace of a great packinghouse strike loomed. But, after a few days, the U. S. & T. Co. weakened and signed on the dotted line. It was a real victory and the oppressed packinghouse workers were jubilant.

The great stockyards organization campaign had by now achieved its major goal. The industry was thoroughly organized all over the country from top to bottom. More than 200,000 workers had come into the dozen federated unions. These included unskilled as well as skilled, immigrant workers and native-born, and fully 25,000 of the new members were Negroes. Many office employees also joined the organization and even the Stockyards policemen formed a union. At last, the autocratic packers were compelled to meet with the workers and talk business with them, and especially they did not relish conferring with Johnstone and me.

The packinghouse victory marked a new high stage in American labor organization. It was the first mass production, trustified industry ever to be organized by the trade unions. And the victory was doubly significant in that it was accomplished by militant policies and on application of the industrial union principle, at least in a modified form. But, of course, the reactionary A. F. of L. bureaucracy learned nothing constructive from all this.

For us former I. T. U. E. L. militants the campaign had a very special significance. It was a glowing justification of our boring-from-within policy and it also showed what could be done on our theory of organizing the unorganized millions by militantly taking advantage of the war situation.

THE AFTERMATH IN THE PACKING INDUSTRY

It turned out that soon after Judge Altschuler's decision I left the packing industry to take up the big steel organizing campaign. But I cannot go on with that until after I tell how the splendid organization of the packinghouse workers was eventually destroyed by the packers, with effective assistance of the A. F. of L. leaders. It is one of the most shameful stories of betrayals in American labor history.*

From the outset in 1917, the Gompersite officials of the Butcher Workmen, headed by Dennis Lane, a stockholder in a local packing company, did all possible to sabotage the organizing campaign. Their aim was to destroy the Stockyards Labor Council with its splendid solidarity and its militant leadership. They wanted to wipe out its industrial union trend and to reestablish the old, discredited craft system. So they fought to cut off its per capita tax from the locals; they demanded that each local have its own business agent, instead of our centralized system; they insisted that there be formed a second council, that is, a packing trades council of Butcher Workmen locals only. This was the fatal two-council system that had destroyed the 1904 strike and which, at the beginning of the Stockyards campaign, we had pledged ourselves never to reintroduce. They flooded the Chicago locals with "organizers" who, supported by every packers' spy and stool pigeon, fought for this splitting program. It was in the face of such disruptive tactics that we had to go on with our organizing work.

The fight became very bitter. Finally, Lane's crowd, in alliance with the notorious Simon O'Donnell gang of building trades thugs, decided to take over the Stockyards Labor Council by strong-arm methods. As an entering wedge, they tried to force us to seat one of their thugs as a delegate. We refused and for this I was slated to be "rubbed out," the notorious gunman, "Big Tim Murphy" openly threatening me. However, we were not helpless and we let it be known that

* See my book, *Misleaders of Labor*, for further details.

if any "rough stuff" were tried we would know whom to reach and how. The Lane-O'Donnell plan fell through and we remained in full control.

In the first year after I left the packing industry the fight grew still more bitter. Two organizers were killed. My successor as Secretary of the S. L. C., Jack Johnstone, one time, gun in hand, shot it out successfully with a gang of Lane's armed raiders who tried to seize the headquarters by force.

Lane, who controlled the official Butcher Workmen Union machinery outside of Chicago (our weak spot all along), finally organized a Chicago packing trades council. Only about 2,000 members joined it. He thereupon expelled 40,000 of his union's members who remained affiliated to the Stockyards Labor Council. The Chicago Federation of Labor protested against this outrage but was warned by Gompers to keep its hands off. Then other A. F. of L. union officials in the packing industry set to work to help Lane split up the packinghouse workers and destroy the industrial solidarity that had been the key to the great success of the movement. Finally, there were three councils: the Packing Trades Council, the Mechanical Trades Council and the Stockyards Labor Council. Besides, there were several unattached locals and large numbers of unorganized workers, demoralized by the A. F. of L. treachery. Similar disruptive tactics were used in other packing centers.

This went on for two and a half years after our big victory in 1918. By the fall of 1920, the former splendid organization was much weakened; so the packers, in step with the great post-war open shop offensive of the time against organized labor, set up company unions, slashed wages and broke off all relations with the unions. The workers replied to these attacks by a national packinghouse strike on December 5, 1920. But though they fought heroically, they were defeated and their organization about completely wiped out, a victim of the reactionary policies of the A. F. of L. If the Greens and Hutchesons of today wish to know one of many reasons why the workers in the basic industries want

no more of craft unions and are demanding industrial organization, let them observe the tragedy of the packinghouse 1917-1921 movement.

FROM MEAT PACKING TO STEEL

But let us come back to the events of 1918. With my theory that the main revolutionary task was the organization of the millions into the trade unions and that at all costs the war-time demand for workers must be utilized to this end, I naturally sought to use the big victory in the packing industry as a point of departure for a new organization drive. I had no idea of settling down as a trade union official in the packing industry. After considerable thought, I decided to make a try at steel. The trade unions had conquered their first trustified industry, meat packing, and I was confident that, if they would only bestir themselves a bit, they could also win out in the greatest of all trustified industries, steel.

Therefore, even before Judge Altschuler had handed down his arbitration decision, I, being sure that he must grant most of our demands, had written a resolution to have the Chicago Federation of Labor call upon the A. F. of L. to initiate a national organizing campaign in the steel industry along the general lines that had proved so successful in meat packing. However, for a couple of weeks I did not introduce the resolution into the C. F. of L. because of a curious reason. During our arbitration, the packers' lawyer, Condon, had dramatically declared that if Altschuler conceded our demands it would create a vast upheaval among workers in industry generally and that millions of them would go marching in to the bosses to make similar demands. Even as he was saying this I had in my pocket the proposed steel campaign resolution. So fearing that its introduction into the C. F. of L. might seem to Altschuler too much like Condon's prophecy coming true and thereby adversely affect his decision, I had to withhold it until after the Judge's award.

Finally, on April 7, 1918, a week after Altschuler's decision,

I introduced the resolution into the C. F. of L., signed by the Railway Carmen * and a dozen other metal trade unions. It called for a nationwide A. F. of L. joint campaign of all the unions having jurisdiction over workers in the steel industry. It was based on a broad industrial movement, from the coal and iron miners and the lake transport workers all through the industry to the men doing the last phases of finishing in the fabricating division of the steel industry and those who hauled the final products out on to the railroad main lines. Such a federated movement, as in the packing industry, was the most practical approach to be made to the necessary industrial form. The C. F. of L. adopted the resolution unanimously and the great steel campaign was on.

* The Railway Carmen came into this campaign on the basis that there were scores of thousands of steel car builders in the great steel plants in McKees Rocks, Butler, Pullman, Johnstown, and many other plants. I was a member of this craft union.

CHAPTER IX

THE A. F. OF L.: THE STEEL CAMPAIGN

It is impossible within the confines of this chapter to sum up even the main events of the big steel organizing campaign and strike of 1918-20. I have done that in my book, *The Great Steel Strike and Its Lessons*, and in my two pamphlets, *Unionizing Steel* and *Organizing Methods in the Steel Industry*. Here I can only consider some aspects of the struggle not adequately dealt with in these publications. I especially wish to treat more fully of the reactionary attitude of the A. F. of L. officialdom. This is now the more pertinent in view of the sabotaging activities of these bureaucrats (as I write this) in the big C. I. O. drive of 1936, in steel.

LASOING THE LABOR BUREAUCRATS

The A. F. of L. leaders, with their "social peace" war-time policy, made no effort to organize the more-than-ripe basic industries. Indeed, they actually hampered such work. Sufficient proofs of this were the facts that I, a rank and file worker on the job, had to initiate the national packinghouse campaign, and that we faced A. F. of L. opposition from start to finish. The A. F. of L. leaders were even less interested in organizing steel. Again the vitally important work had to be started by myself, who was by this time a lesser official; and again, breaking through A. F. of L. sabotage constituted the major problem in organizing the workers. The A. F. of L.'s reactionary attitude towards organizing meat packing and steel was characteristic of its policy in all the industries. What growth the unions made in the war time was mostly spontaneous, the work of rank and file militants.

A. F. of L. sabotage of the steel campaign began immediately after the Chicago resolution was adopted. Our resolution asked the A. F. of L. to lead the work. But Gompers thought to liquidate the matter offhand by referring the C. F. of L. resolution to the approaching convention of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers (A. A.). He might as well have sent it to the United States Steel Corporation as the officials of this company-controlled union. Naturally, the A. A. convention evaded the whole business. But I was not to be sidetracked so easily, and I reintroduced the resolution into the C. F. of L. Here it was once more adopted and I was sent to the A. F. of L. convention in St. Paul, June 1918, as C. F. of L. delegate, to get action upon it.

What happened at the convention was a classic of A. F. of L. "organization" methods. Gompers let the resolution be adopted without change or opposition; for such resolutions make good reading matter for the rank and file. Besides there are better ways to get rid of unpleasant resolutions than by directly rejecting them. My resolution called for a meeting of steel industry delegates during the convention to start the campaign. So, after waiting a few days and no meeting being called, I became alarmed and, inquiring from Secretary Morrison, I was informed that it would be held "in about six weeks." Time was the very essence of my organizing plan and delay would be fatal: we simply had to take advantage of the war situation if it was to succeed, and the war might end very shortly. I, therefore, protested to Morrison that this postponement was disastrous and in violation of the resolution, which very specifically provided for holding the meeting during the convention. So here is what took place.

A day or two later, suddenly and without notifying me, an announcement was mumbled just before the convention's noon adjournment that the steel meeting would be held during the lunch recess. Think of it, a conference to organize the nation-wide steel industry of 500,000 workers squeezed into the lunch period, with the delegates hurrying out to eat before the afternoon session. Very clearly it was a

deliberate attempt to kill the campaign. Despite my experience with A. F. of L. bureaucrats, I was shocked and astounded. I could see the steel campaign going to smash at its very start.

At the designated corner of the convention hall a number of delegates, on their way out to eat, stopped off, in curiosity mostly, to see what was going to take place. No Gompers or Morrison was there, and no one was in charge. I hastily called the "meeting" to order and Organizer Tom Flynn got on a table and began a speech about the need of organization. I could see that lack of time made such a course fatal, so I interrupted Flynn and proposed that we do only the following, which was done: take the names of all present and call a meeting for the next night, over which we should invite Gompers to preside. Then we adjourned our lunch-recess steel organizing conference.

Now came the problem of getting Gompers to come to our meeting. That afternoon I informed him of what had taken place. The arch bureaucrat listened in a bored manner but he became furious when I invited him to the proposed meeting and refused point-blank. Evidently he had already had enough of this bothersome steel campaign which refused to be killed. Then I pulled the ace out of my sleeve. I showed him the list of officials (our knot of curiosity seekers) who had attended the steel "meeting," and I told him it was they who were inviting him. Then his tone changed and he grumbled out that "maybe" he would attend.

So Gompers was roped in for the meeting. Now it remained to lasso the other necessary union leaders. To accomplish this I asked Gompers if he would make the announcement to the convention of the proposed steel meeting. "No! You do it!" he fairly yelled at me. So, that afternoon, I ventured to state to the convention that upon the request of Mr. Gompers I was authorized to invite all concerned to the steel conference, at which Gompers would be present. I could see Gompers getting purple as I said this. We had a good crowd, Gompers' name attracting them. Thus had succeeded my

little strategy of netting Gompers by using the names of my "curiosity seekers" and, on the other hand, of drawing in many other officials by utilizing Gompers' name. By such a device did I have to literally trick the A. F. of L. leaders into this vital organization campaign. After this maneuver I felt as though I had been swimming in a sewer and future prospects for the work seemed most unpromising.

The principal thing our steel meeting did was to call a formal conference, to take place six weeks later. This was a deadly loss of time. The best organizing period American labor had ever known was fast slipping away as the war neared its end. Four months were criminally wasted, from the time I originally introduced my resolution on April 7th, until the first real conference was to be held in August. Such delay can only be termed deliberate sabotage. At the St. Paul meeting, however, after much struggle, I managed to have the proposed conference scheduled for Chicago. I did this in the hope that thereby John Fitzpatrick (who was not at St. Paul) could be drawn into the work as A. F. of L. organizer in Chicago and thus help protect the sprouting campaign from the hostile reactionary bureaucrats.

THE CHICAGO CONFERENCE

The Chicago steel conference was held in the New Morrison Hotel, August 1-2, 1918. Representatives of 15 international unions were present. When the meeting got down to business, the chairman, Gompers, turned to me and said: "Well, brother Foster, you have called us together; now what do you propose?" That was the "great" Gompers' approach to organizing the steel industry; he had brought no proposals whatever. So I proceeded to outline my plan, which can be summarized as follows:

There should be a whirlwind campaign of organization initiated at once and simultaneously in all important steel centers; this to be carried on jointly by all unions claiming jurisdiction in the steel industry. There should be used such methods as huge mass meetings, noted speakers, brass bands,

parades, full-page newspaper advertisements, etc., to set the masses in motion. As financial means, I proposed that each union should assess itself 25 cents per member; and to begin building an organizing crew, that each union should delegate three or more organizers. To carry on the work all the unions should be closely federated, with a national committee headed by an A. F. of L. representative. The unions should establish a uniform small initiation fee. I calculated that with such a great drive, we could get the bulk of the steel workers under our leadership in about six weeks: that is, three weeks' time to assemble our money and organizers and three weeks to carry through a great series of three mass meetings in each town. These meetings, I figured, would give us such a grip on the masses of workers that we could at once send our committee to the steel trust, with an implied threat of a national steel strike if the committee were not received, a threat that we could enforce.

This plan for a great, swift, simultaneous organizing drive in all steel centers was realistic and practical. It conformed to the actual situation and to the potentialities of the unions. It offered the best possible way to arouse the steel workers' enthusiasm and to outwit the inevitable counter strategy of the employers. The workers were in a militant mood and would have surely responded in decisive masses.

My time schedule of six weeks was also strictly feasible; it had only taken us about nine weeks to get the great masses under our leadership in the packing industry and to successfully threaten a strike, and, in view of our riper experience, added prestige and greater resources, we could have done the job much quicker in the steel industry. This would have brought our movement to a head while the war was still on, and the government and the steel trust could not possibly have faced a war-time strike in this great munitions industry. Had my proposals been adopted we would have won through easily and definitely established the unions in the steel industry.

The plan of federating the unions was likewise practical.

It was at that time the logical next step towards industrial unionism and the building of a single steel workers' organization. This was so because at that period there was little positive sentiment for industrial unionism in the A. F. of L. and it would have been utterly impossible to get the many craft unions to surrender their jurisdiction claims to the little, half-dead, corruptly-led Amalgamated Association. The system of industrial federation was succeeding on the railroads and we had just won a great victory with it in the packing industry. It was a case of either a joint movement by the crafts or no campaign at all. I, of course, intended to try to push the crafts into an eventual general steel amalgamation if our campaign succeeded.

My financial plan was similarly feasible. All the larger unions were rich with the war-time flood of initiation fees and dues (my own union, the Railway Carmen, for example, had some \$3,000,000 in its treasury). Each of them could have paid the 25-cent assessment from its funds without the slightest difficulty. Inasmuch as there were some 2,000,000 members in the 24 unions eventually affiliated to our steel campaign, this would have given us several hundred thousand dollars. I estimated that \$50,000 would have sufficed to put on our great planned drive for six weeks.

The Chicago conference, however, made ducks and drakes of this whole realistic plan. All that remained when the unenthusiastic bureaucrats got done with it was the principle of a federated campaign. The conference set up the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers, which eventually included the 24 unions of Iron Miners, Coal Miners, Steamshovelmen, Clay Workers, Quarry Workers, Seamen, Steel Workers, Stationary Engineers, Firemen, Laborers, Machinists, Railway Carmen, Blacksmiths, Coopers, Electricians, Boilermakers, Patternmakers, Bricklayers, Structural Iron Workers, Foundry Workers, Molders, Sheet Metal Workers, Steam Fitters and Switchmen. The movement thus covered the whole industry from the workers who produced the raw materials to those who delivered the

finished products to the railroads, but none of the unions had more than a handful of members in the great unorganized steel industry. Gompers assumed the Chairmanship of the National Committee and I was elected Secretary. (This was, like the Secretaryship of the Stockyards Labor Council, for me an unpaid job, as I drew my wages from the B. R. C. of A. as a regular organizer.) My proposal for an immediate, huge national drive in all steel towns simultaneously was killed. The top A. F. of L. bureaucrats present listened fishy-eyed and with ill-restrained disdain as I outlined the sure victory that must come from such a national drive. Several of them took the floor and, treating my plans as purely visionary, absurdly proposed instead concentrating the work in one locality, even in one steel mill—"to show the workers what we can do and thereby win their confidence." Gompers listened impatiently when I proposed the 25-cent assessment. He did not even discuss it, nor did any of the others. It was simply ignored. Thus the vital assessment proposal went by the boards, and instead of the at least \$50,000 indispensable, the 15 unions present voted the National Committee the ridiculous sum of \$100 each; and in place of the crew of 100 or more organizers that I held to be immediately necessary, a mere half dozen were delegated to the work. As for the A. F. of L., it neither gave nor pledged a dollar.

On the second day of the conference, after my proposals had been well knocked on the head, Gompers withdrew from the meeting to join his convivial building trades cronies in a nearby hotel. To preside in his absence he named John Fitzpatrick, as the ranking Chicago A. F. of L. organizer. This, at least, was good; my strategy of getting Fitzpatrick into the campaign was succeeding.

I was deeply dismayed by the results of the Chicago conference, its defeat of my practical plan to organize the steel industry. It was pretty clear that the A. F. of L. leaders were not interested in organizing the steel workers. One would think, from the resources given our National Committee, that we were setting out to organize a bunch of peanut stands,

instead of the 500,000 almost totally unorganized workers in the steel industry, American finance capital's chief open shop stronghold. It was such reactionary policies as these that cost the A. F. of L. the loss of 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 possible members during the war time. The final defeat of the steel workers 16 months later was directly traceable to the rejection of my plan by the Gompers leadership at the Chicago conference.

THE ORGANIZING CAMPAIGN

I daresay that when the Chicago conference adjourned few of the labor bureaucrats attending it thought that much more would be heard from the annoying steel campaign. But we went ahead anyhow. However, instead of a great, sweeping campaign, opened by a "national steel workers' week," with huge meetings, parades, etc., in 50 to 75 steel towns simultaneously all over the country, we had to confine our activities to the Chicago (Calumet) district. We at once began work in Gary, South Chicago, Joliet and Indiana Harbor. As far as we could, we applied the methods that we had intended using nationally. But, of course, these local activities were only a pale imitation of what our planned great national drive would have been.

Nevertheless, we scored an immediate and tremendous success. In Gary, at our first meeting, 15,000 steel workers attended, and similar mass turnouts were had in the other three steel towns the same week. Steel workers poured into our unions, by thousands. At the end of a month's time we could, if necessary, easily have struck all these great Chicago district steel trust mills.

This was a brilliant demonstration of the correctness of my original plan. Without the least difficulty (had the trade union leaders so willed it) we could have accomplished simultaneously in every important steel town throughout the United States what we had done in the Chicago district. And the experience showed that we could have got the masses behind us in even less time than I had figured on. Had the

Gompers leadership backed my plan with the necessary men and money (and they had plenty of both) our success in the Chicago district showed that well within the six weeks' time I had set we could have been knocking at Judge Gary's door and threatening him with a national strike. With the war still on, such a strike movement could only have resulted in a victory for the steel workers. Rejection of my original plan was tantamount to a refusal to organize the steel industry.

But what a different prospect faced us now as we began to get under way. Our big successes in Chicago (although they failed utterly to arouse the enthusiasm of the A. F. of L. leadership) greatly alarmed the steel trust heads, who previously had not taken us any more seriously than had Gompers. So they set out to fight us relentlessly.

In the next months, lacking men and organizers, we laboriously spread our movement to other districts. We met the most skilled and ferocious resistance of the steel employers. To head us off they gave four successive national wage increases and finally the basic eight-hour day. A month after our Chicago success the war came to an end, and an industrial slump set in. The sole situation weakened our offensive, robbed us of the advantage of surprise, and the employers' counter-offensive against us correspondingly was greatly intensified. As we now slowly battered our way into one steel fortress after another we faced wholesale suppression of the right of assembly in the steel towns, our organizers were slugged and arrested and one, Fannie Sellins, murdered. Many company unions were organized to block us, 30,000 workers were discharged for union membership, Ku Klux Klan movements were fostered, elaborate spy systems were used against us, etc., in short, we faced the whole battery of weapons of the great steel trust.

All these overwhelming difficulties would have been avoided, of course, by carrying through my original plan. Our work was now many times more difficult. But, of our multiplying difficulties, the most serious was the steady sabotage

we suffered from within our own ranks, from the affiliated union leaders. They systematically and shamelessly betrayed the steel workers into the hands of the steel trust. The tremendous importance to the working class of organizing the steel industry, though it stirred the violent resistance of the capitalists, left the A. F. of L. leadership quite cold.

One of the gravest forms of this official A. F. of L. sabotage was the practice of the top leaders, with few exceptions, to stay away from the meetings of our National Committee and to delegate in their stead powerless local Business Agents. Thus they escaped giving support to the campaign, while at the same time making an appearance of going along with it. The consequence was that we were constantly strangled for want of resources and unity of action.

Gompers himself was the worst offender in this respect. He was actual Chairman of our National Committee, but he never spoke at a single meeting of steel workers in the whole campaign nor helped us raise a dollar in money or build a crew of organizers. And about the only way I could get him to come to our meetings was to call an occasional meeting under his very nose, in the room of the A. F. of L. Executive Council in Washington. And sometimes even then he evaded it. Gompers always pleaded lack of time. He found plenty of time, however, to spend several months in Europe helping rig up the infamous Versailles treaty; he also found time to junket down to Mexico City to set up that tool of American Imperialism, the Pan-American Federation of Labor, but he had no time for the steel workers, struggling so desperately to establish trade unions.

I remember that once, during a special crisis for want of funds, organizers and more concerted action by the unions, I drafted a very strong letter urging all the affiliated union heads to attend our next National Committee meeting. Then J. G. Brown, our general organizer, went to Washington to get Gompers to sign it jointly with me. Very reluctantly he did so. But here is what happened. Upon receipt of the letter signed by Gompers and myself, various steel union leaders

called up "Sam" and inquired how about this letter, was it really so urgent, etc.? Whereupon Gompers told them that it was "all right, only a routine meeting." Result: the same old kind of meeting with nearly all the decisive leaders absent. Even Gompers himself did not come. With such a lead from Gompers, the various union heads felt quite safe in the neglect and betrayal that they perpetrated constantly against the steel campaign.

Gompers hung on to the Chairmanship of our National Committee, usually commissioning John Fitzpatrick to serve in his place. Finally, however, on the eve of our big strike, he quit in order to free himself of responsibility, and definitely appointed Fitzpatrick as Chairman.

The sabotage of the steel campaign by the top officials of the 24 affiliated unions is clearly revealed, beyond possibility of contradiction, by the financial figures of the movement in my final report. The total funds eventually contributed to our National Committee by its 24 unions were only \$101,047. This starvation amount, which we painfully extracted from them over a period of many months, was supposed to finance a great nation-wide organization campaign of 14 months' duration, and to feed and otherwise finance a three and a half months' strike of 365,000 steel workers. Actually, all things considered, as I showed, the steel workers financed their own movement with the funds they paid in as initiation fees and dues. And even this sum of \$101,047, together with what the 24 unions themselves spent for their average of three organizers apiece, was more than offset by the huge sums, not less than \$500,000, that we turned over to them and that was collected by themselves in initiations and dues from the steel workers. The unions were flush with money at the time and, had they been sufficiently interested, almost any one of them could, alone, have given more to our strike movement than all of them did together. The fact is that the three radical needle trades unions, Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Ladies Garment Workers and Furriers, outside the steel industry altogether, donated a total of \$180,000 to our strike relief fund,

or almost double what the whole 24 affiliated steel industry unions gave during the entire 16 months' struggle.

The financial sabotage scandal reached its peak in the case of the ultra-reactionary A. A. of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers. This, the basic union in the industry, actually made a large surplus out of the campaign. From this union our National Committee, for all purposes, including strike relief, received only \$11,811.81, although we had turned over to them more than \$150,000 in initiation fees and they had collected probably twice as much more directly from the steel workers in initiation fees and dues. This union treasury showed a surplus of \$206,000. With this huge surplus the reactionary Tighe leaders bought, after the strike, a national union headquarters building in Pittsburgh.

As for the A. F. of L. itself, it raised no money whatever for the organizing campaign. When the strike came, we practically forced it to issue a general call for funds. This raised \$418,141.14, but it was collected mostly by our steel organizers, the A. F. of L. officers making no effort. These were the only monies we received from the A. F. of L., and *they came fourteen months after the campaign had begun and six weeks after we had 365,000 strikers in the streets.*

However, despite all obstacles—the spy system, wholesale discharges of workers, wage concessions, company unionism, terrorism, suppression of civil rights, etc., of the steel trust and the deadly sabotage of the top union leaders—we finally managed, in the course of 14 months of bitter struggle, to firmly establish the unions in the many key plants of the steel trust in the main steel districts. My final financial report showed a minimum of 250,000 workers organized. There were probably many more than that. Our loyal staff of organizers could with justice make the proud boast that we had done the “impossible,” organized the great mass of the workers in the steel industry. Where the A. F. of L. had failed utterly for 25 years we had succeeded. Labor had scaled the ramparts of the greatest of all open shop fortresses.

THE 1919 STEEL STRIKE

Then came the great steel strike, beginning September 22, 1919. Our committee had approached Judge Gary, head of the U. S. Steel Corporation, with our demands, but he refused to meet with us. Meanwhile, all through the industry a big offensive was on to smash our unions, over 30,000 of our members were already on the streets, discharged because of union activity. It was a case of either fight or die; we chose to fight.

In response to our strike call, 365,000 steel workers struck in 50 cities of ten states.* Almost every key plant of the U. S. Steel and big independents was paralyzed. The steel workers dealt a smashing blow at their giant enemy. The steel industry has never seen, before or since, a strike remotely approaching such magnitude and powerful effect.

Needless for me to recapitulate; the strike was fought desperately by the steel corporations. The brave strikers had to face a reign of terror set up by armies of scabs, private gunmen, deputy sheriffs, police and soldiers. Civil rights were completely suppressed in many of the key steel districts; a ferocious campaign of publicity was carried on against the strike all over the country. But worst of all was the sabotage within our own ranks. The persistent treachery of the top leadership now often reached the stage of strike-breaking: exemplified by the attempts of the A. A. to betray the whole movement for a separate agreement; the attempt of the Stationary Engineers to keep their craft at work, and, most disastrous of all, the refusal of the Railroad Brotherhoods to call out their men (who were organized but without union agreements) working on the highly strategic short roads connecting the steel mills with the mainline railroads; the failure of the A. F. of L. national office to rally the labor movement behind the steel strikers, etc.

The heroism of the steel workers could not avail against all this hostile force. Twenty-two were killed, hundreds were

* The Department of Labor figures said 367,000.

slugged and shot, several thousands were arrested, and over a million and a half men, women and children starved and struggled. But the great strike, although it eventually abolished the 12-hour day and caused many other improvements, did not win its major objective of unionization. On January 8, 1920, we called it off unconditionally. About 100,000 were still out, but the strike had lost its effectiveness. The bitter three and a half months' strike was defeated and the steel workers' new unions, built with such infinite difficulty, were smashed.

COULD DEFEAT HAVE BEEN AVOIDED?

In the *New York World* of April 4, 1922, Gompers charges me with responsibility for the loss of the 1919 steel strike, as follows:

This is the same Foster, who in the face of definite information that the U. S. Steel Corporation was prepared for and wished a strike in 1919 and in the face of a request of the President of the United States that the strike be at least postponed, insisted on that disastrous struggle.

It took a lot of crust for one who sabotaged the steel campaign like Gompers did, to accuse me of wrecking the movement. But aside from that, at the outset let me say that I am proud to accept my full share of responsibility for the steel strike, even though it was lost. Never was a strike more necessary, more justified historically. To have accepted the proposed strike "postponement" that Gompers speaks of would have amounted to the rankest betrayal of the steel workers. His "postponement" was of a piece with his sabotage policy from the beginning of our campaign. The situation was as follows:

On September 11th, just eleven days before our scheduled strike date, President Wilson gave a story to the press demanding a postponement of the strike until after the holding of his national industrial conference which was to begin on October 6th, and which was supposed to establish industrial peace between Capital and Labor in the United States. Gom-

pers, without consulting us, at once issued a public statement endorsing Wilson's demand to postpone the strike. Then, proving that there was a concerted movement among the top A. F. of L. leaders, there poured into our office a stream of wires supporting Wilson's and Gompers' stand from a majority of the union Presidents who made up our National Committee. A few will suffice to show their trend:

I wish to be recorded as in favor of complying with the President's request.

W. H. Johnston, Pres., Int'l. Asso. of Machinists

Engineers will abide by suggestions of President Wilson that we delay action until after labor conference at Washington.

M. Snellings, Pres., Steam and Operating Engineers

The Executive Board of the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers International Union desires action in steel strike postponed till after industrial conference in Washington.

Wm. Bowen, Pres.

It is our opinion that there should be no strike called until after the October conference.

J. R. Alpine, Pres., Plumbers and Steamfitters

A strike at this time would be very inopportune.

M. F. Ryan, Pres., Bro. Railway Carmen

It will be better to postpone the calling of the strike until after President Wilson's conference of October 6.

Wm. Atkinson, Acting Pres., Boilermakers

We oppose a strike in the steel industry until after the adjournment of the industrial meeting called by President Wilson.

J. Wilson, Pres., Patternmakers

Various other union Presidents wired similarly; while the ultra-reactionary officials of the A. A. dodged about on the question, fearing openly to advocate postponement. The only Presidents who definitely opposed halting the strike were those of the Blacksmiths and Mine, Mill and Smeltermen.

All this created a real crisis for us. The steel trust was violently attacking our unions and here we were confronted with a demand from the heads of the Government and of the A. F. of L., backed by a majority of our committee,

that our strike be called off. And worse yet, this demand was framed in such an insidious way as to make it appear that there was requested only a short postponement until "Labor's friend," President Wilson, could satisfactorily adjust the whole matter.

As for myself, I was immediately convinced that any postponement of the strike would be fatal. I had not the slightest confidence in President Wilson or his three-cornered conference of Capital, Labor and the Public doing anything for the steel workers. A postponement of the strike would inevitably destroy the workers' confidence in our movement, throw the unions at the mercy of the vicious steel trust and smash the whole organization in a welter of confusion and wildcat strikes. Far better to take a fighting chance with our 250,000 and more organized steel workers. In any event, the best way to get consideration from the industrial conference was to confront it with a great strike.

But what could I do to hold fast to our strike date? To simply call together our National Committee would have been suicidal, as the majority were against the strike. Shortness of time also forbade any kind of a formal rank and file vote or national conference. So, upon my own responsibility, I wired and telephoned our field organizers, at least 95% of whom were honest and wanted earnestly to have the steel workers organized, to express the opinions of their local steel councils. Immediately, I received a flood of telegrams, showing an overwhelming mass demand to go on with the strike. Thus a few of them:

Unless you call the strike before Friday morning we will be forced to take matters into our own hands.

Gary and South Chicago Steel Councils in Joint Session

General committee of all unions at Bethlehem unanimously voted to demand strike action by your committee.

Dave Williams, Organizer

We cannot be expected to meet the enraged workers who will consider us traitors if strike is postponed.

Organizers of Youngstown district

It is imperative that the strike be not postponed as the result will be a demoralization of our forces and the creating of a situation that will be positively dangerous.

District Organizing Secretaries of Youngstown, Rankin, Braddock, Homestead, Butler, Pittsburgh, Johnstown, Wheeling, Steubenville, Buffalo

Fitzpatrick, although he had little faith generally in strikes, agreed with the field organizers' and my opinion that to postpone the strike would be fatal. So we drafted a telegram to Gompers (which the third member of our committee, the A. A. reactionary, Tighe, was afraid not to sign) that "postponement would mean absolute demoralization and utter ruin for our movement" and demanded that the strike go on as scheduled.

Thus, we confronted a head-on collision between the militant masses of steel workers and the reactionary top union leadership backed by the President of the United States. It all ended by Gompers and Company backing up. They simply did not dare to assume the responsibility of openly destroying our movement and denying the steel workers their only chance to win. So the great strike went into effect, as scheduled, on September 22; but, needless to say, its chances for success had been gravely injured by the Wilson-Gompers "postponement" maneuver, which alienated public sympathy.

The outcome of Wilson's national Industrial Conference showed that we were quite right in not surrendering the steel workers' fate into its hands. At this time the large employers were just launching into the biggest open shop drive in American labor history, the ferocious post-war offensive against the workers to strip them of the better wages, shorter hours and union organizations they had built up during the war. Wilson's Conference, dominated by the greatest capitalist interests, reflected this developing offensive and it was so reactionary that it immediately split over Labor's proposal to grant the workers the elementary right of organization. Even the reactionary Gompers leaders had to walk out of the conference.

Fourteen years later the steel workers had again built up a big movement and had developed, in the growing wave of strike struggle and trade unionism in the N. R. A. days of 1934, the best opportunity for a successful steel strike that ever existed in the steel industry. But they unwisely listened to the appeal of President Roosevelt (like Wilson, "a friend of Labor") and William Green that their promising strike movement be "postponed" and the workers' cause be committed to the tender care of a government board. Result: complete defeat for the workers and the liquidation and thorough discrediting of their union, the A. A. And so it would have been with us in 1919, but on a much worse scale. In going ahead with our strike we protected the workers' fighting chance, and we would have won the strike had it not been for the strike-breaking tactics of the A. F. of L. leaders. To have adopted the Wilson-Gompers' "postponement" would have meant certain disaster, and the greatest strike-breaking shame the American labor movement has ever known.

If A. F. of L. leaders seek responsibility for the loss of the steel strike they need look no further than their own general offices. The true cause of the defeat was to be found in their reactionary attitude of indifference, sabotage and strike-breaking towards the steel campaign from the beginning to the end. Had they adopted my original plan at the Chicago conference we could have won hands down, at most with a short war-time strike. But their policies of denying the movement the necessary organizers and money crippled the whole campaign and forced it into a period when the war was over, the acute demand for munitions had ended, an industrial slump was at hand, the government had abandoned its conciliatory attitude, and a great employers' offensive was under way. Nor could all the militancy and sacrifices of the steel workers in their bitterly-fought organization drive and heroic strike overcome these obstacles, raised primarily through the sabotaging policy of the reactionary A. F. of L. leaders.

THE STRATEGY BEHIND THE STEEL STRIKE

Naturally, victory in the steel campaign would have given a tremendous impetus to the organization of the workers in all industries. With my super-appreciation of the importance of trade unionism, I was quite aware of the possibilities such a victory would open up and I based my general strategy upon them. When we won through in the packing industry I had been quick to take advantage of the stimulus it gave and to extend the campaign into steel; and if the steel campaign had been successful I was prepared to repeat this procedure and to branch out into a still more ambitious program.

The capture of the main open shop fortress, steel, by the trade unions would have made easy the organization of many other industries. And my aim was to take advantage of such a situation by having the A. F. of L. launch a gigantic campaign of unionization simultaneously in all major unorganized industries. Concretely, I planned to propose that there be set up a big national committee, patterned after our steel committee, which should supervise the work of organization through sub-committees in each and every industry. I calculated that if we managed to defeat the steel trust we consequently would be able to line up the A. F. of L. for such a great organizing campaign and carry it through successfully in spite of all official sabotage. We would then be able to organize literally millions of workers and to make real progress towards actually unionizing the working class as a whole. It was a bold plan but a feasible one, had the A. F. of L. leaders permitted the steel campaign to be won.

Such a great influx of members would, as I was quite consciously aware, profoundly change the character of the trade unions. Among the certain basic changes would be: (a) to shift the center of gravity from the skilled workers to the less skilled; (b) to break down the old system of craft unionism, and lay the basis of industrial organization; (c) to give the unions more of a class struggle policy and to broaden their social outlook; (d) to develop a more honest and pro-

gressive leadership. In short, I figured that such a great movement would go far towards realizing the boring-from-within plan which we had nourished for years—the revolutionization of the A. F. of L.

The above revolutionizing tendencies were already clearly in evidence in the packing and steel campaigns; both movements were based primarily upon the unskilled masses, both were distinctly industrial unionist, both had a fighting policy, and both had developed a new anti-Gompers leadership.

In these campaigns I had been especially active in pushing forward John Fitzpatrick, whom I sized up as an honest and courageous fighter. I lost no occasion to enhance his prestige and to strengthen his position.* I was directly instrumental in his becoming Chairman of our steel committee and I speculated upon his being Chairman of the great organizing campaign I had in mind. And I could see his whole advance as one day culminating in his assuming Gompers' place.† But I could not unfold all these plans and speculations to the rather slow-going Fitzpatrick. He had to advance from one stage to another. Thus, at first he was skeptical when I had initiated the packinghouse campaign, and he simply said I was "crazy" when I later proposed organizing steel; but as the campaigns got under way he caught their spirit and gave them his whole-hearted support. I figured he would do the same in the higher stages to come in our movement.

It did not require any great brilliance to figure out the above major results of a victory in steel—that is, the organization of millions of other workers and the transformation of the A. F. of L.—and it is certain that the shrewd advisers of Gary and his powerful banker associates had more than an

* In those days Fitzpatrick was quite appreciative of this "boosting" process. Once he wrote me as follows, after a local success in steel:

"I received your letter and was very glad to know of your success. Of course, it could not be otherwise with you at the helm. However, it has caused great interest and you cannot begin to understand the great amount of credit I am receiving as a result of your efforts. So keep on and soon I will have a halo of glory and you will be in jail."

† The material in this section is dealt with more fully in my "Open Letter to John Fitzpatrick," *Labor Herald*, June 1924.

inkling of them. They doubtless realized that if we won the steel strike they would confront a rejuvenated and far more powerful labor movement; for which industry could resist unionization if steel were vanquished? That is why they fought the strike with such relentless fury.

Gompers, a keen old fox, also knew what the unfavorable implications to him of a victory in steel would be, and that is why he, too, sabotaged our struggle. He could plainly see all the industrial union tendencies developing in the packing and steel campaigns and he could not help but feel them as a growing menace to his whole régime. As for the question of a new anti-Gompers leadership, that matter actually broke out into the open and became a living issue.

It happened this way: One day George P. West was in our Pittsburgh office. We had been quite friendly, and inadvertently, I hinted at the real meaning of the steel campaign to the A. F. of L. West, giving me no inkling of his plan, sprang a "scoop" in the *Nation* of April 9, 1919. Dramatically, he pictured the menace the rising Fitzpatrick-Foster combination held for the declining Gompers-Morrison crowd and the revolutionizing of the A. F. of L. Gompers was furious and demanded an explanation from Fitzpatrick. The latter called me up from Chicago.* We were in the midst of the organization campaign and an open fight would surely destroy it. So Fitzpatrick and I agreed to pooh-pooh West's story and let it go at that. But I was astonished and dismayed a few days later when I received a letter from Fitzpatrick containing a copy of his reply to Gompers, fantastically giving the latter vast praise for his "work" in both the packing and steel campaigns. It was a bad retreat and it foreshadowed the ultimate surrender of Fitzpatrick to Gompers four years later in the midst of the bitter struggle of that time.

But Gompers and the other A. F. of L. leaders were not reassured by the weak, apologetic letter of John Fitzpatrick. They only felt safe when the strike, with its radical lead-

* During the steel campaign Fitzpatrick was located in Chicago, as President of the C. F. of L., while I headed the national organizing forces in Pittsburgh.

ership and, to them, threatening possibilities, was beaten. If these leaders, with few exceptions, sabotaged the campaign from start to finish it was because they, like Gary, had a vested interest that was in danger. All of which goes to show that the organization of steel and other basic industries is the task of the progressive wing of the labor movement and must be done in the face of reactionary labor leader opposition. This is as true in the 1936 steel drive of the progressive C. I. O. unions as it was of the 1919 steel campaign.

The organization of the steel industry was the most advanced point ever reached by the American trade union movement. The unions had deeply penetrated the greatest open shop industry. More was at stake in 1919 steel strike than in any other in American history. The victory of this struggle, which the union leadership could have brought about, would have raised the whole trade union movement to a much higher level of strength and development. Its defeat, by the same token, was a big factor in intensifying the oncoming heavy, employers' offensive and in deepening the reactionary trend in the unions during the following several years.

REGARDING SOME CRITICISMS

My activities in the packinghouse and steel campaigns have not been free of sharp criticism. That which came from employer sources and official A. F. of L. quarters merits no answer and I make none. But some "left" elements have also vociferously criticized me, on the grounds that during this period I had abandoned my revolutionary outlook and become part and parcel of the Gompers' machine.* They have,

* These critics were aided by Gompers himself who, in his need to shed all responsibility for my securing such a strategic position in the trade unions, says in his *Seventy Years of Life and Labor* that I had basely deceived him, the poor innocent, regarding my views. But these statements, a tissue of falsifications and an example of how unscrupulously Gompers fought his adversaries, are on a par with his slanderous remarks about Debs on page 416, Volume I, of the same book. By the great mass demand for Debs' release from jail after the war, Gompers had been literally whipped into bestirring himself. So here is how he justifies his action before his bourgeois public by falsely impugning the revolutionary integrity of Debs: "Remember-

also, severely condemned my attitude towards the war. This criticism was based upon chiefly my testimony before the U. S. Senate Committee that investigated the steel strike.

The Senate Committee incident developed thus: On the day after the steel strike began the Senate appointed a committee to "investigate" the controversy. The strike situation was extremely tense. The country was in the midst of the deep-post-war period of political reaction, with its waves of undiminished war hysteria, Palmer "red raids," American Legion and Ku Klux Klan violence and capitalist fear of impending mass working class upheaval. The launching of the national steel strike intensified all this fear and hysteria. With thousand-tongued fury, the press shrieked that this was not a real strike but a revolutionary outbreak, a "red" attempt to overthrow the government and to set up Bolshevik Soviets in America.

In the midst of this acute excitement I was summoned to Washington to testify before the reactionary Senate Committee. In view of my I. W. W. and S. L. of N. A. past, I had been highly dramatized as the chief red who was using the steel strike to begin the revolution. It was quite clear that the Senate Committee's aim was to get a revolutionary speech from me with which to whip up the existing terror and thereby enable the forces of reaction to literally tear the steel strike to shreds.

What, then, should I do? As I have already made clear, I attached the most profound importance to the winning of the steel strike. I saw in its victory not only the well-being of over 1,500,000 men, women and children, but what was even more important, that it would open the door to the

ing him (Debs) as I did when we were friends, I went to see him in Atlanta. As we talked together the perverting twist that had possessed his mind and character since the days of Woodstock jail... seemed to disappear. I saw him again when he came to Washington after his release from Atlanta. He was gentle and genial and seemed greatly touched at what I had done for him. He allowed the message to be brought to me that he had completely changed his point of view. However, it was only a short time before he avowed anew his pre-war and during-the-war attitude. To have done otherwise would have been to invite oblivion."

trade union organization of millions of workers in other industries, that it would bring about a complete reorganization of the A. F. of L. in structure, policies and leadership, and would place a powerful revolutionary weapon in the hands of the working class. I was, therefore, ready to do anything, to sacrifice everything, in order to win the strike. And I was quite convinced also that in the existing circumstances of anti-red hysteria a frank statement of my views on the Senate Committee's witness stand would furnish the capitalist enemy with just the weapon it wanted to destroy the strike. I knew also that the Gompers bureaucracy would seize upon such an occasion to throw the strike to the wolves. I feared, in addition, that such a speech, garbled and twisted by the hysterical press, would confuse and demoralize the steel workers themselves, who were far from being revolutionary and who had not been prepared for such a development. Especially great was the latter danger, because there was no strong revolutionary party backing the strike, the Communist Party then just being born and the Socialist Party being quite unreliable.

So I resolved beforehand not to make a frank exposition of my viewpoint, but, at all costs, to shield the strike. I deemed it incomparably more important to protect the steel workers from added attack than to voice my revolutionary convictions. Come what might, I was determined not to allow the government to use me to break the strike.

On the witness stand I tried to confine the question at issue to the economic demands of the workers and to discard my personal opinions as beside the point. But this proved impossible, as it put me in the untenable position of evasion. Then I offered to develop fully my viewpoint if the press were excluded from the hearing. This also the hostile Committee rejected and I was confronted with the necessity to speak. Thereupon, feeling myself under compulsion and in a sort of police trap, I delivered the testimony for which I have been so sharply criticized. In brief, I obscured my conception of the revolutionary role of the trade unions, did not

draw a sharp political line between the A. F. of L. leadership and myself and stated that I had endorsed the war.

This testimony, extracted from me under these circumstances, did not express my true convictions. It failed to correspond to my past attitudes, to my work during the war-time or to my later activities. Let me be specific:

First, as to the charge made against me that I had given up my revolutionary opinions: To the Senate Committee I could indeed say that I had greatly altered my views since I wrote the S. L. of N. A. pamphlet *Syndicalism* (which played such a big role in the whole situation) but this only meant that I had changed my revolutionary perspective, not abandoned it. As I have outlined in the earlier chapter on the International Trade Union Educational League, I had developed the theory, a type of Syndicalism, that the trade unions, by their constant process of increasing their forces and demands, were making straight for the overthrow of capitalism, in spite of their conservative outlook. I, therefore, felt sure that I was doing genuinely revolutionary work by leading in the war-time mobilization of 565,000 workers in the packing and steel industries and throwing the way open for the organization of millions more. All Syndicalist theory, mine as well as others', is opportunistic and non-revolutionary; but this by no means implies that in developing my particular brand of Syndicalism I had consciously abandoned my revolutionary goal. On the contrary, I was profoundly convinced that by my war-time organization work I was proceeding by the fastest and shortest route, by the only route, in fact, to the revolution.

Now as to the accusation that I had become part of the Gompers machine: This is sheer nonsense, as should be clear from what I have said earlier. Although it is a fact that during the packinghouse and steel campaigns I directed little open criticism against the Gompers leaders, which was a serious error, it is absolutely unjustified to assume therefrom that I had surrendered to these reactionaries. On the contrary, my whole work was aimed at smashing the Gompers

regime, lock, stock and barrel. I carried on my organization work in the conscious realization, first, that it could only succeed by defeating the A. F. of L. top leaders; and, second, that the success of the campaigns I had in mind after a victory in steel would completely wreck the Gompers machine and change the whole A. F. of L. structure, leadership and viewpoint. Hence part of my general program was to develop a new leadership and the whole trend of our movement was to build a powerful left-progressive block in the A. F. of L. The method I used in fighting the Gompersites was the flank attack; that is, instead of a frontal denunciation which in the existing circumstances, as I was without strong organized backing, would have created an open rupture and made my organization work impossible, I strove to confront the A. F. of L. leaders with giant organization campaigns they could not defeat. Thus eventually would be mobilized against them huge masses of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, led by radical and progressive leaders, who would put an end to the whole Gompers regime. This plan was in line with my struggle against the corrupt A. F. of L. leadership.

Finally, as to my attitude towards the war. In this matter I deserved sharpest criticism, because, undeniably my position was highly opportunistic. As I have stated, however, my testimony before the Senate Committee did not express my real sentiments. The error of my war-time position originated in my false syndicalistic conception that the decisive revolutionary task was the building of the trade unions and that to this end all other activities should be subordinated or eliminated, including even direct agitation against the war. A correct policy would have put the fight against the war first and everything else subsidiary to this central task. I was right in opposing the World War and America's entry into it; but once the latter had taken place, I wrongly focussed my attention entirely upon one thing, the organization of the unorganized. As I have shown, I made it my central policy to take advantage of the huge demand for workers by pushing organization campaigns and militant strikes, with

the conception that thus I was creating in the swiftest possible manner the means that would end capitalism, the mass trade unions. This opportunistic policy did not lead me to actually take part in the pro-war activities (the stories current about my selling war bonds being without foundation), but I unquestionably did not make opposition to such activities, with which the trade unions all about me were much occupied. I worked only on my main task of organizing the unions. And my policy for such aggressive organization campaigns and strikes in the basic, trustified and munitions' industries was in sharp contradiction to the "social-peace," "no-strike" policies of the A. F. of L. and the government.

STEEL MARCHES AGAIN

As I write this (July 1936) a new campaign to organize the steel workers is beginning, this time under the leadership of the Committee for Industrial Organization, headed by John L. Lewis, President of the U. M. W. A. But now the work is starting under more favorable circumstances than in 1919: (1) the economic situation in the industry is on the upgrade, whereas, in 1919, the steel industry was slipping into a slump; (2) the political situation is also better—whereas the 1919 campaign was carried on in an atmosphere of "red raids" and deepening reaction, the present campaign is going ahead in an election year, with both parties scrambling for the workers' votes, and the government is mildly favorable to the campaign; (3) the workers now, feeling the upsurge generally among the masses, are in an aggressive mood—but in 1919 they were on the defensive in the face of a huge nation-wide attack by the employers; (4) the present campaign has the solid backing of 1,250,000 workers, besides wide support in the labor movement generally, while we had very little of such support; (5) in 1919 we began our campaign with only \$1400, but the C. I. O. has \$500,000 and a million or two more on call; (6) the 1936 campaign is based upon one industrial union, instead of 1919's 24 quarreling crafts; (7) the company unions are now pretty thor-

ougly discredited, whereas in 1919 they were brand-new and surrounded by many illusions; (8) the big language problem of non-English speaking workers which was acute in 1919, is greatly diminished now; (9) the 1936 organizers have before them for their guidance a whole series of vital lessons learned in the 1919 struggle; (10) these organizers are also working with the confidence bred of the fact that the steel industry actually was organized in 1919, whereas our organizers had to face a monumental pessimism and general disbelief in the possibility of unionizing the steel industry; (11) the radio now also enables the steel workers to escape much of the 1919 terrorism by receiving the union message, in their homes; (12) and lastly, there is now in the field to help, a strong Communist Party, a vital force which we altogether lacked in 1919.

All these advantages of the 1936 campaign over that of 1919, would indicate that the steel workers should be readily organized, notwithstanding the steel trust's opposition and in spite of A. F. of L. sabotaging (which we also suffered in disastrous degree in 1919). The decisive problem will be to win the strike which will almost certainly come before the steel trust will agree to deal with the unions. And this strike, which probably will be the greatest and most important in American labor history, can be won. But it will require a powerful mobilization of Labor's forces. Many industries may be involved. Especially vital will be solid support from the miners and railroad workers in the steel areas.

The winning of the steel drive will open up tremendous possibilities for the labor movement, even as its defeat would be a great disaster. Victory will make it possible to organize millions of workers readily. We saw this clearly in 1919 and planned accordingly. But the perspective is even greater now than in 1919. Millions of new workers in the trade unions, the reorganization and rejuvenation of the A. F. of L., the formation of a national Farmer-Labor Party—these are some of the major implications of a successful drive to organize the steel workers.

CHAPTER X

THE RED INTERNATIONAL OF LABOR UNIONS

THE loss of the 1919 steel strike upset my whole strategy. Gone was the plan for using this struggle as a springboard for beginning a general organizing campaign in all industries, and gone also was my hope of overthrowing the Gompers machine by the mass organization of the unorganized. But from our experience in the meat packing and steel campaigns two important lessons, aside from the major lessons of the great need for industrial unionism, etc., stood out sharp and clear for us as militants, and we proceeded to act upon them.

The first was that our policy of boring-from-within was fundamentally correct. A mere handful of us Syndicalists had been instrumental in launching and leading movements that had organized over half a million workers—native and foreign born, Negroes and whites, skilled and unskilled, women and youth—in two of the most highly trustified industries in the United States. Furthermore, we had succeeded in directing these movements into elementary industrial channels, and the whole job had been done in the face of the crassest incompetency, indifference and down-right sabotage of the A. F. of L. leadership.

The second special lesson reëmphasized for us in meat packing and steel was that in order to bore-from-within we had to have a left wing group, an organized militant minority. The loose united front we had made with the progressive elements was not enough. In both campaigns the lack of a strong left wing organization had been a disastrous handicap to us, with the official union machinery as it was, in the hands of the reactionary top union leadership. In the packing industry we had suffered severely for want of an organized left wing

movement behind us. In the steel campaign, with a crew of about 150 organizers under our leadership, about half of whom were Socialists, Progressives and Farmer-Laborites and other union militants, and including such old S. L. of N. A. fighters as Joe Manley and Sam Hammersmark, we were not so badly off as in meat packing. It was this instrument of rank and file control that had enabled us to defy the deadly demand of Wilson and Gompers that the steel strike be "postponed," that is, liquidated. But this organization also was insufficient.

Clearly, we had to build another boring-from-within organization. The old S. L. of N. A. and I. T. U. E. L. had gone on the rocks, it is true, but maybe we would have better success next time. With this general idea in mind, therefore, I resigned my position as B. R. C. A. Organizer and Secretary of the moribund National Steel Committee in January 1920, when the strike was finished. I was determined to go back to work on the railroad and to try again, as a rank and filer, to build an organized left wing movement in the trade unions. After spending a few months writing my steel strike book, I tried for a railroad job; but I found that I was black-listed at my trade in Chicago. I worked a short while on the C. F. of L. official paper, but gave this up and then found myself unemployed.

In the meantime Jack Johnstone, Joe Manley, myself and some other Chicago militants had been preparing the way for our new left-wing trade union organization. Finally, in November 1920, we launched it, a Chicago group of a couple of dozen members, and we called it the Trade Union Educational League. Again I was elected Secretary.

THE OLD DISEASE—DUAL UNIONISM

Immediately, the newly-organized T. U. E. L. bumped against the same rock upon which its two predecessors, the S. L. of N. A. and the I. T. U. E. L., had been wrecked; the dual union attitude held generally by revolutionary elements.

This seemed as strong as ever. During the packinghouse and steel campaigns the dual union illusion had been a great handicap to us. We simply could not induce the left wing militants, of whom there were large numbers among the great masses of Polish, Russian, Lithuanian and other immigrant workers, to participate aggressively in the two big organization campaigns. In the packing industry Jack Johnstone had spoken before left S. P. groups and fairly begged them to help him fight the Lane reactionary leadership. But in vain, the A. F. of L. was simply poison to them and they would have none of it.

In the steel campaign the situation was about the same. The dualistic S. P. left wing (out of which the Communist Party was then being born) assumed, except in one or two places, an indifferent and very unsympathetic attitude to our movement, while the I. W. W. and the S. L. P. denounced it in the sharpest terms. An example of the strength of dual union sentiment at the time was the clash we had with Eugene V. Debs in Youngstown. In 1919, in this great steel center, where the A. F. of L. had been badly discredited recently by betrayed strikes, we were having a desperately hard time to get the workers organized. Debs, then just on the eve of going to jail for his Canton anti-war speech, was holding big meetings there and sharply assailing our movement with typical dualist arguments. This increased our difficulties and incensed our organizers, and I was made one of a committee of three to visit Debs to demand that he cease his attacks on pain of our making an open fight against him. Finally, he agreed to do this, but we could not induce him to tell the masses of steel workers who packed his meetings to join the A. F. of L. unions. Later on, however, when the big strike took place, Debs heartily endorsed it and sent me word from Atlanta penitentiary that if he were free he would be fighting shoulder to shoulder with us to win the strike.

By 1920, the I. W. W., the traditional hope of dual unionists, had heavily declined after its war-time spurt and had degenerated pretty much into a defense organization for

its many political prisoners. But the dual union sentiment, nevertheless, fed upon a number of other independent industrial unions, all either very weak and some altogether fruitless, including the Amalgamated Food Workers, United Labor Council, etc. The main one of such unions was the One Big Union of Canada, which exerted considerable influence in the United States. After the turn of the century, Canadian rebels had not been so badly afflicted by dualism as the American left wing, and over a period of years they had won control of the whole union in the West and were rapidly securing leadership over the entire Canadian trade union movement. But the dual union illusion finally caught up with them and their promising situation was wrecked by the launching of the ill-fated One Big Union in Calgary, March 13, 1919. The O. B. U., by pulling the militants out of the old unions, as usual, left the reactionaries in complete control.

Despite its long-continued lack of success, the dual union theory, however, still continued to exert a hypnotic effect over almost the whole American left wing. The I. W. W., fanatically dualist, would not even discuss the question of working within the trade unions, nor would the S. L. P., nor what remained of a left wing in the S. P. after the 1919 split. The nascent Communist movement, just born out of the S. P. in the shape of two Communist Parties, was similarly dualist and endorsed the I. W. W. Even Liberals and Progressives, in the trade unions and outside, were also dead sure that nothing could be done in the old trade unions. I remember how, at a meeting of such liberal elements in New York in 1920, after my speech on the steel campaign, they scoffed at my proposals that revolutionists should give up their foolish policy of building dual unions and should concentrate upon work within the conservative trade unions.

UNEXPECTED REINFORCEMENTS

In view of this almost unanimous left wing hostility to boring-from-within, the frail, newly-born T. U. E. L. faced a most unpromising struggle for existence. It seemed fated soon to join its luckless predecessors. But it suddenly received very powerful assistance from an unlooked-for quarter, which changed radically the whole situation. This much-needed help came from none less than the great leader of the Russian revolution, Lenin.

It so occurred that in the early days of the T. U. E. L., I had happened upon Lenin's famous pamphlet, *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. Here, to my great joy and amazement, I found revolutionary dual unionism condemned and the boring-from-within policy endorsed much more clearly and forcefully than we had ever expressed it. Among other attacks on dualism, Lenin said:

... the German "Left" Communists are guilty of just this stupidity when, because of the reactionary and counter-revolutionary character of the *heads* of the trade unions, they jump to the conclusion that it is necessary to leave the trade unions, to refuse to work in them, to create new, *fantastic* forms of labour organizations! This is an unpardonable blunder that would equal the greatest service the Communists could render the bourgeoisie. ... To refuse to work in the reactionary trade unions means leaving the insufficiently developed or backward working masses under the influence of reactionary leaders, agents of the bourgeoisie, labor aristocrats, or "bourgeoisified workers..."

There can be no doubt that Messieurs the Gomperses, Hendersons, Jouhaux, Legien, and the like, are very grateful to such "Left" revolutionaries. ...

Needless to say, the T. U. E. L. militants used Lenin's pamphlet effectively in left wing circles. Then came further encouraging news from Moscow. At its first congress, the Communist International, under pressure of the American delegation, and absorbed in the great task of preliminary mobilization of its forces, had given countenance to dual unionism by calling upon the I. W. W. to "take the initiative

in trying to establish a basis for the uniting in one organization of all unions which have a class conscious character, of all workers who accept the class struggle, such as the W. I. U., the One Big Union, and certain insurgent unions in the A. F. of L." But the second C. I. Congress, held early in 1920, was able to devote closer attention to this question and, with the American delegation opposed, declared categorically against dual unionism and for working within the conservative trade unions.

We old-time borers-from-within were more than delighted at these sudden and far-reaching developments. It appeared that our ten-year fight for work within the conservative unions was at last going to be successful. Nor were we mistaken. Lenin's writings and the action of the Comintern for the first time produced a real discussion on the dual union question in the United States. The result was inevitable. The dual union myth was exploded. Soon the two C. P.'s (which were not yet amalgamated) endorsed the Comintern policy and so did, likewise, a section of the I. W. W. Dual unionism received a fatal blow. The revolutionary movement in the United States had come to a new turning point.

THE FIRST CONGRESS OF THE R. I. L. U.

Just at this juncture I was invited to attend the first congress of the Red International of Labor Unions, to be held in Moscow in the spring of 1921. Our Chicago group agreed and I went as one of the T. U. E. L. delegates. The T. U. E. L. delegation also included Earl R. Browder and Mother Bloor. In addition, there was an I. W. W. delegation of several, with Bill Haywood at its head. Herbert M. Wells and Dennis Batt were fraternal delegates from the Seattle and Detroit central labor councils respectively. There were also a few delegates from New York independent revolutionary unions.

This first R. I. L. U. congress was an historic occasion. It launched the first revolutionary trade union international

movement since the days of the old International Workingmen's Association, of which Karl Marx was the political leader. Its organization came about as a result of the long years of treachery of the Amsterdam trade union international and its Socialist-controlled trade federations. The newly formed R. I. L. U. consisted of the Russian unions, left Socialist and Syndicalist unions in various countries and organized minorities within the Social Democratic unions in many lands.

This is no place, however, to review in detail the work of the first R. I. L. U. congress. Here I shall confine myself to those questions most directly concerning the American situation. The main issue in this respect was that of boring-from-within. The fight developed around a demand of the I. W. W., which was supported by the New York revolutionary unions, for an endorsement of dual unionism. A sharp struggle took place. But the congress, in line with its general policy on the union question, declared basically for a policy of boring-from-within in the United States. Its decision said:

The members of the I.W.W. should join their respective trade unions and spread their propaganda among them, explaining the working class problems. The longer they keep themselves aloof from the American Federation of Labor, the greater will be the sufferings and the harder will be the process of advancement of the unorganized workers. . . .

The decision further pointed out:

Therefore, the question of creating revolutionary cells and groups inside the A. F. of L. and independent unions is of vital importance. There is no other way by which we could gain the working mass in America, than to lead a systematic struggle in the unions.

The I. W. W. delegates were incensed at this rejection of their fetish of dual unionism. It is true that there was a crumb of comfort for them in the decision by its provision that where mass independent unions already existed they

should not be liquidated, but the I. W. W. were violently angry that the new revolutionary international had rejected their claim to being the only genuine labor movement of the United States. Syndicalists from other countries, most of whom were dual unionists, shared their dissatisfaction.

Another basic question that created much heat and division was that of political action. The congress declared categorically for political action and for fraternal collaboration with the Communist International. As for myself, I was prepared to accept such a decision because during the course of the meat packing and steel campaigns my old Syndicalist anti-politics had started to collapse. So much so that by early in 1920 I had begun to be active in the Labor Party, then centering in Chicago. But to the other Syndicalists, including the I. W. W., and some groups and small unions from Spain, Italy, France, Germany, etc., the whole idea of political action was anathema and taboo. They fought fiercely against it.

Further clashes were had with the I. W. W. and other Syndicalists over the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They, in substance, demanded the abolition of the Soviet state and the turning over of the industries to the trade unions. To me, in view of what I had already learned of the Russian situation, this proposal seemed sheer madness. It showed quite clearly that the Syndicalists did not know the way to the revolution, nor did they recognize the revolution when it stood before their very eyes. So far did the Syndicalists go in their anti-Soviet attitude in the congress that they openly criticized the suppression of the dangerous Kronstadt revolt of a few months before. In the latter matter they accepted the leadership of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who, running here and there all over the hall, were organizing the struggle against the Communists and the Soviet Government.*

* Goldman and Berkman were at this time actively supporting the Ukrainian-Anarchist bandit, Makhno, who was carrying on an armed struggle against the Soviet Government. They denied this when so accused by Bukharin at the R. I. L. U. congress, but it is sufficient to note that Makhno has long since become an Anarchist hero. In the San Francisco Anarchist journal, *Man*,

With such grievous differences over the basic questions of trade unionism, political action, the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc., it is not surprising that many of the Syndicalists and Anarchists did not join up with the newly-formed R. I. L. U. In fact, anticipating a split, they had held a conference a short while before in Berlin and there decided to form an international of their own. For them the R. I. L. U. congress was only a favorable jumping-off point to launch their own international. Their secession finally crystallized into the sectarian and short-lived so-called Berlin Syndicalist International.

Upon his return to the United States, Williams of the I. W. W. delegation submitted a grossly hostile, counter-revolutionary report, and the I. W. W. leaders voted to repudiate the R. I. L. U. and all its works. In December 1921, they declared: "The G. E. B. of the I. W. W. recommends that this organization does not affiliate with the R. I. L. U." This was followed up with a barrage of slanders against the R. I. L. U., the Comintern, the Communist Party and the Soviet government. The I. W. W., from that time on, has persisted in an anti-Soviet vilification, hardly to be equaled even by the attacks of the A. F. of L., the Hearst press and the Civic Federation.

The Haywood-Hardy-George-Smith-Mink-etc. minority of the I. W. W., however, supported the R. I. L. U. Haywood, ill and facing a 20-year sentence for anti-war activities, remained in Moscow after the congress and never returned to the United States. Thus one of the finest sons of the working class passed out of the American scene. Haywood was a real battler, a true proletarian fighter. He was the leader of the old Western Federation of Miners when it made its most glorious traditions of struggle; he was the outstanding figure in the I. W. W. in the days of its greatest militancy and success, when it led many great strikes and produced such

August 1934, for example, together with agitation in favor of the Hitler provocateur who burned the Reichstag building, Van der Lubbe, there is an appeal for funds for Makhno, then lying fatally ill in Paris.

fighters as V. St. John, Frank Little, E. G. Flynn, etc., he led the left wing of the S. P. in its historical fight in 1912, and under his leadership the I. W. W. had made the best fight of any American organization against the war. Debs was the greatest agitator of the American revolutionary movement, but Haywood was its most outstanding fighter. With unerring proletarian instinct, Haywood knew the enemies of his class and fought them without giving or asking quarter, whether they were a bunch of gunmen at the picket line, capitalist war mongers or a clique of opportunist intellectuals controlling the Socialist Party. His only serious political error was his characteristic American deviation into dual unionism and Syndicalism. It was no accident that the splendid fighter, Haywood, eventually took his place in the ranks of that fighting organization, the Communist Party. He died in Moscow in 1928 and part of his ashes now lie beside the heroic revolutionary dead under the Kremlin wall and the rest beside the Haymarket martyrs in Chicago.

The favorable action of the R. I. L. U. congress on the question of boring-from-within was backed up by the R. I. L. U. endorsing the T. U. E. L. as its American Section. Our delegation was elated at all this. We were sure that at last the basis had been laid for a sound revolutionary union policy in the United States, and we believed much success could be secured. And the sequel showed conclusively that we were right in our optimism.

CHAPTER XI

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

IMMEDIATELY following the first R. I. L. U. congress in Moscow in 1921, there took place the third congress of the Communist International. Among the several hundred delegates present were the great Lenin and many leading revolutionary fighters from all over the world. I attended the sessions of the congress and followed its deliberations with very eager interest. The congress naturally took the same line as the R. I. L. U. on the questions which immediately interested me most: boring-from-within and Syndicalism. But instead of reviewing in detail the work of the congress, let me deal generally with the development of the Communist International and thereby the main analysis which led me to become a Communist.

The Communist International, or Comintern, held its first congress in March 1919. The roots of the Comintern were started in the war-time conferences of revolutionists held in Kienthal and Zimmerwald and in the left wing groupings that had been taking shape within the Socialist Parties of the world even before the war. The crystallization of the Comintern and its constituent Communist Parties became historically necessary because of the bankruptcy of the social reformist Socialist Parties of the Second International, a bankruptcy which climaxed in the support of their respective capitalist classes during the World War and their defense of capitalism against the threatening proletarian revolution.

THE BANKRUPTCY OF SOCIAL REFORMISM

Prior to the world war the masses of revolutionary workers everywhere, except for Syndicalist and Anarchist minorities,

pinned their hope on the Socialist Parties for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism. But it proved to be an illusory hope. Bitter experience was to demonstrate that the Socialist International, instead of being the great menace to capitalism, was its mainstay and savior.

About the middle of the nineteenth century Marx and Engels had founded the Socialist movement upon revolutionary principles. In the *Communist Manifesto* these leaders showed how the whole development of capitalism led to the greater exploitation and impoverishment of the masses, to the sharpening of class antagonisms, to the awakening of revolutionary class consciousness among the workers and other toilers, who would finally overthrow capitalism, set up the dictatorship of the proletariat and begin to build Socialism as the transition stage to Communism.

But in the long pre-war period of relatively peaceful development and expansion of capitalism, the Socialist Parties everywhere fell into the hands of petty-bourgeois intellectuals and conservative trade union officials. These opportunistic leaders gradually rejected and repudiated the revolutionary Marxian perspective. Instead, they developed revisionist reformist theories of constantly improving living standards and increasing civil liberties of the masses under capitalism, and of the painless growth of capitalism into Socialism by a gradual process of nationalizing the industries through purchase and by the winning of control of the government through building up Socialist majorities in the parliaments.

Two conclusions of profound importance flowed from these reformist theories. The first was a total disbelief not only in the necessity, but also the possibility of the proletarian revolution: the reformist Socialist leaders never tired of asserting that revolution would mean chaos, that the inexperienced workers could never take hold of and operate the complicated economic, political and social structure, that the workers had to get this control piece by piece, in the course of long years, learning as they went how to direct society. The second general conclusion, required by the first, was that

in order to develop capitalism into Socialism it was fundamentally necessary to maintain the capitalist system intact by defending it from both the revolutionary attacks by the workers and from the workings of capitalism's own internal forces that tend to break it down and disrupt it. The result of the whole reformist conception, therefore, was to completely identify the interest of the Socialist Parties with the capitalists of the various countries. Hence they helped the employers fight against the developing proletarian revolution and aided them in carrying through drastic measures to expand imperialistically the respective national capitalist systems and to keep them from collapsing.

Social reformism came to its first inevitable debacle in 1914. Thus, when the capitalist powers, under stress of their urgent need for imperialistic expansion, launched into the World War, then logically, the opportunistically-led Socialist Parties, whose interests had been identified with those of their respective capitalist classes, marched almost without exception into the war under the leadership of their bourgeois masters.

This traitorous action by the reformistic Socialist leaders advertised the bankruptcy of social reformism and split the Second International; its inevitable consequence was the formation of the revolutionary Comintern under the leadership of Lenin. The degeneration of social reformism, and of the Second International with it, proceeded rapidly. So that, when at the conclusion of the war a great wave of revolution swept through several European countries, it was the Socialist leaders who defeated it. With their control of the masses of workers, and animated as these leaders were with a disbelief in the revolution and a firm resolve that at all costs they must maintain capitalism as a base from which to evolve into Socialism, they proceeded to again violate the fundamental principles upon which the Socialist movement had been founded, by helping the capitalists beat back the great revolutionary wave and keep intact the capitalist system of Europe.

In Germany, at the close of the war in 1918, the workers, by a spontaneous upheaval, overthrew the Kaiser, dealt a great blow at the bourgeoisie and, traveling the path of the victorious Russian toilers, organized Soviets all over the country. But the German Social Democratic Party leaders, the reactionary Eberts, Noskes, Scheidemanns, *et al*, who had not one whit of revolution in their whole being, were able to halt the German revolution and to prevent the consolidation of its victory. They were responsible for demolishing the Soviets, setting up the Weimar bourgeois republic and eventually returning the political power to the capitalist class. And in the process they shot down hundreds of revolutionary workers, including the heroic Liebknecht and Luxembour, who resisted this betrayal of the revolution. So shameless and open was the rescue of stricken German capitalism by the Social Democratic leaders that only the politically blind could fail to see it. The capitalists admitted it and the Socialist leaders boasted about their saving capitalism. In a letter sent out to big capitalists by the National Association of German Manufacturers (the Morgans, Duponts and Rockefellers of Germany) it is frankly said:

In the first reconsolidation era of the bourgeois post-war regime... it was only due to the fact that the Social-Democratic Party split the working class that it was possible for finance capital to maintain its rule. Thanks to its social character as being originally a workers' party the Social Democracy brought into the system of reconsolidation at that time (1918-19) in addition to its purely political force, something more valuable and enduring, namely, the organized working class, and while paralyzing their revolutionary energy chained them fast to the bourgeois state.*

If in 1936 humanity now faces the dreadful menace of fascism and the danger of a new and terrible World War, the chief responsibility for this situation rests with the German Social Democracy. In 1918 it had in its very hands the op-

* In my pamphlet, *The Revolutionary Crisis in Germany, England, Italy and France*, I have summed up the anti-revolutionary role of the Social Democracy in the post-war revolutionary upheavals.

portunity to end capitalism and to establish Socialism in Germany, which would have had a decisive effect in starting all Europe towards Socialism. But the Socialist leaders rejected that revolutionary opportunity, and instead they saved the capitalist system. And now we see in full flower the poisonous growth of their treachery: the present world threat of fascist terrorism and war.

In Italy, in the post-war revolutionary wave of 1920, the workers and peasants, with a series of great strikes, developed a revolutionary attack that had the capitalist class helpless; but again the reformist Socialist leaders smashed the whole movement, this time by peddling it for a few petty concessions. This action preserved the Italian capitalist system and in the resultant proletarian demoralization Mussolini was able to develop his offensive and to set up the fascist state. The Socialist Party leaders, instead of being the "grave diggers of capitalism," as Marx expressed the role of the working class, became its savior in several countries. The only reason they did not rescue the capitalist system in Russia also was because they did not control the masses who in November, 1918, were following the lead of the revolutionary Bolsheviks.

In the long post-war period also, from 1918 on, the mortally wounded capitalist system found its best nurse all over the world in the reformist Socialist leaders who in many countries occupied key positions in the capitalist governments. Every step the capitalists deemed necessary to breathe the breath of life into their decaying system had the support of these false leaders. They used their prestige and power to induce or force the workers to accept low wages and unemployment uncomplainingly; they liquidated strikes and other sharp struggles of the workers; they endorsed the capitalist speed-up or rationalization of industry campaign and urged it upon the workers as the broad way to prosperity; they voted the growing war budgets; they slandered the Soviet Union in unmeasured terms; in India the British Labor Party Government shot down rebellious workers and peas-

ants, etc. In short, the Socialist leaders were everywhere the willing helpers of stricken capitalism and they did all their reactionary work in the name of Socialism.

But the bankruptcy of S. P. social reformism reached its climax in the coming to power of Hitler. When the finance capitalists of Germany, surrounded by insoluble difficulties, began to turn in the direction of fascist demagoguery and terrorism in order to preserve their threatened social system, the Socialist reformist leaders, true to their role as defenders of capitalism, began to orient themselves in the same direction. With millions of workers behind them and with the power in their hands to smash fascism, they would not fight it. They refused to make a united front with the Communists and fight against the growing fascist menace, but instead, joined in the anti-red hunt; they voted for the Bruening Government, which prepared the way for Hitler; they sacrificed the workers' civil rights; they called upon the masses to vote for Hindenburg, who after his election promptly turned the power over to Hitler. And to cap their betrayal of the working class, they voted, both the Social Democratic Party leaders and top trade union officials, to support the Hitler Government. It was these misleaders of labor, preparers of the road for fascism, that the Communists properly called social fascists.

The opportunist Socialist leaders thought they could find the place of loyal capitalist servants in the new fascist régime; but they learned to their amazement and dismay that the big capitalists, of whom the fascists are tools, were determined to repress everything that was not out and out fascist, not only the organizations of the Communists, but also of the reformist Socialists and even the mildest liberals and Catholics. Thereupon, the Socialist leaders unresistingly allowed their huge party, trade unions, coöperatives, etc., to be completely wiped out without the slightest struggle, stubbornly refusing to make a united front with the Communists against Hitler.

Had the Socialists joined in a general strike with the Com-

munists it would have changed the political face of Europe: Hitler would have been smashed, fascism decisively defeated and the now approaching World War staved off. Their failure to accept the C. P.'s united front proposals constituted another great tragedy added to the long and disastrous score of social reformism. It was a fitting follow-up to their betrayal of the 1918 German revolution.

In this surrender to Hitlerism, the S. P. social reformism reached its inevitable and complete bankruptcy. Even the Socialist Second International, which was equally to blame with the German Social Democratic Party, had to say the following:

It is a fact that can never be blotted out of the history of Social Democracy that 48 Social Democratic members of the Reichstag out of the 65 present decided in favor of a vote of confidence in Hitler.

The same war and post-war years also exposed the bankruptcy of Syndicalism (which is at bottom a form of social reformism) and showed conclusively that it was not a revolutionary force that could destroy capitalism. Even before the war French Syndicalism had lost the militancy and fighting spirit that had once attracted so much attention and fostered so many revolutionary hopes. It had discarded the use of the general strike, abandoned sabotage, and sunk pretty much to the level of pure and simple trade union social reformism. When the war came, its leaders, with but few exceptions, fully supported the French imperialist aims. And when the war was over the once so fiery C. G. T. officials marched quite in step with the Social Democratic trade union and political leaders in their persistent efforts to save capitalism, to discredit the Soviet Union and to head off the threatening general Communist revolution. The C. G. T.'s reactionary course finally resulted, a dozen years ago, in a split and the organization of the Communist-led C. G. T. U. Italian Syndicalism, after the war, followed the same slippery trail into social reformism, the *Unione Sindacali*

finally collapsing before the onrush of Italian fascism, and many of its leaders becoming officials in Mussolini's fake trade unions. In Spain, during this period Syndicalism ran likewise into paths of social reformism. And we have already seen how the American I. W. W., despite its brave stand in the war, has degenerated into a narrow, anti-Soviet sect.

The Syndicalist workers are revolutionary, but their traditional program is not. The bankruptcy of Syndicalism is shown in 1936 when the Spanish workers, in spite of their anti-parliamentary theories, under the pressure of iron necessity first vote for the united front electoral candidates and then bravely take up arms in defense of the Popular Front Government. And they will also be forced by the same stern necessity, and alas, at the cost of serious defeats, eventually to drop their opposition to the dictatorship of the proletariat, to discard their naïve illusions about the trade unions operating the industries under Socialism, their false conceptions of decentralization and spontaneity, their resistance to political organization by the workers, their opposition to a centralized government and a disciplined army, etc., and the Spanish Anarchist and Syndicalist workers will be facilitated in learning these fundamental lessons by having as a guide the revolutionary experience of the Russian working class and its great Communist Party.

THE RISE OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

As the Social Democratic Parties and trade unions, dominated by opportunist leaders, began to sink into the quagmire of social reformism long before the war started, a revolt of the more consciously revolutionary elements gradually took shape against the abandonment of the revolutionary goal of the Socialist movement. This revolt began most sharply in Russia at the turn of the century and soon manifested itself in Germany and many other countries. The American S. P. splits of 1909 and 1912 were part of this growing, world-wide struggle against social reformism. The

movement continued inside the Socialist Parties until they were eventually split altogether by the action of their leaders in supporting the World War. Then, in 1919, was born the Communist International, and the Communist Parties crystallized themselves out of the S. P. left wing, revolutionary Syndicalists and an occasional Anarchist, in nearly every country from England to China and from Canada to Chili. And even as I write this, in 1936, this revolt within the Second International against reformism takes on renewed scope and energy, caused by the manifest bankruptcy of its reformist leaders and the burning need for a united front and a fighting policy in the face of attack of fascism. The fight in the American Socialist Party against the "old guard" is just one phase of this new world-wide resurgence of revolutionary spirit inside the Second International. But I shall speak further of all this in the concluding chapters.

The outstanding leader of the revolutionary struggle against social reformism in the workers' movement was Lenin, not only in Russia but also upon a world scale. Lenin was the greatest revolutionary thinker and practical leader since Marx. His viewpoint was based upon the principles of scientific Socialism laid down by Marx and Engels. Stalin has defined Leninism as "the Marxism of the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution." * Manuilsky, at the 12th Plenum of the Comintern, expanded Stalin's definition as follows:

Lenin further developed the teachings of Marx and Engels for the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolutions, analyzed the problems of monopolist capitalism, the proletarian dictatorship, the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution, the role of the national-colonial revolution, the Party, and the problem of the successful construction of Socialism in the period of the proletarian dictatorship.

Lenin, far more than any one else, worked out the program of the modern Communist movement. Furthermore, he led in achieving its greatest practical success, the Russian revolu-

* *Foundations of Leninism.*

tion. Losovsky says of his role in the Party: "He was its theoretician, its man of action, agitator, propagandist, organizer and leader. He was soldier and general, teacher and pupil." *

But here is not the place to give a detailed presentation of Lenin's role or the principles of Communism. In my book, *Towards Soviet America*, I have tried to give an outline of the methods and objectives of the Communist movement. Now I can only mention some of the major points developed by Lenin in his struggle against social reformism and for a revolutionary movement.

Breaking with Marx's teachings, the social reformists, led by Bernstein, had developed the theory that capitalism was gradually overcoming its internal contradictions and heading towards a system of organized capitalism, with constantly improving living standards of the masses. There would be a progressive and inevitable evolution of capitalism into Socialism through piecemeal reforms. Against this opportunist, non-revolutionary theory, Lenin fired his heaviest guns. By a masterly analysis of capitalist imperialism, he showed that, contrary to the assertions of the reformist Socialist leaders, capitalism was approaching the end of its era of free expansion and was entering an imperialist period of decline and decay. He showed further that this imperialism inevitably produces ever deeper industrial crises, with wholesale impoverishment of the toiling masses; that it sharpens all class contradictions and also provokes gigantic armed conflicts between nations. He proved that imperialism is the era of wars and proletarian revolutions. This analysis has been brilliantly demonstrated since by the whole course of events.

Lenin also shattered the reformist contention that the modern bourgeois state is a people's state which the workers can peacefully capture by votes and then utilize for the building of Socialism. He demonstrated with crushing logic what Marx and Engels had long before proved, that the capitalist state is the but slightly disguised organized dictatorship of

* *Lenin, the Great Strategist of the Class War.*

the capitalist class; that no ruling class in history has ever given up its control without a violent struggle, and that, consequently, the revolutionary workers, in alliance with the peasantry and other exploited masses, must destroy the capitalist state in open struggle and set up their own state, a Soviet government, which is the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin also carefully analyzed the composition and role of the new proletarian state. We need look only to the fascist terror in Germany, Italy and Spain to realize the correctness of this whole analysis of Lenin's and also the futility of the social reformists' plan of bringing Socialism through purely legal parliamentary action.

Lenin did not oppose fighting for economic and political reforms under capitalism. On the contrary, he realized fully that this daily fight for minor demands must be the starting point of the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. But such reforms must not be the end-purpose of the movement, as the social reformists understood them. They are only "by-products" of the revolutionary struggle; a means to defend the workers' standards and for the education, organization and disciplining of the working class in preparation for the final assault upon the capitalist system.

The reformist Socialist leaders, basing themselves upon the skilled workers and petty bourgeoisie, systematically disregarded the unskilled workers and the peasantry and, like the true imperialists they were, they abandoned the oppressed masses in the colonial countries to the ruthless exploitation of the capitalist masters in the "home" imperialist countries. As against these narrow opportunist policies, Lenin developed a broad united front of all the exploited. He joined the unskilled with the skilled, organized an alliance between the workers and the poorer ranks of the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie, and linked together the proletarian revolutionary movement of the imperialist countries with the national liberation movements in the colonies.

In the fight against war, Lenin ridiculed the reformist notion that imperialist wars could be stopped by pacifist

propaganda and also the Syndicalist theory that wars could be defeated by a "folded arms" general strike. Lenin advocated that while every possible means should be used to hinder and make war more difficult, including anti-war agitation, general strike, etc., the fight against war must be based fundamentally upon the policy of transforming imperialist war into a war against the capitalist system, into a fight for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

To carry out this revolutionary program, Lenin worked out the main foundations of the Communist Party. The Party is based on the principle of the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat. Instead of the amorphous membership of the Socialist Parties, it contains only the most advanced, best fighting elements of the working class. It is founded on democratic centralism and is infused with a strong discipline. Structurally, its basic units consist of nuclei of revolutionists in every institution where work of any kind is carried on: factories, farms, schools, government, army, navy, etc. Only such a Party, Lenin contended, can be truly revolutionary; it is incomparably better fitted than reformist Socialist Parties to lead the struggle on every field for the workers' economic, political and cultural demands, to lead them in the final overthrow of capitalism, and also in the construction of Socialism.

History, as the capitalist system crashed into the World War and general decline, put to the great test the Communist movement, as well as the reformist Socialist movement. We have seen what tragically pitiful results social reformism, with all its armies of voters, control of many governments, scores of millions of trade unionists and members of co-operatives, etc., finally led to—support of the World War, defeat of the proletarian revolution, demoralization of the working class, victory for fascism.

But the budding Communist movement came through this life and death test with flying colors. As Lenin had fore-

seen,* the workers and peasants in united front alliance under the leadership of the Communist Party with Lenin at its head, transformed the imperialist war into a civil war, smashed the capitalist system and set up the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of the Soviet government. They made the first great breach in the world capitalist fortress. Then, in the face of the most stupendous obstacles and hardships ever confronted by any modern nation—economic blockade, armed intervention, civil war, famine, pestilence, economic collapse, sabotage, industrial and agricultural backwardness, etc.—they forged ahead to the building of Socialism in a country covering one-sixth of the land surface of the globe.

Because of the unsoundness of the reformist Socialist theories, Germany, Italy and Austria have been temporarily lost to the revolution and the world confronted with the horrors of fascism and another World War. And because of the non-revolutionary nature of Anarchism and Syndicalism, the revolutionary struggle in Spain (as I write this) is dangerously menaced. In the fiery test of the breaking up of the capitalist system, it is only the Leninist theory and practice, exemplified above all by the Soviet Union, that has proved victorious for the toiling masses and has led to the successful proletarian revolution and Socialism.

As social reformism sinks into decay and crisis, the Communist Soviet Union, with its great Party led now by Stalin, blazes ahead building Socialist industry at a record pace, profoundly revolutionizing the medieval system of agriculture and swiftly raising the economic and cultural levels of the vast Russian masses. The Soviet Union, first great victory of the Communist movement, has now become the hope of the oppressed millions of the earth, the leader and inspirer of all that is progressive and revolutionary in the world. It is the beginning of the new world era of Socialism.

* Lenin's *State and Revolution*, written on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution, is almost a blue-print of the revolution that followed and the Soviet Government that emerged from it.

In every capitalist country also the growing Communist Parties, joined together in the Communist International, are struggling to educate, organize and lead in united front struggle the masses of exploited toilers of field and factory, demoralized by the bankruptcy of the policies of the reformist policies of the Second International and confused by the wild demagoguery of fascism and the general reaction of the capitalist system in decay. The Comintern Parties are the heart and leader of every real battle that takes place against capitalism in every corner of the world, as the heroic struggles of the workers and peasants in China, Germany, France, Austria, Spain, the Balkans and many other countries eloquently testify. But here it is impossible to review these struggles; I must now return to the immediate course of my narrative, to 1921 in Moscow.

I BECOME A COMMUNIST

I remained in Moscow about three and a half months and I most assiduously studied the Communist movement in all its ramifications: the history and institutions of the revolution itself, the congresses of the Comintern and the R. I. L. U. I read widely in Communist political literature. And as a result of my intense observations and reading I declared myself a Communist.

Syndicalists, with their anti-state, anti-political-action theories, usually have considerable difficulty in understanding and accepting Communism. But my whole experience of many years in the revolutionary movement had prepared me to readily become a Communist. An especially powerful factor in predisposing me to accept the Communist position was the highly intelligent way in which Lenin and the other Comintern leaders had handled the boring-from-within question, a problem over which American rebel leaders had broken their heads in vain for nearly 30 years. But more decisive still for me was the effect of the reality of the Russian revolution itself. Evidently the Communists were not only

people who wanted a revolution, but, most important, had actually brought one about. A comparison of their achievements with those of other labor movements could have only one conclusion.

At that time, in 1921, the Russian revolution was in a desperate situation. The civil war had just been ended successfully, but the country was prostrate from seven years of war and revolution, during which it had passed through a thousand Valley Forges. Industry had collapsed to only 10% of the pre-war volume and agriculture was also badly broken down. The country was suffering terribly from an economic blockade by the capitalist powers. Starvation stalked the land, about half a pound or so of black bread being the usual daily ration. In Moscow and other cities in the previous fierce winter, many people had burned for fuel the furniture and wood trimmings of their own dwellings. In whole sections of the cities there was no running water or electric lights. Hundreds of thousands fled the starved-out cities for the country where conditions were only slightly better. Counter-revolutionary upheavals in the villages and sabotage and strikes in the cities were the order of the day. Typhus and cholera ravaged the stricken country and medical supplies were almost nil. The horrible famine in the Volga districts was just beginning. It was indeed an appalling situation. For the building of Socialism, the defeated capitalists and landlords, aided by the armies of some capitalist countries, had left only a mass of wreckage. But in the midst of this chaos and ruin, triumphant over its world of enemies, stood the brave Russian working class, led by the indomitable Communist Party with the great Lenin at its head, ready to begin the ten times "impossible" task of Socialist reconstruction in the backward, ruined country.

Before I arrived in Moscow, I must admit that I was much in doubt as to the outcome of the Russian revolution. Buried in the big packinghouse and steel campaigns, I had not found the opportunity to free myself from the current opportunist conception that Socialism could only be brought about in a

highly industrialized country. But direct contact with the revolution almost immediately shattered this wrong opinion. It was soon as plain as a pike-staff to me that in Soviet Russia there had occurred a truly Socialist revolution, just what I had been fighting for all my adult life. What mattered the difficulties of the situation? My class was fighting a desperate revolutionary struggle and my place was in its ranks to help however I could. I must stand shoulder to shoulder with the embattled Russian workers, win, lose or draw. And despite the staggering difficulties confronting the revolution, I became convinced, after a close study of the situation, that the workers would eventually win out. In my book, *The Russian Revolution*, published immediately after my return to the United States, I wrote as follows:

The revolution is a bitter struggle, but I do not despair of the outcome. By their heroic and wonderful achievements in the past the Russian workers breed confidence for their future. Although all the world said it could not be done, they solved the political problem of organizing and controlling the Government in the face of great odds, and they solved the military problem by building a vast army and beating back their many foes. And they will solve the tremendous economic problem also. In my judgment the Russian revolution will live and accomplish its task of setting up the world's first free commonwealth.

This optimism of mine has only been strengthened by the passage of the 15 years since I wrote the above, although the problems of the revolution have indeed at times been almost overwhelmingly difficult. I have made, during this period, numerous trips to the Soviet Union (in which I acquired some familiarity with the complicated Russian language), and I have been able to observe the revolution in nearly all its stages. I saw the success of Lenin's great New Economic Policy which the capitalists and Socialist leaders everywhere hailed as signaling the end of Communism. I saw under Stalin's leadership the completion of the reconstruction of the old industries and the beginning of the building of the new industrial system. I witnessed the brilliant and successful

fight led by Stalin against the disastrous opportunist programs proposed by Bukharin. I saw the defeat of the eventual renegades and assassins, Trotsky and Zinoviev. In wide travels through the U. S. S. R., I observed, at first hand, the accomplishment of the first five-year plan and the beginning of the second, with their swift upbuilding of industry, tremendous collectivization of agriculture, strengthening of the armed defenses and raising of the cultural and economic levels of the great masses. In short: I have observed, in its various aspects, the rapid construction of a new Socialist country, one which is showing the toilers of the world the way they must travel to emancipation out of the hell of capitalism.*

Although I was, in 1921, deeply certain that the Russian workers had found the way to Socialism and eventual Communism in Soviet Russia, I was not by that fact alone convinced that the Communist program for achieving Socialism was necessarily the best one for other countries, especially the United States. On the contrary, I weighed every phase of it in the light of American conditions and my own long experience in the class struggle. And the final result was that in Leninism I found the answer to every major revolutionary problem.

To begin with, I did not have to be convinced in principle of the necessity for a revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism. A dozen years earlier I had recognized the futility of the Socialist Party's policy of trying to transform capitalism into Socialism through piecemeal reforms, and my whole conception of Syndicalism, even in its most opportunistic phases, had been based upon the proposition of smashing the power of the capitalists by the workers' superior force. All my experience in the class struggle fighting the cold-blooded, autocratic and ruthless American trusts had ground into my very being the realization that the ruling capitalist

* As a result of these trips to the U. S. S. R., I wrote three pamphlets, *Russia in 1924*, *Russian Workers and Workshops in 1926*, *Victorious Socialist Construction* (1930).

class will never allow itself to be talked, bought or voted out of power, but will proceed to any extreme of violence to maintain its control. But Communism taught me many vital lessons regarding the forms and methods of carrying on this revolutionary struggle, including the policy of transforming an imperialist war into a revolutionary war against capitalism, the combination of revolutionary agitation and struggle with the daily fight of the workers for immediate demands, the united front of the workers and peasants; these policies had been so brilliantly illustrated in the Russian revolution and all of them, with adaptations to local situations, are applicable and indispensable in every capitalist country.

As to the question of revolutionary political action, I found myself accepting this without difficulty, though I had been a Syndicalist for a dozen years. During later years, as a result of my own experience, especially in the meat-packing and steel campaigns, the need for political action had been gradually dawning upon me and I began more and more to feel that it was not a wise policy that tried to restrict the struggle of the workers solely to the economic field. Indeed, as I have stated earlier, so much had my views on political action changed that in 1920 I had already become active in the Labor Party movement then centering in Chicago. I became further convinced of the need for political action as I watched with misgivings the weakening of Syndicalism in France, Spain, Italy and other countries; and besides, did I not see, in passing through London on my way to Moscow, the shameful collapse of the Triple Alliance of miners, railroaders and transport workers that we Syndicalists had so much counted on? And, most important of all, had not the Russian revolution itself completely exposed the futility of Syndicalism? The cup of my disillusionment with anti-political Syndicalism was filled to overflowing by the un-revolutionary (to put it mildly) actions of the Syndicalists and Anarchists in fighting the heroic Communist Party and the Soviet Government at the first R. I. L. U. congress. All these facts com-

bined to convince me that political action is fundamentally necessary for the workers and that without it successful class struggle is impossible.

Many Syndicalists and other sincere workers also have much difficulty in understanding the role of the Soviet government, which is the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is because they are afflicted with illusions as to nature of the state and the possibility of society going by one easy leap from capitalism to a perfected Socialism or Communism. They ignore the whole problem of the transition period. It did not take much observation for me to see, however, that in the Soviet Union a strong state, sternly enforcing the will of the revolutionary proletariat, was indispensable to the maintenance of the workers' rule and the building of Socialism, and that it was the preliminary stage to the eventual stateless Communist society.

Had the Russian workers been unwise enough to try to build the new society by the way of a general all-class democratic government, according to the Socialist plan, or through a system of trade union control, as the Syndicalists propose, or according to the Anarchist notion of simply relying on the spontaneous activities of the masses, the revolution would have been soon undermined and destroyed by its many class enemies at home and abroad. These hostile elements, always ripe for intrigue, sabotage and insurrection, had to be held in check and they were, through the dictatorship of the proletariat. To do this was the first condition for the workers' and peasants' victory.

I was quite convinced also that when the revolution comes in the United States the workers and their allies will have no less need for the dictatorship of the proletariat. When the revolutionary working class leads in defeating the capitalist class, it will never be able to maintain power or build the new society unless it has a state organization strong enough to hold down the members and hangers-on of the powerful capitalist class (who will then be all more or less fanatical fascists and militantly counter revolutionary) until the eco-

conomic, political and cultural bases of the erstwhile ruling class have been completely destroyed. And the best possible form of such a revolutionary state is the Soviet: a system of government, based on direct representation from the factories, mines, railroads, farms, army, etc., which sets up the broadest democracy among the toiling masses and presents the most solid fighting front against the class enemy.

The strong discipline of the Russian Communist Party has also caused much question among workers, especially Syndicalists and Anarchists. But such hesitations are only expressions of the petty bourgeois individualism to which the capitalist environment has exposed them. As for myself, even my preliminary observations of the Russian revolution in 1921 completely cleared up this matter for me. With my opportunity to study it, only the veriest political tyro could fail to see that without such a disciplined party there could have been no Bolshevik revolution in the first place, nor could the workers have retained political power once they got it. After carefully studying the Russian Communist Party, with its combination of centralism and inner-Party democracy, with its foundation nuclei rooted in the factories, farms, schools, army, etc., with its membership of the best fighting elements of the working class and poorer peasantry, and with its record of victory in the face of superhuman difficulties, I was inevitably drawn to the conclusion which I expressed at the time: that the Russian Communist Party was the highest type of organization ever produced by mankind. Nor did it require much further thought for me to realize that in fighting the powerful American capitalist class the workers of this country, bearing in mind their own special conditions, would do well to build their Party on the basic lines of the great Communist Party of Soviet Russia.

I also accepted without difficulty the Communist policy of a strong, centralized International, the Comintern. Manifestly, such an organization is necessary to fight world capitalism, and the Comintern has shown in its activities that it can guide the world revolutionary movement. The Comin-

tern leaders are incomparably the best body of Marxians anywhere; they are flooded with information from all countries; they have had an enormous personal experience, especially the Russians, many of whom have lived in various countries, speak several languages, and have passed through three revolutions in their own country. Such a center, better informed than any Socialist body, capitalist government or economic organization, and following a consistent revolutionary policy, is incomparably more fit to lead the international revolutionary movement than the autonomous, opportunistic Socialist Second International.

Only after thus considering Communism, not alone with regard to the Russian revolution, but especially as to the applicability of its program to the United States, did I declare myself a Communist. My previous nine years in the Socialist Party and dozen years in the Syndicalist movement (I. W. W., S. L. of N. A., and I. T. U. E. L.), as well as twenty years of membership in various trade unions, had given me a pretty broad theoretical and practical experience upon which to base my decision. It became clear to me, therefore, that the Communist program was the one that spelled the doom of capitalism and the foundation of the new social order, Socialism, in all countries. So, when I returned to the United States, in the middle of 1921, I joined the Communist Party and took my proper place in the ranks of the revolutionary Communist International. And the passage of the ensuing 15 years, with their continued progress in the Soviet Union, breakdown of capitalist economy, collapse of social reformism and growth of fascism, has only served to justify my 1921 decision and to convince me of the correctness of the Communist program.

CHAPTER XII

THE TRADE UNION EDUCATIONAL LEAGUE

UPON our delegation's return from Moscow in the fall of 1921 we began an active campaign to build the T. U. E. L., which, as I have stated, had been organized in November 1920. We established the *Labor Herald* in Chicago, with Earl R. Browder as editor. We set up groups in many cities. The T. U. E. L. held its first national conference in Chicago, August 26-27, 1922. Present were 45 delegates from 26 cities, including four in Canada. The looseness of the T. U. E. L. groups prevented any exact statistics as to the number of workers represented.

PROGRAM OF THE T. U. E. L.

The T. U. E. L. program was developed chiefly in a number of documents, including (a) the *Initiatory Statement of Principles*,* (b) *The Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement*† and (c) the resolutions of the first T. U. E. L. national conference. Here it is possible to emphasize only the central points of this program. The *Initiatory Statement* thus outlines the general aims of the T. U. E. L.:

The Trade Union Educational League proposes to develop the trade unions from their present antiquated and stagnant condition into powerful, modern labor organizations, capable of waging successful warfare against Capital. To this end it is working to revamp and remodel from top to bottom their theories, tactics, structure and leadership. Instead of advocating the prevailing shameful and demoralizing nonsense about harmonizing

* *The Labor Herald*, March 1922.

† A pamphlet written by myself.

the interests of Capital and Labor, it is firing the workers' imagination and releasing their wonderful idealism by propagating the inspiring goal of the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' republic.

The resolutions of the first national conference summarized the T. U. E. L. program as follows: (1) categorical rejection of dual unionism, (2) repudiation of the A. F. of L. policy of class collaboration and adoption of the principle of class struggle, (3) for industrial unionism through amalgamation of the existing unions, (4) the organization of the unorganized, (5) for unemployment insurance, (6) for a labor party, (7) for the shop delegate system in the unions, (8) affiliation of the American labor movement to the R. I. L. U., (9) whole-hearted support of the Russian revolution, (10) the abolition of the capitalist system and the establishment of a workers' republic.

To accomplish these purposes the T. U. E. L. proposed the formation of a broad united front:

The working theory of the T. U. E. L. is the establishment of a left progressive bloc of all the revolutionary and progressive elements in the trade unions, as against the autocratic machine of the reactionary bureaucracy.*

The T. U. E. L. program put special emphasis upon the development of industrial unionism by amalgamation. In my pamphlet, *The Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement*, its theory of industrial unionism as the normal climax of trade union growth and evolution is stated as follows:

As the workers feel the need for more united action they build up and extend their old unions and then strike up closer and closer affiliations with sister organizations. . . . Sooner or later the unions in all industries and in all countries find themselves at the point where they are based upon industrial rather than craft lines. So in arriving at this stage of development they ordinarily pass through a more or less lengthy evolutionary process marked by three distinct phases, which I shall call: (1) isolation, (2) federation, (3) amalgamation.

* *The Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement.*

Organizationally, the T. U. E. L. followed much the same lines as the old S. L. of N. A. and the I. T. U. E. L. The membership consisted only of members of trade unions. There were no dues, finances being secured by sale of the journal and literature, by collections at meetings, etc., and a voluntary sustaining fund of \$1.00 per year. The local industrial and general groups paralleled the local unions, district councils and central labor councils of the trade unions. The local industrial groups were joined up nationally into 14 national industrial sections, each of which had its own name, secretary, journal, funds, program, etc.* Ostensibly they were independent bodies; only one, the Needle Trades, being known officially as a section of the T. U. E. L. There were four territorial sections: Canadian, Eastern States, Central States and Pacific Coast. The T. U. E. L. National Committee formally consisted of the Secretaries of the national industrial sections; provisionally, however, a small board was elected at the national conference, with the industrial Secretaries to be added as soon as their sections could be organized. The T. U. E. L. was affiliated to none of the revolutionary parties, but eventually joined the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, on the same basis as other labor organizations. The T. U. E. L. was the recognized American section of the R. I. L. U.

A PROSPECT OF STRUGGLE

The T. U. E. L. found the situation among militant and revolutionary workers quite favorable for its work. The traditional hard shell of dual unionism had been finally smashed by the clear-cut decisions of the C. I. and the R. I. L. U. Now we veteran borers-from-within found receptive ears on all

* Later there were two more added: the Red International Affiliation Committee, comprising the T. U. E. L. minority in the I. W. W., and the Red International Committee which, with headquarters in New York, linked up the R. I. L. U. independent unions with the T. U. E. L. on a 50-50 basis of representation.

sides. The underground Communist Party (at that time establishing unity) strongly endorsed the T. U. E. L. and made its upbuilding a central Party task; its legal expression, the Workers Party, did likewise. The left wing of the I. W. W. also endorsed the T. U. E. L. and affiliated to it. After the deep Communist splits of 1919-21 there was very little of a left wing remaining in the S. P., but Debs wrote an article for the *Labor Herald* endorsing the general line of the T. U. E. L. The Proletarian Party, although with many hesitations, also gave the T. U. E. L. its endorsement. And in New York, the small R. I. L. U. independent unions supported the T. U. E. L. The United Toilers, a Communist split-off, also endorsed the T. U. E. L., but the sectarian S. L. P. continued to support its traditional dual unionism.

This all sounds like very much support, but in reality, because of the long persistence of dual unionism, very few of these revolutionaries were members of the trade unions, much less influential in them. In addition to these left wing affiliations, the T. U. E. L. developed coöperative relations with the Farmer-Labor Party group headed by John Fitzpatrick. This was an outgrowth of our joint activities in the packinghouse and steel campaigns of 1917-20. J. G. Brown, National Secretary of the F. L. P. and former organizer in steel, became a member of the T. U. E. L. National Committee and Fitzpatrick looked upon our movement with a friendly eye.

Together with this substantial support, there was a favorable objective basis for T. U. E. L. struggle in the huge series of strikes then going on. It was in the latter phase of the great 1919-22 post-war open shop offensive of the employers to smash the trade unions and to take away from the workers the eight-hour day, higher wages and better working conditions they had won during the war. Part of this general employers' offensive was the ferocious Palmer, Department of Justice, 1919-20, attack upon the nascent Communist movement, arresting thousands of its members and

driving the two Communist Parties underground, where they remained until the end of 1922.*

The employers were facilitated in their offensive by the sharp industrial crisis of that period and by the vigorous government use of courts, police, troops, etc., against the workers. But the workers fought back militantly. They replied with the greatest series of strikes in American labor history. The number of strikers totaled over 8,000,000,† practically every major industry—steel, meat packing, coal, marine transport, metal mining, textile, clothing, building, lumber, railroads, automobile, printing, etc.,—being involved, and nearly every union had to fight for its very existence. The workers fought bravely, but because of shameless sabotage and betrayal by the leadership, who were still dreaming of the “class peace” of war-time days, the great strikes were nearly all lost. A main cause of this were the craft divisions between the unions, the leaders repeatedly keeping one set of unions at work in an industry while the rest were striking, and thereby defeating them all. The A. F. of L. and independent unions decreased by about 1,000,000 members, and the unions were wiped out in several industries. It was the worst defeat ever suffered by the trade union movement in this country.

THE T. U. E. L. GOES INTO BATTLE

Early in 1922, without waiting for its first national conference, the T. U. E. L. plunged into the raging class struggle. Although it was a new organization and but little known, it managed to catch the attention of the embattled workers and to play an active role in several of the big strikes in the end phases of the great open shop offensive. In these strug-

* In its legal form the Communist Party was successively called, Workers Party, Workers (Communist) Party and Communist Party.

† The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics gives the following figures:

1919	4,160,348	1921	1,099,247
1920	1,463,054	1922	1,612,552

gles the Communist Party gave the T. U. E. L. maximum support.

The first success of the T. U. E. L. was in the great coal strike of 1922. The miners were fighting a desperate national struggle against an attempt to smash their union, when, suddenly Frank Farrington, President of the Illinois U. M. W. A. (later proved to be a paid agent of the Peabody Coal Company) tried to break the strike by signing a separate state agreement. In Southern Illinois the T. U. E. L. had already won the support of the leaders of the great 1919 "outlaw" strike of 70,000 miners, including Slinger, Corbishley, Thompson, etc., and with them it was able to mobilize great mass meetings of miners which rejected Farrington's treachery and thereby, without doubt, saved the national strike and probably the U. M. W. A. itself.

The T. U. E. L. also played a big role in the bitterly-fought Chicago building trades strike of the Spring of 1922 against the open shop Landis award. Its militants, Krumbein, Johnstone, Kjar and others, were powerful forces in stiffening the workers in their struggle against the bosses, the government and their own treacherous trade union leaders. The rapidly forming T. U. E. L. groups also played an important role in strengthening the several big New York needle trades strikes of this period.

The climax of the great open shop drive came in the national strike of the 400,000 railroad shopmen of 1922. Here again the T. U. E. L. was able to take a very important part. It sent out several speakers, including myself, to work among the striking railroaders.* In the Omaha Central Labor Council T. U. E. L. militants had adopted a resolution call-

* On this speaking tour I was kidnaped from the Oxford Hotel in Denver by Colorado State Rangers under command of the notorious Pat. Hamrock. After a night in jail at Brighton incommunicado, they drove me to Cheyenne, Wyo., and turned me over to the sheriff there. With a couple of deputies, the latter drove me several hours across Wyoming, finally dumping me out on the road ten miles from Torrington, Neb. In the ensuing Fall elections, W. E. Sweet, Democratic candidate for Governor, made my kidnaping case a central issue and was elected. During his term of office the State Rangers were dissolved, for lack of sustaining finances from the state legislature.

ing for a general strike of all workers nationally to smash the strike-breaking Daugherty Federal injunction against the railroad strike. The response was so great from 200 other labor centers that Gompers declared that never before in his experience had he known such a demand for a general walk-out. The T. U. E. L. movement in this strike culminated in a big national amalgamation conference of 400 delegates in Chicago, December 9, 1922. Much of this railroad work was done through the Minnesota Shop Crafts Legislative Committee, headed by O. Wangerin, which finally became the T. U. E. L. national railroad section.*

The T. U. E. L. also helped to develop a broad united front movement to defend the Communists arrested at the C. P. underground convention held in Bridgman, Michigan, in August, 1922. The Federal Government, seeking to paralyze the growing influence of the Communist Party, had swooped down upon the convention and arrested 32 delegates, later indicting 40 more. A couple of days afterward they raided the first T. U. E. L. conference in Chicago and arrested 11 delegates. Among the T. U. E. L. leaders arrested at the convention and conference were Browder, Dunne, Johnstone, Krumbein, Aronberg and myself. Wide support was developed in the unions for the defendants. I was tried first and got a hung jury. Next came C. E. Ruthenberg, Secretary of the C. P., who was framed up and convicted of violating the state Criminal Syndicalism Law. He died, however, as his appeal was pending in the courts. The cases lingered on for 11 years and were only finally dismissed in 1933.

During the period in question the T. U. E. L. carried on an active campaign for affiliation of the trade unions to the R. I. L. U. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers voted a fraternal affiliation and the Canadian T. U. E. L., led by Tim Buck, secured a direct R. I. L. U. affiliation from the Nova Scotia miners, U. M. W. A., the only A. F. of L. body ever so

* For an analysis of the T. U. E. L. railroad movement read my pamphlet, *The Railroaders' Next Step—Amalgamation*.

to affiliate. The T. U. E. L. also conducted broad campaigns for Mooney and Billings, Sacco and Vanzetti, the I. W. W. prisoners and other class war victims.

AMALGAMATION, LABOR PARTY, RECOGNITION OF SOVIET RUSSIA

Although the T. U. E. L. made its influence deeply felt in many of the struggles of these stormy days, it scored its swiftest and greatest successes in its big triple drive for amalgamation, for a Labor Party and for recognition of Soviet Russia. It conducted a nation-wide offensive with all its forces for these three issues. The whole labor movement was shaken by its campaign. Great masses of trade unionists rallied to the T. U. E. L.'s slogans. More than one-half of the trade union movement openly supported one or all its three central demands. Within a few months the T. U. E. L. had made them the main issues confronting the A. F. of L. and Railroad Brotherhoods.

The huge response to these three T. U. E. L. slogans evidenced the existing wave of radicalization among the masses. The workers saw in industrial unionism through amalgamation the road to real unity and power, the way to organize the unorganized and to stop the disastrous situation of one group of unions in an industry working while the rest were striking, which had proved so ruinous in the recent great railroad, building, printing and other strikes, and which was the outstanding weakness of the packinghouse and steel campaigns. The workers saw in the Labor Party an effective answer, on the one hand, to the broken promises and strike-breaking troops, courts and police of the government, and on the other, to the fatal non-partisan political policy of the A. F. of L. leaders. And in their wide demand for the recognition of Soviet Russia, the workers expressed their natural proletarian solidarity with the new Socialist Republic. In the T. U. E. L. campaign as a whole they saw the way opening to a more honest, powerful and effective labor movement.

The organized forces behind this big T. U. E. L. movement took the form of a broad united front of left wingers and Progressives. The Communist Party and the T. U. E. L. were the driving left wing forces, while the Progressives, chiefly the Fitzpatrick-Nockels Farmer-Labor Party group, coöperated sympathetically. It was essentially a continuation and growth of the combination that had carried through the packinghouse and steel campaigns. The movement centered in Chicago and the amalgamation campaign proper took its national impetus from the adoption by the Chicago Federation of Labor on March 19, 1922, of a resolution, presented by T. U. E. L. delegates, which, after reciting the tragedy of craft disunity, concluded as follows:

Resolved, that we, the Chicago Federation of Labor, in regular meeting, call upon the American Federation of Labor to take the necessary action toward bringing about the required solidarity within the ranks of organized labor, and that, as a first start in this direction, the various international unions be called into conference for the purpose of arranging to amalgamate all the unions in the respective industries into single organizations, each of which shall cover one industry.

Reactionaries, led by Vice President Nelson, fought against this resolution, but were voted down by 114 to 37. Then followed a big national T. U. E. L. sweep under the slogan, "Amalgamation or Annihilation." During the next 18 months the Chicago resolution was widely endorsed and the solidarity movement expressed itself in many get-together tendencies. Sixteen international unions, including the Railway Clerks, Railway Maintenance of Way, Iron Molders, Butcher Workmen, Typographical Union, Bakery Workers, Lithographers, Brewery Workers, Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Furriers, Amalgamated Food Workers, Bookbinders, Metal Polishers, Firefighters, Textile Workers and Shoe Workers voted outright for amalgamation; while the Ladies Garment Workers, Railroad Trainmen, Railroad Firemen and several other internationals voted for federation or partial amalgamation. Likewise, 17 state federations of labor,

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including such important bodies as those of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Oregon, Nebraska, Washington, South Dakota, Utah, Colorado, etc., adopted amalgamation resolutions. Besides this, scores of central labor councils and thousands of local unions took similar action. We were well within the truth when we declared at the time that more than 2,000,000 workers, or about one-half the organized trade union movement, responded to the T. U. E. L. amalgamation slogan. From Canada, Tim Buck reported "Amalgamation resolutions have been endorsed during the past year by almost every kind of union in every part of Canada, including the Alberta Federation of Labor and seven of the largest central labor councils, or, all told, over 50% of the members affiliated to the Trades Congress of Canada." *

The campaign for the Labor Party was also very effective. The Labor Party movement had sprung up spontaneously at many points in the years 1918-20, especially in Minnesota, New York and Chicago. But the poor showing in the national elections of 1920 had paralyzed the newly-formed Farmer-Labor Party, and it lingered along, more dead than alive, under the control of the Fitzpatrick-Nockels C. F. of L. group. Then, in agreement with Fitzpatrick, the Workers Party (legal form of the C. P.) and the T. U. E. L. began to push the Labor Party issue. Result: an upsurge that was even more extensive than the amalgamation movement. Many international unions, state federations of labor, central labor councils and local unions voted for the Labor Party. During this campaign the T. U. E. L. put out a national referendum to 35,000 local unions on the Labor Party question and received over 7,000 endorsements, and doubtless many more locals endorsed it without notifying us. The Labor Party movement culminated in the Chicago, July 3, 1923, convention—but of that, more anon.

The fight for the recognition of Soviet Russia also took on

* For a full statement of amalgamation movement, read Jay Fox's pamphlet, *Amalgamation*.

a broad scope. At this time Soviet Russia was suffering from the 1921 Volga district famine, so the recognition issue was linked up with the collection of relief funds by the Friends of Soviet Russia, led by A. Wagenknecht, and the Trade Union National Committee for Russian Famine Relief, headed by Joe Manley, and including such Progressives as W. H. Johnston, Tim Healy, etc. The recognition demand was supported by many internationals, such as the Teachers, Miners, Stationary Firemen, Locomotive Engineers, Machinists, Printers, etc., as well as by innumerable state federations, central bodies and local unions.

These were prosperous times for the T. U. E. L. It was indeed giving a graphic demonstration of the feasibility of boring-from-within. Its prestige grew rapidly, and its loose groups and movement sprang up in many centers. It had fairly leaped from a small sect to a real power in the labor movement. The T. U. E. L. received high praise from the R. I. L. U. for the effective work being done.

THE GOMPERS BUREAUCRACY ON THE DEFENSIVE

Naturally, the T. U. E. L. had not scored its big successes on amalgamation, the Labor Party and Russian recognition, without coming into a head-on collision with the A. F. of L. leadership. These reactionaries hated and feared all three issues. They realized the movement would soon pass from agitation to decisive action, unless swiftly crushed. In amalgamation they could see the eventual loss of thousands of their fat jobs and the end of their class collaboration policies; the Labor Party meant for them severing their corrupt alliances with the two capitalist parties; and recognition of Soviet Russia would be a blow in the teeth from their worst enemies, the Communists. They understood clearly that the victory of our movement would mark the end of their reactionary regime and the beginning of a new progressive period for the unions. They got a foretaste of the real meaning of the T. U. E. L. program and its force in the big Detroit

convention of the railroad Maintenance of Way workers, where 1500 delegates adopted the whole T. U. E. L. immediate program and then fired 19 out of 21 top officials, including their President, Grable, who had betrayed the 1922 railroad strike by keeping his union at work despite its vote to join the strike.

Hence, the A. F. of L. bureaucrats fought us bitterly. They filled the unions and the capitalist press with shrieks that the T. U. E. L. was a dual union, that the reds were out to destroy the A. F. of L. and that we had received vast sums of money from Moscow to finance our work. The Federal Government joined in the latter lying charges.* But these wild accusations went largely unheeded by the workers. The T. U. E. L. progress continued unabated. Union after union declared for its three key slogans. The A. F. of L. leaders were discredited by their strike-breaking tactics in the great post-war offensive of the bosses, and the workers were taking the situation into their own hands.

The A. F. of L. leaders were forced into the defensive and they began to show signs of demoralization. Their weakened position was illustrated, for example, by the fact that at the very important Ohio State Federation of Labor convention in 1922, Joe Manley, with no preparatory work whatever, went to the convention and got its almost unanimous indorsement of our amalgamation resolution, despite the efforts of the top officials to defeat him. And in Chicago, after our first victory on amalgamation, the reactionaries announced loudly through the press that they would come *en masse* to the next C. F. of L. meeting and repudiate our resolution. But the result was they were beaten even worse than before, by a vote of 103 to 14.

* Earl R. Beckner, *Journal of Political Economy*, August 1925, in an article on the T. U. E. L. and quoting the U. S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, says: "The U. S. Dept. of State has obtained information, which it declares to be reliable, that Foster brought to the U. S. from Moscow the sum of \$40,000,—and that in April 1923, the T. U. E. L. received an additional \$90,000." He says further that Losovsky, head of the R. I. L. U. (who has never in his life been in the U. S.) brought us still another \$35,000 to the Bridgman convention of the C. P. All of which was a tissue of lies.

Gompers, the old fox, was highly upset by all these developments, as he knew quite well their import. So, three days after the second vote in the C. F. of L., he came to Chicago. He did not dare to attend the hostile C. F. of L. meeting, so he assembled a hand-picked conference of 1,500 union officials in the Morrison Hotel. He called upon them to take the C. F. of L. out of the hands of the reds at all costs. It was an appeal to use violence. But even this carefully selected meeting was sympathetic to amalgamation. I was present and, among others, defended our cause. Gompers lost his head and challenged me to debate the whole question with him publicly. Eagerly I accepted, both at the meeting itself and through the *Labor Herald*; but Gompers thought better of his challenge and finally ignored the whole matter. And nothing came of his call upon the reactionaries to capture the C. F. of L. by force (we prepared to repel the attack), they, no doubt, feeling themselves too weak for the job.

THE SURRENDER OF THE PROGRESSIVES

It was a dangerous situation for the Gompers leaders and, if continued, would have certainly led to their overthrow. They were badly discredited by their strike-breaking and disruption during the post-war strike struggles; their own ranks were split during this period by the formation of the big Conference for Progressive Political Action movement, and now they were facing an awakening rank and file led by revolutionaries using the new and strange policy of boring-from-within. The Gompers clique, for the first time in their history, were actually seriously threatened. Indeed, taking advantage of the situation, the right wing of the C. P. P. A. group, headed by President William H. Johnston, of the Machinists, were already openly planning to capture Gompers' throne. But meanwhile, even as the T. U. E. L. movement surged ahead, counter currents were developing which were to swiftly and dramatically remove the conservative leaders from all danger and to place them more

firmly than ever in control of the trade union movement. A whole new situation was developing, one that put a sudden stop to the stormy advance of the T. U. E. L. and gave the broad trade union movement a new, and disastrous, policy.

The basic thing that caused this great change was the beginning, about the first of 1923, of the long, so-called Coolidge period of prosperity. This rapidly changed the whole situation. As the depression waned, the bosses dropped their union-smashing, wage-cutting tactics and secured intensified exploitation of the workers through working them harder. They began the tremendous drive of the next several years for the speed-up or rationalization of industry, which accomplished great increases in the workers' output and realized huge profits for the bosses. The movement soon spread all over the industrial world and exerted profound effects economically, politically and socially. In the next chapter I shall deal more fully with this big movement; here let me confine myself simply to saying briefly that the trade union leaders immediately based their whole policy upon coöperating with the employers to cheapen production and to increase the exploitation of the workers. In line with this policy, they assiduously set about cultivating prosperity illusions among the masses and shooting to pieces our dangerous rank and file movement which fought for a class struggle program.

The reactionary trade union leaders were helped in all this reactionary course by a change in front of the Progressives. Dropping all pretense of struggle, these vacillating elements fitted themselves entirely into the new intensified class collaboration and speed-up policies of the bosses, and indeed became their most ardent champions. The first of the Progressives to so hoist the white flag were the right wing elements. These, grouped around the railroad unions, were organized in the Conference for Progressive Political Action, and were led by such men as Johnston, Stone and Hillman. The Socialist Party was also an active factor in this organization. The C. P. P. A. contained about 3,000,000 organized workers and farmers. These masses clearly wanted a Labor

Party, but their Progressive leaders, after talking radically about a Labor Party during the period of sharpest struggle, sensed the new turn of events towards class collaboration, and therefore ran the whole movement into the ditch. At the Cleveland, December 11, 1922, conference of the C. P. P. A., they definitely repudiated the plan of forming a Labor Party, indorsed the A. F. of L. non-partisan policy and, making complete peace with the A. F. of L. leaders, they soon all set sail together for the LaFollette fiasco of 1924. The right wing Progressives then completed their surrender by unceremoniously dumping overboard their Plumb Plan of government railroad ownership, canceling their inter-union solidarity agreements and soon becoming the very leaders in the developing movement for intensified class collaboration.

OUR SPLIT WITH THE FITZPATRICK GROUP

The left wing of the Progressives, the Fitzpatrick Farmer-Labor Party group, with whom the T. U. E. L. and W. P. (C. P.) were coöperating, held out several months longer against the new conservative trends in the labor movement, but they also finally went to the right. Fitzpatrick had denounced the Cleveland decisions of the C. P. P. A. as rank betrayal of the Labor Party movement and had formally agreed with the Workers Party to call a national convention in Chicago, July 3, 1923, at which a new Labor Party would be launched, provided there were at least 500,000 workers represented. The W. P. was officially invited to attend the convention, and it accepted; but the Socialist Party, which followed the line of the right Progressives into the camp of LaFollette and intensified class collaboration, declined the invitation. It was in the months preceding this 1923 convention that the T. U. E. L. and the Workers Party campaign for the Labor Party took on its broadest mass character.

Meanwhile, the Gompers leaders, strengthened by the rising wave of prosperity, the growth of class collaboration policies, the decline in the workers' fighting spirit, the spread of

prosperity illusions among the toilers and the collapse of the C. P. P. A., felt themselves able to begin to put pressure on the Fitzpatrick-Nockels group. In June, 1923, therefore, they cut off 50% of the C. F. of L.'s monthly subsidy and threatened to reorganize the C. F. of L. if it did not break its alliance with the Communists and stop agitating for amalgamation, the Labor Party and Russian recognition. This coercion had an effect and the C. F. of L. leaders began visibly to lose interest in the coming Labor Party convention.

When the July 3rd convention assembled there were present some 600 delegates representing over 600,000 organized workers and farmers, besides several important unions (A. C. W. and others) that sent observers. From the start it was evident that the Fitzpatrick group wanted to break its relations with the Workers Party, although, only shortly before, they had specifically invited it to the convention. They hemmed and hawed with various maneuvers to this end; finally, on the last day of the convention, submitting a proposal to exclude the W. P. on the grounds that it advocated the overthrow of the government and asking all present except the W. P. to affiliate to the old moribund Fitzpatrick F.-L. P. The convention delegates (of whom only a very small minority were Communists) roared disapproval of this course, and by a vote of 500 to 40 established the originally planned Federated Farmer-Labor, of which Joe Manley was elected Secretary.

Whereupon Fitzpatrick and a handful of delegates walked out of the convention. Nearly all of his customary supporters, however, including such veterans as Alex Howatt, Duncan McDonald, Mother Jones, etc., indorsed the W. P. line in the convention. They could not see the consistency of Fitzpatrick's first condemning the C. P. P. A. a couple of months before for not seating W. P. delegates and denouncing it as a scab organization for not launching a Labor Party and then, suddenly switching front, taking essentially the same course himself in this big convention. Although supported by only a few delegates, nevertheless the Fitzpatrick walkout

became a real break. The capitalist papers helped it decisively by yelling "split" in a thousand headlines all over the country.

This split, combined with the general trend of the A. F. of L. and organized farmers towards the candidacy of La-Follette, prevented the growth of the newly organized F. F.-L. P., and it perished after a 12 months' lingering existence. The Fitzpatrick Farmer-Labor Party also soon died out, with its leaders turning more and more back to the A. F. of L. non-partisan political policy.

Fitzpatrick has many times since bitterly attacked the Communists for the July 3rd split. But this is not in accordance with the facts. The main responsibility lay with himself. We simply stuck to the plan we had definitely agreed upon with Fitzpatrick before the convention, of forming a new, federated party. It was he who directly caused the split, in his eagerness to break with the Communists and to put himself in tune with the strong conservative trends developing at the time in the trade union movement.

The worst that we can be fairly charged with was an error in tactics. As I have pointed out, Fitzpatrick and his group, feeling the upswing of prosperity and the growth of class collaboration, were at the time retreating rapidly to the right under Gompers' fire. This trend on their part was clearly demonstrated afterwards by Fitzpatrick's giving up the Labor Party movement altogether and reverting back to the A. F. of L. non-partisan policy, by abandoning amalgamation and by becoming a bitter enemy of the Soviet Union. He also became an ardent advocate of all the subsequent A. F. of L. schemes of intensified class collaboration. Our failing was that we should have realized more clearly all this rightward trend and, instead of holding Fitzpatrick to his pre-convention agreement, made the greatest compromises in order, if possible, to avoid such an open and sharp break.

The whole history of the next several years showed, with the Progressives generally gone far to the right and becoming the leaders of the class collaboration movement, that the

W. P. and T. U. E. L., with their class struggle policy, were bound to have the greatest difficulty in carrying on any joint struggle whatever with them. Nevertheless, we should have fought more skillfully against the split. As it was, the split developed in the worst form, dramatically and around such a major issue as the Labor Party. The sequel showed that the Chicago split cost the W. P. loss of contacts with many important Farmer-labor militants in various sections of the country. It shattered the united front combination that had done such effective work in the meat packing and steel campaigns and in the amalgamation, Labor Party and other movements and that held promise of important future activities.

THE A. F. OF L. COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

The Chicago split in the united front between the Communists and left-Progressives was manna from heaven to the threatened Gompers leaders, and they accepted it as a signal for a big offensive against the T. U. E. L., the Communists and progressive movements generally. The first serious clash came at the Illinois Federation of Labor convention in Decatur, September 10, 1923, at which I was a delegate. This was said to be the largest state federation convention ever held in the U. S., the A. F. of L. having made a big mobilization of its forces to defeat us. Gompers had sent out a special letter condemning us and delegated Matthew Woll to lead the fight against us. The battle centered around the question of amalgamation, and it was a hot fight. The Fitzpatrick F. L. P. delegates, very bitter at us, for the Chicago split, joined forces openly with Woll, signed his statement condemning amalgamation and helped vote down their own C. F. of L. amalgamation resolution. Result: amalgamation was defeated by a four to one vote, whereas three months before it would have been adopted by the same delegation with an overwhelming majority. This was the first time the A. F. of L. leaders had been able to defeat amalgamation in

any state federation convention and their jubilation knew no bounds.

Just at this critical time, with the Gompers machine managing to get on the offensive against us, the Socialist needle trades union leaders taught the right reactionaries a new trick in how to fight militant unionism. In the International Ladies Garment Workers, where our movement was very strong, they began a campaign of expulsion of T. U. E. L. members in Chicago, New York and elsewhere. They backed this up by suppressing free speech in the union and infesting it with professional gangsters.* To the Socialist old guard leaders, to Sigman in person, therefore belongs the shame of having initiated into the United States the reactionary policy (which they copied from their parent Amsterdam International) of expelling workers from labor unions and their jobs because of their political opinions. An attempt was made to give a color of justification to such expulsions by the absurd charge that the T. U. E. L. was a dual union.

The reason for this ruthless attack was that the Socialist leaders were extremely antagonistic to us because of the world-wide fight between Socialists and Communists, and they were also allied tightly with the Gompers' bureaucracy and following out its whole class collaboration policy.

The Gompers clique were quick to follow the lead given by the old guard Socialist trade union leaders and they proceeded to adopt the expulsion policy generally. They were determined to exterminate all rank and file opposition to their ruinous collaboration policies. They dramatized the

*In Chicago, during a large protest meeting in Carmen's Auditorium against these outrageous expulsions, a notorious gunman suddenly appeared from the fire escape and fired three shots into the meeting in my direction, I being the speaker. A disastrous panic was narrowly averted. We protested to Debs against this outrage and against the whole I. L. G. W. expulsion policy. Debs claimed he could do nothing about it and he refused to take up the battle against the reactionary S. P. old guard. Instead, he later withdrew from the T. U. E. L. and criticized it openly. Thus Debs again exhibited his most serious political weakness, which was that throughout his career he consistently refused to join firmly with the left wing in its fights against the right wing Socialists, as exemplified by his stand in the 1909, 1912, 1919-21 inner S. P. struggles, and now again in this 1923 fight.

expulsion policy at the Portland, 1923, A. F. of L. convention, where with bell, book and candle, they demonstratively expelled from the convention William F. Dunne, T. U. E. L. National Committee member and regularly elected delegate of the Silver Bow (Butte), Montana, trades council.* The T. U. E. L. was officially branded as a dual union and a call was issued for war against the Communists in the unions. And although the majority of the organized workers had voted for amalgamation, a Labor Party and Russian recognition, and the bulk of the organizations were definitely committed to one or all three of these issues, the reactionary leaders almost unanimously voted them all down, the Labor Party vote, for example, being 25,066 to 1,895. This most reactionary convention then capped its destructive work by adopting as Labor's "constructive program" the new schemes of class collaboration which were well-nigh to destroy the unions during the next six years—but of all that more in the succeeding chapter.

Never was there a more flagrant violation of trade union democracy than the actions of the Portland A. F. of L. convention, one of the last attended by the arch-reactionary Gompers before his death. The misleaders of labor served notice that henceforth there would be war to the knife against the T. U. E. L., the Communists and every sign of militancy in the labor movement, and there was. After Portland, expulsion from unions and jobs, backed by gangster control and suppression of trade union democracy, became the official weapon against the militant opposition. The A. F. of L. leaders demanded that the Cleveland, Minneapolis, Detroit, Seattle and other central labor unions expel all Communists and T. U. E. L. members, on pain of losing their charters. Then most of the international unions adopted the same policy, the Socialist-controlled needle trade unions, as we shall see, outstripping all others in this reactionary campaign, wholesale expulsions in the needle industry even reaching

* Read Wm. F. Dunne's *Speech at the A. F. of L. Convention*, T. U. E. L. pamphlet.

the total of tens of thousands of workers in certain cases.*

In the early stages of the expulsion drive the T. U. E. L. held its second national conference in Chicago, September 1, 1923, with 143 delegates from 90 cities, including three from Canada and one from Mexico. The convention took steps to speed up its three major campaigns, and worked out concrete plans for partial and complete amalgamation in the most important industries. It also proposed to fight the growing expulsions by mass demands for reinstatement in the unions. But it was unable to find effective means to consolidate its loose mass movements in the face of the developing offensive of the Gompers bureaucracy.

Under pressure of the fierce attack of the top union leadership, in many cases supported by the bosses and the police, and under the influence of the growing "prosperity" and class collaboration, the T. U. E. L. forces in the unions were soon driven back. Hundreds of its best fighters lost their key union positions and also their jobs in the industries. Reaction and autocracy grew everywhere, and the movements for amalgamation, the Labor Party and recognition of Soviet Russia suffered a heavy decline. In this time also, the workers' militancy fell off greatly. Gradually, the work of the T. U. E. L. in general slowed down and lost in mass volume. Its militants found themselves largely cut off from the organized workers. Thus there entered the period of partial or relative isolation of the T. U. E. L. from the masses, a situation which was to last more or less as long as the Coolidge "prosperity" era.

* Among the many militants expelled in this several years' long period of expulsions was myself. The usual expulsion method was to use little or no formality, but with me the following "diplomacy" was applied by the B.R.C.A. leaders: When, as usual, I submitted my dues by mail to Chicago to my local (I lived in New York) I was notified that upon instructions of the National Office I should take a withdrawal card. I refused to do this, whereupon my dues in money was returned to me without explanation. I sent it back again, demanding dues stamps. No answer. Then, at the end of three-months, I was notified that I had been dropped for non-payment of dues. Thus ended 16 years of membership in that union.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRADE UNION EDUCATIONAL LEAGUE (Cont'd)

THE COOLIDGE PROSPERITY PERIOD

Now let us examine somewhat more closely the extensive class collaboration movement in the trade unions during this period, and the war against the T. U. E. L., which was the reverse side of the dominant A. F. of L. class collaboration policy.

The era of the Coolidge "good times," which, including the few months of Hoover, lasted with but short breaks from the middle of 1923 until the October crash in 1929, was a period of difficult struggle and relative isolation from the masses for the T. U. E. L. It was a time of the least working class militancy and struggle in the history of the American labor movement and of the worst corruption and autocratic rule ever practiced by the reactionary trade union leadership. Naturally, the T. U. E. L. felt sharply the effects of all the prosperity illusions, expulsions, terrorism, etc., in loss of mass contacts and mass movements.

The basic cause of this great sag in labor struggle was the big upswing of American imperialism during this period. American capitalism made huge advances, economically and in international influence, the United States becoming the world's strongest imperialist power. Various factors combined to produce its great industrial development and, hence, its increased political power. Among them were the capital export of 20 billion dollar war and post-war loans, which enormously stimulated American production and exports; the capture of world markets from the crippled European pow-

ers; the introduction of a tremendous speed-up or "rationalization" of industry; the growth of the vast installment buying system; the industrialization and mechanization of agriculture; the expansion of the automobile and various luxury industries; the industrialization of the South, etc. Altogether it was an orgy of profit-making for the American employers who became the objects of envy and admiration throughout the world capitalist class.

During this period the government was starkly reactionary. Its general spirit was exemplified by the huge growth of armaments and military propaganda, the repeated armed invasions of Caribbean and Central American countries, the systematic enslavement of Germany through the Dawes and Young plans, violent hostility towards the Soviet Union, and by such developments as hostile labor legislation, execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, continued imprisonment of Mooney and Billings, unchecked campaign of lynching in the South, the Teapot Dome scandal, the Scopes anti-evolution trial, etc.

THE RATIONALIZATION OF INDUSTRY

In this era of wild profit-making and reaction, now looked back to by American capitalists as the Golden Age, the central aim of the employers was to further increase their swollen profits by the most intense speed-up of the workers. They vastly improved industrial technique, and to lure the workers into their speed-up trap they developed a whole series of tricky institutions, such as new fangled bonus and piecework plans, elaborate "welfare" systems, pseudo old-age pensions, employee stockbuying, etc.*

All this was accomplished by oceans of slick propaganda, through every publicity channel of capitalism, to convince

* While the company unions fitted into this general scheme, they were somewhat in abeyance during this period. They had been organized as a bar to the spread of trade unionism in the war period, and as the strength of the trade unions declined after the big defeat of 1919-22, so also did the company unions stagnate. It was only upon the new trade union upsurge in 1933 that the company unions took on a fresh lease of life.

the workers that their interest resided in coöperating with the employers to increase production for minimum costs. This poison gas campaign took on wonderful aspects. The magic formula of "mass production and high wages" was alleged to bring not only better living standards now, for the workers, but also their final emancipation from capitalism. A whole school of bourgeois economists developed this speed-up propaganda into a system which I at the time called "capitalist efficiency socialism." * For example, Carver argued how the workers with their high wages were gradually buying up control of industry, Gillette glibly stated that this was leading to a coöperative commonwealth, Chase portrayed the social wonders to be achieved by rationalizing capitalist industry, Foster and Catchings outlined their miraculous theory of "financing the buyer," etc. Everything was lovely and the goose hung high. In short, there was no need for a proletarian revolution. American capitalism had cured its inner contradictions. No more industrial crises nor mass unemployment. Ford had superseded Marx. And the capitalists all over the world marveled at this wonder, lauded the American "new" capitalism and sought to introduce it in their own countries.

In reality, however, the great volume of the new wealth created in these years by the rationalization of industry poured into the laps of the insatiable capitalists. The workers got very little of it. From 1923 to 1929, output in industry increased no less than 29% per worker,† and profits doubled and tripled, but average real wages advanced, according to reliable figures, not more than 4½%.‡ Also most of this increase went only to the organized skilled workers, especially through overtime, steady work, etc., and their standards raised considerably. There was widespread in this period what Marx called the "bourgeoisification" of the labor aristocracy. The unskilled masses, if not materially much better

* *The Communist*, March 1928.

† *National Bureau of Economic Research*.

‡ Paul H. Douglas, *Real Wages in the United States*.

off, were also considerably bourgeoisified ideologically from the current intense rationalization propaganda. It was a time of the most extensive capitalist prosperity illusions ever known among the toiling masses.

THE NEW ORIENTATION OF THE TRADE UNION BUREAUCRACY

Without delay, the A. F. of L. leadership fitted themselves into this entire capitalist speed-up, rationalization program. In fact, they turned the unions into mere instruments of the capitalists' production plans. On the altar of production for less costs they sacrificed hard-won union conditions, and they peddled away every illusion put forth by the rationalization wind-jammers, besides inventing many of their own. Cheaper production became their fetish and the only way to working-class well-being.

This whole development the T. U. E. L. dubbed "the new orientation of the trade union bureaucracy towards intensified class collaboration" and "the company unionization of the trade unions." It was the traditional A. F. of L. class collaboration policy elaborated, theorized and revamped to meet the latest needs of the employers. The trade unions were reorganized on a basis of Fordism. As I have already indicated in the previous chapter, the movement began at the very outset of the Coolidge prosperity period, first taking shape on the railroads in the form of the so-called Baltimore and Ohio plan. This plan was the means used to break finally the 1922 railroad shopmen's strike through a separate settlement with the B. & O. railroad. The B. & O. plan, officially known as "Union-Management Coöperation," was thus stated by William H. Johnston, President of the Machinists Union:

The idea underlying our service to the B. & O. may be compared to the idea which underlies the engineering services extended to the railroads by large supply corporations which have

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contracts with these railroads to furnish, let us say, superheaters, stokers, or lubricating oil:*

In his pamphlet, *Class Struggle vs. Class Collaboration*, Earl R. Browder, editor of the *Labor Herald*, stated the T. U. E. L. analysis of the B. & O. plan as follows:

It is an agreement whereby the union purchases recognition from the railroad management by supplying efficiency engineers who, with the authority of the union behind them, speed up production, eliminate waste, reduce the cost of production and eliminate undesirable workers and union working rules that hamper efficiency in profit making.†

The B. & O. plan made a big hit with the A. F. of L. bureaucrats who went for it horse, foot and dragoons. The reactionary Portland, 1923, convention endorsed it and accepted its principles as the central policy of the A. F. of L. in the U. S. and Canada. And immediately they began to spin wonderful speculations about the blessings that were to come from the new system. Soon this theorizing by Stone, Woll, Frey, Green, etc., produced the notorious "New Wage Policy" of the A. F. of L. and the "Higher Strategy of Labor."

These high-sounding terms were simply fancy names for surrendering the trade unions entirely to the greedy exploitation of the capitalists in return for the right of the bureaucrats to collect dues from the workers. The workers had but to work faster and faster and then, by some hocus-pocus, which the A. F. of L. leaders never explained, they would, automatically and without struggle, get higher wages and steady work. Industrial crises and unemployment would be things of the past. Strikes were to be no longer necessary. At best, strikes were only remnants of the dark ages of the labor

* Quoted by D. M. Schneider, *The Workers (Communist) Party and American Trade Unions*, p. 11.

† Of the various T. U. E. L. publications during this period I contributed the book, *Misleaders of Labor*, and the pamphlets, *Wrecking the Labor Banks*, *Strike Strategy*, *Organize the Unorganized*, *The Watson-Parker Law*, as well as several statements of T. U. E. L. general program in pamphlet form. These deal in detail with the prevalent speed-up, class-collaboration movement.

movement. There was no further need for the unions to perform their basic role as fighting organization. They were distorted into production instruments of the employers. The old class struggle was liquidated. Now the key to working class prosperity was industrial coöperation with the employers. It was the "two chickens in every pot" philosophy of Hoover with a labor dressing. As the Coolidge period advanced, the class collaboration movement extended and deepened.

On the basis of this reactionary speed-up program, many trade unions hired efficiency engineers, and their leaders went begging to the captains of industry to allow them to help in more ruthlessly exploiting the workers in return for union recognition. The new A. F. of L. President, William Green, actually pleaded that the trade unions, with their "New Wage Policy," would be far more advantageous to them than the "out-moded" company unions. It was a case of the trade unions outstripping in servility the company unions themselves. Many employers, especially on the railroads, hearkened to this servile plea and made "coöperative agreements," though the bulk of trustified industry, satisfied with its own system of efficiency engineers and unorganized workers, did not. The effects of the A. F. of L. class collaboration agitation, however, ran far beyond the confines of the organized workers and poisoned sections of the unorganized as well. In his *Industry Comes of Age*, Tugwell lists the A. F. of L. policy as one of the major causes for the huge increase of industrial efficiency in the Coolidge years.

Fundamentally necessary to the success of the A. F. of L. "New Wage Policy" of class collaboration was the ruthless suppression of all militant opposition in the trade unions. Those workers who would not accept the speed-up were to be driven into it. It was no accident that the same A. F. of L. Portland, 1923, convention that endorsed the B. & O. plan also launched the big offensive and expulsion campaign against the C. P., T. U. E. L. and their policies of class struggle. Thereafter, during the whole Coolidge period, ex-

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pulsions, gangster control, stealing of elections, packing of conventions, etc., became the rule throughout the broad A. F. of L. Trade union democracy sank to the lowest level in all labor history, while the trade union leaders cemented more and more firmly their alliances with the American Legion, Chambers of Commerce, Republican and Democratic Parties and other capitalist organizations.

PROGRESSIVES AND SOCIALISTS SUPPORT CLASS COLLABORATION

The Progressives at once fell into step with the new class collaboration movement of the bosses and A. F. of L. top leaders. In fact, they became its most skilled and enthusiastic leaders and they were its instructors to the Gompers-Green bureaucracy. It was the Progressives, Johnston and Beyer, who originated the B. & O. plan. Johnston, Stone and Hillman were the outstanding champions of the corrupt and demoralizing labor banking movement, which I christened "trade union capitalism" and which dovetailed into the whole class collaboration movement. And Stone and Hillman were among the chief theoreticians of the "Higher Strategy of Labor," Hillman thus stating this theory at the Philadelphia convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers:

We have our problems and fortunately it is not necessary to apply the weapon of the strike for the solution of many of them. We have passed in our industry from the days of the jungle into an era of civilized ways of dealing with employers.

The Socialists were equally ardent supporters of the B. & O. plan, labor banking and the class collaboration movement generally. Many of them hailed it as the road to Socialism. Abe Cahan baldly repudiated Marx as outmoded and the Socialist Party struck out all reference to the class struggle from its membership application forms. Its attack against the Soviet Union was redoubled. Internationally, the Socialists were no less enthusiastic about the class collaboration developments. The British Labor Party, the Germany Social Democracy, in fact the whole Second and Amsterdam Inter-

nationals joyfully hailed capitalist rationalization and the "new capitalism." They spun many tricky theories about its developing into an "organized capitalism," a "super-imperialism," that was evolving directly into Socialism. Ford became the Messiah of the international Socialist movement.

The American Socialist-led unions, mostly needle trades, became practically indistinguishable from ordinary A. F. of L. unions. They practiced class collaboration intensely in all its newer forms, they were infested with gangsters, democracy was practically unknown among them and they pushed the expulsion campaign against the left wing to further limits than any other unions in the United States. Moreover, their leaders, dropping the last vestiges of the traditional Socialist opposition, became part and parcel of the reactionary A. F. of L. ruling clique. On this phase let witnesses friendly to them testify:

After the world war the Socialist boring-from-within policies and tactics were completely reversed. . . . Instead, they aim to sue for the confidence and good will of the entrenched labor leaders. . . . The new political alignment of the Socialists with the administration forces marks the end of their leadership of the opposition in the labor movement.*

The Socialists gave up their policy of militant boring-from-within and sought to win the confidence of the A. F. of L. administration.†

DEMORALIZATION AND DECAY

Of course, the "new" capitalism was only the "old" capitalism in a fresh guise. The boasted rationalization of industry could not and did not cure the great inner-contradiction of the capitalist system, the conflict between the rapidly increasing producing power of the toilers and their lagging purchasing power; which is the basic cause of the recurrent industrial crises. On the contrary, rationalization only inten-

* D. J. Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism*, pp. 37-39.

† D. M. Schneider, *The Workers (Communist) Party and the American Trade Unions*, p. 21.

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sified this fatal contradiction, the huge development of the productive forces during that period greatly hastening the whole system forward to the devastating international crash of 1929. Even a glance at the pages of Marx would have exposed this inevitable outcome. The whole rationalization business was a classical example of the "suicide economics" of capitalism.

The much-advertised paradise for the workers never materialized. During the Coolidge period, as we have already remarked, the workers as a class got very little out of the vastly increased wealth that they produced, and their very efficiency was rushing them on to the later holocaust of unemployment and mass starvation. What the workers did get in the Coolidge period, however, was the gravest demoralization, both ideological and organizational. Confused by the bourgeoisification of their upper ranks of skilled workers, they lost much of their fighting spirit. Never in the history of the labor movement were strikes so few and trade union morale so low.

For the first time in their entire existence the trade unions failed to grow during a period of prosperity. On the contrary, they actually lost members.* With a relatively good demand for labor power, it should have been an easy matter to organize large numbers of workers. But the unions had all the vitality sucked and beaten out of them by the rationalization campaign, with its accompaniments of speed-up, no strikes, surrender of union conditions, suppression of democracy, gangster control, expulsion of militants and capitalist "prosperity" propaganda.

The Socialist Party, saturated with class collaboration, dwindled away in influence and membership until in 1927 it had no more than 7,425 members. The Farmer-Labor Party movement also practically disappeared, except in Min-

* A. F. of L. reports show the membership figures practically stationary from 1923 to 1929. But these statistics are illusory, because during this time, many unions, notably the U. M. W. A., lost heavily in members, but kept up their per capita tax in order to maintain their voting strength in A. F. of L. conventions.

nesota, where it had become an established party. The I. W. W. and such independent unions as the Amalgamated Food Workers, all of which had become penetrated with Coolidge prosperity illusions and lost their former militancy, declined heavily in membership and influence.

The Coolidge era was the period of the deepest confusion and demoralization in the history of the American working class. The class collaboration poison was eating the very heart out of the labor movement. And upon this scene of working class paralysis the capitalists and their hangers-on could and did look with smug satisfaction. Thoughts of industrial crisis and strikes, not to speak of revolution, were far from their minds where America was concerned. They were drunk with power and prosperity. Their great enemy, the proletariat, seemed to be hopelessly drugged into insensibility and bound hand and foot by its official leaders. But they were living in a fool's paradise, as the next few years showed.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE T. U. E. L.

Internationally, the Comintern carried on a resolute struggle against these new forms of social reformism, against these disastrous policies which finally culminated in the German Socialist leaders' capitulation to fascism. And the Communist Party and the T. U. E. L. were the only labor organizations in the United States that understood and fought against the illusions and fallacies of the capitalist rationalization movement. They showed the futility of trying to solve capitalism's contradictions in any such way and they warned of the inevitable industrial collapse; they resolutely combated every phase of the class collaboration movement and all its advocates, from Carver and Green to Thomas and Muste; they spared no effort to mobilize the workers for a policy of class struggle. In the Coolidge period the C. P. and T. U. E. L., under the leadership of the C. I. and R. I. L. U., gave a real demonstration of their revolutionary character.

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But the T. U. E. L. could not entirely escape the wave of pessimism and inaction that affected the working class. The combined effects of the bourgeoisification of the skilled workers, the poison propaganda of class collaboration, the turn of the Progressives to the right and our split with them, and the barbarous expulsion policy and gangster control of the unions, definitely weakened the T. U. E. L.'s offensive in support of its three great issues of amalgamation, the Labor Party, and recognition of Soviet Russia, and prevented it from passing from the agitation stage into concrete action and results. T. U. E. L. work was forced to take on more of a local or partial character than its big sweeping movement of 1922-23.

The T. U. E. L., unskillfully, made worse its relative isolation from the masses in this period by identifying itself too closely with the Communist Party. It adopted practically the whole program of the Party and in many cases its groups consisted entirely of Communists. It also merged its official organ, *The Labor Herald*, into the *Workers Monthly*, which then became the joint journal of both the T. U. E. L. and the C. P. With the workers in their passive mood and in view of the situation generally in the trade unions, this sectarian policy tended further to shrink the T. U. E. L. from a broad mass opposition movement of workers of every political opinion to a mere revolutionary propaganda organization.

Nevertheless, in the Coolidge period the T. U. E. L. did manage to conduct a number of broad united front struggles. One of the more important of these was in the Carpenters Union led by M. Rosen and N. Kjar. This union's leadership, corrupt and autocratic, followed the usual policy of intensified class collaboration and backed it up by expelling many militants in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, etc., in some cases with police help. The T. U. E. L. fight reached its high point in the union elections of 1925, when Rosen, an avowed Communist, received, even according to the falsified official election returns, 9,014 votes against Hutcheson's 77,985.

More effective, however, was the T. U. E. L. fight in the Machinists Union, led by A. Overgaard. William H. Johnston, the head of this union, was the first sponsor of the B. & O. plan and the organization was saturated with the new forms of class collaboration. Big discontent existed among the rank and file at the bad union conditions. Johnston tried to quell this by expelling Overgaard and many other militants in Toledo, Chicago, etc. As a result of the T. U. E. L.'s fight against the B. & O. plan, expulsions, etc., the left wing at the Detroit, 1924, I. A. of M. convention polled 44 votes against the administration's 107. In the ensuing 1925 union election, the T. U. E. L. made a united front with the progressive Anderson group against the expulsion and class collaboration policy of the union leaders. Even from the official election returns it was clear that the united front slate had won, but the so-called Progressive, Johnston, according to the prevailing union officials' practice, did not let that detail worry him. He proceeded to steal the election, announcing the doctored returns as: Johnston 18,021, Anderson 17,076.

The T. U. E. L., in the Coolidge years, conducted many other struggles against class collaboration in the various internationals, locals and central labor bodies. But its main fights occurred in the mining, textile and needle industries. In these three industries special conditions prevailed. Firstly, foreshadowing the eventual general crisis of American industry, they were all greatly depressed from overproduction, with accompanying unemployment, low wages, and bad union conditions. And secondly, the workers in these industries were especially rich in fighting traditions, so they responded more readily to T. U. E. L. leadership.

THE T. U. E. L. IN THE MINING INDUSTRY

Throughout almost the entire Coolidge period, the coal industry was in depression. This, part of the world coal crises, was caused by over-development during the war, a high state

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of competition, mechanization of the mines, use of oil, water power and other substitutes for coal, etc. Result: chronic mass unemployment and gradual worsening of wages and working conditions even several years before the 1929 general crisis. The miners' position was made worse because the Lewis administration of the U. M. W. A., which in those years followed a typical conservative course, proved to be unable to alleviate these evil conditions. Consequently, the miners were deeply discontented and much inclined to hearken to the T. U. E. L. program.

From its outset, the T. U. E. L. had a strong following among the miners. As we have seen, it defeated Farrington's attempt in Illinois to disrupt the 1922 national strike. It also took a prominent part in the fight against the expulsion of Alex Howat, militant President of the Kansas miners; a fight in which Lewis was once defeated by a convention vote of 977 to 866.

On June 2-3, 1923, in Pittsburgh, the T. U. E. L. miners met and formed the Progressive International Committee of the U. M. W. A., with 25 delegates present, including Howat. Tom Myerscough became its Secretary. This conference adopted a program of nationalization of the mines, Labor Party, amalgamation, organize the unorganized, recognition of Soviet Russia, alliance between miners and railroaders, six-hour day, national agreements only, against dual unionism, for democracy in the union, etc. At this conference it was reported how the T. U. E. L. had prevented a split of 40,000 miners in the anthracite. Lewis replied to this conference by making membership in the C. P. or T. U. E. L. an expulsion offense and, in the next period, by systematically expelling hundreds of militants.

The first big clash with the Lewis machine came in the union elections of 1924. On the basis of its Pittsburgh program, the Progressive U. M. W. A. Committee put up as its candidate for President, George Voyzey of Illinois, a Communist miner. Although he was but little known, vast masses of miners voted for him. The final official returns gave Lewis

136,000 and Voyzey 66,000. We charged fraud and asserted that Voyzey had actually been elected.

Things went from bad to worse in the U. M. W. A. The coal crisis deepened, the bosses redoubled their attacks upon the workers on all fronts, the U. M. W. A. administration ruthlessly expelled militants throughout the organization. At that time Lewis himself was a prominent figure in the Republican Party and many of his Organizers and District Presidents were tied up with employers' associations and all kinds of conservative organizations. The union was shot through with the prevailing ruinous union-management coöperation. Consequently, the union crumbled and fell to pieces in many districts, including Middle Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Alabama, Canada, etc. In 1925, the powerful Pittsburgh Coal Company repudiated the Jacksonville agreement, went open shop, and threw down the gauntlet of battle to the U. M. W. A.

In this grave crisis the T. U. E. L. forces raised the slogan, "Save the Union." They demanded that there be a vigorous organization campaign started in the South and other unorganized districts and that the anthracite miners unite their forces with the bituminous miners for joint action in the life and death struggle ahead. The T. U. E. L. built up a broad united front with non-Communists and created a national Save-the-Union Committee, with branches in many localities. During this campaign I spent five months on the road doing organizing work. In the union elections ensuing, this committee put up a united front "Save-the-Union" election ticket, headed by John Brophy, former President of District 2. Lewis violently opposed this entire development with further expulsions, suppressions of union democracy, etc. When the election returns were issued they gave Lewis 173,323 and Brophy 60,661. We protested these figures, claimed gross frauds in many districts, and asserted that Brophy had been cheated (by padding Lewis' vote and re-

ducing Brophy's) of 100,000 votes and thereby of the election.

The next U. M. W. A. convention, late in 1926, presented a sorry picture. The Jacksonville agreement was about to expire, the union faced a desperate struggle, and no real preparations had been made for it. Widespread discontent at Lewis's leadership existed in the union. But the T. U. E. L. united front forces could accomplish nothing at the convention. Lewis had solid control, based chiefly on large numbers of office-holder delegates from the organized territory. The left-progressives also charged that there were hundreds of delegates from "blue-sky" locals in the many disorganized districts where the district provisional administrations were appointed by the U. M. W. A. Board. Lewis ruled the convention with a strong hand and defeated every proposal of the opposition. Evidently the U. M. W. A. was in very bad shape and threatened with disaster.

On April 1, 1927, with the Jacksonville agreement ended, the union found itself on strike, or practically locked out, in all the unionized northern bituminous fields. The miners fought bravely, and the C. P. and T. U. E. L. threw all their forces into the desperate struggle. We organized mass picketing and set up a relief system under the leadership of A. Wagenknecht. As for the U. M. W. A. officialdom, it seemed paralyzed and disorganized. Characteristically also, the top A. F. of L. leaders in Washington, lost in their dreams of prosperity through the speed-up and class collaboration, were oblivious of the vital importance of this most crucial strike and raised for the miners only enough funds to pay their strike relief rolls for one week.

The organized left-Progressive bloc did much to stiffen the ranks of the miners, and so well did the strikers fight that on April 1, 1928, a full year after the strike began, they were still standing solid in all the key union districts notwithstanding extreme starvation, neglect and police terrorism. On this date, the Save-the-Union movement held a national conference in Pittsburgh. Present were 1125 delegates, repre-

senting approximately 100,000 miners from all over the country. The conference decided to strengthen the strike by stiffening up the picket lines and by extending the fight, first into the important Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia fields, and finally into the anthracite districts. In consequence, a revival of picketing was had and 19,000 unorganized miners soon struck under T. U. E. L. leadership in nearby Fayette and Westmoreland counties.

But the great strike was already defeated and we could not revive it. The formal end came when the union signed a separate agreement in Illinois, and the miners who could get jobs dragged back to work in the other districts. The big battle was lost. The U. M. W. A. had been practically wiped out of its remaining strongholds in Western Pennsylvania, Northern West Virginia and Ohio. The vast bulk of the soft coal fields were now open shop. At one blow the miners lost wages and conditions and the union that had taken 30 years to build up. The U. M. W. A. ceased to be a real power in the bituminous districts, and by this fact organized labor in general suffered one of the greatest defeats in its history. To our next chapter let us postpone the recital of left wing developments in the coal industry after this disastrous strike.

THE T. U. E. L. IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

The textile industry, like coal mining, was in a state of depression from over-production for several years before the 1929 crisis. Again like mining, its bad situation was a part of a world-wide crisis in that industry. Unemployment, low wages, and excessive speed-up were the lot of the oppressed and impoverished textile workers. Only about 5% of the 1,000,000 textile workers were organized, and these solely in the North, the South being totally unorganized. The principal unions were the United Textile Workers, the American Federation of Textile Operatives and the Associated Silk Workers, the two latter being independent unions. The leadership of these unions was saturated through and through

with the current speed-up, class collaboration schemes, and worked diligently with the employers to intensify the exploitation of the workers. The three unions were inert and paralyzed, valuable only to the employers to help drive the workers faster and faster in production.

Among the textile workers, who have good fighting traditions, there was much unrest and the T. U. E. L. had worked among them since 1922. Its general program condemned B. & O. plan-ism and company unionism, and called for a fighting policy, for honest leadership, amalgamation, and organization of the unorganized. It proposed a united front between the squabbling unions pending amalgamation. It organized local groups in the unions and set up united front mill committees in the mills, made up of representatives of the various unions and the unorganized. The T. U. E. L. textile section held two national and several local conferences. It did much local organization work and exposed the fallacies of class collaboration at all times.

The first big T. U. E. L. mass movement among the textile workers was the Passaic, New Jersey, strike of 1926. The T. U. E. L., under the name of the United Front Committee of Textile Workers, began activity in Passaic right after the 10% wage cut of October 1925. The U. T. W. and the other textile unions were practically non-existent in Passaic, so the U. F. C. began recruiting members and forming a union, intending later to join the A. F. of L. Soon 1000 had affiliated, and on January 25th, the U. F. C. committee presented demands to the Botany mill to rescind the wage cut, for time and one-half for overtime time and no discrimination against union workers. The company replied by discharging the whole committee of 45. Then the 5,000 Botany workers struck and spread the fight to the other mills, soon involving 15,280 workers and tying up the whole Passaic textile industry.

The strike was stubbornly fought on both sides. It lasted for eleven months. The bosses used the police, the courts, citizens' peace committees and every method of strikebreaking

and terrorism; the workers replied with heroic solidarity and tireless endurance. One of the features of the strike was the big national relief campaign, into which the C. P. and T. U. E. L. threw all their effort. The official leader of the strike was A. Weisbord, a good mass speaker but a mediocre strategist; the real leadership of the strike resting in the core of revolutionaries, nearly all Communists, actively participating in the top committees, including such fighters as W. Weinstone, Bill Dunne, E. G. Flynn, G. Deak, J. Ballam, A. Wagenknecht, L. Cherenko, M. Siskind, etc. This very militant and dramatic strike of the impoverished textile workers attracted broad working class sympathy all over the country; while the A. F. of L. officialdom, saturated with class collaboration poison, viewed it with ill-disguised hostility. Senators, governors, mayors, lawyers, philanthropists, etc., galore, took a hand in trying to "settle" the bitter struggle.

By terrorism and duplicity the bosses were unable to break the strike so, after six months of it, in July, they decided on a maneuver to defeat the workers; they announced that they would deal with the strikers provided the Communist leadership was removed and the strikers were affiliated to the U. T. W. To agree to take out the mass leaders was a difficult condition for us, but the strike was in a hard situation; so, refusing to let the issue of Communism stand in the way of a settlement, we called the bosses' bluff and withdrew Weisbord, and we also affiliated the workers to the U. T. W. We were confident that with the other leaders above noted, the real heads of the strike, we could still hold firm leadership of the workers. For this whole course of action we were later severely criticized by the R. I. L. U.

The employers, seeing that their maneuver had failed, then stated they would not deal with the A. F. of L. either. In consequence, the strike dragged on, bitterly fought (under our leadership—the U. T. W. doing nothing) until December 13th, when the big Botany Mills capitulated to the union by restoring the wage cut, agreeing not to discriminate against union members and recognizing grievance commit-

tees. The other mills soon followed suit. Thus ended almost a year of struggle. It was a hard-won, if only partial, victory, but it produced little tangible results in organization. The union, weakened by the long struggle and neglected by the U. T. W. conservative McMahon leadership, was unable to follow up with a vigorous campaign for organization and against blacklisting.

The Passaic strike was very important. It stood out like a light-house in the midst of the prevailing fog of class collaboration in the A. F. of L. It was also the first mass strike in this country led independently by Communists. It strengthened the resistance of the textile workers all over the country and was a stimulant to the whole revolutionary movement. But, perhaps, most important of all was the influence this strike had, as we shall see, on changing the policy of revolutionary trade unionism in the United States.

THE T. U. E. L. IN THE NEEDLE TRADES

In the Coolidge "prosperity" years the needle industry, suffering like mining and textile from over-development and extreme competition, experienced difficult and depressed conditions. Heavy unemployment became more and more chronic, and the busy seasons grew shorter and shorter. As in all industries, the employers drove through with a rationalization program, speeding the workers by every known device.

The Socialist top leaders of the unions in the industry dove-tailed their policies to fit into this speed-up program of the bosses. In no other American industry was the class collaboration "union-management coöperation" so highly developed as in the needle trades. The Socialist leaders joined hands with the technicians of the employers in putting through a whole series of "minimum standards of production," piece-work systems, wage cuts, etc. In some cases, with their own efficiency experts, they actually took over the technical management of the speed-up; in others they even financed bankrupt employers with the savings of workers col-

lected in their labor banks. No other unions went so far as they in the speed-up, and none proceeded to such extremes to suppress the opposition by abolishing union democracy, by expulsions, blacklisting and gangster tactics.

The needle workers, the most revolutionary in American industry, revolted in large masses against the worsening of their unions and conditions through this misleadership. They accepted the T. U. E. L. and built its needle trades section into a powerful united front movement, with at one time at least 100,000 workers directly following its lead and many more under its influence. This mass revolt developed in all sections, especially in New York, the main center of the industry. The chief points in T. U. E. L. policy were, against class collaboration and for a policy of class struggle, against gangsterism and corruption and for union democracy, for amalgamation of all needle unions into one industrial union based on the shop delegate system, for the Labor Party, recognition of Soviet Russia, affiliation to the R. I. L. U., release of political prisoners, etc. Besides these general demands, the T. U. E. L. groups had specific programs for each union in the industry.

The bitter fight took on much the aspect of a political struggle between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. On the one side, were the C. P. and T. U. E. L., backed by huge masses of discontented workers, and on the other, the S. P. and union bureaucracies, supported chiefly by skilled workers and actively aided by the bosses, the A. F. of L., the capitalist newspapers, Tammany Hall politicians, and often even by the police. Never in any American unions had there been such a widespread and relentless internal fight.

The struggle reached its most acute stages in the International Fur Workers Union and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. In the Amalgamated Clothing Workers conditions were as bad as in the other unions, as its top officials were among the outstanding advocates of class collaboration in the whole country. The T. U. E. L. fought to put the Amalgamated on a class struggle basis and it had

many successes; but our movement, principally because of poor leadership, did not take on the sustained mass character that it did in the I. F. W. U. and I. L. G. W. U. In the Cloth Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union, the left wing, led by M. Sazar, M. Ziebel, etc., also developed a strong movement which was influential in the life of the union, but it was not able to win control of the organization or of its large strikes away from the class collaboration leadership.

To give a detailed picture of the long and complicated struggle of the T. U. E. L. in the needle trades would run far beyond space limitations here. The student can find the main facts in Jack Hardy's book, *The Clothing Workers*.^{*} Here all I can do is to touch upon the high points of the struggle in the two unions where it was the keenest, the Fur Workers and the I. L. G. W. U.

In the I. F. W. U. the Kaufman bureaucracy, reactionary and autocratic, early followed the I. L. G. W. U. method of breaking the opposition to the speed-up by expelling militants out of the union, blacklisting them from the shops, and ruling the union by gangster methods. At the union meetings dissenters were slugged, Ben Gold and A. Gross, the T. U. E. L. fur workers' leaders, being dangerously stabbed. The T. U. E. L. was condemned as a dual organization and membership in it pronounced sufficient cause for expulsion. But the mass opposition movement grew, nevertheless, as official mismanagement forced the workers' conditions from bad to worse. The struggle culminated in the May 1925 elections, when the T. U. E. L. forces, setting up a united front with the Sorkin-Winnick "middle" group, won control of the Furriers New York Joint Board, the bulk of the whole international union. Gold became head of the new local administration.

In February 1926, over 12,000 New York furriers under Gold's leadership went on strike with a central demand for the 40-hour week. The ensuing 17-week struggle was one

^{*} International Publishers, 1935.

of the hardest fought in the history of New York. The workers not only had to battle large numbers of professional scabs and gangsters, but also the right wing leaders of the International Union sabotaged the strike shamelessly. When it finally looked like victory in spite of all, these people brought in William Green, and together they made an agreement with the bosses behind the local leadership's back for a 42-hour week. Then they tried to stampede the strikers to return to the shops. But the workers stood firm, rejected Green's settlement, carried on their strike for several weeks longer, and finally won the 40-hour week. It was a slashing victory, a splendid example of effective strike leadership and a sharp repudiation of the whole A. F. of L. no-strike policy.

The right wing Socialist labor leaders, and especially Green himself, were greatly compromised by these events. These people especially feared the stimulating effect of this splendid strike upon the discontented masses throughout the needle trades. So they redoubled their attacks upon the union's left wing leaders. They shouted red revolution, charged Gold with mishandling the union's funds, using violence in the strike, bribing the police, violating the union constitution, etc. Then an A. F. of L. "investigation" committee, composed of the ultra-reactionaries M. Woll, E. McGrady, J. Ryan, J. Sullivan and Hugh Frayne, with the coöperation of the S. P., the bosses, newspapers, etc., proceeded to reorganize the New York Joint Board by expelling its members, "dissolving" its four locals, and setting up new unions. This action forced the great mass of furriers outside the A. F. of L., where they remained under left leadership and in the sharpest struggle until unity was achieved seven years later. But about this phase of independent existence more will be said in succeeding chapters.

The struggle in the I. L. G. W. U. was no less bitter and protracted. Again, only its bare outlines can be given here. In the I. L. G. W. U. the most outstanding left united front leaders were Borochoovich, Hyman, Wortis, Zimmerman, Portnoy, etc. This union suffered acutely from the prevalent

"union-management coöperation" schemes, gangsterism, suppression of democracy, etc. Especially vicious was the expulsion policy. The T. U. E. L. forces fought in all garment centers against these conditions, but the fight climaxed in New York, where the masses gave the left wing militants a ready ear.

The first major clash came in 1925. After three years of struggle the T. U. E. L. had built up a left united front leadership in locals 2, 9 and 22, comprising about 70% of the New York Joint Board, backbone of the international. Whereupon President Morris Sigman on June 11, seizing upon the absurd pretext that the Communist *Freiheit* editor, M. Olgin, had spoken at the locals' May Day meeting, arbitrarily expelled the whole regularly elected 77 executive board members of the three locals as Communists, which amounted to expelling some 35,000 members. This provoked an explosion of indignation in the industry. The "Joint Action Committee" was set up among the expelled locals, a bitter struggle ensued, and after 16 weeks of it, Sigman had to give in and reinstate the expelled locals and executive boards.

This was a big left wing victory and it mobilized at least 75% of the whole I. L. G. W. U.'s membership behind the T. U. E. L. militants. The left wing united front got control of the New York Joint Board, and elected L. Hyman as Manager. Similar victories were had in the Chicago Joint Board and in local unions in many centers. But the "old guard" Socialist Sigman administration managed to retain control at the Philadelphia, November 1925, convention of the union by reason of the prevailing system of "paper locals" and disproportionate representation. Thus Sigman had on his side 146 delegates representing 15,852 members, while the opposition, representing 34,762 members, had only 114 delegates. With the convention thus packed, Sigman ruthlessly steam-rolled the left wing proposals. This provoked a crisis and the outraged opposition delegates left the convention in a body, determined to launch a new union. It

was only upon the advice of the T. U. E. L., represented by Bill Dunne, that, to preserve the union's unity, they returned to the hall. A few concessions were won, but Sigman's destructive grip was not broken.

The convention left much bitterness in the union. The next big struggle between the conservative administration and the T. U. E. L. united front developed during the strike of 35,000 New York cloakmakers, beginning July 1, 1926, which was led by the left wing New York Joint Board. Again, as in the Furriers' strike, the right wing leadership sabotaged the struggle. And again, seizing a favorable time when the strikers were exhausted by the long fight, the Sigman leadership, although they had regularly spoken for and endorsed the strike at its outset, suddenly on December 13th, denounced it as illegal, took over the negotiations with the bosses, referred the whole matter to arbitration and ordered the cloakmakers back to work. Unlike in the Furriers' strike, the lefts were unable to defeat this maneuver by mobilizing the strike-tired workers, so the strike was lost and the workers' conditions were slashed by the arbitration board. It was a big defeat for the workers and the T. U. E. L.

Sigman, with A. F. of L. and S. P. support, then intensified his offensive against the T. U. E. L. by expelling the New York Joint Board, and several of the big New York locals. Similar action was taken in Chicago and other left strongholds. Then, aided by the pressure of the bosses' blacklist, the I. L. G. W. U. leaders proceeded with a campaign of re-registering expelled workers into new local unions. Like other reactionaries in similar situations, the I. L. G. W. U. leaders showed that they were ready to wreck the union rather than allow it to pass under left leadership.

As the result of Sigman's splitting policy at least 35,000 workers now found themselves expelled from the I. L. G. W. U. Thus of the Furriers and the I. L. G. W. U., altogether some 50,000 workers had been ousted from their unions and the A. F. of L. They, therefore, linked forces in a joint action committee to continue the struggle for trade union unity

through reinstatement, for democratization of the A. F. of L. needle unions, and against the rapidly worsening economic conditions of the needle trades workers. But here let us leave them for a while and consider the general course of the T. U. E. L., of the revolutionary trade union movement as a whole.

THE TREND TOWARDS INDEPENDENT UNIONISM

Ever since 1912, the T. U. E. L. and its predecessor organizations, the S. L. of N. A. and the I. T. U. E. L., had carried on a stout fight against dual unionism; but now in the latter Coolidge period—1926-29—forces were at work that were gradually pushing the T. U. E. L. towards a partial policy of independent unionism. Indeed, there had long been a potential base for such unionism in the great masses of deeply exploited, unorganized workers in the mass production, trustified industries which the A. F. of L. had been unable and unwilling to unionize. This was true, in spite of the fact that such dual organizations as the I. W. W., W. I. I. U., etc., because of their ultra-revolutionary programs, hostility to A. F. of L. workers, and general sectarian practices, were never able to build any independent unions on a permanent mass basis among the huge numbers of unorganized. The general course of events in the post-war Coolidge years had tended to greatly strengthen this potential basis for independent unionism and finally to put before the revolutionary movement as a living issue the question of forming new unions. Let us cite four of the general forces tending to produce this result, as follows:

1. There was the narrowing down of the A. F. of L. base in many industries during the great post-war employers' offensive, including the complete wiping out of its unions by strikes in the steel, lumber and meat-packing industries, the crushing defeat of the railroad unions in 1922 with a loss of several hundred thousand members, and the eventual breaking down of the U. M. W. A. in the bituminous fields; be-

sides, there was a serious weakening of the unions in various other industries, including building trades, marine transport, printing, needle, textile, food, shoes, etc. In consequence of these strike defeats, the worst in our labor history, the numerical strength and strategical position of the A. F. of L. had been greatly weakened and the percentage of unorganized workers much increased. Especially the A. F. of L. had lost great masses of unskilled workers and tended to become more and more an organization of the skilled labor aristocracy.

2. There was the adoption by the A. F. of L. of its no-strike, "union-management coöperation," "higher strategy of labor" program. This policy of class collaboration, by distorting the unions from their basic role as fighting organizations into adjuncts of the employers' production speed-up, killed the militant spirit of the unions and inflicted upon the labor movement a disastrous dry rot. As a result of it the unions, during the Coolidge "prosperity" years, were not only not able to recover their losses in the big post-war strikes, but as we have seen, for the first time in history, had steadily declined in strength and influence. The A. F. of L. became less able than ever to defend its own members' interests and to organize the unorganized.

3. There was the expulsion of large numbers of militant and revolutionary workers from the trade unions, a fact which robbed these organizations of their best elements and hastened their decline. In consequence of these expulsions, the T. U. E. L. militants, largely outside, found it very difficult to work within the A. F. of L. unions, which, to make matters worse, were gangster-ridden and bereft of democracy.

4. There was a new and growing tendency among the organized and unorganized masses to fight, exemplified by such bitter, hard-fought strikes as the Passaic textile workers, the New York fur and cloakmakers in 1926, the national U. M. W. A. strike of 1927, the Boston shoe workers' strike, the New Bedford textile strike, and the great 1929 strike of textile workers in Gastonia, Elizabethton and many Southern

towns. This developing strike movement could not be stimulated, developed and led to victory by the corrupted leaders of the half-dead A. F. of L. unions, with their no-strike policies, but was in every instance directly sabotaged by them.

All these factors combined showed a definite decline of the A. F. of L. unions in strength and fighting ability. Their heavy loss of members and spirit-killing class collaboration, the mass expulsions, and the growing urge for organization among the unorganized, all worked together to prepare the ground for independent unionism. Especially, in the three major fields of T. U. E. L. activity—mining, textile, needle—the basis for new unions was definite and strong.

In the mining industry the bituminous section of the U. M. W. A. had been wrecked, the militants stood expelled in great numbers and the miners, with long organization experience, were bitter against the U. M. W. A. and definitely disposed to form a new union. After the disastrous 1927 strike this tendency manifested itself by the growth of a whole series of spontaneous local dual organizations in Canada, Colorado (I. W. W.), West Virginia (Keeney), Illinois (P. M. A.—1932), Oklahoma, the anthracite districts, etc. A general outcropping of new unions was taking the place of the collapsing U. M. W. A.

In the textile industry, the tendency towards independent unionism took a somewhat different course, but the general direction was the same. The U. T. W. and the other textile unions, containing only 5% of the workers, were paralyzed by the intense class collaboration practices of the period and were both unable and unwilling to respond to the demands of the discontented workers in the industry for a fight in behalf of their demands. The result we have seen in Passaic where the T. U. E. L., in spite of its intense anti-dual union attitude, was compelled to form an independent union in order to organize the workers.

In the needle trades the course towards independent unionism was again somewhat different, but none the less sure. The reactionary course of the union leadership, the steadily

worsening economic conditions, the expulsion of almost 50,000 militant workers; all created a growing mass demand in the industry for a new, fighting industrial union.

But the T. U. E. L., traditional fighter against dual unionism, strongly resisted these mass demands for new unions. In the mining industry, for example, at the big April 1, 1928, Save-the-Union Pittsburgh Conference, representing 100,000 miners, there was a strong trend to launch a new union, but it was defeated by the T. U. E. L. and C. P. opposition. Most of the above-mentioned new unions in the mining industry were initiated by Socialists and other non-Communists. In the textile industry in Passaic, even after the T. U. E. L. had been compelled to form a new union, we were opposed to its independent existence and proceeded to affiliate it to the torpid U. T. W.; this, indeed, being our line in all industries where we built new unions among the unorganized. And in the needle trades it was the T. U. E. L. that was responsible for stopping the split at the Philadelphia convention of the I. L. G. W. U. and for generally having the masses of expelled workers adopt the policy of fighting for reinstatement in their old organizations.

Just in the midst of these developments, on December 3-4, 1927, the T. U. E. L. held its third national conference in New York, whither the organization had just removed its headquarters from Chicago. There were 297 delegates, of whom 107 were from the needle trades. In total they represented a following estimated at 300,000, or about 10% of the trade union movement. The Conference clearly realized the menace arising from the smashing of the A. F. of L. in many industries, its failure to organize the unorganized, its fatal no-strike, class collaboration policy and its reactionary trend in general. It stated that the unions were in full retreat before the employers' economic, political and ideological offensive and declared that the very existence of the trade unions was endangered. But it did not understand these developments as laying the basis for independent unionism. On the contrary, the whole orientation of the T. U. E. L. third

conference was towards the A. F. of L., it directed all its efforts to an intensification of the fight within the old unions against class collaboration, for trade union democracy, for the organization of the unorganized, for the Labor Party, for unemployment insurance, against trade union capitalism (labor banking), against racial discrimination, for world trade union unity, etc. It called upon the many expelled workers to fight for reinstatement into their former unions and it put forth as a central slogan, "Save the Trade Unions."

THE R. I. L. U. TAKES A HAND

At this juncture the R. I. L. U. had a very important word to say on the American situation. Its Fourth World Congress, held beginning March 17, 1928, adopted a resolution, with the full concurrence of the T. U. E. L. delegation, developing the need for the building of new unions in the United States. The resolution stated:

The vital and immediate task of the T. U. E. L. is to become the leading organization struggling to organize the unorganized, concentrating especially in mining, steel, oil, automobiles, rubber, textile, chemicals, marine, transport and lumber industries. . .

The T. U. E. L., when necessary, may fight for the affiliation of the organizations of the A. F. of L., but only on conditions which guarantee class leadership and a militant programme.

The resolution, while making the organization of the unorganized the central T. U. E. L. task, also stressed the necessity of developing the work in the A. F. of L., thus:

At the same time it must use all the possibilities of working inside the existing unions and fighting for the leadership (of the workers organized) in them.*

This resolution was accompanied, on March 15, 1928, by an article of A. Losovsky, General Secretary of the R. I. L. U., in the *Communist International* sharply criticizing the policy of the T. U. E. L. and pronouncing it one of "dancing quadrilles around the A. F. of L." Losovsky pointed out in

* *Report of the 4th R.I.L.U. Congress*, p. 136. English edition.

this article the narrowing base of the A. F. of L. and the growing field for independent unionism. He declared that the T. U. E. L., by relying on the A. F. of L. leaders, by trade union legalism, and by making a fetish of anti-dual unionism, was neglecting the organization of the unorganized. Especially did he put great stress upon the recent I. W. W. strike of Colorado miners and our own Passaic strike as indicators of the need for new unions. He drastically condemned our policy in Passaic of turning our new union over to the reactionary U. T. W. Out of all this he drew the conclusion that the T. U. E. L. must develop more of an independent leadership and that while the work in the A. F. of L. unions must be continued and developed, the T. U. E. L. should give vastly more attention to the actual organization of the unorganized into new industrial unions in industries where the old unions did not exist or could not function.

Losovsky's main point was well taken. The T. U. E. L. for years past, should have paid more attention to directly organizing the unorganized in the basic, mass production industries, and this would have implied launching, temporarily at least, independent unions in many cases where the A. F. of L. unions did not function. It is true that, in principle, the T. U. E. L. had long endorsed the policy of supporting new unions where the A. F. of L. was decrepit or defunct or where the independents took on a mass character. It was on this basis that the T. U. E. L. backed the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Amalgamated Food Workers, the Railroad Brotherhoods and the I. W. W. in agriculture; while at the same time it urged the affiliation of these organizations to the A. F. of L. In point of fact, however, the T. U. E. L., in its deep-seated and profoundly correct antagonism to dual unionism, had leaned somewhat backward in handling this question and had undoubtedly neglected unorganized fields where independent unions might have been built.

The Fourth Congress resolution and Losovsky's blast caused a great commotion in the Communist Party and the

T. U. E. L. A burning discussion started at once. This reached a head in the May, 1928, meeting of the C. P. Central Committee which, while unanimously concurring in the main with Losovsky's general proposals and agreeing with the need for independent unions in industries where the A. F. of L. did not function, sharply warned against abandoning work in the old organizations:

The combined trade unions still have a membership of approximately 3,000,000. These we cannot surrender to the leadership of the reactionary bureaucrats. We must continue and extend our work among these organizations, to build our Party, and to capture the rank and file from control of the reactionaries. Our Party has behind it the general left wing tradition of 30 years of dual unionism. At best, it is difficult to work in reactionary American trade unions. Should there be the slightest minimizing of this work, inevitably there would be a tendency on the part of our comrades to neglect it and to desert the old unions. This can be counteracted only by clearly stating the necessity of Communists working within the A. F. of L. unions and laying down programs for the work.*

This was a timely warning and it turned out that the T. U. E. L. and C. P. would have done well had they borne it clearly in mind during the next few years.† But what was not so sound in our May resolution was its argumentation that the new stress upon independent unionism did not basically alter our existing policy towards new unions, but was only a matter of emphasis.

* *The Communist*, July 1928.

† At the time we had much factional division in the C.P. over this question. I was one of those who sharply warned of the danger of abandoning work in the old unions, a logical position in view of my many years' advocacy of boring-from-within. J. P. Cannon, who a year later became a counter-revolutionary Trotskyite and bitter enemy of the C. P., T. U. E. L. and independent unionism, at this time sharply criticized me for seeing a danger of dual unions and he said my argument aimed "to raise a scare about abandoning the work in the old unions where none exists."

CHAPTER XIV

THE TRADE UNION UNITY LEAGUE

THE T. U. E. L. began its reorientation in policy towards independent unionism during the middle of 1928 by the organization of new unions in the three industries where it had its most substantial forces: mining, textile and needle, and where, because of wholesale expulsions, decline of the A. F. of L. unions, etc., conditions were ripest. The first of these unions to be set up was the National Miners Union at its convention in Pittsburgh, September 1928. The miners were badly disorganized after the loss of the great 1927-28 strike and only some 15,000 joined the new organization. The second union established was the National Textile Workers Union, in New York, September 1928, with about 5,000 members. Then came the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, founded in a convention representing 22,000 workers in New York, January 1929. All these membership figures are only approximate, as the dues systems were as yet poorly organized.

The T. U. E. L. held its fourth national conference or, more properly, convention, in Cleveland, August 31-September 1, 1929. There were present 690 delegates from 18 states, including 15 delegates from the Pacific Coast. Of these, 322 delegates came from the three new industrial unions then comprising approximately (probably an excessive estimate) 57,000 members; 159 delegates from left wing groups in trade unions; 107 from small groups in unorganized industries; 18 directly from A. F. of L. locals with 2,855 members; 40 were members of the T. U. E. L. National Committee and 44 fraternal; 64 were Negroes, 72 women and 159 youths. The average age of the delegates was only 32 years.

The convention reorganized the T. U. E. L. and changed its name to the Trade Union Unity League. This was in conformity with the new tendencies in our movement, which were enthusiastically supported by the big convention delegation. The new constitution provided for three types of national organization: (a) industrial unions, (b) industrial leagues and (c) trade union minority groups.

(a) The national industrial unions, adapted in form to the conditions in each industry, were based upon the principles of "One shop, one industry, one union"; they were departmentalized, corresponding to the important subdivisions of their industries; they had autonomy to elect their own officials, set their dues rates and initiation fees, work out their detailed programs and union agreements and conduct their own strikes, subject only to general T. U. U. L. control; an important feature was their youth sections.

(b) The national industrial leagues were industrial unions in embryo; they were loose national groupings of local unions, shop committees and individual workers. Bodies not yet strong enough to function as unions, their dues were set and their general activities supervised by the T. U. U. L. National Executive Board. (c) The national trade union minority groups were a continuation of the old T. U. E. L. national industrial sections working within the conservative unions. Where A. F. of L. and T. U. U. L. unions existed in one industry the T. U. U. L. union was connected up with the T. U. U. L. minority in the A. F. of L. to secure joint action.

Locally, the T. U. U. L. assumed a variety of forms, including local industrial unions, local craft unions, shop committees, initiative organizing groups and left wing trade union groups. All these were linked together into city-wide Trade Union Unity Councils. There was also provision for state Trade Union Unity Councils, although none ever developed.

Nationally, the T. U. U. L. was headed by a National Committee of 53 members, elected at the national conven-

tion. The N. C. (to meet every six months) elected the National Executive Board of ten members, to meet monthly. The national convention elected the following National Officers of the T. U. U. L.: General Secretary, William Z. Foster; Assistant Secretary and Treasurer, John Schmies; National Organizer, J. W. Johnstone; National Negro Organizer, J. W. Ford; Editor, W. F. Dunne.* With but small modifications, this general system of organization, national and local, prevailed throughout the life of the T. U. U. L. The official T. U. U. L. organ was *Labor Unity*, and each national union and league had its own journal or bulletin.

THE PROGRAM OF THE T. U. U. L.

The Cleveland convention organized the T. U. U. L. into a new trade union center. But the convention did not set up a general system of dual unionism. It declared against a policy of individual withdrawals or petty splits from the A. F. of L. and it proposed to form new unions only where the A. F. of L. unions were decrepit or non-existent. It also warned repeatedly against slackening the work inside the A. F. of L. The *Program* said:

The new Trade Union Unity League has as its main task the organization of the unorganized into industrial unions independent of the A. F. of L. At the same time it organizes the revolutionary workers with the reformist unions. It unites politically and organizationally the unemployed with the employed.

Except for these important new union developments, the convention continued and developed the general policies of the old T. U. E. L. It was distinctly a left convention. There were present but few outstanding trade union Progressives. This was not remarkable, because at this time, the highest point of the Coolidge boom, the Progressives were quite generally very enthused over trying to save the working class by the A. F. of L. union-management coöperation

* Later editors of *Labor Unity* were N. Honig and Pat Toohey.

(B. & O. plan) method of speeding up production and they rejected the T. U. U. L. line of militant class struggle as naïve and outmoded.

The convention made a head-on collision against the whole A. F. of L.-employer schemes of intensified class collaboration; B. & O. plan, higher strategy of labor, new wage policy, labor banking, etc. "The heart of the convention was the struggle against capitalist rationalization and all its evil consequences of speed-up, unemployment, accidents, occupational sickness, low wages, etc." * The convention declared for a militant strike policy. Its program was based on the class struggle and its central slogan was "Class Against Class." The convention's main decisions were sloganized as follows:

Build the Trade Union Unity League, fight against imperialist war, defend the Soviet Union, fight against capitalist rationalization, organize the unorganized, for the seven-hour day, five-day week, for social insurance, for full racial, social and political equality for Negroes, organize the youth and the women, defeat the misleaders of labor, for world trade union unity.

The convention paid much attention to questions of industrial unionism, strike strategy and the organization of the unorganized; it directed T. U. U. L. attention more sharply to the basic unorganized industries; steel, automobile, chemicals, agriculture, etc., and to work in the South; it discussed at length the problems of building shop committees in the mass production, trustified industries, and how to defeat the bosses' spy and blacklist systems; it worked out the application of the united front, especially between employed and unemployed, and between the A. F. of L. rank and file and the members of the T. U. U. L. unions; it stressed the policy of independent leadership by the workers, as against their reactionary union officials. The convention also paid much attention to the special problems of Negro, youth and women workers, questions which had been largely neglected in the early days of the T. U. U. L.;

* *Labor Unity*, September 14, 1929.

it declared its solidarity with the oppressed workers in the colonial and semi-colonial countries; it warned of the danger of imperialist war, especially war against the Soviet Union. With no illusions as to the extent or continuance of the "prevailing prosperity," the convention adopted a demand for federal social insurance, based on full wages for all workers incapacitated through unemployment, sickness, accident or old age. The convention also modified the former T. U. E. L. attitude towards the Labor Party: in view of the prevailing reaction in union official circles, it declared for participation in the Labor Party only where it was actually a party in the hands of the workers. In the 1932 elections the T. U. U. L. and its unions supported the Communist Party ticket, as the T. U. E. L. had done in 1924-28.

THE A. F. OF L. AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Less than two months after the T. U. U. L. convention the great 1929 world industrial crash took place. The dizzy financial structure of American capitalism collapsed. The intense rationalization of industry and agriculture that was to herald in the dawn of universal prosperity had resulted in a huge market glut, a great over-production which the impoverished and robbed masses could not buy back and which could not be disposed of abroad. Industry swiftly fell off about one-half and wages were slashed on all sides. Agricultural prices dropped about 60% and land values declined accordingly. The army of unemployed leaped from the 3,000,000 of the so-called good times to the unheard-of total of 17,000,000 in 1933. A monstrous development of poverty, destitution and starvation enveloped the toiling masses all over the country. Fear of revolution seized upon the ruling class. The boasted "new capitalism" was giving a graphic illustration of the fact that it was only the old capitalism after all and that, as such, it was hopelessly involved in the world-wide decay and decline of the capitalist system.*

* In my book *Towards Soviet America*, written in 1932, I have made an analysis of the basic causes, course and probable results of the crisis.

The onset of the terrific crisis created consternation among the trade union and Socialist Party leaders. Tumbled in ruins overnight were their glittering dreams of the "new wage policy," the "higher strategy of labor," "organized capitalism," and all the rest of their speed-up, class collaboration, prosperity fantasies. The labor movement under their leadership had been demoralized and confused and the workers poisoned and disorganized by the long-continued, class collaboration, no-strike, B. & O. plan propaganda; the unions were weakened by loss of members, suppression of democracy and the expulsion of their best fighters. Hence, as a result of these destructive policies, when the test came under the shattering blows of the crisis, naturally the masses were quite unprepared to defend themselves and their official leaders knew no other policy than one of precipitate retreat.

Consequently, during the first three and a half years of the crisis, until Roosevelt's New Deal, the great mass of the workers did not develop any real resistance, while the employers brutally shoved the burden of the crisis upon them and their families by mercilessly slashing their wages and reducing living standards generally. And the trade union leaders actually helped the employers in this savage attack by their surrender policies. Through this period of wholesale slaughter of the workers' conditions there were fewer strikes than for many years previously. In 1930, for example, there were only one-tenth as many strikers as in the corresponding crisis years of 1922.

The situation in Chicago was typical of that prevailing throughout the entire United States. Despite that the workers of that city had many militant traditions and strong labor unions and fully 50% of industrial workers were thrown out of work and the rest had their wages cut from 20% to 50%, yet there was not a single strike of any importance whatever in the first three years of the crisis. Unrestrainedly, the capitalists gloated over the widespread working class demoralization, the logical result of long years of A. F. of L. policy. Their publicists hypocritically declared that it indi-

cated a great harmony between Capital and Labor, and they slobbered over the workers' "patience" and "loyalty" in facing the trials of the crisis. The capitalists, in their need, were indeed making effective use of their "labor lieutenants," the craft union leaders.

This period was one of the most shameful in the whole wretched history of the A. F. of L. policy. Every major step of the employers to save themselves at the workers' expense actually had the A. F. of L. leaders' direct or indirect support. These misleaders lulled the workers' vigilance by repeating all of the capitalists' underestimation of the crisis and ballyhoo about prosperity being "just around the corner." Hardly had the crisis begun when President Hoover, on November 11, 1929, called a national industrial conference of employers and trade union leaders, presumably to maintain wage standards. At that time wages were already being slashed in the unorganized mass production industries, and the purpose of the Hoover conference was manifestly to hog-tie the trade unions by a no-wage-cut-no-strike illusory agreement until, the masses of unorganized having their wages cut, it would be relatively easy also to reduce the rates of the trade union workers. Instead of adopting a militant strike resistance against the developing wave of wage-cuts at the very start of the crisis, as the T. U. U. L. urged, Green and the other A. F. of L. leaders served as bell-wethers to draw the masses into Hoover's trap.

Thus, by their Hoover agreement, the A. F. of L. leaders threw the unorganized workers at once to the wage-cutting wolves. The wage slashing went ahead full blast in the trustified industries, the betrayed and demoralized workers being unable to resist; and meanwhile both Hoover and Green brazenly asserted that there had been no wage reductions. Finally, when the unorganized workers were "deflated," inevitably it came the turn of the organized workers to be slashed. Whereupon, the trade union leaders, reflecting the capitalists' interests, became ardent wage-cutters themselves, actually arguing that since wage-cuts had gone into effect

in the unorganized industries, now the organized workers had to accept reductions. So union after union accepted one cut upon another without the slightest resistance. What wage-cutters the leaders became was well illustrated when Matthew Woll hailed the acceptance of a 10% wage-reduction by the railroad unions without a strike as one of the greatest industrial achievements in the history of the country. In the needle trades the Socialist leaders also followed the general A. F. of L. policy of retreat. Never before in an economic crisis had the American working class taken wage-cuts lying down, as the great struggles of the 1890's and 1921-22 eloquently show.

Because of this aid from their A. F. of L. "labor lieutenants," the capitalists were able to put through their huge wage-slashing campaign without serious working class resistance, except what was developed by the weak T. U. U. L. unions (of which more later). But the betrayal of the workers' interests by the A. F. of L. leadership reached its greatest depths in the case of the hungry millions of unemployed. Hoover's plan to handle the question of unemployment (and this was the plan of finance capital) was two-fold: First, a policy of share-the-work (or share-the-poverty), which meant to force the great body of workers on to short time and correspondingly reduced wages; and second, a policy of treating unemployment relief as a matter of local charity and no concern of the Federal Government. It was a most brutal program of organized mass starvation.

To their shame it must be said that the A. F. of L. leaders fitted themselves also into this outrageous assault upon working class living standards. They became the greatest champions of Hoover's "stagger plan" of sharing work and they were fanatical antagonists of unemployment insurance. With incredible brass and stupidity, they denounced the "dole" as "subsidizing idleness," "degrading to the dignity of the American working man," and "a hindrance to real progress." They declared that unemployment insurance meant the ruin of the trade unions and the downfall of

civilization. In short, they made all the current arguments of big capital against feeding the starving masses. For this reactionary stand, the A. F. of L. won glowing praise from the Wall Street rulers of America. At the Boston, 1930, A. F. of L. convention, Hoover, many Generals, Bishops, capitalists, American Legion officials, etc., joined with Green, Woll, Frey and others in repudiating unemployment insurance and denouncing the Communists who were so persistently fighting for it all over the country. And while the A. F. of L. leaders thus basked in the praise of the enemies of the working class, millions of unemployed workers and their families were sinking deeper and deeper into destitution and actual starvation.

THE T. U. U. L. IN THE CRISIS

The onset of the industrial crisis came as no surprise to the Communist Party and the T. U. U. L. As Marxist-Leninist organizations they had long understood the temporary character of the "prosperity," and foresaw its inevitable crash. While the trade union and Socialist leaders were singing the praises of capitalist industrial rationalization in the Coolidge period, the C. P. and the old T. U. E. L. had been warning the workers of the bitter reckoning to come. And as the crisis developed, the T. U. U. L. and the C. P. undertook to mobilize the workers for struggle against the growing capitalist offensive against mass living standards. They conducted many strikes and developed a strong campaign for unemployment insurance and relief; besides, they carried on many other militant activities, such as support of the struggling farmers, the veterans' bonus campaign, the student movement, the Mooney and Scottsboro cases, etc. It is an incontestable fact that during the crisis up to the New Deal period the only serious resistance made by the workers and other toilers against the monstrous mass pauperization was that organized and led by the C. P. and T. U. U. L.

The employers and the government countered this left

wing militancy with a policy of ruthless brutality. In most industries known membership in the T. U. U. L. was a signal for certain discharge and blacklist. T. U. U. L. strikes were fought by the employers ferociously. T. U. U. L. strike committees were raided and their members jailed; pickets were viciously slugged, shot, gassed and arrested. Innumerable injunctions were issued against the red unions by the courts.* In several states T. U. U. L. unions were declared illegal. In Brooklyn agents of the Department of Labor intimidated employers and warned them not to make agreements with the T. U. U. L. organizations. And the same department, under the infamous labor traitor Doak, deported hundreds of militant workers, including many T. U. U. L. union officials, often to fascist countries. Especially vicious were the government attacks upon the T. U. U. L. unemployed demonstrations, its answer being the club, the revolver, tear gas, the charge of mounted police, the prison. And the A. F. of L. and old guard Socialist trade union leaders condoned all these attacks upon the T. U. U. L. and other militant forces by the combined bosses, police, gangsters, etc.

In this T. U. U. L. baptism of fire hundreds of workers were beaten up, jailed, deported. Many also were killed. The Labor Research Association listed 23 workers killed in T. U. U. L. struggles from September 1929 to March 1933. Among these were eight killed in strikes, including Ella May Wiggin in Gastonia; Steve Katovis in New York; Harry Simms, Y. C. L. and N. M. U. organizer, in Kentucky, etc. There were 15 killed in unemployment demonstrations, including five in the famous hunger march on the Detroit Ford plant March 7, 1932; three Negro workers shot down in a Chicago anti-eviction fight on August 4, 1931, etc.

* At a local T. U. U. L. conference in New York in 1931, the Food Workers Industrial Union displayed 110 injunctions issued against its New York strikes.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE UNEMPLOYED

During the period of the crisis with which this chapter concerns itself, up until the beginning of Roosevelt's term, the T. U. U. L. devoted its major activities to organizing and leading the starving multitudes of unemployed. Its organization was the National Unemployment Council, at first headed by H. Benjamin and later by I. Amter and A. Mills. Originally this organization was directly affiliated to the T. U. U. L., but later it operated as an independent body, with the full support of the C. P., T. U. U. L., Y. C. L., and other revolutionary bodies.

The T. U. U. L. made the central issue in this work the demand for Federal unemployment insurance at the expense of the government and the employers, and on the basis of the average wages of employed workers. Its demands were in line with the T. U. U. L. convention resolution on social insurance and it crystallized them eventually in legislative form in the Workers Unemployment Insurance Bill (H. R. 2827). The T. U. U. L. also fought for every form of unemployment relief, including local cash relief, public works at union wages, against evictions, for free food for school children, etc. It organized the workers into block, neighborhood, city and national committees and councils, on a non-dues-paying basis. Its major method of struggle was the mass demonstration; but it also carried on intense work for relief of individual cases. It ruthlessly exposed all the many false charity schemes of the period, miserable substitutes for effective insurance and relief. Central in its strategy was the linking up of the struggles of the unemployed with those of the employed.

A very important feature of the T. U. U. L. unemployed work was its support of the left wing A. F. of L. Committee for Unemployment Insurance and Relief, headed by Louis Weinstock. This rank and file body carried on a wide agitation in the trade unions for unemployment insurance and relief and against the reactionary Green policies of

stagger plan, local charity relief, expulsion of unemployed from the unions for non-payment of dues, etc. At a government hearing in Washington, February 1934, Weinstock testified that more than 3,000 A. F. of L. unions had endorsed the workers' bill, H. R. 2827, and many hundreds more have done so since. The work of this committee was largely responsible for forcing the A. F. of L., at its 1932 convention, to reverse its reactionary attitude and to give at least lip service to unemployment insurance.

The National Unemployment Council, jointly with the C. P. and T. U. U. L., was the first to take up the fight for the unemployed, the A. F. of L. openly supporting Hoover and the S. P. toying about with every capitalist fake charity scheme (thus Norman Thomas joined over the radio with J. P. Morgan in support of the delusive "block-aid system") and only beginning to organize the unemployed two years after our forces had blazed the way. Consequently, great masses of workers rallied to the leadership of the Unemployment Council movement. Under the slogans: "Don't Starve, Fight," and "Work or Wages," it conducted many militant national demonstration struggles. The first of these was the famous one of March 6, 1930, which brought some 1,250,000 workers into the streets, including 110,000 in New York, 100,000 in Detroit, etc. This demonstration definitely raised the issue of unemployment insurance to the level of a living national, political question. In New York, with huge masses of unemployed and with the bourgeoisie in a panic of fear, the situation became very tense just prior to March 6th. A few days before this date, Matthew Woll, openly coöperating with the police, lyingly announced far and wide through the press that the T. U. U. L. had received \$2,000,000 from Moscow to stage the demonstration. Police Commissioner Whalen forbade the proposed march to City Hall and mobilized the 18,000 police and 7,000 firemen of Greater New York to prevent it. Union Square was saturated with police and the nearby buildings bristled with machine guns. We attempted to march nevertheless, whereupon the police

charged upon the forming procession and clubbed it to pieces, injuring many workers. The workers' committee, including Bob Minor, I. Amter, Harry Raymond and myself, were arrested and sentenced to three years in the New York County Penitentiary, of which sentence we served six months apiece, except Raymond who did ten months. The rest we did on parole.

Besides this fight, the U. C., with the full support of the C. P., T. U. U. L., Y. C. L., etc., carried through many other national unemployed demonstrations, hunger marches, mass delegations, conventions, etc. Three times there were national petitions of 1,000,000 or more signatures presented to Congress. Some of the more important of these big movements were: the National Unemployed Convention in Chicago, July 4, 1930, with 1500 delegates; National Unemployment Insurance Day, February 25, 1931, with 400,000 demonstrators; and February 4, 1932, with 500,000 demonstrators; the National Hunger March of December 7, 1931, with 1800 delegates to Washington; the second National Hunger March of December 6, 1932, with 3000 delegates and an estimated 1,000,000 participants in various cities; the big national demonstration upon Roosevelt's inauguration day, March 4, 1933. The T. U. U. L. also actively supported the famous veterans' bonus march to Washington in 1932, which was driven out of the Capitol by Hoover at the point of the bayonet. The call for this march was issued by the revolutionary Workers Ex-Servicemen's League, headed by E. Levin, although the movement took on such a swift mass character that it largely escaped W. E. S. L. control.

But the main field of T. U. U. L. unemployment struggle was in the various localities. Here the U. C. conducted numberless city and state hunger marches, anti-eviction fights, unemployed conventions, etc. Nearly every industrial center saw such activities. The demonstrations were extremely militant, usually facing violent attacks from the police. Altogether, they were a powerful force in compelling the reluctant city authorities to grant relief to the starving masses.

To take only a couple from many such examples; during the Fall of 1932, the city council of St. Louis decided to cut 17,000 families off the relief rolls, but the Unemployed Council, by a vast and militant demonstration, forced the immediate abandonment of this barbarous proposal; and in Chicago in the summer of 1932, the Unemployment Council in a united front with the Unemployed Citizens League, by great mass movements, defeated a projected 50% cut in relief. Similar results were achieved in dozens of other cities by the policy of militant mass struggle.

In developing this great fight of the unemployed, the C. P., T. U. U. L., and U. C., wrote some of the finest pages of struggle in American labor history. The movement was a definite force in saving the masses from actual starvation and eventually compelling federal relief measures on a large scale. It was in brilliant contrast to the deeply reactionary policy of the A. F. of L. and the vacillating, dabbling attitude of the S. P.

THE T. U. U. L. IN THE MINING INDUSTRY

After its reorganization at Cleveland the T. U. U. L. broadened out its strike activities. The continued decline and decay of the A. F. of L. in the early crisis years broadened the base for independent unionism in the industries generally throughout the country and it threw ever greater burdens of leadership upon the revolutionary unions. But the T. U. U. L.'s greatest field of struggle still remained the mining industry. Here the T. U. U. L. conducted several big movements in the crisis period up to the Roosevelt régime. The most important of these was the National Miners Union strike during the summer of 1931 in Western Pennsylvania, Eastern Ohio and Northern West Virginia. Embracing 42,000 miners, it was the largest strike ever led by a revolutionary union in the United States.

Following the loss of the 1927-28 strike and the break-up of the U. M. W. A. in these districts, wages had dropped

from \$7.50 to as low as \$2.00 per day, working conditions were ruined, huge unemployment prevailed and actual starvation stalked the whole mining region. Into this situation came the newly-organized N. M. U., led by such fighters as its Secretary, Frank Borich, Pat Toohey, T. Myerscough, Leo Thompson, Dan Slinger, Tony Minerich, V. Kamenovich, etc. After a wide agitation and a few successful local mine strikes, which roused hope among the defeated and demoralized miners, the N. M. U., calling for a "Strike Against Starvation," declared war against the new wave of wage cuts.

The strike began on May 27, 1931, in the Atlasburgh-MacDonald mines, where 1000 walked out. Swiftly it spread. A strike fever seized upon the bitterly oppressed miners all around. By June 1st, 16,000 were out and by the latter part of June it reached 42,000, of whom about 6,000 were Negroes. The strike involved the mines of many of the greatest trusts in America. The C. P. and T. U. U. L. sent in a number of organizers, including Bill Dunne, Jack Johnstone, A. Wagenknecht, myself, etc., to help the small and weak N. M. U. But still there was a desperate shortage of organizers to unite and strike the willing miners. Had we promptly assembled greater forces undoubtedly we could have pulled out at least 100,000 miners and possibly have won the strike.

The strike shook the whole district; the steel workers began to stir, and the unemployed staged huge demonstrations; a great upheaval was in the making in the affected territory. The workers' fighting spirit was wonderful and 25,000 of them joined the N. M. U. Men, women and children poured out onto the mass picket lines. United front local and general strike committees were set up, the first time in the United States that this method of organization had been applied on a large scale.

The government, operators and A. F. of L. leaders fought the strike desperately. The striking miners faced an army of state police, deputy sheriffs and coal and iron police; Department of Labor agents combed the district to deport

foreign-born militants; the courts issued one sweeping injunction after another; the armed forces jailed, beat up and shot innumerable strikers, two being killed; and the companies evicted 100,000 men, women and children, and flooded the district with strike-breakers, driven into the mines by hunger. But the worst blow to the strike came when the U. M. W. A. signed a local agreement at the Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Co. mines, accepting the wage cut. The operators and the government, from Hoover down, joined in a common cry of "Rebuild the U. M. W. A." as a bulwark against the revolutionary N. M. U. Between the U. M. W. A. and the N. M. U. forces it came to open struggles and Myerscough, Thompson and several other militants did two years in jail for such a fight.

On July 15th, in Pittsburgh, the N. M. U. held a national united front conference of miners to spread the strike. Present were 685 delegates from 270 mines in eight states. The conference decided to try to extend the struggle into other districts. But before this could be done the strike, confronting many terrific difficulties, began to weaken, and the men dribbled back to work. On August 18th, the general strike committee in Pittsburgh, somewhat belatedly, practically called off the strike by deciding that the workers at each mine should secure the best terms possible. The strike was lost and the N. M. U. received a deadly blow. Many miners were blacklisted. But at least a check was put to the terrific deterioration of the miners' conditions. When the rebuilding of the U. M. W. A. took place under Roosevelt's New Deal, winning recognition for it was made the easier by the bosses' vivid memories of the great N. M. U. 1931 strike.

An important aftermath of this great strike was a walkout of the Kentucky miners soon afterward, led by the N. M. U. These miners, formerly under U. M. W. A. leadership, had been carrying on for many months one of the most desperate strikes in the history of the American coal industry. The fight became almost a guerilla war, many being killed on

both sides. Disgusted by U. M. W. A. misleadership and inspired by the N. M. U.'s heroic fight, a delegation of Kentucky miners, led by Dan Slinger, came to the N. M. U. national strike conference, in Pittsburgh, joined the organization and went back to re-strike Kentucky and Tennessee. They met a fierce onslaught of propaganda and terrorism by the operators and their hangers-on, who shrieked against the "menace of Communism." The Kentucky fields became almost an armed camp and the whole local N. M. U. leadership was arrested in Pineville. On January 1, 1931, over 8,000 miners, nearly all American-born for generations past, struck. But this strike lacked force, as it was ill-prepared in face of the fierce terrorism prevailing, and it soon frittered away.

The N. M. U. also conducted much activity in the Illinois district. Immediately after its formation in 1929, it succeeded, under the leadership of H. Corbishley, Freeman Thompson, G. Voyzey, and others, in organizing into the N. M. U. several thousand miners in the southern coal counties, who were in revolt against the corrupt Illinois U. M. W. A. leaders. Then, but without sufficient preparation, a strike was called against the worsening conditions in the mines and the oppressively-used check-off system of the U. M. W. A. An estimated 10,000 to 15,000 men struck for a few days, but ineffectually. This ill-advised, poorly organized strike killed the N. M. U. in Illinois and greatly undermined the years' long strong C. P. and T. U. U. L. influence in these coal fields. After this defeat the N. M. U. forces in Illinois gradually liquidated its skeleton locals and supported the growing opposition movement in the U. M. W. A. This latter movement, led principally by Socialists and Musteites, and one of the many similar movements developing all through the coal industry as the U. M. W. A. declined in strength and fighting spirit, finally split from the U. M. W. A. in the Fall of 1932 and formed the Progressive Miners of America. Between the P. M. A. and the U. M. W. A. there later raged a bitter struggle for local control that has cost

23 lives in the many armed clashes in Illinois. The P. M. A. afterwards developed a very reactionary leadership and policy.

In the anthracite districts of Eastern Pennsylvania, the N. M. U. at first tried to build local unions, but soon seeing the un wisdom of this in these organized districts, began to function as the left wing opposition in the U. M. W. A. Conditions were very bad in the mines and the leadership was servile to the mine operators; hence several powerful opposition movements developed, usually culminating in "outlaw" strikes and eventually producing a dual miners' union. The T. U. U. L. gained much influence in these movements, but was never able to win the leadership from the Morgans, Schusters and others who juggled them about.

IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

The National Textile Workers Union, with Jim Reed as President,* was born out of the New Bedford, 1928, strike of 25,000 textile workers, where the old T. U. E. L. had played a decisive role in partially defeating a 10% general wage cut. After this strike the N. T. W. U. sent organizers into the South and soon secured a foothold in the Gastonia, North Carolina, mills. The local workers, totally unorganized, were acutely discontented at the extremely low wages and the murderous "stretch-out" or speed-up system. The district was full of child labor, poverty and the terrible hunger disease, pellagra.

On March 12, 1929, some 6,000 unorganized rayon workers struck spontaneously at Elizabethton, Tennessee. The N. T. W. U., immersed in the developing struggle at Gastonia, failed to get its organizers to Elizabethton in time, so the strike passed into the hands of the A. F. of L., who proceeded to quickly slough it off. On April 2, the partly-

* The N. T. W. U. exhibited sharply a characteristic weakness of T. U. U. L. unions—fluctuations in the leadership. In its five years of life it had a number of national secretaries: Keller, Weisbord, Miller, Murdock, Devine, Russak, Burlak.

organized Gastonia workers struck in the Manville-Jenckes mills, under the leadership of the N. T. W. U. The strike spread quickly and finally involved about 5,000 workers in the Gastonia area. From the outset the bosses made desperate efforts to break the very militant strike.

Gastonia was the spark that started a burning fever of strike revolts far and wide among the vast masses of Southern textile workers against the intolerable "stretch-out" and low wage system. Strikes broke out rapidly in Marion, Greenville, Danville and many other places. Seldom or never has American industry experienced such a tremendous spontaneous upheaval of unorganized workers. But the T. U. U. L. lost a great opportunity to take the lead of the whole struggle. Thanks to its Gastonia prestige and by throwing in all possible field organizers and calling a general Southern textile conference, it could have united the many scattered fights into one great coördinated struggle. But the Lovestone group then leading the C. P. had little mass organizing experience and scoffed at this proposal to spread the struggle and, instead, concentrated all efforts upon Gastonia.

The general effect was to isolate fatally the N. T. W. U. in terror-ridden Gastonia and to let the leadership of the general spontaneous movement go to the A. F. of L. by default. For suddenly the A. F. of L., greatly alarmed at the danger of red unionism in textiles, decided to "organize" the Southern mill workers. Thereupon, William Green sent in a lot of organizers and got control of the main strike situation throughout the South. The A. F. of L. proceeded, with the prevailing no-strike policy, to stifle all militant action and to slough off all strikes on the basis of B. & O. plan speed-up agreements with the bosses. The tragedy was that the workers were fighting against the speed-up, whereas encouraging the hated speed-up was the very heart of A. F. of L. policy. Everywhere, the workers fought bravely against the gangsters, troops and police, many being killed. But they had no chance to win. The trickery of the A. F. of L. and of the Muste group of Progressives proved too much for

them. Their strikes were everywhere beaten and the whole great movement collapsed in ruins. It all made another tragic monument to A. F. of L. misleadership.

Meanwhile, a fierce struggle was proceeding at Gastonia. The N. T. W. U. strikers were extremely militant, and the bosses' thugs viciously brutal. It was here that Ella May Wiggin was shot down in cold blood by a gunman. In one of many terroristic attempts to break the strikers' solidarity, the police and company guards made an armed raid on the strikers' camp of the Workers International Relief. The workers defended themselves guns in hand. After a sharp fight, the raiders were beaten back, Chief of Police Aderholt being killed. Infuriated, the bosses organized a wave of lynch spirit, in which 70 workers were arrested and charged with murder. Eventually, 15 of them, including L. McLaughlin, W. M. McGinnis, K. Y. Hendricks, Clarence Miller, F. Beal (who later turned traitor), Russel Knight, etc., were sentenced to from 5 to 17 year penitentiary terms. The strike was finally broken. During most of this struggle the T. U. U. L. forces in Gastonia were led by Bill Dunne.

In the course of the next two years the N. T. W. U. participated in many local strike struggles in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut, involving some 50,000 workers. These were nearly all either wholly or partially successful in defeating wage cuts and checking the speed-up system. In 1931, the N. T. W. U., simultaneously with the U. T. W. and Associated Silk Workers, called a strike in Paterson. The N. T. W. U. did most of the fighting but the other unions, aided by bosses, newspapers, etc., got the compromise settlements. "Anything to defeat the red unions" was the employer-A. F. of L. slogan in the textile industry as well as in others. In February 1931, also, the N. T. W. U., led locally by Edith Berkman, won a strike of 10,000 workers in Lawrence against the speed-up, preventing a big lay-off and forcing the discharge of the efficiency engineers. This important victory raised high the workers' spirits, so that, in October 1931, 23,500 of them,

mostly unorganized, struck; the biggest local walkout since the famous I. W. W. Lawrence strike of 1912. In the meantime, the N. T. W. U. leader, Edith Berkman, had been arrested by the Department of Labor and held for deportation.* This fact, coupled with suppression of free assembly for the N. T. W. U., enabled the A. F. of L. to secure control of the strike, which was soon lost completely.

In the above and many other militantly fought strikes the N. T. W. U. built its prestige far and wide in the textile industry. With the A. F. of L. union reduced to a skeleton, and to powerlessness by no-strike, speed-up policies, the workers had no defenders but the N. T. W. U. But the latter's membership remained small, fluctuating between 5,000 and 10,000. It was hated and feared and its members were blacklisted by the bosses. The A. F. of L. textile union (U. T. W.) leaders stuck at nothing in order to defeat its strikes and almost everywhere the N. T. W. U. encountered the opposition of the Socialist Party and the Muste Conference for Progressive Labor Action.

IN THE NEEDLE TRADES

We have seen already that although the A. F. of L. leaders talked very much during the first three years of the crisis about the necessity of maintaining wage rates, they nevertheless materially helped employers to cut them; first by accepting the hypocritical Hoover no-wage-cut, no-strike agreement, which facilitated the bosses' slashing wages in the unorganized industries and then, when this had been accomplished, by the unions themselves "voluntarily" accepting wage reductions. The needle trades Socialist union leaders followed this same general line, even as they had pursued the A. F.

* In this period of intense struggle the Department of Labor openly joined with the bosses and attacked the N. T. W. U., as well as other T. U. U. L. unions. It seized William Murdock and Pat Devine, successive N. T. W. U. National Secretaries and deported them. It also arrested and tried to deport the succeeding secretary, Ann Burlak, an American-born girl.

of L. 1923-29 policy of speed-up and intensified class collaboration.

True, during these early crisis years there were a number of large strikes in the needle trades. These strikes were amicably conducted in full agreement with the employers and amidst the applause of the capitalist press. They usually lasted only a few days, and they all ended with widely advertised "victories" for the workers. The only practical results of these strikes, however, were to reduce wages and speed up the workers, to bring the unorganized workers into the reformist unions, and to compel scattering small employers to join the bosses' associations. During the years 1929-32, a score or more of such "successful" strikes took place, covering the bulk of the needle workers in every important garment center yet the needle workers' wages and working conditions tumbled precipitously.

The newly-organized Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, located in New York, with L. Hyman, President, and B. Gold, Secretary, undertook a gallant struggle against the downward trend of the needle workers' standards. It bitterly resisted the current A. F. of L. wage-cuts and piecework policies. With the slogan of "Transform the fake strikes into real strikes," it followed the policy of calling out its own forces in the affected shops of such strikes and urging the A. F. of L. and A. C. W. workers, on a united front basis, to coöperate with the N. T. W. I. U. in developing a militant struggle for real demands. Thus, the N. T. W. I. U. was able to greatly strengthen the A. F. of L. needle workers' resistance and to at least partly shield them from the engulfing wave of wage cuts and general worsening of conditions.

Besides this participation in A. F. of L. strikes, the N. T. W. I. U. conducted many struggles under its own banner. These were far too numerous to detail here. A few of the more important of its strikes during the Hoover years of the crisis were: 10,000 New York dressmakers, February 1929; 2,000 New York furriers, June 1929; 3,000 New York dressmakers, February 1931; 4,000 New York furriers, July

1931; 8,000 New York dressmakers, February 1932; 7,000 New York furriers, July 1932; 1,800 South River dressmakers, August 1932. There were also many N. T. W. I. U. strikes in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, etc. The Labor Research Association estimated that during these years there were also out in single New York shop strikes, some 30,000 workers under N. T. W. I. U. leadership. Many of these strikes resulted in partial victories.

The struggle of the N. T. W. I. U. was an especially difficult one, faced as the organization was by bosses, gangsters, police, courts, newspapers and A. F. of L. and Socialist Party leaders. Nevertheless, the T. U. U. L. union succeeded in entrenching itself in the industry, especially in the fur section, where it far outstripped the A. F. of L. union in numbers and influence. It enjoyed wide prestige among the needle workers generally, its militant fighting spirit greatly stiffening their resistance. It was a real barrier to the wage-cutting bosses. Always to them the fear of the fighting N. T. W. I. U. getting control of the workers was a powerful deterrent. But the N. T. W. I. U. never succeeded in building itself into a large union. All through its existence its membership fluctuated between a minimum of about 15,000 and a maximum of some 30,000.*

AUTOMOBILE, STEEL, MARINE

The automobile industry, with its high development of specialization, mechanization, rationalization and trustification, presents a classical example of the failure of the A. F. of L. craft unionists to organize the mass production industries. It long offered an open invitation to independent unionism. During the war period the Automobile, Aircraft and Vehicle Workers Union, an independent union, displayed some activity, but it was smashed in the post-war employers' offensive. The Detroit, 1926, A. F. of L. con-

* For a detailed account of N. T. W. I. U. history, read Jack Hardy's *The Clothing Workers*, International Publishers.

vention boasted loudly that it would organize the automobile workers, but when the automobile kings rejected the A. F. of L.'s proposals to help them speed up the workers (they were satisfied with their own speed-up systems) the 19 unions claiming jurisdiction gave up their "organizing campaign" without further effort.

Shortly afterward T. U. E. L. forces won the leadership of the isolated Detroit local of the old A. A. & V. W. U. In 1929 this was expanded into the Auto Workers Union (T. U. U. L.). The A. W. U., located in Detroit and led by Phil Raymond, John Schmies, W. Goetz, etc., carried on an active campaign among the automobile workers and took an important part in the many big unemployed struggles of the C. P. and Unemployed Councils in Detroit. Its first important strike was in the Fisher Body plant in Flint, July 1931, 5,000 workers being involved. This strike was lost through its plant leadership falling into the hands of company tools. The union also conducted a number of smaller strikes.

The most important strikes led by the Auto Workers Union in the pre-Roosevelt crisis period, the time with which this chapter deals, took place in January-February 1933. The bosses were carrying on a heavy wage-cut offensive. The A. W. U. developed a strike of 600 at the Briggs Waterloo plant and defeated the cut. This victory was a spark that touched things off. Soon followed a series of strikes, all victorious, that culminated in the strike of 10,000 workers of the Briggs plants, which furnish auto bodies for Ford. This strike, which won a few concessions but was finally lost, brought the great Ford plant to a standstill for several days, the first time it had ever been halted by strike action. Another partial strike of 3,000 at the Hudson Motors plant was partially successful. These strikes, which substantially increased the membership and prestige of the A. W. U., played a great role as starters for the big strike wave that took place under the N. R. A. The A. W. U. reached a maximum of 5,000 members in 1933.

The Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union, Sec-

retaries J. Meldon, J. Powers and J. Eagan, was formed in Pittsburgh in August, 1932, by a reorganization of the old T. U. E. L. Metal Workers Industrial League, formerly headed by A. Overgaard. The S. & M. W. I. U. came into existence because of the weakness, corruption, decrepitude and general reactionary spirit of the A. F. of L. union, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers (A. A.), a union which made no effort whatever to organize steel workers. During the crisis period we are here considering, up to Roosevelt's inauguration, the S. & M. W. I. U. occupied itself principally with mass agitation and work among the unemployed. Its principal strike was one of 1,500 workers at the Warren, Ohio, plant of the Republic Steel Corp., September 1, 1932, which ended successfully. In March 1933, the union contained only 1,400 dues-paying members, but it had succeeded in gaining a wide influence which was soon to translate itself into very important strikes under the N. R. A.

The Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union, Secretary Roy Hudson, was organized in New York in March 1933, with a membership of about 2,000. It was a reorganization of the old Marine Workers Industrial League, of which George Mink was Secretary, and it grew out of the state of demoralization in the industry created by the dozen weak and squabbling A. F. of L. craft unions, of which the most important are the International Longshoremens Association and the International Seamen's Union, headed respectively by the ultrareactionary Ryan and Furuseth-Olander cliques. The League that preceded the M. T. W. I. U. had carried on much agitation and conducted a number of small strikes among sailors, longshoremen and river boatmen in Philadelphia, Galveston, New Orleans, Duluth, Sacramento, etc. This work culminated in the formation of the M. T. W. I. U., which, under the New Deal, was to lead the first important marine transport strikes for ten years and to play a very important part in the great San Francisco general strike.

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND SHOE

At the Cleveland convention of the T. U. U. L., there was organized the Agricultural Workers Industrial League by a handful of agricultural worker delegates from the Far West. Later the League was reorganized into the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union. This organization, so inauspiciously launched, was soon to lead the biggest agricultural workers' strikes on record in this country and to become the most successful union that farm workers have so far produced in the United States. The A. F. of L., of course, had completely neglected the agricultural workers and the field was wide open for a T. U. U. L. union.

The C. & A. W. I. U. (at that time still a league), a worthy heir to the best fighting traditions of the I. W. W. agricultural unions, led two militant strikes in Imperial Valley, California, in 1930; one of 2,500 workers and the other of 4,000. The strikers were mostly Mexicans, Filipinos and Japanese. The strikes were carried on under acute terror conditions, but nevertheless resulted in substantial gains for the workers. As result of a mass raid on the union headquarters, 100 workers were arrested and eight of their leaders (F. Spector, K. Sklar, O. Erickson, L. Emery, D. Roxas, B. Orosco, T. Horiuchi and E. Herrera) were eventually sent to San Quentin penitentiary for terms of from 3 to 42 years each.

Another very important struggle of the C. & A. W. I. U. was the strike of 18,000 Colorado beet workers in the spring of 1932. Again violent measures were used against the strikers, thousands of the Mexican workers being deported. Some concessions were secured. This strike was led by Pat Toohey and C. Guinn, under the auspices of "The United Front Committee of Action of Beet Workers," a grouping that included several fraternal organizations.

The main stronghold of the C. & A. W. I. U. was in California and the Southwest, although it had some locals in other states, including as far east as New Jersey. In April

1933, it led at San Jose 2,200 pea pickers on strike; in June 1933, over 2,000 cotton choppers struck under its leadership in Eastern New Mexico; in September 1933, about 6,000 California grape pickers and several thousand lettuce workers; in October 1933, some 18,000 cotton pickers in Southern California and Arizona, etc. In the next chapter we shall see how the union's leadership was jailed for these militant and successful strikes. The C. & A. W. I. U. cooperated with organizations of poor farmers, such as the Sharecroppers Union and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, and directed its main struggles against the powerful farming concerns.

The Food Workers Industrial Union, headed, among others, by M. Obermeyer, S. Bloomfield and J. Rubin, grew out of a split off from the Amalgamated Food Workers in 1930. Its headquarters and strongest organizations were in New York. This union had behind it a T. U. E. L. tradition of a dozen years of left wing agitation in the A. F. W., the A. F. of L. unions and among the unorganized. The Food Workers Industrial Union led hundreds of small strikes in New York restaurants, cafeterias and food stores. It especially had to fight the injunction menace. No sooner would the union strike a place than it would confront a ready-at-hand injunction, secured jointly by the bosses and A. F. of L. leaders. In following out the T. U. U. L. policy of mass violation of these injunctions, hundreds of its members were jailed. Although many of the F. W. I. U. strikes were successful, it had succeeded in building a stable membership of only 1,500 members by March 1933, which is as far as this chapter takes us, although the union shortly after that date increased its membership several times over.

The Shoe and Leather Workers Industrial Union, led by F. Biedenkapp, S. Ziebel, etc., was organized in September 1931, and maintained its headquarters in New York. Its predecessor was the Independent Shoe Workers Union, an organization chiefly of Brooklyn shoe workers, and before that the old T. U. E. L. Shoe and Leather Workers Amalgama-

tion Committee. These organizations conducted many strikes under their own banners, as well as struggles within the several independent shoe workers' organizations and the reactionary A. F. of L. Boot & Shoe Workers Union. The most important of their strikes were the I. S. W. U., New York, 1929, strike of 4,500 workers, which was successful; and the S. & L. W. I. U. strike of 1,400 workers in 1932, which was lost.

OTHER T. U. U. L. UNIONS AND GROUPS

The Tobacco Workers Industrial Union was organized in April 1931; its headquarters were in New York, and its principal national leaders L. Terras, P. Uffre and A. Ramirez. This union, mostly local in character, had as a forerunner the important strike of 7,000 T. U. U. L. cigar makers in Tampa, Florida, in November 1930. In that city the authorities, because the union celebrated the Russian revolution on November 7th, arrested 15 leading members. The union replied to this by a three-day general strike which tied up every cigar factory in Tampa. Through a reign of terror the union was finally broken and H. Bonilla, C. Lezama and J. E. McDonald were sentenced to ten years and C. Alvarez and F. Marrero to three years each on the infamous Florida chain gang. The T. W. I. U. also conducted big New York shop strikes in 1931 and a general strike in the same city in August 1932, altogether involving 5,000 workers. In these struggles, however, the union built up only a small membership.

The Lumber Workers Industrial Union, Roy Brown, Secretary, headquarters in Seattle, was organized in 1931, out of the fragments of the old A. F. of L. and I. W. W. organizations of lumber workers. It conducted a number of small strikes in the Pacific Northwest, but at the time of the beginning of the New Deal counted only a membership of some 3,000.

The Furniture Workers Industrial Union, Joe Kiss, Secretary, was organized in New York, February 9, 1934. It was

in existence about 14 months when it was amalgamated with the A. F. of L. Upholstery Workers. The union conducted an important general strike under the New Deal.

The Food and Packinghouse Workers Industrial Union, Sam Weissman, Secretary, headquarters New York. It conducted a few strikes and built up a small membership.

Besides the foregoing thirteen national industrial unions, the T. U. U. L. contained a number of local organizations, including, among others, the Building Maintenance Workers Union, Fishermen and Cannery Workers Industrial Union, Barbers Industrial Union, Novelty Leather Workers Union, Jewelry Workers Industrial Union, Office Workers Union, Wholesale and Drygoods Workers Union, Printing Workers Industrial Union, Taxi Workers Union, Doll and Toymakers Industrial Union, Photographic Workers Industrial Union, Laundry Workers Industrial Union, etc.

The most important Trade Union Unity Council, or local Central body, of the T. U. U. L., was in New York. It reached a membership of 45,000 by the end of 1933, and during the last quarter of 1933 led strikes of 65,000 workers. Its secretaries during its five years of existence were Jack Johnstone, Joseph Zack, J. Steuben, A. Overgaard.

The T. U. U. L. also contained many left wing groups in the A. F. of L. unions and Railroad Brotherhoods. Such were to be found principally in the mining, needle, building, shoe, metal, printing, and other industries where the craft unions had a grip. They all played a considerable role in the life and struggles of their organizations during the T. U. U. L. period. These groups were all local in scope, except the Railroad Workers Industrial League, O. Wangerin, Secretary, headquarters Chicago, and the Printing Trades Industrial League of New York.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRADE UNION UNITY LEAGUE (Cont'd)

THE NEW DEAL

WHEN Roosevelt was inaugurated President on March 4, 1933, the American capitalist system, once world-boasted as crisis-proof, was in a chaotic, panicky situation. It was experiencing the world economic breakdown worse than any other country. Every bank in the country was closed, industry was paralyzed, domestic and foreign trade had fallen by 50%, about 17,000,000 workers walked the streets unemployed, hundreds of thousands of farmers had lost their farms, millions of small bank depositors had been robbed of their funds, vast numbers of the middle class had had the mortgages on their homes foreclosed. The disillusioned and discontented masses were stirring aggressively; the whole country was full of militant hunger demonstrations of unemployed, bonus marches of war veterans, farmers' strikes, etc., and on all sides the masses talked angrily, if confusedly, about taking drastic action if measures were not adopted at once to relieve them of the intolerable starvation and pauperization that had engulfed them.

This threatening situation of a broken-down economic system and rapidly awakening masses threw into the ranks of the American capitalist class the greatest fright it has ever known. Their writers and other spokesmen loaded the press and the air with pessimism, fear and lugubrious forecasts. Not prosperity, but revolution seemed just around the corner. Finance capital—the great bankers and industrialists—realized that if they were to hang on to their rich rulership of society something must be done to prop up the collapsing capitalist

system and to allay the swiftly mounting mass radicalization. Manifestly the crude and brutal Hoover policy of simply pouring billions of relief into the coffers of the banks, railroads, etc., and letting everybody else go broke and starve was heading capitalism straight to disaster. New measures must be taken and that swiftly. The "something" that finance capital decided upon to save their capitalist system was contained in Roosevelt's "New Deal."

The sum up of the New Deal, as expressed by its score of alphabetical laws and bureaus, was a greatly increased centralization of the Federal government and its intensified intervention in the economic life along the following main lines: (a) pouring of government billions into the banks, railroads, etc., to save them from threatening bankruptcy; (b) raising of the price level through inflation (devaluation of the dollar, immense bond issues, etc.), code price-fixing, and organized restriction of agricultural and industrial production; (c) liquefying of billions of dollars of the banks that were frozen in unpayable mortgages on farms and homes by extension of payment periods on these mortgages; (d) "priming the industrial pump" and easing the workers' unrest by large government capital investments in public works; (e) tinkering up by law the worst breaks in the capitalist banking and credit systems, including supervision of the stock exchange, sale of foreign bonds, etc.; (f) intensified struggle for world markets—bigger navy, air fleet, army, new tariff agreements, etc.; (g) throwing a bone to the starving masses of unemployed and aged by allotting them a niggardly Federal relief and skeleton pensions; (h) granting of equivocal rights of the workers to organize into labor unions; (i) organized subsidies to farmers for reducing production.

By its heavy government spending and minor sops to the masses the New Deal, in substance, was a shot in the arm, a doping of the economic system out of its deepening crisis. It was calculated to preserve the capitalist system by relieving somewhat the economic and mass pressure. The center of it, the National Recovery Act (N. R. A.), was contrived in Wall

Street and was first enunciated by the U. S. Chamber of Commerce. Many capitalist theoreticians hailed it as the beginning of fascism. To call the New Deal socialistic or communistic is nonsense; it had nothing in common with either.

It is the proud and not altogether unwarranted boast of the New Dealers that they have saved the capitalist system, at least temporarily. At the time I write these lines, July 1936, the same finance capitalists who heartily supported the New Deal at its outset are now fiercely attacking it and their Supreme Court is busy knocking out its N. R. A.'s, A. A. A.'s, etc., one after the other. But if these capitalists take such a hostile attitude now towards the New Deal it is only because they believe they are over the worst of the crisis, that the New Deal has exhausted its benefits for them, and that fresh policies of a more reactionary character are necessary. They want to take away even Roosevelt's few concessions to the impoverished masses of workers, farmers and lower middle class.

In order to swing the masses behind the capitalist panacea, the New Deal, it was necessary to surround it with a florid demagoguery. So, such was had in plenty, and it far outstripped Hoover's famous "chicken in every pot" promises. Glowingly, the toilers were promised higher wages, steady employment, the right to organize, and the farmers and middle class would be freed from the clutches of the "money changers." The purchasing power of the masses would be increased and a redistribution of wealth brought about. President Roosevelt himself participated in this campaign of promises, with his "forgotten man" generalities and his great parade of liberal phrases. Other New Dealers rhapsodically went far beyond him, calling the New Deal a "revolution," "the birth of a new social order," the "beginning of the era of plenty," etc. Chief Brain Truster Moley even bemoaned the fact that the word "comrade" had been too badly discredited to be used by advocates of the New Deal. He said:

I regret that the term "comrade" has been used by foreign and strange and un-American groups of social revolutionaries and reformers. I mean comrade in the sense that Walt Whitman used it in his great poetic expression of democratic unity among all people, rich and poor, high and low, all of them devoted to the principle of building a nation of happy people.*

THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND THE NEW DEAL

The A. F. of L. and railroad brotherhood leaders swallowed the New Deal hook, line and sinker. They greeted Roosevelt's whole program as a providential gift from the gods, and the N. R. A. as a "new charter for Labor." The Blue Eagle became the A. F. of L. union label and Section 7a its Bible. The extreme right wing leaders of the unions, Green and Company, decried all strikes and other militancy, turned a deaf ear to Labor Party talk, and preached full reliance upon Roosevelt. They echoed and reëchoed his promises and fallacies. Roosevelt would solve all problems for the workers: he would feed the unemployed and find jobs for them, improve the standards of the unemployed, build up the trade unions. So these leaders entered enthusiastically into the National Labor Board and the many code-making bodies, assuring themselves and the workers that these organizations, in reality established to shore up the crumbling capitalist system, were meant to function in behalf of the workers. Only the Miners, Textile Workers and Needle Trades group (the future C. I. O. forces) displayed any serious independent strike and organizing activities.

To any one acquainted with the character of the A. F. of L. "labor lieutenants of the bourgeoisie" such a surrender on their part to the Roosevelt program came as no surprise. For had they not followed Wilson with all flags flying into the World War, and then later dragged the workers into the needless and disastrous retreat in the 1919-22 post-war employers' offensive against Labor; had they not also during the 1923-29 Coolidge period reduced the trade unions to

* *New York Times*, May 22, 1933.

mere appendages of the employers' speed-up plans; and, during Hoover's unlamented régime, had they not followed sheep-like his tricky no-wage-cut, no-strike agreement and his brutal starve-the-unemployed policy? So what more natural than that these capitalistic-minded misleaders of Labor should refuse to lead the workers beyond the narrow limits of the Roosevelt New Deal? Their wrong policy lay not in the fact that they accepted such concessions as Roosevelt offered, but that they confined themselves to these niggardly sops.

The Socialist Party also tailed along after Roosevelt. The Socialist leaders greeted the New Deal enthusiastically. In some respects they went even beyond the Green bureaucrats, as they called the New Deal a big step towards Socialism. Hillquit and Thomas journeyed to Washington to pay their respects to Roosevelt. No A. F. of L. officials entered more fully into the machinery of the New Deal than the Socialist needle trade union leaders, Hillman, Dubinsky, Zaritsky, etc. They all counseled confidence in Roosevelt, and Norman Thomas warned the workers that this was not the time to strike.*

Thus again the S. P. leaders exposed their opportunism. Just a few years before they had been enthusiastically declaring that the B. & O. plan (Fordism) of speeding production was opening the way to Socialism by creating abundance for all, and now, by an economic somersault, they were claiming that Roosevelt's policy of restricting production amid mass starvation was also leading to Socialism. Nor were the American Socialist leaders alone in these opportunistic gymnastics. In England, France and other countries, outstanding Socialist figures likewise hailed Roosevelt and began to shape their programs after his, even as they had greeted Ford a few years earlier, and Wilson before him. Curious Marxists these who for 20 years past have always looked for

* The renegade Lovestone and Trotsky groups followed a similar line of reliance in the N. R. A.

inspiration and policy to the political and economic leaders of the American bourgeoisie: first Wilson, next Ford, then Roosevelt. What better proof is needed of the bankruptcy of opportunistic Social Democracy?

The Communist Party and T. U. U. L., in sharpest contrast to the A. F. of L. and S. P., took up the cudgels against Roosevelt's policy from the outset, even as they had fought the B. & O. plan class collaboration, Hooverism, etc. They analyzed the New Deal for what it was, the program of capitalism to repair its shattered economic machinery and its diminished profits at the expense of the toiling masses; they exposed the economic fallacy of trying to create prosperity through organized scarcity; they condemned the inflationary and company-unionizing tendencies of the New Deal; they showed that it would not create real prosperity for the workers and farmers; they pointed to the Soviet Union, with its expanding prosperity, as indicating the only way out of the crisis for the toilers; they characterized the Roosevelt program, notwithstanding its few concessions to the workers, the unemployed and the farmers, as one making for the continuance of the capitalist system with its hunger, fascism and war.

Consequent upon this analysis, the C. P. and T. U. U. L. placed no reliance in the Roosevelt Administration. They warned the workers and farmers that the New Deal would not give them the promised employment, higher wages, the right to organize and prosperity; that the big capitalists dominated the various code bodies, that the workers would get from the Government and the employers only what they struggled for militantly. And the results of the New Deal up to date have borne out this analysis. While the C. P. and T. U. U. L. participated in the industrial code and other legislative hearings and fought for the best terms possible for the workers, they at the same time redoubled their efforts to develop active mass struggles for unemployment relief and insurance, for the right to organize, and for better standards generally of the toilers; they declared for a militant

strike policy and called upon the workers to "write your own codes on the picket lines." In short, while the other sections of the labor movement were drugged by the Roosevelt promises, the C. P. and T. U. U. L., faithful to their revolutionary character, sounded the true working class note and summoned the masses to struggle.

THE UPHEAVAL OF THE WORKING MASSES

The workers believed the promises of Roosevelt and, as Jack Stachel said, "took seriously the statement that they had the right to join unions of their choice." So, after the beginning of the New Deal and continuing all through 1933, 1934 and to a lesser extent, 1935, they developed a great surging mass organization and strike movement, one of the most tempestuous in the history of the American working class. It was a huge spontaneous outburst, an explosion of proletarian wrath against the rapidly rising cost of living, long years of low wages, unemployment, inhuman speed-up and autocracy in industry. It also revealed a growing lack of faith in the capitalist system as a whole. The big strikes of 1919-22 were defensive actions of organized workers under employer attacks; but the 1933-35 upheaval was basically a militant and powerful counter-offensive of the unorganized masses. One of the most striking features of the whole movement was the solidarity of the unemployed with the strikers and their refusal to be strike-breakers. With surprise and dismay the capitalists, who for a dozen years past had been complimenting themselves on the decline of working class militancy, watched the great toiling masses bestir themselves and launch this historic strike movement. They developed a great distaste for this whole phase of the Roosevelt New Deal.

When the N. R. A. was instituted on June 13, 1933, there was already a gradually mounting strike wave under way. The first effect of the N. R. A. was to halt this for a while,

and to turn the budding strike movement into a general campaign of union building, the workers relying upon the promises of the government and A. F. of L. officials to secure redress of their grievances. But the movement soon passed out of this stage of naïve hopefulness. The employers were establishing starvation minimum codes, militantly resisting the spread of the unions, building company unions on all sides, while the government and A. F. of L. policy was only one of rosy assurances to the workers. So, sensing the situation correctly, and realizing that they must fight, the masses burst into a broad strike movement in the last half of 1933, "to help Roosevelt enforce the N. R. A." against the employers, as was said widely by the workers at the time. Strikes raged in coal, steel, copper, automobile, textile, needle and many other industries.* The incomplete U. S. Bureau of Labor statistics show there was a total of 812,000 strikers in 1933, as against 242,826 in 1932.

With the turn of 1934, the strike movement took on greater volume, the number of strikers for that year amounting to 1,353,608. But more important, the multiplying strikes were of a far greater militancy and a deeper political significance. This was because early in the course of the New Deal, finance capital had made it clear that it was continuing its traditional opposition to the unionization of the open shop basic industries, and the government also soon showed that it would not insist upon such unionization, despite its apparent sympathy towards trade unionism. That is why the several conciliation boards set up by the government in industries where the workers were developing strike movements invariably demoralized the new labor unions by yielding to the company unions. The estimates of the growth of com-

* It is significant that this strike wave was least effective in those industries where the A. F. of L. antiquated craft union system was most entrenched: railroad industry, metal trades, building trades, food trades, printing industry, amusement trades, etc. The main force of the upheaval was among the unorganized and in those unions more approximating the industrial form and where left wing influence was greatest.

pany unionism under the New Deal range from 1,000,000 to 3,000,000.*

As the New Deal codes developed it became more and more clear, therefore, that the government's policy, especially in the unorganized basic industries, despite its liberal phrases, led to company unionism, starvation minimum wages and long hours. Without fully realizing the implications of this situation, large masses of workers nevertheless began to sense the elementary truth that if they were to secure the right of organization and relief for their grievances under the New Deal they would have to do as the T. U. U. L. was urging: write their own codes on the picket lines. Hence, the big strikes of 1934 bore increasingly the character of struggles against the N. R. A.; against its \$12.00 to \$15.00 minimum wage scales, for the right to organize and against the company unionism, against the ruinous delays, fake elections and equivocations of the various N. R. A. bodies set up by the Roosevelt Government with the help of the A. F. of L. leadership.

The strikes of 1934 to 1936 took on the most acute political character of any in the history of the United States. Against the violent opposition of the A. F. of L. leaders, the political mass strike, long a cardinal point in the Communist Party's agitation, became an established weapon of the American working class. The workers fought with splendid heroism and solidarity in the face of a demagogic government, tricky union leaders and an unprecedented use of troops, police, gunmen and vigilantes against them. The great battles of Toledo, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Terre Haute (1935), Pekin (1936), the huge national 1934 textile strike, the national coal strike of 1935, and many other struggles of the period constitute one of the brightest pages in our labor history.

* *The Monthly Labor Review* (U. S. Dept. of Labor) of October 1935, in its study of company unionism, states that in the industries examined, 64% of all existing company unions were established during the period of the N. R. A.

THE T. U. U. L. IN THE 1933 STRIKES

The T. U. U. L. did not confine itself to issuing manifestoes calling upon the workers to strike. On the contrary, from the outset in 1933, it launched all its unions, and leagues, and minority groups, into the surging battle. Its program of struggle found response among the militant, discontented masses. So that, despite its relative weakness, the T. U. U. L. was able to play a very considerable role in stimulating the big struggles and in directing the fighting masses along the path to victory.

Through this eventful period the T. U. U. L. was capably led by Jack Stachel, who had been elected Assistant Secretary in December 1931. During the 1932 election campaign, when I was the Presidential candidate of the Communist Party, I had suffered a severe heart attack in the midst of a five months speaking tour and I collapsed in Moline, Illinois, September 8th. For many years I had overworked myself. Besides carrying on much strike and other intense activities, I had made a dozen national speaking tours of 100 to 150 meetings each, several of them on the hobo, in addition to making innumerable shorter tours. These trips had taken me repeatedly into every state and important city in the country. But in the 1932 campaign the pitcher went once too often to the well. Result, a smash-up: angina pectoris, followed by a complete nervous collapse that kept me in bed for five months and made my life a literal torture, day and night, for over two years. It is only now that I am recovered enough to begin slowly to work again. My best work has been always as a mass organizer during big strikes and other struggles, but it was my doubly bad fate to be laid up helpless all through the bitterly fought mass strikes under the New Deal.

The influence of the T. U. U. L. upon the 1933-35 strikes in fact dates from beyond this period itself. Its long agitation and struggle for years past to develop the militant spirit of the workers bore fruit when these great battles in the New

Deal years got under way. It is significant that it was in the very fields where the T. U. U. L. had been most active—mining, textile, needle, agriculture, and to lesser extent, automobiles and steel—that the workers developed the strongest strike movements under the New Deal. Especially important were the militant T. U. U. L. strikes in the years of 1930-31-32 in these several industries, described in the previous chapter. They were the forerunners of the great 1933-35 strike wave. And literally sparks touching off the big struggle in 1933 were three important T. U. U. L. strike movements just preceding the N. R. A., viz., the Auto Workers Union Detroit strikes of 16,000 workers in January-February, the National Miners Union April strike of 3,000 miners in Western Pennsylvania and the February strike of independent New England shoe workers, in which the T. U. U. L. forces played a decisive role.

Once the big 1933 strike wave had begun, following the introduction of the N. R. A., the T. U. U. L. unions carried on many strikes under their own banners, mostly successful. In the steel industry the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union launched the first important strikes since 1919, including strikes in McKees Rocks, Buffalo, Greensburg, Latrobe, Hammond, and the fiercely fought strike of 5,500 workers in Ambridge; besides, this union conducted many strikes, involving several thousands of light metal workers in New York and vicinity. The National Miners Union led several small coal strikes, besides the bitter struggle of 2,000 miners in Gallup, New Mexico, and a strike of 2,000 miners of the Pittsburgh Coal Co. The Auto Workers Union led strikes totaling 10,000 workers in the Detroit area early in 1933. The National Textile Workers Union brought out 1,800 in Salem, and 15,000 workers in the national A. F. of L. silk strike of 75,000 workers in September 1933. The Shoe and Leather Workers Industrial Union had a strike of 12,000 shoe workers in September. The Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union struck 15,000 workers in New York in the Fall of 1933. The National Furniture

Workers Industrial Union carried through strikes of 20,000 workers in 37 cities from September 1933 to February 1934. The Marine Workers Industrial Union conducted a number of small strikes in various ports and ship lines, including the Munson line. The Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union had several important strikes in California during September and October 1933, including 6,000 grape pickers in Lodi and 18,000 cotton pickers in Southern California and Arizona. The Tobacco Workers Industrial Union conducted a strike of 2,000 New York tobacco workers in August 1933. The Food and Packinghouse Workers Industrial Union struck 2,700 packinghouse workers in Pittsburgh, November, and 2,000 food workers in St. Louis, in May 1933. The Laundry Workers Industrial Union struck 1,000 workers in the Bronx in June of the same year. There were many other T. U. U. L. strikes. A *Pen and Hammer* survey showed 132 T. U. U. L. strikes in New York alone during October and November 1933, as against only 25 of A. F. of L. organizations.* With few exceptions concessions were won for the workers by T. U. U. L. strikes. The T. U. U. L. unions grew rapidly and by the end of 1933 totaled 125,000 members.

In the numerous 1933 strikes of independent unions not directly affiliated to the T. U. U. L., the T. U. U. L. forces were also an important factor. Proofs of this T. U. U. L. influence in the organization and activities of these independent unions was shown by the latter's characteristically T. U. U. L. names; such as Radio and Metal Workers Industrial Union, Shipyard and Marine Workers Industrial Union, Tool and Diemakers Industrial Union, etc.

The T. U. U. L. unions likewise played a big part in the many A. F. of L. union strikes in 1933. In the soft coal districts the National Miners Union had been very active, together with the Unemployed Councils, and in many strikes, hunger marches, etc., and it had developed a large influence

* For detailed lists of T. U. U. L. and other strikes during the 1933-34 strike movement see *The Labor Fact Book II* (1934) and *The Trade Unions Since the N. R. A.*, by N. Honig.

among the miners as an independent union. But when the big strikes led by the U. M. W. A. began in that year the whole T. U. U. L. and C. P. forces supported them, throwing all their members into the U. M. W. A., stimulating the fight militantly on all fronts, and becoming a real factor in re-establishing the U. M. W. A. In the steel industry the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union had an organized membership at this time of some 14,000, but when the mass of workers started into the A. F. of L. steel workers union (A. A.), the S. & M. W. I. U. members proceeded to join the A. A. as individuals, just as the N. M. U. had done in the U. M. W. A., and to use all their power and influence to build the A. A. In automobiles it was the same. Although in Detroit and vicinity, the Communist Party and T. U. U. L., during the course of much activities (see March 6, 1930 demonstration of 100,000 unemployed, the Ford Hunger March, many strikes, etc.) had built a great influence among the workers, the Auto Workers Union promptly joined up with the expanding A. F. of L. locals and supported their strikes. The National Textile Workers Union similarly supported A. F. of L. strikes in the textile industry, etc. In all these A. F. of L. strikes the T. U. U. L. forces exerted a big influence, although they were handicapped by recent tendencies to neglect to work within the A. F. of L. unions.

At the eighth convention of the Communist Party, Cleveland, April 2, 1934, General Secretary, Earl R. Browder, indicated the role of the T. U. U. L. unions in the 1933 strike wave as follows:

	Membership Led in Strikes		New Members
A. F. of L.	2,500,000	450,000	500,000
Independent Unions	250,000	250,000	150,000
T. U. U. L.	125,000*	200,000	100,000
Unorganized		100,000	
	<hr/> 2,875,000	<hr/> 1,000,000	<hr/> 750,000

* These figures do not include the large following of the T. U. U. L. groups in the A. F. of L. and independent unions. The T. U. U. L. unions' member-

From these figures we see that the T. U. U. L., although not quite 5% of the total trade union membership, directly led 20% of all strikes and gained 20% of all new members. The independent unions, a little under 10% of the total membership, led 25% of the strikes. The A. F. of L. unions, comprising over 85%, led 45% of the strikes.*

These statistics show clearly the relatively greater strike and organizing activity of the T. U. U. L. than had the A. F. of L. in 1933. Proportionate to its membership, the T. U. U. L. led eight times more strikes and organized four times more workers than did the A. F. of L. The figures prove the T. U. U. L. to have been a vital factor in the whole struggle. But Browder's tables do not bring out the additional very big role of the T. U. U. L. forces in directly stimulating and strengthening the strikes of the A. F. of L. unions themselves, as we have noted in coal, textile, needle, auto, steel, transport, New York taxi strike, etc.

THE T. U. U. L. IN THE 1934 STRIKES

As we have pointed out above, the strikes of 1934 took on not only greater volume and acuteness but also more of a political character. That year marked the crest of the big strike wave. Its distinctive feature was the growth of powerful general strike movements. The workers, displaying great militancy and a realization that they had to fight in order to achieve anything under the New Deal, carried on their strikes in a splendid spirit of solidarity; while the employers, alarmed by the growing strike wave and working class radicalization, countered these strikes with unprecedented violence, using militia, police and armed thugs unsparingly.

ship fluctuated greatly in this period; official figures for the respective unions at their highest points under the New Deal were as follows: Needle Trades, 25,000; Steel and Metal Workers, 21,000; Agricultural Workers, 20,000; Miners, 10,000; Food Workers 10,000; Shoe Workers 9,000; Furniture Workers 8,000; Marine Workers 7,000; Textile Workers 7,000; Auto Workers 5,000; Lumber Workers 3,500; Fishermen 2,000; Tobacco Workers 1,400; Miscellaneous locals 10,000.

* *Communism in the United States*, International Publishers, p. 40.

In the 1934 national textile strike alone, troops were called out in 11 states, the Governor of Rhode Island summoned the Legislature to declare a "state of insurrection" and to demand Federal troops, and the State of Georgia erected concentration camps and herded into them several thousand striking textile workers. Some 20 workers were killed in this struggle. Also, to break the great San Francisco general strike of the same year, 30,000 soldiers, police and armed deputies were mobilized. Similar use of force was made by the state and city governments wherever the workers developed real struggle.

The most important strikes of 1934 were those in Toledo, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, the Pacific Coast marine strike, the San Francisco general strike and the national textile strike. These were practically all conducted under the banner of the A. F. of L. For the most part, the T. U. U. L.'s participation in them took the form of active support by its unions or work through its groups within the A. F. of L. But in all these situations the C. P. and T. U. U. L. forces played a vital role.

In the fiercely-fought Toledo strike in May 1934, it was the Communist-led Unemployed Councils that issued the call for solidarity mass picketing which brought out 10,000 pickets, mostly unemployed, in support of the, at that time, small strike of auto-equipment workers. The state troops attacked this picket line, killing one worker and gassing and arresting hundreds more. Aroused by this brutal attack, the 83 out of the 91 local A. F. of L. unions voted for a general strike. A hurried settlement, however, prevented the general strike order from going into effect. In the bitter Milwaukee street car strike a little while later, which was also brought to a sudden settlement by the threat of a local general strike, the T. U. U. L. forces similarly played an active part. This was also true to a lesser extent in the local general strike movement growing out of the heroic fight of the Minneapolis truck drivers. And into the huge A. F. of L. national textile strike of some 400,000 workers the National Textile Workers

Union threw all its energy, membership and influence. But it was in the big Pacific Coast Marine and San Francisco general strike that the C. P. and T. U. U. L. did their most important strike work in this period. In fact, in this struggle their influence was decisive. It so happened that I was in San Francisco during the general strike although too sick to take an active part in it. It was the greatest torture for me to be in the midst of such a glorious struggle and yet to be unable to help.

Here I have space for no more than a bare outline of this historic fight. In 1932, on the then largely-unorganized San Francisco waterfront, the C. P. and T. U. U. L. carried on their work intensively along two main lines: the seamen were organized into the T. U. U. L. Marine Workers Industrial Union and the longshoremen into the A. F. of L. International Longshoremen's Association. Following out this policy, there was in 1933 a strong M. W. I. U. organization built up along the Pacific Coast and, together with other militant workers, the T. U. U. L. forces succeeded in organizing a large I. L. A. local union among the disorganized Frisco dock workers. The leader of the longshoremen was Harry Bridges and the head of the local M. W. I. U., Harry Jackson; both left wing militants. The Secretary of the California district of the Communist Party was Sam Darcy.

The strike movement began among the longshoremen early in the spring of 1934. The San Francisco local had taken the lead in lining up the weak I. L. A. Coast locals to present demands to the employers. The employers, aided by corrupt I. L. A. top leaders, tried the usual schemes of delay, conciliation and arbitration to break up the rapidly developing militant movement. Rejecting these maneuvers, the I. L. A. locals declared a strike on May 9th and had the whole Pacific Coast tied up within two days. Harry Bridges was elected Chairman of the I. L. A. strike committee, and the *Western Worker*, local Communist organ, was endorsed as the official strike journal.

The open-shop employers were determined at all costs to defeat the militantly-led longshoremen, the heart of whose demands was the right to organize. This aroused the fighting spirit of the marine workers generally. The T. U. U. L. union, the M. W. I. U., promptly called out its seamen in support of the 12,000 striking longshoremen and tied up every ship coming into Frisco. The other marine unions, A. F. of L., followed suit, and soon the entire marine industry of the Pacific Coast was paralyzed. Ten unions, with 30,000 workers, were now out. The striking unions made a Solidarity Pact and formed the Joint Strike Committee of 50, with Harry Bridges as Chairman.

Now, indeed, the employers grew alarmed at the spread of the strike. They redoubled their efforts to break the workers' solidarity. Hundreds of strike-breakers were mobilized; Governor Merriam flooded the Bay District with soldiers; a flock of Department of Labor "meddlers" came in with their "conciliation" soothing syrup; Ryan, national head of the I. L. A., McGrady and other labor bureaucrats, worked shamelessly with the employers concocting strike-breaking schemes, which the workers rejected one after the other. Ryan, repeatedly defeated, had to leave town, denouncing the strike as a Communist affair.

As the bitter fight dragged along for weeks, organized labor in general along the Pacific Coast became deeply stirred. The trade unionists could see that if the marine workers lost it would be a dangerous victory for the open shop and that no other union would be safe. Meanwhile, the Communist Party, through its press, urged a general strike of all workers in the Coast cities to force a settlement. This call fell on fertile soil. The workers were enraged at the violence used against the marine strikers and general strike sentiment grew among them swiftly, although the A. F. of L. leaders strove feverishly to smother it. During the movement a general strike vote was carried in Portland and strong general strike agitation spread rapidly in Seattle, Tacoma and other Coast cities; but it was in San Francisco that the workers

went into action with the first general strike since the historic Seattle strike of 1919.

The Frisco general strike actually started when the powerful truckdrivers union, with 4,000 members, voted down its reactionary officials 1,220 to 217, and went on strike on July 12th in solidarity with the maritime strikers. This splendid action immediately set the labor movement on fire. Despite their reactionary leaders, the San Francisco Labor Council, with 115 unions and 65,000 members, voted to strike July 16th; and the Oakland Central Labor Council, embracing 40,000 workers, voted to strike July 17th. By July 18th there were 150,000 workers out in the San Francisco Bay area. The whole territory was paralyzed. It was a magnificent example of Labor's solidarity and power.

Then, how the capitalist reaction shrieked and frothed. The Hearst press called the strike an insurrection and declared that the city was in the hands of the Communists. The bosses' associations demanded a vigilante terror; General Hugh S. Johnson, head of the N. R. A., conveniently passing through the city, denounced the Communists as "rats" who must be driven from the district. The "liberal" Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, in reply to a telegram from Governor Merriam, announced that the Department of Labor would coöperate by deporting all alien "agitators." And, of course, William Green had to add his voice to the reactionary chorus by stating that "the A. F. of L. neither ordered the strike nor authorized it." Meanwhile, the State government poured troops and police into the district and the employers organized gangs of gunmen and vigilantes. It was estimated that at least 30,000 troops, police and armed deputies were in the Bay District.

The local A. F. of L. leaders, Vandeleur, Kidwell and others, realizing their inability to block the general strike movement, had put themselves at the head of it in order to destroy it from within. Through their official positions and because of left wing weakness in most of the Frisco trade unions, they were able to secure control of the General Strike

Committee and to pack it with "reliable" delegates. Then they proceeded to undermine the strike in various ways. They refused to call out the workers on the newspapers and in the power-houses and also in other public services; they sent the Market Street carmen back to work on the second day of the strike; they issued trucking permits indiscriminately; they allowed many restaurants to remain open; they refused to organize a workers' guard to police the city, etc. All of which greatly weakened the strike.

To facilitate these leaders' strike-breaking treachery, the President's Longshore Board redoubled its efforts to demoralize the strikers by various so-called conciliation moves; and the city police and vigilantes, under orders of Mayor Rossi, delivered a series of swift raids against the offices of the Communist Party, Marine Workers Industrial Union, Workers' Ex-Servicemen's League, the Workers' School and many other radical organizations, wrecking their premises and arresting hundreds of workers. This terror soon spread all over Central California. Among its victims were the leaders of the strong Cannery and Agricultural Workers Union (T. U. U. L.), Caroline Decker, Pat Chambers and several others, arrested in Sacramento and now doing long terms in San Quentin and other prisons for alleged violation of the state anti-syndicalist law.

These combined attacks upon the strike by labor leaders, capitalist press, government officials, police, etc., all took place very swiftly, within 48 hours of the strike's beginning. To some extent they confused the fighting masses of workers, although the strike was still spreading. The reactionary local labor leaders, on July 19th, the fourth day of the strike, working in harmony with the government and the employers, hastened to rush through a vote calling off the strike on the basis of the marine workers' dispute going to arbitration. But this they were not able to do without difficulty, even in their hand-picked General Strike Committee, the vote being 191 to call the strike off and 174 to continue it. All except the waterfront union then returned to work. Thus, by smash-

ing this great fight, the A. F. of L. leadership added one more case of strike-breaking to its long and unsavory record.

The 30,000 maritime workers continued their coastwide strike until July 31st, when they agreed to arbitration. By force of their solidarity and fighting spirit, they managed to secure a favorable decision. Later the I. L. A. reelected its fighting leader, Bridges; the marine unions built up their strength, united themselves into the Maritime Workers Federation, and established the best wages, hours and working conditions to be found on any American coast.

In this great strike the C. P. and T. U. U. L. forces made a number of errors. Among these were a certain hesitation at times in exposing the treachery of the A. F. of L. leaders, the failure to spread the struggle to the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, a lack of activity by the left labor forces to get control of the General Strike Committee, etc. But in the main it was a splendid and successful fight and it cast much deserved credit upon the Communist Party and the other militant fighters who led it so gallantly.*

THE A. F. OF L. LEADERSHIP: A BRAKE ON THE MASSES

During the big struggles of 1933-35 the A. F. of L. top leaders were a distinct hindrance to the organization and struggles of the awakening workers. This was shown by their consistent opposition to necessary strikes, by their inactivity in organization work, and by the stupid craft union policies that barred from the unions the masses eager to organize. Let us consider each of these three points briefly.

First, as to the A. F. of L. strike policy. When Roosevelt took office there was, as we have seen, a strike wave beginning to get under way. The new Administration at once declared war on this developing struggle, especially as the T. U. U. L. unions were playing such a prominent part in

* Further accounts of this big strike are to be found in *The Communist* of July and August 1934 (articles by Sam Darcy and resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party), and in Bill Dunne's pamphlet, *The Great San Francisco Strike*.

it. Roosevelt threatened that "just as in 1917, horses that kick over the traces will have to be put in a corral." General Johnson also shouted and bellowed against strikes. And the National Labor Board was organized on August 23rd, to kill the rapidly spreading strike movement. All of which anti-strike policies were heartily supported by the Green A. F. of L. bureaucracy. According to them the workers could safely rest their case in the hands of the "beneficent" Roosevelt government.

Green and other A. F. of L. top leaders not only agitated against the many militant strikes of the period, but took definite action against them when they had the opportunity. We have just seen their strike-breaking activities in the great San Francisco general strike. Another case of such interference, disastrous in its consequences, was in the automobile industry in 1933. Here was on foot a splendid strike movement. Clearly, the interests of the workers demanded that the industry be tied up completely, for the first time in its history. Such a demonstration of power would have cleared the air and had a salutary effect on the automobile kings. It could only have ended in victory. But the A. F. of L. Executive Council turned the whole movement over to Roosevelt's Automobile Board, with inevitably ruinous results: the defeat of the auto workers' demands, the weakening of the trade unions and the further intrenchment of company unionism.

But one of the worst cases of A. F. of L. strike-breaking under the New Deal was in the steel industry. Very considerably under the influence of the militant T. U. U. L. union, the S. & M. W. I. U., the steel workers had developed a powerful strike movement in 1933 under the official head of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers (A. A.). This agitation brought on a strike of 13,000 at Weirton in September 1933, which the A. F. of L. leaders promptly called off, turning the whole matter over to the government, where the workers' cause soon became hopelessly bogged and lost. Despite this defeat, the steel

workers movement, stimulated by the A. A. rank and file "Committee of 10" and the S. & M. W. I. U., moved on until 100,000 members were enrolled into the A. A. and the great mass throughout the industry were getting ready to strike. It was a splendid situation. The workers had high spirits, and the steel companies were on the defensive. A nationwide strike was quite possible and would have been surely successful. It was the best opportunity the steel workers ever had to tie up the whole industry, win their economic demands and establish their union. But the A. F. of L. Executive Council would have none of all this. Aided by the A. A. leadership and the weak "Committee of Ten," the A. F. of L. officials completely ruined the whole movement by referring the controversy to the Steel Board set up by Roosevelt, where it died the usual lingering death. Thus the A. F. of L. leaders criminally threw away another opportunity to organize the steel industry.

Now as to the second point, the A. F. of L.'s inactivity in organization work. Never in its history has the A. F. of L. general office organized an industry, although it has launched dozens of paper "organizing campaigns." The two apparent exceptions, meat-packing and steel in 1917-19, were in reality carried on by progressive local forces in the face of A. F. of L. indifference and outright sabotage. So it was not unexpected that a similar A. F. of L. inability and unwillingness to organize the masses would again display itself in the 1933-35 situation. It is true that the A. F. of L. gained about 1,000,000 members during this period; but this was due to the work of local militants and of the individual unions, such as the Miners, Needle Trades and Textile Workers (though the latter threw away most of their gains in the futile settlement of their general strike). As for the A. F. of L. itself, it developed no serious organizing campaigns whatever.

The 1933-35 period was exceptionally advantageous for organization work in all the industries. The masses were very militant; the employers (discredited by the deep crisis and huge army of unemployed) were confused and on the

defensive; and the government, as a necessary measure to make its capitalistic New Deal palatable to the masses, was compelled to at least mildly assert the right of the workers to organize. Had the A. F. of L. leaders put on a vigorous organizing campaign in this unusually favorable combination of circumstances, several millions of workers could have been easily organized. Their failure to do so was a repetition of the war-time experience; a splendid opportunity to organize uselessly frittered away. And for such anti-working class actions Green and Company draw their \$15,000-plus salaries and strut about the country posing as "labor statesmen."

Thirdly, regarding the craft union barriers maintained by the A. F. of L. leaders against the organization of the masses. Nobody but a reactionary A. F. of L. official could fail to see that the craft system of organization has become obsolete and industrial unionism made necessary by the specialization, mechanization, rationalization and trustification of industry. A thousand lost strikes and sterile organization campaigns have shouted this elementary lesson. But the A. F. of L. leaders stubbornly maintain their nineteenth century craft unionism, although it is manifestly a gigantic barrier to the organization of the unorganized and from every point of view a disastrous liability to the working class. And at the present writing they are willing to split the A. F. of L. by expelling the dozen unions of the C. I. O. rather than to make any concessions to industrial unionism.

This A. F. of L. antediluvian craft system was a real obstacle to the organization of the workers in 1933-35, as always. It was criminally absurd to propose that the workers of modern mass production industries be divided into from 10 to 25 craft unions, with high initiation fees and dues. Yet that was and is the line of the A. F. of L. Naturally, few workers were organized. And worse yet, when the workers organized themselves into single unions, the A. F. of L. proceeded to split them into crafts, with the result that large numbers were lost to the movement altogether.

During 1933-35 many independent unions sprang up,

especially in the trustified, mass production industries. Not including the 400,000 members in the non-affiliated R. R. brotherhoods and Amalgamated Clothing Workers, nor the 125,000 in the revolutionary T. U. U. L. unions, the new independent unions during this period totaled some 250,000 workers. The very existence of the whole independent union movement was a monument to the reactionary policies of the A. F. of L. leadership.

These paralyzing A. F. of L. policies were also largely responsible for the development of considerable company union sentiment among the masses. Many workers, having no faith in the decrepit craft system of the A. F. of L., were impelled in the direction of company unionism in an effort to improve their conditions. This tendency was very clearly illustrated in the steel industry, where the workers, betrayed time and again by the ultra-reactionary Tighe leadership of the A. A., developed a strong movement to utilize the company unions as their labor organization, while the A. A. stood aside half-dead and despised until it was taken in hand by the C. I. O. forces.

THE T. U. U. L. MERGES WITH THE A. F. OF L.

The Communist Party and the T. U. U. L. have ever been the front line fighters for trade union unity, not only in the formal sense of all workers being members of one national union center, but especially in the deeper political sense of the ideological and organizational solidarity of craft with craft, skilled with unskilled, employed with unemployed, native-born with foreign-born, whites with Negroes, adult workers with the youth, men workers with women workers, etc. They have fought resolutely against all employer-inspired policies of A. F. of L. leaders to oppose these groups to each other. In the pursuit of their final goal of this basic organizational and ideological unification of the working class millions, the C. P. and T. U. U. L. have always used flexibility in adopting necessary changes in policy. And so,

when in the big mass upheaval under the New Deal, the immediate path towards working class unity manifested itself by affiliation of large masses of workers to the old trade unions, with the consequent rejuvenation of these unions, the T. U. U. L. re-oriented itself accordingly and merged its forces with the A. F. of L., giving up its independent existence.

But this was not altogether a simple matter. In the T. U. U. L., during 1933-35, there developed simultaneously a double-process of unification; a lesser tendency towards the creation of a federation of independent unions and a major tendency towards affiliation to the A. F. of L. Let us consider first the minor trend, that of building a federation of independent unions.

As I have already indicated, the early years of the crisis and the mass movements under the New Deal produced a large growth of independent unions, in addition to those affiliated to the T. U. U. L. Among the most important of these were the Progressive Miners of America (Illinois), Mechanics Educational Society (Auto), Anthracite Miners Union and United Shoe and Leather Workers Union. Besides there were scores of similar bodies in the metal, shipbuilding, textile, radio, aeroplane, food, transportation and many other industries. An important feature of this independent union movement was the many new unions formed among white-collar workers, including teachers, engineers, postal workers, newspaper writers, etc. Together with the T. U. U. L., the independent unions numbered about 400,000. Most of them were based on the industrial union principle. Many had class struggle programs, Socialists, Communists and other revolutionary workers having played a prominent part in their organization.

Inasmuch as the new independent unions, although radical in outlook, were not revolutionary enough to affiliate with the T. U. U. L., and, in view of the obstacles placed in the way of their affiliation to the A. F. of L. by the latter's craft policies, there was a serious danger of these isolated organi-

zations falling to pieces, and many actually did. Therefore, the T. U. U. L. issued the slogan in the spring of 1934 for the creation of a federation of independent unions. This independent federation should be formed on industrial lines and based upon a broad class struggle program. The T. U. U. L. would affiliate nationally with the new federation and the T. U. U. L. unions would follow a policy of merging with other independents in the respective industries. Towards the A. F. of L. the new national center would follow a policy of united front coöperation, not of petty splits. "... the relationship of the Independent Federation of Labor to the A. F. of L. workers would be not one of opposition but one of trying to unite with the A. F. of L. workers for common struggle against the attacks of the capitalists, and their lieutenants in the labor movement." *

But the real road to unity lay not in the direction of an independent federation. Despite all obstacles placed in their way by labor reactionaries, the masses were literally breaking into the A. F. of L. unions; for these were the traditional labor movement, the unions being recognized by the bosses and the government and those offering the prospect of the most immediate results. The workers also felt the urge to unity in the face of the growing offensive of American and world reaction. So the question of an independent federation was not pressed by the T. U. U. L.

Now let us turn to the decisive process already rapidly at work in the T. U. U. L., the tendency to merge its unions with the A. F. of L. organizations in the several industries.† The influx of large masses of workers into the A. F. of L. during the strike movements under the New Deal greatly changed the nature of its affiliated unions. Says the resolution of the T. U. U. L. National Executive Committee in the *Daily Worker* of March 11, 1935:

* The proposal for an independent federation is outlined in an article by Jack Stachel in *Labor Unity*, June 1934.

† The development of this policy is fully explained in the reports and articles of Jack Stachel in *The Communist* of the years 1933-34-35.

The entrance of these masses of new workers into the A. F. of L., and their determination to struggle for their rights, despite the opposition of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy, make of these A. F. of L. unions mass unions more militant in character. This in turn creates the possibility of achieving the unification of the trade union movement and the defeat of the employers' offensive; of mobilizing and leading the workers and their unions in defense of the workers' interests, and the carrying through of a class struggle policy.

One of the most striking signs of the improved situation in the A. F. of L. was the development of a progressive spirit in a section of the top union leadership. Among various evidences of this, the most important is the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization (C. I. O.), headed by John L. Lewis, President of the U. M. W. A., and made up of twelve national unions comprising 1,250,000 members or 40% of the total A. F. of L. membership. These leaders, although they do not give outright support to such an elementary measure as the formation of the Farmer-Labor Party, nevertheless perceive the rising tide of reaction in the country and the impossibility of preserving even their own unions unless the millions of unorganized are organized, which they also know can only be done on the basis of industrial unionism.

In short, the entry of the 1,000,000 workers into the A. F. of L. in 1933-35 at least partly removed many of the glaring evils that had been the original cause of the independent union policy of the T. U. U. L. These new militant masses had largely broken down the disastrous A. F. of L. no-strike policy; they had weakened the leaders' autocratic control and reduced the expulsion evil; they had established at least a trace of trade union democracy, and they had even caused a breath of progress to blow among the leadership. Under such circumstances the place for all revolutionary workers was in the A. F. of L. to give leadership to these awakening masses. In the earlier stages of the struggle the T. U. U. L. unions, justified by objective and subjective

conditions, had played a positive, revolutionary rôle, in their independent status, but now, by the alteration fundamentally of those conditions, such an independent status was no longer necessary. It was in realization of this fact that the T. U. U. L. proceeded to merge its unions into the A. F. of L.

From their beginning, the T. U. U. L. unions had always followed a united front policy with A. F. of L. unions in their respective industries wherever such unions showed any life or activity. This policy expressed itself by the development of proposals, often realized, for joint demands, joint picket lines, joint strike committees, etc. It was in line with this elementary unity program, therefore, that the T. U. U. L. unions actually joined forces with the A. F. of L. unions when, through mass pressure, the latter began seriously to organize and strike under the New Deal.

The process of merging with the A. F. of L. took place in various ways. We have already seen, for example, how in mining and steel the members of the N. M. U. and S. & M. W. I. U. simply joined the A. F. of L. unions as individuals, dissolving their own organizations. The same course developed in marine transport, automobile and a few other industries. In the needle trades, textile, furniture, metal, food, shoe, lumber, agriculture, etc., however, formal amalgamation movements were carried through either on a local or general scale.

This T. U. U. L. movement for trade union unity began in the middle of 1933 among the miners and proceeded all through 1934. In September 1934, the T. U. U. L. National Executive Board, directed a letter to the approaching 54th convention of the A. F. of L. proposing unity on the basis of a class struggle program.* These proposals were in line with the world trade unity policy of the R. I. L. U., a policy that has since resulted in the amalgamation of the two opposing labor federations in France, the C. G. T. and C. G. T. U., and the unification of the French labor movement. But, with no illusions as to the responsiveness of the A. F.

* *Labor Unity*, October 1934.

of L. labor moguls, the T. U. U. L. went ahead with its policy of amalgamation from the bottom. One after another of its organizations joined the A. F. of L. Moreover, the T. U. U. L. used its very considerable influence among other independent unions to have them adopt a similar line of policy. Many of them also joined the A. F. of L., including the Amalgamated Food Workers, an organization of some 18 years' standing. At present the Communists are urging such organizations as the P. M. A., M. E. S. A. and others to unite with the A. F. of L. unions in their industries.

The A. F. of L. top leadership, of course, extended no welcome greeting to this amalgamation movement. On the contrary, amid loud applause from Hearst, William Green sent out a letter to all A. F. of L. local and national unions demanding the expulsion of the Communists; he also threatened to lift the charter of the A. F. of L. Fur Workers if they carried through the amalgamation with the N. T. W. I. U. members. But in both these moves Green failed: his general letter was almost everywhere rejected, tabled or thrown into the waste-basket; also, in spite of his threats, the furriers' amalgamation was completed, Ben Gold being elected manager of the New York Joint Board.

But, of course, Green is not so easily defeated as this in his expulsion and splitting policy. He and his reactionary cronies class everything militant and progressive as Communist and they are willing to split the labor movement to get rid of it. Only a year or so ago the corrupt Tighe administration of the A. A. expelled over half of the steel workers' membership and it took a court order to have the expelled lodges reinstated. Also the Furuseth-Olander reactionaries in the International Seamen's Union have cancelled the charters of the fighting sailors of the Pacific Coast, thereby expelling several thousands of these veterans of the great San Francisco general strike. And, upon the election of the militant, Weinstock, by an overwhelming vote as Secretary of the New York Painters District Council, the heads of that national union tried in vain to lift the charter of the Council.

By the end of 1934, however, the merging of the T. U. U. L. unions with the A. F. of L. organizations had proceeded so far that the question naturally arose regarding the further continuance of the T. U. U. L. as a national body. It fell to me to propose its dissolution. Accordingly, the T. U. U. L. called a convention in New York, March 16-17, 1935, to consider the matter. For the National Executive Board I submitted to this convention a review of the rôle of the T. U. U. L., and Jack Stachel presented the resolution of policy, which was adopted.* After outlining the struggles and trade union unity efforts of the T. U. U. L., the policy resolution declared:

In line with this policy of a unification of its unions with the A. F. of L., the Trade Union Unity League, as such, which functioned as a centralized organization of all its affiliated unions, has no further need of continuing in its present organizational form and should therefore give way to a new form which corresponds to the present objective situation and tasks of the remaining T. U. U. L. and independent unions. . . .

This can best be accomplished by these remaining unions forming a leading committee from among themselves, a Unity Committee, which shall, in addition to unifying their joint activities, wage a ceaseless struggle and agitation for the unification of the remaining unions to the A. F. of L.

To liquidate the T. U. U. L., by affiliating its remaining unions to the A. F. of L., the convention set up the Committee for the Unification of the Trade Unions, with Sam Nesson, Secretary. This body continued in existence for four months when, with only a few of the T. U. U. L. unions still unaffiliated, it formally dissolved. Thus the T. U. U. L., successor to the old S. L. of N. A., I. T. U. E. L., and T. U. E. L., came to an end and with it 23 years for me as national secretary of left wing boring-from-within movements.

* These documents are contained in the *Daily Worker*, March 16 and 17, 1935.

THE PRESENT C. P. TRADE UNION POLICY

Since the liquidation of the T. U. U. L., and with the Communist trade union forces almost entirely included within the A. F. of L., the main emphasis of C. P. trade union policy is again upon the revolutionizing of that body by systematic work within its ranks. Great stress is laid upon the organization of the unorganized, not only through recruitment of the craft unions, but especially through rebuilding of industrial unions in the mass production industries; unions that are either in affiliation with the A. F. of L., or propose to so affiliate.* In this respect the Communists support the work of John L. Lewis' Committee for Industrial Organization; but they go much further in the immediate program by proposing the reorganization of the whole A. F. of L. upon an industrial union basis through a process of federation and amalgamation and also by advocating the development of a class struggle program, real trade union democracy, a militant leadership, the building of a Farmer-Labor Party, and, eventually, the establishment of Socialism.

For the rest, the political content of the present Communist trade union policy remains essentially the same as that of the old T. U. U. L. The principal change over former stages of work within the reformist trade unions has to do with the question of method. The main feature of this change of method is that the C. P. does not now as a general policy, save in exceptional cases when such groups are an established precedent in industries (needle, printing, etc.), build left wing groups of the T. U. E. L. and T. U. U. L. types within the various trade unions. Aside from its own Party fractions,† it chiefly confines its organization to such forms as are customary in the trade union movement generally.

The basic reason for this important alteration of tactics is that in the given situation, with the workers rapidly becom-

* See pamphlet, *Industrial Unionism*, by N. Honig and myself.

† Fractions are the groups of Communist members in the given union or other mass organization.

ing more radical, the most effective way of developing contacts with those in the trade unions on the broadest united front basis is through the usual organs and practices of the unions themselves. Thus, in connection with the C. P.'s educational work in the unions, greater stress than ever is placed upon the election of Communists and other progressives to executive offices; the strengthening and enlivening of local, union committees; the building up of left wing and progressive delegations to central labor councils, to the conventions of the international unions and the A. F. of L.; the drawing of the unions officially into various inter-union committees to further the work for organizing the unorganized, for a Farmer-Labor Party, for defense of political prisoners, for Negroes' rights, against fascism and war, etc.

Thus, far more than in T. U. E. L. and T. U. U. L. days, the tendency is for these radical policies, instead of being simply the program of special groups, to become the program of the labor movement proper, or at least of its most advanced sections. The Communist trade union program acquires more of an official character. Its organized phase becomes increasingly an expression of the trade union movement itself.

In this favorable situation the continuation of the old left wing formal group membership system as the main policy could hinder the development of contacts with the trade union masses. So it has been dropped. And with it has gone its usual accompanying concepts of the revolutionary forces as constituting merely an "opposition" or "minority" movement. Thus, the new policy cultivates more of a sense of responsibility for the conduct of the union affairs and sharpens the urge to win actual mass leadership. It also broadens the united front of the militant workers and progressive sections of the leadership in the unions. Altogether it established the maximum possibility for building the Communists and their program into the very sinew and fiber of the trade union movement.

By the operation of these methods the healthy and grow-

ing Communist Party is rapidly extending its influence among the organized masses. Communists are increasingly taking over more of the official leading rôles, although, as yet on a minor scale, in the trade union movement. Their influence is now an important factor in the A. F. of L.; and we may be sure that as the class struggle sharpens and the workers become still more radicalized, a process which is swift and certain, the Communists will play a rapidly increasing leading rôle in the inevitable great trade union organizations and battles of the near future.

T. U. U. L. ACHIEVEMENTS AND SHORTCOMINGS

From the foregoing brief review of the strikes and other activities of the T. U. U. L. during its six years of militant existence it is clear that the revolutionary unions developed a substantial resistance to the wage-cutting, starvation offensive of the employers. In the early and difficult Hoover years of the crisis, while the A. F. of L. was submitting unresistingly to having the workers' wages slashed and allowing the unemployed to be forced down into utter pauperism, the T. U. U. L. unions, supported militantly by the C. P., held aloft the banner of struggle. Their organizing and leading the unorganized into struggle were a decisive factor in winning a measure of relief for the starving jobless, and their militant strikes not only placed a serious hindrance in the way of the wage cutters, but also served as a powerful stimulus to the huge labor battles soon to occur under the New Deal. And when the big strike struggles developed in 1933-34, the T. U. U. L. was a real factor in furthering the organization and militancy of the workers.

The T. U. U. L. unions, however, did not succeed in building up powerful organizations numerically. This was largely because of the extremely difficult conditions under which they worked—blacklists, police raids, court injunctions, deportation of leaders, etc. A factor also in many cases was weak organization work. The unions' membership was loose and

subject to violent fluctuations, hence exact estimates of their numerical strength were difficult to make. Their mass influence, however, extended far and wide beyond the concrete limits of the organizations. In the middle of 1934, the T. U. U. L. reached its maximum trade union organization, with approximately 125,000 members. This was aside from approximately 150,000 members reported for the National Unemployed Council in 1933 by its Secretary, H. Benjamin.

In the earlier stages of its work, the T. U. U. L. developed a number of sectarian weaknesses which injured its general efficiency. The first was a tendency, under the fierce attacks from its many enemies, to develop its union programs upon a too advanced revolutionary basis and to identify the organizations too closely with the Communist Party. This, of course, had the effect of checking the growth of the organization by making difficult its contacts with the more conservative workers and by narrowing down the T. U. U. L. united front with the left Progressives. It was a departure from the original plan for the independent unions, which called for programs not so sharply revolutionary, but more of a broad united front character.

The second serious weakness of the T. U. U. L. in this period was the beginning of a tendency in the direction of dual unionism, the traditional weakness of the American left wing. The basis of this was the deplorable situation in the A. F. of L.; its lassitude in the face of the employers' attacks and its rapid decline in strength and influence. This tended to make the T. U. U. L. neglect the work in the old unions, to concentrate on the new unions, and to establish new unions in some cases when it would have been more practical to have worked inside the A. F. of L. The left Socialists, Musteites, Trotskyites and Lovestoneites, who now criticize this weakness of the T. U. U. L., also were at the time actively engaged in organizing the Illinois miners' P. M. A. and other non-A. F. of L. independent unions.

During 1929-32 the A. F. of L. was indeed in a critical position and showed many signs of disintegration. It was

reaping in full the bitter crop of misleadership that its reactionary leaders had long been sowing. In the war-time these leaders had stupidly thrown away an unprecedented opportunity to organize many millions of workers; then in the great 1919-22 post-war offensive of the bosses they had, by their policy of craft scabbery and retreat, made Labor suffer the biggest defeat in its whole career; they had followed this up during the Coolidge "prosperity" years, which could have been spent successfully organizing the workers, by their adopting the infamous B. & O. class collaboration schemes which devitalized and paralyzed the whole labor movement; and finally, when the crisis came upon them, the craft union leaders walked right into Hoover's wage-cut, starve-the-unemployed murderous policy. The general result was utter stagnation in the A. F. of L. unions, whose membership fell from 4,078,740 in 1920 to 2,126,796 in 1933, and the growth of a widespread belief that the A. F. of L. was definitely in decline.*

When the Fourth R. I. L. U. Congress resolution and the Cleveland T. U. U. L. convention laid down the policy for the independent unions they proposed, first, that the new unions might be affiliated to the A. F. of L. under conditions where militant policy and leadership were assured; and second, that work within the A. F. of L. unions should be continued and intensified. But under the pressure of the struggle and in view of the reactionary and broken-down condition of the A. F. of L., with its no-strike policies, its hidebound unions slowly crumbling and its membership dispirited and demoralized, the T. U. U. L. tended to deviate from its originally correct line in both of these important essentials of organization policy. It began to stress independent unionism somewhat too much. On the one hand, it abandoned the policy of conditional affiliation of the new unions to the

* This 1933 figure is far too high, as many of the unions were maintaining their regular per capita tax payments to the A. F. of L. for convention voting purposes, although they had actually suffered huge membership losses in the crisis. It is, therefore, doubtful if the A. F. of L., at its low point in 1933, had more than 1,500,000 actual members.

A. F. of L. and tended to develop the T. U. U. L. as a rival trade union national center, and on the other hand, it decidedly slackened its work within the A. F. of L. unions, although every statement of T. U. U. L. general policy stressed the necessity for such activity.

With regard to the latter point: the most important work done by the T. U. U. L. in the old unions during this period was through the A. F. of L. Committee for Unemployment Insurance, which I have previously noted. Besides this, there was little more than rather desultory activities in the railroad, needle, mining, building, printing, metal and shoe craft unions. The consequence was a great weakening of T. U. U. L. influence in the A. F. of L. unions. One sign of this was that leadership of the industrial union movement in the A. F. of L., traditionally led by the left wing, passed over automatically to John L. Lewis when he began his agitation for industrial unionism. Another result of T. U. U. L. neglect to work within the A. F. of L. unions was to give a stimulus to the growth of the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, an organization which, made up chiefly of lower trade union functionaries and intellectual dilettantes and headed by A. J. Muste, of Brookwood Labor College, tried to occupy the place once held in the craft unions by the old T. U. E. L. But this opportunistic organization failed and it finally merged into the Trotskyist Workers Party.* We have seen, however, that with the new situation, the T. U. U. L., following its true line of unity, resumed in full its work within the A. F. of L.

The life of the T. U. U. L. showed that its policy of independent unionism was basically correct and historically justified under the given conditions. This is true in spite of the incorrect tendency, already indicated, to distort that policy in the direction of dual unionism in some cases. The T. U. U. L.'s program of class struggle, industrial unionism, organization of the unorganized, trade union democracy,

* In my pamphlet, *Little Brothers of the Big Labor Fakers*, I have analyzed the Muste movement.

unemployment insurance, equal rights for Negroes, fight against fascism and war, etc., were also fundamentally correct and corresponded to the true interests of the working class. The T. U. U. L. unions and organizations of unemployed were a real force in the class struggle during the Hoover period and they took a very militant and effective part in the big strike upheavals of 1933-35. The sectarian weaknesses above noted, however, operated to considerably lessen the T. U. U. L.'s potential influence, both within the trade unions and in the independent union movement. But, as we have seen, the great sharpening of the workers' fight in the strike period under the Roosevelt New Deal soon caused a drastic change in the policy of the T. U. U. L., so that once more its main stress was placed upon work within the reformist unions. All factors considered, the T. U. U. L. represented a necessary and correct stage in the development of the American labor movement.

CHAPTER XVI

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

IN the space of this chapter I can outline only the main course of development of the Communist Party of the United States. For further details of the Party's program, policies and activities, the reader is referred to the books, *Communism in the United States* and *What Is Communism*, by Earl R. Browder, and also my book, *Towards Soviet America*. Likewise, here I can make only the briefest mention of my own rôle in the building of the Party. Let me cover this angle by stating simply that I have been a member of the Central Committee ever since I joined the Party in 1921, that I have been its Chairman twice, that I was its Presidential candidate in 1924, 1928 and 1932, that I was candidate for Governor of New York in 1930 and that I have been in the thick of the Party work from 1921 on. I have also been honored, for a number of years past, with membership in the Executive Committees of the Communist International and of the Red International of Labor Unions.

THE FAILURE OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The Communist Party was born out of the ranks of the Socialist Party in the split in September 1919, the year of the foundation of the Communist International. The launching of the American Communist Party was patent proof that the Socialist Party, like its parent body, the Second International, had failed as the revolutionary organization of the working class.

The failure of the Socialist Party in the United States is evident. That party was organized more than 35 years ago. For more than a generation vast efforts were expended by

sincere and devoted militants to build it up; yet the Party still remains small, weak and stagnant. In 1903 the Socialist Party had 15,975 members and in 1935 it had only 19,121, or practically what it started with, and it is now rapidly losing many of these members in the present big national split. The Socialist Party vote in 1932 was 883,342, or less than the 897,011 it polled in 1912. Twenty-five years ago the Party's trade union influence was many times greater than it is at the present time. And so it is on all fronts: stagnation and decay.

Why the miserable showing of the Socialist Party over so many years? Is this the best that could be done for Socialism in the greatest capitalist country in the world? This is a very pertinent question. Self-criticism is a cardinal Leninist virtue and the Socialist Party has great need at present to practice it. Of course, there have been many great objective difficulties in the way of developing class consciousness and a mass party among the American working class. Some of these I have already indicated in earlier chapters, including the restraining effects of the higher American wage levels, greater economic opportunity, more formal democratic rights, the diversity of races and nationalities, etc. But in spite of these objective difficulties there was a substantial basis for the building of a strong revolutionary party, and if the Socialist Party has failed in this purpose the true explanation is to be found in the wrong line of its general policy, rather than in difficult objective conditions.

This is evident from a brief examination of the question. The American working class has long been subjected to a brutal, ferocious exploitation. The capitalists have literally coined their huge fortunes out of the blood and tears of the workers. And that the workers have bitterly resented this organized robbery is amply shown by their long history of determined struggle. Prior to the World War no country in the world, except Czarist Russia, had such a record of violent and fiercely fought strikes as the United States. This native working class fighting spirit was the raw material out

of which a strong revolutionary Party could have been made. But the Socialist Party proved glaringly incapable of doing this job.

To build itself a strong mass Party the Socialist Party needed to tackle boldly the great problems of mass education, organization and struggle confronting it. The working class was thoroughly saturated with capitalist illusions, the trade unions were in the hands of the deeply reactionary Gompers clique, the great masses were still tied to the two big capitalist parties. In such a situation, which was more difficult than that faced by the Socialist Party in any other major capitalist country, the American Socialist Party, in order to grow and to put itself at the head of these backward masses dominated by ruthless capitalist enemies, first of all had to be a fighting Party, a Party of the class struggle. That is, (1) it had to give active political leadership to the workers in their everyday fights for immediate and burning economic and political demands and in this way alone it could come forward as the real vanguard of the working class; and (2) it had to systematically educate its own membership and mass following in the principles of Marxian Socialism, and thus build up a strong body of revolutionary fighters, the very seed corn of the Party.

The whole history of the American labor movement demonstrates the validity of the policy of class struggle. The trade unions have always grown most in their periods of greatest militancy (typical example, 1933-34) and stagnated most in their periods of most intense class collaboration (example, 1923-29). The rapid and healthy growth of the Communist Party in numbers and influence (it has now about four times as many members as the much older Socialist Party) is directly due to its brave and tireless class struggle policy. And, highly significant is the fact that the best periods of growth of the Socialist Party itself were exactly those in which its policies, because of left wing pressure, took on most of a class struggle character.

From all this we can put our finger directly upon the

cause of the Socialist Party's failure historically. The reason lies precisely in the fact that, except on rare occasions, the Socialist Party has not carried on a policy of class struggle. On the contrary, its traditional course has been one of reformism, of opportunism, of class collaboration and sectarianism; and this was the path to stagnation and decay.

Ever since its foundation the Socialist Party has been dominated by middle class intellectuals of a rankly opportunist character—preachers, doctors, lawyers, professors, publicists and what not—who have been animated by revisionist theories of gradually turning capitalism into Socialism by peaceful penetration of the government and purchase of the industries. These non-proletarian elements have always conceived the Party pretty much as a tail to the petty bourgeois kite. They wanted to make of it a liberal or progressive party. Vote-catching and petty political reforms have been their whole line of action. They looked on the Party as a reformist propaganda organization. Consequently they played down every manifestation of working-class fighting spirit. They resisted the Party's coming forward as the militant strike leader and organizer of the unorganized; with their theory of neutrality they refused to fight the Gompersites for control of the trade unions, but instead made corrupt alliances with them; they pussyfooted on the question of industrial unionism; they took a sectarian attitude against the formation of a Labor Party which would have been a powerful weapon to awaken the workers to fight the Gompers regime; they compromised with the war; they condemned the Russian revolution; they plunged neck-deep into the disastrous B. & O. plan speed-up of the Coolidge era; they supported La Follette; they hailed F. D. Roosevelt as a near-Socialist, etc. And all the way along, throughout the whole history of the Socialist Party, these middle class intellectuals suppressed the teaching of Marxism to the Party membership and utilized all their power to check, repress and often drive out of the Party in masses, the very elements without whom the Party could not possibly be built, the left wing of the Party.

The general result of this opportunist policy was that the Socialist Party failed to become a strong revolutionary Party. It ducked and evaded and compromised every struggle and issue that the workers were basically interested in. By its weak policies it was unable to defeat its powerful capitalist enemies and their labor henchmen; hence, it could not secure the leadership of the masses and become their accepted Party. There could be no other outcome of the Socialist Party's long record of opportunist vacillations and abdication of working-class leadership than the Party's obvious failure and the eventual necessity of establishing a new and revolutionary Party.*

THE ORIGIN OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Communist Party did not suddenly spring, full-fledged, into being during the Socialist Party split of 1919. On the contrary, behind it lay a protracted period of gestation, a long time when it slowly refined its ideology and gathered its forces, amidst bitter struggle against the opportunist intellectuals who dominated the Socialist Party.

Hardly had the Socialist Party come into existence in 1901, as a result of the historically-justified split away from the deadly sectarianism of the Socialist Labor Party, than the fatal control of reformist doctors, lawyers, etc., asserted itself. And likewise, as the corrective to these baneful elements, the revolutionary left wing of the Party began slowly to take shape and to voice its program. With the passage of the years the cleavage between the right and left wings in the Party became more and more pronounced, until finally the inevitable break came in 1919.

Throughout this whole period the left wing fought relentlessly to make a revolutionary organization of the Socialist Party, and wherever the Party played an effective rôle in the class struggle the credit belonged mainly to the left wing. True the left wing program was always weighed down with "left" sectarianism, and these errors definitely checked the

* See my pamphlet, *The Crisis in the Socialist Party*.

progress of the Socialist Party; but its main line was nevertheless sound at heart. Its whole aim and tendency was to base the Party upon the principles of the class struggle, to make it really the political leader of the working class. And precisely in the fact that the left wing was defeated in these efforts by the opportunist leadership lies the explanation of the historical failure of the Socialist Party.

In the chapter on the Socialist Party I have dealt with one phase of this developing struggle within the Socialist Party, i.e., the 1909 split in the states of Oregon and Washington. This split was, of course, only one situation in the growing national fight to make the Socialist Party into a revolutionary Party. Important here is it to recall the disastrous consequences to the Party on the Pacific Coast of the 1909 split. The Socialist Party there was deeply injured by the loss of many of its best proletarian fighters; and the budding left wing, the very heart of the Party, was not only smashed organizationally but demoralized ideologically, as for the most part it liquidated itself into I. W. W. Syndicalism.

But the inevitable fight spread and intensified itself nationally under the leadership of Haywood and the Marcy-Kerr *International Socialist Review* group. It was deepened by the growing radicalization of the masses and a burning need for militant leadership by the Party. Eugene V. Debs was a voice of the left wing in these times, but he never gave it any practical support in its fight against the right opportunists. The left wing program of this stage was stated in Haywood's and Bohn's pamphlet, *Industrial Socialism*. It was a protest against the petty bourgeois intellectuals' domination of the Socialist Party and their rankly opportunist policies and it formulated a demand for a fighting proletarian program. This pamphlet contained many characteristic semi-syndicalist errors—such as underestimation of the rôle of the Party, illusions about dual industrial unionism, etc.—but the essence of it was the traditional and correct aim of the left wing to give the Socialist Party a policy of class struggle.

The deepening inner fight involved all sections of the Socialist Party, but was hottest in the West. It came to a national climax in the 1912 Socialist Party convention. The convention was filled with lawyers, doctors and preachers, and the left wing was defeated. Shortly afterward the great fighter, Bill Haywood, was formally excluded from the National Executive Committee by referendum.

The outcome of this fight was a real disaster to the Socialist Party. The deadly grip of the petty bourgeois leadership was strengthened and their opportunist policy more deeply entrenched. The Party dropped in membership from 118,045 in 1912 (the highest point it reached in all its history) to 79,374 in 1915. Its previous rapid advance in the trade unions was stopped dead and its election vote fell from 897,011 in 1912 to 585,113 in 1916. Thousands of the best proletarian elements, the real Party builders, including Haywood, quit the Party in disgust, never to return. The Party was drained of its best blood. And worst of all, as in 1909, the left wing itself became ideologically demoralized by its defeat and great numbers of militants went over outright to the camp of I. W. W. Syndicalism.

The 1912 split could not, however, be the decisive fight between the right and left wings in the S. P. The Second International, not yet discredited by the World War and the accompanying revolutionary struggles, still had prestige as the revolutionary organization of the working class, as the Party of Marx and Engels, and hence its ultra-opportunist American section also retained power to attract revolutionary workers. Besides, the left wing, still saturated with sectarianism and Syndicalist tendencies, was as yet insufficiently developed ideologically to build a separate revolutionary Party. But events were soon to cause a fundamental break between the right and the left and to call into being the Communist Party. These decisive developments were the World War, the Russian Revolution and the post-war revolutionary struggles in Germany and other European countries.

In Chapter XI, I have shown how the anti-revolutionary

attitude of the Second International towards these great events had split the Socialist movement in every country and thereby caused the formation of the Communist International on a world scale. The United States felt the full force of this whole development, which raised every fundamental issue of Marxian theory, strategy and tactics, and the long developing fight between the left and right wings of the American Socialist Party was thus brought to the breaking point.

On the vital question of the war, the left wing of the American Socialist Party violently opposed the whole course of the Second International, condemned the action of its parties for supporting the war, and strongly resisted America's entry into and prosecution of the war. But the right wing of the Party, under cover of radical phrases, compromised with the whole war situation in the typical reformist manner. This brought to an acute stage the struggle between the two groups.

The controversy over the Russian revolution added fuel to the growing conflagration. The rapidly growing left wing heartily supported the revolution and accepted its great lessons, together with the revolutionary principles laid down by Lenin. But the right wing hated the Russian revolution and all its works, and Hillquit truly expressed the world reformist point of view when he later on declared, "The Soviet Government has been the greatest disaster and calamity that has ever occurred to the Socialist Party."

The open betrayal of the revolution in Germany at the close of the war and the liquidation of the nascent German Soviets by the Socialist Party, which thus saved the capitalist system in Central Europe, and all of which treachery received the tacit or open support of the right wing leadership of the American Socialist Party, still further deepened the cleft within the Party, even as it did in all other countries.

The Socialist Party was thus hopelessly split ideologically by the reactionary course of its petty bourgeois national and international leaders. The long years of struggle within the Party had now come to a climax. It was the parting of the

ways between the conflicting tendencies within the Party; between the policies of class struggle and class collaboration; between the revolutionists who wanted to overthrow capitalism and the reformists who wanted to preserve it.

Inevitably the ideological split had to take organizational form; and logically the right wing, in line with its long fight to kill the left tendency, took the initiative also in rupturing the Party. It developed thus: The revolutionists, organized first in the Socialist Propaganda League (Boston, 1915) and later in the Left Wing of the Socialist Party (New York, June 1919), had the support of the majority of the Party membership and in 1919 elected 12 out of 15 members of the National Executive Committee of the S. P. But the right wing repudiated this election and, to control the approaching Emergency Convention, did much as the A. F. of L. Executive Council is doing with the C. I. O. in 1936; it suspended seven language federations and the whole Michigan Party organization. At the convention itself in Chicago, August 30, 1919, the rights, with the help of the police, expelled all known left delegates. The Party split was thus complete.

The 1919 split was even more disastrous to the Socialist Party than that of 1912. The right wing had at last ousted the militant left wing, the very life blood of the Party, and the numerous ruinous consequences to the Party quickly showed themselves. Within a year the Party's membership dropped from 104,822 to 26,766, and by 1927 it had fallen to but 7,425. The influence of the Party in the trade unions declined swiftly, and its vote in the Presidential elections of 1928, (262,805), was hardly more than 25% of its vote in 1920. The Party also plunged generally into political decay. With the left wing no more on hand to restrain them, the opportunist leaders of the Socialist Party completely abandoned all fight against the A. F. of L. reactionaries and joined with them in their whole program of B. & O. plan speed-up, labor banking, expulsion of Communists, anti-Soviet slander, etc. Thus, reduced almost to zero in num-

bers, influence and revolutionary principle, the Socialist Party harvested in full the inevitable dead fruit of its reformist policies and petty bourgeois leadership.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

In previous splits—1909 and 1912—the left wing, because of its ideological undevelopment, had either liquidated itself into I. W. W. syndicalism or had dribbled individually back to the Socialist Party. But not so in 1919. During the stirring world events of the past several years, the left wing was rapidly maturing theoretically. The growth of the left opposition internationally (Zimmerwald, Kienthal, etc.) and especially the victory of the Russian Revolution, as I have related earlier, had acquainted American left forces with the revolutionary principles of Leninism, which is the Marxism of the period of capitalist imperialism. The left wing, by 1919, had cleared up, or was rapidly doing so, its traditional errors on such fundamental questions as the role of the state, the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the seizure of power, the role of the Party and the trade unions, etc. In short, as A. Bittelman says, it had advanced “from vague Left Socialism and general proletarian militancy to the definite and solid foundations of Leninism.” * Now ideologically and organizationally strong enough, the left wing proceeded to organize its own Party, the Communist Party. In fact, the expelled lefts set up two Parties, the Communist Labor Party (August 31st) and the Communist Party (September 1st). Only small differences in principle separated these parties, however, so they were fused 14 months later, December 1921, under the Secretaryship of C. E. Ruthenberg.

In all the vital events of these times—the Socialist Party fight against the war, the formation of the Communist Party, etc.—the central left wing figure was Charles Emil Ruthenberg. Born in Cleveland on July 9, 1882, Ruthenberg was a devoted revolutionist and a clear-headed, resolute fighter. His name will be long preserved as one of the most capable

* *15 Years of the Communist Party.*

leaders of the American working class. He was General Secretary of the Communist Party from its organization in 1919 until his death, except during the two years that he spent in Sing Sing penitentiary for revolutionary activities. He died on March 2, 1927, at the age of 45 and now lies buried in the Kremlin, Moscow, side by side with many other brave revolutionary fighters.

The founding of the two Communist Parties was met by bitter persecution from the government. The year of their birth, 1919, experienced more strikes than any similar period in American history. It was only three weeks after the setting up of the two Parties that the great steel strike began. The whole country was in turmoil, and the so-called liberal Wilson government greeted the advance of the dreaded Communist movement in the United States by launching the savage Palmer "Red Raids" on November 7, 1919. Many halls and workers' homes were raided; revolutionary newspapers were confiscated and suppressed; the new Party units were ruthlessly broken up and their members slugged and arrested. According to official government figures, during the 1919-20 raids 4,138 workers were jailed and 505 deported. It was a real baptism of fire for the Communist movement. The effect of it was to drive the two young Parties underground and to reduce their previous vague and greatly overestimated membership practically to only the resolute and convinced Communists. At the conclusion of the Palmer terror the Communist membership had stabilized itself at about 10,000.

Besides the left wing of the Socialist Party, other revolutionary streams went towards making up the newly-forming Communist Party. During 1919-20 an important addition was the Haywood-Hardy-George-Smith minority group of the I. W. W. At the same time a number of militants from the Socialist Labor Party also joined. Then, during the middle of 1921, came the Trade Union Educational League group, with such outstanding figures as J. W. Johnstone, J. Manley and S. T. Hammersmark, and including the Jay Fox former Anarchist group. In the summer of 1921 the Socialist Party suf-

ferred another left split, losing the Workers Council group (Engdahl, Trachtenberg, Lore, Finnish Federation, etc.), who joined up with the Communist Party in December 1921. The latter date may be taken as practically concluding the foundation period of the Communist Party.

THE BEGINNINGS OF MASS WORK

At this time the Communist Party was no more than a revolutionary propaganda organization. But to make itself into a real Bolshevik Party and the leader of the working class it was imperative that the Party, in addition to carrying on revolutionary education, should become an active participant in the every-day struggles of the workers for their immediate economic and political demands. For the daily fight of the working class is the foundation and starting point for all revolutionary education and organization of the masses.

In order to carry on effectively this indispensable work the new Communist Party had to overcome a whole series of wrong tendencies which it had inherited from the past. The Party's fundamental revolutionary line was correct, but its application of this line was very impractical. The basic weakness in it was the traditional trend of the American left wing to sectarianism. This "left" sectarianism, largely syndicalist in character and of which De Leon was the principal theorizer, derived mainly from the inexperience of the left wing in actual mass leadership, its lack of theoretical development, the difficult objective conditions under which the revolutionary movement developed in general in the United States. The Socialist Labor Party, Industrial Workers of the World, S. L. of N. A., Left Wing of the Socialist Party, etc., had all been heavily saturated with such sectarianism and they largely passed it on to the new Communist Party.

The essence of this "left" sectarianism was an exaggerated belief in the power of revolutionary propaganda alone, due to a lack of understanding of the elementary fact that revolutionary propaganda can educate and organize the masses only

if it is linked up with and adjusted to the everyday struggles of the worker. The "left" sectarianism manifested itself by an impractical approach to the masses; the placing of advanced revolutionary slogans (usually twisted and distorted) that had no connection with the workers' immediate needs. This failure to adapt the revolutionary slogans to specific conditions resulted very largely in keeping the revolutionists apart from the masses and in condemning them to sterile, dogmatic, sectarian isolation over a period of many years.

Among the traditional types of American "left" sectarianism were the following: (a) rejection in principle of the struggle for immediate political demands; (b) anti-parliamentarism, or refusal to participate in government elections and political activities; (c) dual industrial unionism, or organization of ideal independent unions, instead of participation in existing mass unions; (d) anti-united front tendency, or failure and refusal to unite with natural allies (Progressives, Negroes, poor farmers, etc.), and agitation against the Labor Party in principle; (e) mechanical application in the United States of the revolutionary experiences of workers in other countries without due regard to the different situation; (f) illegalism and other forms of romantic revolutionary adventurism; (g) "God killing," or overstress and distortion of the religious question; (h) anti-Americanism, or ignoring and flouting of American traditions and culture. From its foundation, the C. P. had to wage war against these leftist tendencies.

In developing its practical mass policies, the Communist Party also has often had to combat the right deviation, the openly opportunistic, reformist tendency to compromise with capitalistic forces. But in the main its fight has been against the traditional American leftist tendency, which is opportunism covered with "left" phrases. The development of the American Communist Party can be measured by its progress in liquidating this leftist sectarianism in its mass work.

Even prior to the Party's organization in 1919, the fight against sectarianism had gotten well under way. Lenin led in

this. Lenin was doubly great as a leader in that he was not only a towering Marxian theoretician, but also the greatest of all practical revolutionary leaders. While theoretically analyzing capitalist imperialism, he at the same time worked out in detail the strategy and tactics to use in the fight against it, and then applied them victoriously in the struggle. Lenin in developing the Bolshevik line of the maximum mass struggle against capitalism, fired heavily into the right opportunist trend, the greatest danger to the revolution, but he also ruthlessly attacked the dangerous "left" sectarianism in all its various manifestations. His pamphlet, *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, is a devastating attack upon the sectarian deviation.

Therefore, as under Lenin's theoretical guidance, the budding American left wing strengthened itself regarding such essentials as the role of the capitalist state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Party, the trade unions, immediate demands, etc., it also began to shed its sectarian dual unionism, anti-parliamentarism, isolationism, utopianism, etc.; and to approach mass work in a more practical manner, on a broad united front basis. And in the years since the organization of the Communist International and under its capable leadership, the fight against the stubborn "left" sectarian tendency has gone on relentlessly and successfully, although not without occasional temporary setbacks.

The first important step of the Communist Party against sectarianism and towards mass work was the organization of the Workers Party in December 1921, as its legal expression. The Communist Party itself, however, continued to exist as an underground Party, it being commonly referred to as "Number one," while the Workers Party was "Number two," until the underground Party was finally liquidated at the end of 1923. The party, henceforth, everywhere became active in election struggles, and in 1924 it placed its first national candidates on the ballot. The C. P. endorsed the Labor Party and also began to turn its attention seriously to the question of the Negroes and the farmers. In August 1925, the Workers

Party adopted the name of Workers (Communist) Party and in March 1929 it was re-named the Communist Party.

With the affiliation of the T. U. E. L. forces in 1921 the party started immediately to take an active part in the many trade union struggles of the period. In Chapters XII and XIII, I have reviewed in detail these big movements: the great strikes of 1921-23, the fight for amalgamation, the Labor Party, recognition of the Soviet Union, etc. For the first time in American left wing history, the Leninist policy of the united front was applied and with immediate and huge success. This success was a striking practical demonstration of the applicability of the Communist class struggle program to the United States. Although small in membership, the Communist Party rapidly became a real factor in the American class struggle; while the Socialist Party, following its line of reformism, sank lower and lower into impotence.

But this rapid shedding of "left" sectarianism and advance to mass leadership by the Party soon received a rude setback through a combination of developments, all related to each other. The first was the beginning in 1923 of the Coolidge "prosperity" period which, with its many capitalist illusions, B. & O. plan, class collaboration, etc., sapped the fighting spirit of the workers and consequently reduced the Communist Party's field of mass action. The second was the disastrous split at the Chicago Labor Party convention, July 1923, which broke the united front of the Communists with the Progressives and thereby tended greatly to isolate the Communist Party from the masses. The third was the persistence, from 1923 on for several years, of a serious faction fight within the Party that weakened still further the Communist Party's mass work. The first two of these developments I have dealt with in previous chapters, so here I need only treat of the third, the faction fight.

THE PARTY FACTION FIGHT

From 1923 to 1929 the Communist Party was torn with factional strife. The Party divided itself into two warring

camps: the Ruthenberg-Pepper-Weinstone-Lovestone group, and the Bittelman-Browder-Dunne-Foster-Cannon group. Bitter was the fight; factional groups existed in every party unit; two national caucus committees functioned; Party discipline was supplanted by factional discipline, and Party interests were subordinated to the requirements of faction. At times there was a minor shifting of the lineup; a third faction, the Weinstone-Cannon group functioned for a while, but always the fight went on, with only a few periods of lesser intensity.

This prolonged factional struggle revolved around many issues: estimates of the general economic and political situation, united front tactics, attitude towards the Socialist Party and other reformists, the form of the Communist Party structure, the Labor Party, the Negro and farmer questions, the situation in the Soviet Union, etc. But all through the whole fight the question of trade union work occupied the center of the acrimonious discussion.

For several years the Party lived on the verge of a split. Its mass activities were greatly handicapped and lessened; its unity was constantly disrupted. The membership of the Party slowly declined to a low point of about 7,000 in 1929. Despite all this harmful factionalism, however, a constructive process was quietly in operation. The basic thing that happened during these difficult years, the hardest in the history of the Communist Party, was a gradual Bolshevization of the Party, a slow advance along the road from a revolutionary propaganda organization to a Party of mass class struggle. But this forward movement was hindered and delayed by several powerful factors, which were the main basis of the faction fight and of which the following three were the chief:

(a) The prevalent passivity of the masses: the Communist Party, like all working class organizations, grows best when the masses are in motion; but the 1923-29 period of Coolidge prosperity was one of the least mass struggles in all labor history. This tended to isolate the Party from the masses and this isolation was worsened by the recent Farmer-Labor

Party split. Consequently, the Party, unable to develop as freely as it would have done in a period of sharp class struggle, turned in upon itself, so to speak, and could make its slow progress only with the accompaniment of endless factional debate and struggle. It was no mere coincidence that the Party faction fight continued through, almost exactly, the Coolidge prosperity period with its minimum of mass struggle.

(b) Lack of Party homogeneity. A further fact intensifying the internal Party struggle was the lack of political homogeneity between the two leading Party groups. The special weakness of the Ruthenberg group, which had originated mainly in the Socialist Party left wing, was its lack of mass experience, most (but by no means all) of the Party's experienced trade union leaders being members of the Bittelman-Foster group. On the other hand, the greatest weakness of the Bittelman-Foster group, many of whose leaders came from the S. L. of N. A. and I. W. W., was its stronger admixture of Syndicalist tendencies.

(c) Non-Communists in the Party. The sequel showed that many non-Communist elements had been absorbed by the Party in its earlier years. These alien forces also intensified and embittered every phase of the factional struggle.

Year after year the fight raged on. Repeated decisions by the Comintern on individual political and organizational questions did not settle the chronic Party warfare. In 1923 and 1924, the Bittelman-Foster group controlled a majority of the Central Committee of the Party, while from 1924 to 1929 the Ruthenberg group, with the Communist International endorsement, constituted the Central Committee majority. By repeated decisions the Communist International confirmed the leadership of the Bittelman-Foster group in the mass trade union work. But the inner fight continued. The Communist Party was two parties, rather than one; and on several occasions it narrowly escaped an open rupture. In spite of this factional clamor and struggle, however, the basic healing process was proceeding steadily and it eventu-

ally brought about Party unity and health. This developed in the following manner.

First, in the factional years the ideological level of both major groups was considerably raised under the tireless instruction of the Comintern. Hence, in the course of those mass struggles that the Party's forces engaged in during those years and in the extended discussions that accompanied them, gradually the two major Party groups lost their special characteristics and approached more and more to a unified Communist position, particularly with regard to the much mooted trade union work.

Secondly, this basic Bolshevization and ideological unification of the Party's membership tended to expose, isolate and eliminate harmful non-Communist elements from the ranks. In 1923-24 the centrists, Salutsky, Lore, Askelli, etc., were dropped from the Party.* In 1928, J. P. Cannon and a few other members of the Bittelman-Foster group became avowed Trotskyites and were also expelled from the Party. And in 1929, Jay Lovestone (the Party Secretary) and John Pepper, leaders of the Ruthenberg group, (Ruthenberg had died two years before) developed right opportunist tendencies of a semi-Social Democratic character along the line of the international Brandler group. Censured by the Comintern, which formally dissolved all the factional groups, they violated its decision and tried to split the Party. But Jack Stachel, William W. Weinstone, Bob Minor, Max Bedacht, Mother Bloor and other outstanding members of their group refused to go along with this criminal enterprise and joined forces with the Bittelman-Foster group for war against the Lovestone splitters, some 250 of whom were finally either expelled from or quit the Party. The fight against Lovestone, following the expulsion of Cannon, broke down the factional walls practically overnight. Like magic, almost,

* In earlier stages of the Party history this cleansing process had also gone on. Thus had been eliminated the Keracher Proletarian Party group (abstract propagandists), the United Toilers (underground romanticists), etc.

the factional fight disappeared and the Party started rapidly along the path to unity.

Thirdly, this new-found Party unity was cemented and intensified by the awakening of the workers and the development of increased class struggles in the long crisis following the great industrial crash of October 1929. The Party now enjoys the firmest unity in all its history. The defeat of the Bukharin and Trotsky factions throughout the Communist International helped this unifying process.

A HEALTHY, GROWING, FIGHTING PARTY

During the seven years of economic crisis the Communist Party has proceeded at a faster pace with its ideological and organizational development. Under Comintern guidance it has made real strides in transforming itself from a propaganda organization into a Bolshevik leader of mass struggles. This progress has been, in general, a growth away from the Communist Party's remaining "left" sectarianism and toward a broad united front policy. The C. P. is the militant leader for the united front in every phase of the class struggle.

One of the Party's important united front advances, in addition to its liquidation of anti-parliamentarism, dual unionism, anti-united front attitudes, etc., is its more recent practical approach to the religious question, on the basis long ago laid by Lenin. In consequence, the anti-religious Communist Party is now to be found in close united front coöperation with dozens of churches and other religious organizations on questions of immediate economic and political interest to the toiling masses.

The C. P. is rapidly Americanizing itself by winning large numbers of native-born workers, and very important in this whole process is the Party's gradual shedding of the old-time sectarianism toward national traditoins and its adoption of a Leninist-Stalinist attitude on this vital matter. The Communist Party boldly challenges the right of fascists and other reactionaries to speak historically in the name of the American people. It correctly puts forward its own revolu-

tionary program as the inheritor and present-day expression of the revolutionary traditions and the century of democratic strivings of the toiling masses in this country. Its position on this question is summed up by the slogan, "Communism is 20th Century Americanism." * This attitude opens another door to the united front.

The Party is also redoubling its fight for a legal existence. In the light of American revolutionary traditions of 1776 and 1861, it demands the right to function freely as a mass revolutionary party. It repudiates accusations of advocating violence, and flings these back against the organized capitalist terrorist gangs of vigilantes, strikebreakers, K. K. K., etc.

In the preceding two chapters I have given an outline of some of the major mass struggles led or supported by the Communist Party forces in the crisis period, including the big 1930-33 movement of the unemployed, the veterans' and farmers' movements, the 1930 T. U. U. L. strikes and the many strike struggles of the unorganized and the trade unions in the 1933-35 period. These big mass movements, producing radical repercussions far and wide in the labor movement (of which the left turn in the Socialist Party and the development of the great C. I. O. movement are outstanding examples) had facilitated the broadening of the united front program of the Communist Party.

Now, more than ever, the Communist Party is playing an active role in the class struggle on a broad united front basis. Here I can mention only a few of its chief activities at the present time: It has mobilized a support of at least 5,000,000 workers and others in support of the Workers Unemployment Insurance Bill (H. R. 2827). It is playing an important part in the American Youth Congress, which at its convention in Cleveland, July 3, 1936, had 1400 delegates, representing a membership of 1,700,000. The Communist Party is likewise a vital factor in the American League Against War

* For the American Communist attitude on religion and national traditions, see E. R. Browder's books, *Communism in the United States*, (Chapter XXII), and *What Is Communism?* (Chapter I).

and Fascism, a movement which held its third congress in Cleveland, in January 1936, with an attendance of 2,070 delegates from 1840 organizations of 3,291,906 members. The Party's role was also one of central importance in the organization of the great united front National Negro Congress in Chicago, February 1936, of 817 delegates representing 1,200,000 members organized in trade unions, churches, youth clubs, etc. In all these united front movements the Communist Party is an official participant.

In the vitally important drive of the C. I. O. to organize the steel, auto, rubber and other industries the Communist Party is playing a big part by mobilizing all its many forces for active organizational work. In the developing Farmer-Labor Party movement the Communist Party is also a most important factor. This was acknowledged when, at the June 30, 1936, Farmer Labor Party conference in Chicago, attended by prominent leaders of the Minnesota Farmer Labor Party, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, many local labor parties, etc., the Communist Party delegates were officially seated.

Another most important activity of the Communist Party is its militant fight against the suspension of the C. I. O. by the A. F. of L. Executive Council. If, up to the present writing, 20 state federations, 70 city central bodies, several international unions and hundreds of local unions have protested the suspensions, a large share of the credit must go to the Communist Party, as the C. I. O. has displayed little activity in this respect and the S. P. has been quite dormant, as usual.

Besides all these broad movements, the Communist Party is also carrying on many other united front activities, with the Socialist Party, with company unions, American Legion units, Townsend clubs, etc. The Party is also playing an important and increasing role in the great awakening that is taking place among the intellectuals, more and more of these elements becoming involved in the Party's united front activities. Especially, through the Young Communist League

are the Communists also making headway among the vital strata of the youth. In short, the Communist Party is becoming a major factor in the American class struggle.

Wherever the fight is the hottest there the Communist Party is to be found, organizing the toilers for a united front stand against the exploiters. Due to its correct policies, the Party enjoys a healthy unity and grows steadily. Its recent paid membership figures show: 1930—7,500; 1931—9,000; 1932—14,000; 1933—18,000; 1934—26,000; 1935—30,000; 1936—41,000, plus 13,000 members in the Young Communist League, or 54,000 in all.

These accomplishments, of course, are very modest in comparison with the great revolutionary tasks ahead. Besides, the Communist Party has many glaring weaknesses and insufficiencies still to be corrected. But the important thing is that the Party is on the right track, its fundamental program of class struggle is correct, its policies of a broad united front are successful, and it is learning to apply them effectively. This is amply proved by the revolutionary Communist Party's record of growth and progress, in comparison with the historical failure of the reformist Socialist Party. It all goes to show that in the many years' long fight between rights and lefts in the American revolutionary movement the lefts were correct. Not along the road of reformism, but of class struggle is the way the workers must win the victory.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The Communist Party seeks to set up united front action with the Socialist Party; but has only modest success, despite the fact that this issue played a prominent role in the 1936 Socialist Party split. Although the Socialist Party leaders have coöperated with the Communist Party on several questions, such as labor defense, street demonstrations, etc., and have aided in amalgamating the two Socialist and Communist-led unemployed organizations, they have nevertheless categorically rejected the Communist Party's proposal for a joint S. P.-C. P. ticket in the national elections, and they

make unbending opposition to any general united front policy with the Communist Party. Besides, they have obstructed and even sabotaged vital united front struggles in which the Communist Party plays an important part, including the Farmer-Labor Party, youth, Negro and anti-fascist movements.

Meanwhile, the Socialist Party itself flounders along in crisis and demoralization. During the past few years, under the pressure of the awakening broad masses, the Socialist Party membership has been undergoing a movement to the left. This manifests itself as a strong growth of revolutionary sentiment in the organization and it resulted in the partial defeat of the "old guard" at the 1936 Socialist Party convention. But the Socialist Party, despite its new left turn, has by no means freed itself from the opportunism that caused its historical failure. Much of this opportunism still exists and, in fact, by taking on a sectarian dress of radical phrases, has assumed new and dangerous forms.

The parties of the Second International are not all moving in the same direction after the bankruptcy of reformism under the blows of the capitalist crisis and fascism. There are three distinct tendencies: First, there is the group of Socialist Parties (France, Spain, Italy, Austria, etc.) and minorities elsewhere that are developing class struggle programs, expressed by united front action with the Communists, the building of the Peoples Front, etc. Second, there are various parties (England, Scandinavia, Germany, etc.) and minorities in other parties that have learned nothing and that still cling to the traditional and discredited class collaboration policy of the Second International. Third, there is a minority in all the Socialist Parties, a tendency which supplants the old open right opportunism by a sectarian opportunist policy of radical phrase-making, or ultra-leftism. The Socialist Party of the U. S. is showing dangerous signs of falling into this third, sectarian category.

The sectarian danger in the American S. P. was greatly increased by its recent absorption of the Trotskyite group.

At a time when these elements are proved before the world to be counter-revolutionary terrorists, the S. P. sees fit to take them to its bosom. The Trotskyites will tend seriously to cause the S. P. to degenerate into an anti-Communist, anti-Soviet sect, and it will drive the best worker elements out of the Party and weaken its contacts with the masses. A couple of years ago the French Socialist Party also made the mistake of swallowing the noisome Trotsky group; but it soon had to relieve itself of the poisonous, indigestible mess, and the American S. P. will have to do the same if it is to grow into a healthy mass party.

The Socialist Party is now in a state of theoretical confusion, generally making toward sectarianism. The viewpoint of Norman Thomas, its outstanding leader, is a reformist melange of "left" liberalism and Bernstein revisionism, heavily tintured with Trotskyism, and this incongruous mixture he calls Socialism. Thomas is even less a Marxist than the old-time right opportunist S. P. leader, Hillquit. He blithely challenges the fundamentals of Marx and Engels, and as for the basic theoretical work of Lenin and Stalin, it has left him almost untouched. His program boils down to a curious combination of both right and "left" sectarianism. Consequent upon its theoretical confusion, the Socialist Party also lacks organizational unity: it consists of a number of conflicting groups of "militants," "old guardists," Trotskyites, Love-stoneites, etc., whose deepening factional struggles are tearing the vitals out of the Party.

The heart of the Socialist Party's present-day, growing sectarianism is Thomas' theory that, as capitalism is breaking down, partial economic and political demands are now relatively unimportant and that the immediate question at issue is Socialism versus capitalism. "The immediate demand of Socialists," says he, "is Socialism." This sounds very revolutionary coming from Thomas who only three years ago blessed Roosevelt's program. But it is actually only radical phrasemongering. In reality, never was the question of partial demands so vital as now, faced as the working masses are with

violent attacks on their living standards and civil rights by the growing reaction. And, as the Communist Party correctly stresses, a militant defense of the workers' immediate interests is the starting point of all revolutionary work; the gateway to the struggle for Socialism. Thus, to take a striking example, by militantly defending their democratic liberties, the Spanish workers are at the same time advancing rapidly the revolutionary fight for Socialism. But by soft-pedaling immediate economic and political demands and concentrating the whole struggle abstractly for Socialism, Thomas weakens the general fight of the workers, isolates the Socialist Party from the masses, and plays directly into the hands of the Hearsts, who seek to scare wavering elements by picturing every fight of the workers for civil rights or wage improvements as a threatening revolution. It is also water in the mill of the counter-revolutionary Trotskyites who are seeking to control the S. P.

The sectarian trend in the Socialist Party also greatly increases the membership losses in the present split with the right wing "old guard." One cannot fight right opportunism with "left" sectarianism. The effect of Thomas' trying to do so is to drive into the arms of the "old guard," or out of the Party through other channels, large numbers of good elements.

Where Thomas' sectarian theory leads to in practice was seen in the 1936 national elections. The great capitalist interests, who embody the real threat of fascism in this country, were almost solidly united behind Landon to defeat Roosevelt who, notwithstanding all his vacillations and concessions to them, they find unsatisfactory. Manifestly, the task, as the Communist Party has pointed out, was to warn the masses to defeat Landon while at the same time condemning Roosevelt's policies. With its own candidates in the field—Browder and Ford—the C. P. attacked Landon as the key agent of incipient fascism. But the newly-fledged, super-revolutionary Thomas wanted none of this. He talked abstractedly of the fascist danger, but it had no significance for him that the chief

fascist in the United States, Hearst, had become the leader of the Republican Party and had hand-picked its candidates for President and Vice-President. In fact, Thomas actually gave objective aid to Hearst by failing to signalize Landon as the main spokesman of the fascist danger. Thomas' only advice to the workers to counter this dangerous Hearst fascist maneuver was to vote the Socialist Party ticket for Socialism. Thus the Socialist Party reduced its anti-fascist fight to zero, put itself in direct conflict with the interests and activities of the great masses of workers, and set out squarely on the road further into the swamp of sectarian reformism.

The Socialist Party's policy towards the threatening war is also a vestige of its reformist past, although it is glossed over with a sectarian show of radicalism. Briefly the war situation is this: (1) fascist Germany, Japan and Italy are developing a great bloc of nations for a war offensive against the Socialist Soviet Union, and they also contemplate eventual assaults against the capitalist democracies of France, England, Czechoslovakia, Spain, the United States, and also various colonial countries; (2) if successful this attack would be a crushing blow to the workers in every country: it would extinguish the last semblance of civil rights in Europe, reduce the living standards of the toiling masses to coolie levels in the capitalist countries and drown the Soviet government in the greatest blood bath in history; (3) the Soviet Union's peace policy correctly, therefore, seeks to develop a combined defensive by the Socialist and democratic forces of the world to resist the menacing fascist offensive and to maintain peace, and thereby not only to preserve the workers' standards and democratic liberties in capitalist countries and also Socialism in the U. S. S. R., but likewise tremendously to accelerate the Socialist movement everywhere.

But Norman Thomas, with a pseudo-radical gesture, sweeps aside this obviously correct revolutionary strategy. Echoing the "red imperialism" slanders of Kautsky and the lies of Hitler that the U. S. S. R. is the source of the war danger, he denounces the Communists as crusaders for a

"holy war." He sneers at the struggle being led by the Soviet Union against the fascist aggressors as only so many preparations for an eventual "good" war between capitalist nations,* and then plumps for the American imperialist policy of "neutrality." Roosevelt's "neutrality" policy, which Thomas supports, cannot keep the U. S. out of war, and his "good neighbor" policy is equally fruitless; for one might as well try to make friends with a mad dog as to be "good neighbors" with the fascist aggressors. America can only keep out of war by helping the peace-striving nations keep war out of the world. Thomas' reactionary attitude towards the war danger constitutes a shameful surrender before Hitler's offensive, an abandonment of the embattled European workers and a sacrifice of the world Socialist cause. It can only compromise the Socialist Party in the eyes of the American toiling masses and weaken its general influence.

Thomas' retreat before the fascist war attack in Europe is typical of his whole outlook. He is a confirmed prophet of pessimism and defeatism. In every phase of sharp class struggle he always manages to find the road of inaction and surrender. But fortunately his way is not the way of the masses. For them the class struggle is not merely a matter of philosophical speculation: their very lives and liberties are at stake, and they will fight. Numerous examples might be cited of Thomas' non-struggle policies. Thus, for instance, when Roosevelt promulgated his N. R. A., Thomas called upon the workers not to strike. Happily, however, they disregarded this counsel of passivity and carried through successfully one of the greatest strike waves in American history. Again, in his book, *As I See It*, Thomas was at great pains to show that armed action by the workers was rendered impossible by the development of the airplane and other modern military weapons; but the workers in Spain, against whom the great bulk of the trained army revolted, are giving a glorious negative to Thomas' surrender propaganda. And now in his new book, *After the New Deal—What?*, Thomas

* *After the New Deal—What?*, p. 218.

not only sees fascism as inevitable for the United States following the next serious economic crisis, but more or less universal after the world war that is now threatening. But the workers will also disappoint this monumental pessimism of Thomas. They will have a big word to say before fascism can possibly succeed in this country, and what realist can doubt that the next world war, instead of being followed by a spread of fascism, will give birth to a new wave of proletarian revolutions that may well crack the capitalist system all over Europe? Thomas' new sectarianism has its roots in his basic pessimism, his glaring lack of faith in the fighting ability of the working class and its allies. It is an escape from the hard realities and tasks of the class struggle into the easy realm of satisfying oneself with glittering radical generalities. And the working class will not follow Thomas along this sectarian path of inaction and surrender any more than it has along similar fatal roads he has indicated.

In the Socialist Party of the Thomas regime, among the many reformist hangovers from the past is the Socialist Party leadership's opposition to the united front. They yield on this point only when their membership compels them to. Their resistance to joint action with the Communist Party, despite Thomas' attempt to hide its real meaning in a cloud of glib words, is essentially a continuance of the many years' long war of the right opportunists against the left wing, the fatal policy which did so much to bring the Socialist Party to its present lowly status. The American Socialist Party's anti-united front policy is in line with that of the most reactionary sections of the Second International. It is the policy of the German opportunists who rejected the Communist united front to fight Hitler and who still refuse to learn the recent bitter lessons of working class division. The logic of the present Socialist Party anti-united front policy would be for the workers of the various groups and parties in Spain and France to liquidate their Peoples Fronts * and to revert to

* Thomas, who supported the MacDonald and Hindenburg governments, which were alliances of the Socialists with the big bourgeoisie, refuses to

the old Socialist Party reformist policy of isolated action which caused such havoc in Germany and elsewhere.

Another festering sore in the S. P. is that Party's generally reactionary policy toward the U. S. S. R., as well as towards its peace policy. This is a direct descendant of the bitter anti-Sovietism of the Hillquit "old guard." The *Socialist Call* is a happy hunting ground for Zam, the Trotskyites and various other professional slanderers of the Soviet Union, whose lies are of a piece with those of Hearst and Green. And Thomas' own attitude with regard to the U. S. S. R. or "Russia," as he calls it, is about 1% grudging endorsement and 99% cynical criticism. Such a reactionary position towards the sole Socialist country not only injures the U. S. S. R., but also, and especially, it undermines the Socialist Party itself by sapping its integrity and by antagonizing the most revolutionary elements in the working class.

The Socialist Party of today also has not yet broken with that generation-long disaster for itself: opportunist petty bourgeois control. The Party is still run by lawyers, preachers, doctors, etc., despite the defeat of the "old guard." Thus in the new N. E. C. of 11 members only one is a worker, and he is a trade union official. Compare this, for example, with the Political Committee of the Communist Party, which also has 11 members, all of whom are workers.

In previous pages I have shown what a fatal reformist mistake it was over a period of many years for the Socialist Party that it had a sectarian anti-Labor Party policy. This opposition to the Labor Party in principle was a real hindrance to the growth of working class political consciousness and organization in general and to Socialist Party membership and influence in particular. The present-day Socialist Party leadership has modified only very little this injurious policy; chiefly it has but glossed it over with radical phrases. Its endorsement of the Farmer-Labor Party is mostly lip-service. It does not give the masses real leadership on this

heartily endorse and give real support to the governments of France and Spain, which are backed by the Peoples Front.

vital question but acts as a wet blanket everywhere. The Socialist Party has not substantially helped to build the many new local and state Farmer-Labor Parties, but has been a distinct hindrance to them. With protestations of super-revolutionary purity, it declined even to attend the May 30 Farmer-Labor Party conference in Chicago, called by the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party. The Socialist Party still clings pretty much to the reformist illusion that the Farmer-Labor Party is a rival, and at the S. P.'s recent convention 64 delegates (against 119) voted antagonism to the Labor Party on principle.

In its trade union work the new regime in the Socialist Party has broken with the old reformist policy, so harmful to the Socialist Party for a generation, of "neutrality" towards the unions. But the Party's general approach to the practical questions confronting the workers (Labor Party, fascism and war, the Soviet Union, the united front, etc.) is so narrow and sectarian that its new attitude towards the trade unions as such has not helped much. In fact, the Socialist Party has recently suffered such a catastrophic decline in its trade union influence that it has almost entirely lost the leadership even of those traditional Socialist unions, the needle trades.

To sum up briefly the situation of the Socialist Party. In the beginning of this chapter I pointed out that the inability of the Socialist Party to build itself into a strong revolutionary party in its long history could be reduced to two major causes: (1) its failure to come forward aggressively as the mass leader of the working class in its struggles for everyday economic and political demands; (2) its failure to educate and develop a solid body of trained revolutionaries as the brain and backbone of the Party. Can it be said therefore that the Socialist Party, especially since its recent left turn, has liquidated these two fatal weaknesses, the poison fruits of opportunism? To this question the answer must be a categorical, no! First, as we have seen, the Socialist Party, although it has partly broken with the old reformist conception of the Party merely as a propaganda-electoral machine,

still fails to act as the militant political leader of the working class in its daily battles, and its present deepening sectarianism tends to push it more and more out of the struggle and onto the sidelines. Secondly, the Socialist Party leadership, itself hopelessly confused theoretically, is incapable of educating a corps of revolutionists to serve as the foundation of the Party. The opportunism of the Socialist Party remains, but in changed forms. Hence, it must be said that with its present policies the Socialist Party can neither be united nor built into a mass organization. Unless they are corrected the Socialist Party will stand threatened by the decay and mummification that is the fate of the sectarian Socialist Labor Party and the Industrial Workers of the World, or worse yet, to sink into the swamp of counter-revolutionary Trotskyism.

Nevertheless, the situation in the Socialist Party is not altogether negative. On the contrary, there is now a new and genuine left spirit developing among the Socialist Party rank and file and lower leadership. This tendency, however haltingly, presses in the direction of a correct Leninist-Stalinist line of class struggle, through the complete liquidation of the reformist policies that ruined the Socialist Party over so many years, as well as the doing away with the present reformist sectarian tendencies. This is the basically healthful tendency in the Socialist Party and the hard lessons of life will increasingly strengthen its force.

The Communist Party greets and supports this leftward turn in the Socialist Party for the good and obvious reason that every increase in revolutionary sentiment and organization is fundamentally advantageous. The Communist Party advocates immediate united front action with the Socialist Party; but it goes further and also works for eventual amalgamation of the two parties on the basis of a class struggle program. Such united action and organization would greatly increase the power of the American revolutionary movement.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ROAD AHEAD

THE world today presents a picture of the capitalist system in decay. Devastating economic crises, huge unemployment, mass starvation, great strikes, revolutionary People's Front movements, wide colonial upheavals, growing fascism and cultural reaction, threatening war danger;—all these phenomena, which constantly increase in tempo of development, are unmistakable signs of the breakdown of an order of society that has outlived its time: capitalism. They are also the birth pangs of the new social system that is coming into life: Socialism. And the greatest of all signs of the downfall of the capitalist system and the coming of Socialism is the establishment and rise of the Soviet government.

Capitalism, which is in its last stage of imperialism, now faces destruction as a world economic-political system because of the elementary fact that it is no longer able to develop the productive forces of society; for when a social system finds itself in such a position it is doomed. Capitalist society, based upon private ownership of the industries and natural resources and organized under the political rule of the bourgeoisie, cannot provide further the means for indispensable economic growth. Its period of easy development and expansion is over. It now stagnates and even retrogresses economically and forces hundreds of millions of workers, small farmers and middle class elements into a deepening starvation. It generates a terrific pressure of the economic forces against the limiting capitalist order. The increasing pressure takes on acute political form; it is explosive in character and it will inevitably blow the whole political structure of capitalism to bits and thus, by revolution, clear the way for a free growth of the economic forces and mass well-being under

the system of Socialism. The turmoil, struggle and crisis that we see on all sides throughout the capitalist world are the earlier stages of this political explosion or revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system.

THE ACHILLES HEEL OF CAPITALISM

The impossibility of capitalism to substantially develop further the productive forces of society is concretely expressed mainly in the basic and incurable (under capitalism) contradiction between the constantly expanding power of the workers and farmers to produce commodities and the inability of the restricted capitalist markets to absorb these commodities. It is the conflict between the toilers' producing power and their purchasing power. That is, in plain language, the capitalists rob the workers and peasants so much (through wages, prices, taxes, etc.) that the latter cannot purchase back what they have produced; whereupon the capitalists find in their hands such a plethora of riches that they can neither consume, waste nor find markets to absorb them. With every advance in industrial and agricultural technique, on the one hand, and the spread of industrialism into many new countries, on the other, this problem of over-production—that is, production beyond the purchasing power of the capitalist world market—becomes more and more acute.

The capitalist system has many basic flaws, economic and political contradictions which constantly tend to tear it asunder, but this conflict between producing and purchasing power is the most elementary and explosive of them all. It is the mainspring of the far-reaching and deepening struggle between capitalists and workers for a greater share of the latter's products; it intensifies (by its irresistible demands for markets) the fight between capitalist groups in a given country; it is the very core of the growing danger of a new world war; it is generating the social forces that will destroy the capitalist system.

Karl Marx, 90 years ago, pointed out and analyzed this

fatal contradiction of capitalism and its revolutionary implications. But capitalism then had before it a wide field of free development, industrializing the handicraft trades, developing whole new industries, conquering colonial markets, etc.; so the sinister contradiction between producing power and market demand was deeply obscured. Capitalist (and revisionist Socialist) economists everywhere, therefore, ridiculed Marx. But now, with the period of capitalist development obviously drawing to a close, these same schools of economists are compelled to recognize the great contradiction between the producing and purchasing power of the masses. They all talk about its disastrous effects, even if they do refuse to accept Marx's ruthless analysis of its revolutionary consequences.

The entire course of world capitalist development tends to sharpen this contradiction. Intensified exploitation of the toiling masses by the capitalists in their insatiable greed for profits makes wider and wider the gap between what the masses can produce and what they are able to buy back of their products. This fact, taken in connection with the other disintegrating tendencies inherent in capitalism—planless production, acute competition, imperialist aggression, etc.—forces the capitalist system ever deeper into its engulfing general crisis.

This whole process is brought clearly to light in the United States. Both Hoover and Roosevelt told us militantly that the key to economic recovery was to increase the purchasing power of the masses. But notoriously under Hoover the buying power of the workers and farmers catastrophically declined through unemployment, wage cuts, fall of agricultural prices, etc. Under Roosevelt, it is true that, in the aggregate, there has been some increase in mass purchasing power through creating jobs by the government work—relief to farmers and unemployed, and the gradual rise in industrial production. Nevertheless, basically, the fatal gap between producing and purchasing power has continued to widen. This is especially evident in the case of the millions of indus-

trial workers. Due to lagging wage scales and rising costs of living, real wages for employed workers as a whole are about the same as when Roosevelt took office. But, on the other hand, the productivity of labor in manufacturing industries per man-hour has increased 30% since 1932 *: all of which means a widening gap between producing and buying power.

The New Deal has brought huge increases in profits for the great capitalists, but it has failed to fundamentally improve the position of the toiling masses. It has not abolished unemployment—10,000,000 are still out of work and a total of 18,000,000 are dependent on relief; it has facilitated greatly intensified exploitation of the employed workers; it has not improved the living standards of the lower categories of farmers. At most, it has only tided the masses over from actual starvation during the depth of the crisis. In short, the New Deal has not lessened the spread between mass purchasing power and mass producing power, but has increased it. Thus it has not weakened the basic cause of the capitalist crisis, but considerably strengthened it.

Although many capitalist countries are now experiencing a decided easing of the long economic crisis, this is no more than the upward phase of the periodic cyclical crisis within the framework of the deepening general crisis of the capitalist system as a whole. Such recovery as has taken place is largely artificial, feverish and unhealthy. It rests very much upon replacement of worn-out capital goods, huge war orders, and government relief work. There is little or no real expansion of the capitalist system by the necessary investment of new capital (new capital issues in the U. S. in March 1936, were only 8% of what they were in 1929), and without such capital investment as an outlet for its piling up surpluses of production, capitalism must strangle on its mass of unconsumable commodities. The present economic improvement, in the U. S. as well as in other capitalist countries, is only temporary in character and is but a prelude to a new collapse,

* Labor Research Association, *Economic Notes*, July 1936.

far more devastating in its effects, industrial and political, than that of 1929.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS

The only solution of the deadly capitalist crisis is its revolutionary liquidation. This means that the proletariat and its farmer and petty bourgeois allies must break the political power of the ruling capitalist class and socialize the banks, the major industries, and the land. Production for private profit will thereby be abolished and production for use established. The exploitation of the toiling masses will cease. With the toilers as a whole receiving the full product of their labor, minus what is necessary to operate the public services and extend the industries, the capitalist limitation upon their buying power will be ended and the fetters will at the same time be stricken from the now-imprisoned productive forces. Instead of warring against each other as under capitalism, the power to produce and the power to consume will automatically balance and grow together. This, in broad outline, is the economic foundation of the Socialist system, the intermediate stage between capitalism and Communism.

With the solution of the basic economic contradiction of capitalism (the conflict between the expanding productive forces and the contracting markets) and the class rule of the capitalists broken, there will disappear the innumerable other miseries and conflicts of capitalism. Socialist production will be planned and will proceed upon a steady and rapid upward course, without the devastating periodic economic crises peculiar to capitalism. The well-being of the toiling masses of factory and farm will be automatically advanced as production increases in volume and cheapness. Unemployment will cease. Social classes will disappear, and with them the class struggle. Strikes will become a thing of the past. Nations, having no further cause to exploit and repress each other, will live side by side in lasting peace and coöperation. Racial and religious hatred will die out. Science, litera-

ture and art will at last be freed from their age-long bondage to the ruling class and will experience a vast development. For the first time in human history there will be real democracy and freedom.

The Soviet Union is a living proof of the correctness of the analysis and revolutionary Socialist program worked out by Marx and Engels three generations ago. In November 1917, the Russian workers and peasants, led by the Communist Party, drove out the landlords, capitalists and other exploiters, took the governing power of one-sixth of the earth into their own hands and then socialized the industries and the land. Now they are steadily forging ahead to happiness and well-being. The U. S. S. R. has no unemployment or economic crisis, although the rest of the world is prostrated economically and tens of millions walk the streets without jobs. While the capitalist industries of the world stagnate, those in the Soviet Union flourish: in 1935 the U. S. S. R. increase in industrial production was 23%. Since 1928 it has gone up 275%. No capitalist country has ever experienced such swift industrial growth. With the hordes of profit-eating parasites liquidated there is no problem of markets, but only the temporary one of developing the producing power of the masses in a formerly backward country. With exploitation of man by man abolished, the many peoples of the U. S. S. R. live in peace and harmony together, the Soviet Union being free of anti-Semitism and all other forms of national minority persecution. By the same token, the U. S. S. R. is the only country in the world founded upon a program of peace, as its whole system of organization is basically opposed to imperialism and completely excludes the struggle for colonies, markets, spheres of influence, etc., that are the main causes of modern war. And as the capitalist countries turn more and more to fascist terrorism, demagoguery and cultural reaction, the Soviet Union develops an ever-more inclusive democracy (exemplified by its new constitution) and a broad mass culture of science and art. In a word, the Soviet Union has broken with the ages-old system of slavery that has kept

the masses for so long in misery, poverty and servitude; it has found the basic solution to the great economic and political problems of mankind and it is now blazing the way for all humanity to that rational and happy system of society worthy of human beings, and for which the best minds of man have dreamed and fought throughout history.

The U. S. S. R. has been able to give the world this practical demonstration of the validity of Socialism only after the most incredible struggles and hardships. No people have ever been so severely put to the test as the Russian workers and peasants. They have literally had a world of difficulties to overcome. Theirs was the "impossible" task of establishing Socialism in a country with only a fragment of industry and whose agriculture was still in the wooden plow stage. Moreover, the country had been ravaged and ruined by seven years of imperialist and civil war, and it has remained ringed about by a hostile capitalist world eager to grasp at any desperate measure to hinder or destroy the new-fledged Socialist society. The Russian toilers also had to be pioneers in working out the huge and unique technical problems of Socialist organization and upbuilding in these difficult conditions, as all social experience offered them no guides to go by. They bravely faced war, starvation, pestilence, economic collapse, cultural backwardness, organized sabotage of their industries and assassination of their leaders; and they won through every obstacle. With their great Communist Party, brilliantly headed first by Lenin and then by Stalin, they have conquered all these difficulties, which the capitalist world had declared to be a thousand times impossible.

For many years, as the Russian toilers valiantly struggled against the innumerable huge obstacles lying in the path of Socialism, the capitalists of the world, and their reformist agents in the workers' organizations were able to misrepresent the revolutionary process going on, because this process was entirely new to the workers in capitalist countries and often difficult to understand. Every step forward by the U. S. S. R. was distorted and lied about by its enemies, from the

Brest-Litovsk treaty, the N. E. P. and the first 5-year plan, to the affiliation of the U. S. S. R. to the League of Nations, the Franco-Soviet military alliance, the growth of the Stakanovite movement, etc. With a show of much plausibility, the anti-Soviet forces were able to point to the Russians' poverty and hardships as proof of the unworkability of Socialism. And many backward toilers believed them. But now, as the Soviet Union forges ahead so rapidly to prosperity and happiness, the vast network of anti-Soviet slanders are being swept aside like swamp mists before a fresh breeze. So plain is the success of the new Socialism that even the most backward must recognize it. The U. S. S. R. has become a great beacon of hope and guidance to the exploited masses all over the capitalist world and its revolutionizing influence before them is far-reaching and ever-increasing.

THE WORLD GROWTH OF FASCISM

In its basic features—Workers and Farmers Government (dictatorship of the proletariat), socialization of the banks, industry and the land, abolition of the profit system, etc.—the Socialist system developed by the Russian toiling masses is applicable, with necessary local adaptations, to every capitalist country. More: Socialism is the only possible solution for the great economic and political crisis facing society; it is the sole way for mankind to get out of the murderous jungle of capitalism and to enter into a period of peaceful development, well-being and culture.

But Socialism can be established only after the bourgeoisie have been overthrown; for the capitalists and their henchmen, all those parasitic elements who live by preying upon the laboring masses, will have nothing to do with this revolutionary solution of society's agonies except to resist it frantically. These anti-social elements have only one thing in mind: to preserve their own privileges, wealth and power, regardless of the fate of the great mass of the people. Cost what it will they must have their huge estates, their pal-

aces, their yachts and their autocratic power. Their idle and luxurious life must be maintained even though tens of millions of workers starve in unemployment, babies die like flies in the slums, industry stagnate and agriculture decay, the bulk of humanity degenerate from bad social conditions, culture revert back to the status of the middle ages, democracy be abolished, the world be torn with civil war and international conflicts that slaughter millions upon millions, and although a thousand other calamities shriek out the historic fact that capitalism has become a brake upon progress, the mass executioner of the people, a growing disaster to the human race, and that to prolong its obsolete life threatens the very existence of civilization.

In the earlier stages of capitalism, when this system could mitigate the destructive forces of its own inner-contradictions, economic and political, by being able to find new markets through expansion into new industries and new countries, the capitalists could maintain their power within the framework of a limited democracy. They conceded the toiling masses a certain minimum of civil and economic liberty—the rights to vote and hold office, to organize unions and to strike, etc.; they also made wage concessions to the upper, skilled layers of the working class. The toiling masses, with their heads stuffed full of carefully cultivated capitalist illusions and superstitions, largely acquiesced in this situation and their revolutionary organization proceeded only slowly.

Now, however, the picture is radically changed. The general crisis of capitalism deepens, especially since the world war. The economic system is strangled and disintegrated. The toiling masses are thrown into starvation, and revolutionary sentiment grows rapidly amongst them. More and more they organize for attack upon the capitalist system. The ruling classes, determined at all costs to continue the mass exploitation, increasingly realize that they must discard their old methods of rulership. Their answer to all problems is to ruthlessly use force and violence. They abolish parliamentary government, smash the trade unions, outlaw the workers'

parties, break up all petty capitalist and farmer opposition, reduce the living standards of the industrial and farming masses, and subsidize, cultivate and strengthen the capitalist monopolies. In short, they abolish the old capitalist democracy and set up a naked capitalist dictatorship, based upon military terror, extreme demagoguery and intensified exploitation of the toilers.

Together with attempting to liquidate their internal contradictions by increased repression and robbery of the toiling masses, the capitalist rulers seek also to solve their external, or foreign, contradictions by force. Cultivating a rabid nationalism and ruthlessly regimenting their people as cannon fodder, they embark on campaigns of intense imperialist aggression against other countries to wrest from them territory and markets. Thus they greatly sharpen the ever-present capitalist war danger. The fascist governments are always outstandingly truculent, warlike, treacherous and murderous. The rape of China by Japan; the conquest of Ethiopia by Italy; the brazen preparations of Germany to seize the Ukraine, are the inevitable manifestations of aggressive fascist imperialist policy. The growth of fascism confronts humanity not only with the horrible prospect of gigantic mass degradation and enslavement, but also the lowering menace of a new world slaughter many times more disastrous than the last one.

This is fascism, the rotten fruit of monopoly capitalism, of the decaying capitalist imperialism. And towards this fascist goal the decisive elements in the capitalist class—the great bankers, industrialists, landed interests, etc.—in all countries are moving as capitalism's general crisis grows more acute. The tempo of their development is dependent upon the depth and intensity of the capitalist crisis in the respective countries. Fascism is the desperate effort of finance capital, which has inveigled many smaller capitalists, large sections of the deluded middle class and many backward workers to help it beat back the advancing proletarian revolution and to maintain in existence the obsolete capitalist system, that his-

tory has irrevocably sentenced to destruction and to replacement by Socialism.

THE AMERICAN FASCIST DANGER

Finance capital in the United States is no exception to the general course of world capitalist development. Like the financial oligarchies in other countries and for the same basic reasons it, too, is traveling the road to fascism. If its tempo of development has not been so fast as that of Germany, Italy, Austria, etc., it is only because the capitalist crisis has not yet become so acute in the United States; and if fascism takes on somewhat different forms in this country, the decisive reason is because of our special national traditions. But he who, because of these American peculiarities of fascism, cannot see the fascist danger is blind indeed.

The home address of incipient American fascism is Wall Street. More and more the big bankers, industrialists and landholders, the real rulers of the country, are coming to the determination to utilize fascist methods and policies in the United States. All the many fascist and semi-fascist organizations, activities and personalities of today revolve around and draw sustenance from this central decisive fact. The increasing crop of demagogues like Hearst, Coughlin, Smith, Woll, Talmadge, MacFadden, et al, and the multiplying activities of the American Legion, vigilante gangs, K. K. K., Black Legion, Crusaders, etc., are but so many expressions of the basic reality that the most influential sections of big business, always deeply reactionary, are now gradually becoming fascist. Grossly mistaken are those who, seeing the active rôle of the petty-bourgeoisie in the fascist movement, erroneously conclude therefrom that fascism is the rule of the middle class and not the open dictatorship of monopoly capital.

In the midst of the thickening economic and political difficulties of capitalism, two major considerations, both closely interrelated, are pushing American finance capital in the

direction of fascism. The first of these is the deep-seated fear, common to capitalists in all countries, of the approaching proletarian revolution; the American big capitalists realize the ultimate revolutionary significance of the mass upheaval now taking place in the United States, despite its as yet conservative features, and they would take time by the forelock and forestall this revolutionary menace through increasing fascist measures of demagoguery and violence. The big capitalists' second consideration is more immediate in character: they ardently wish to increase their profits at the expense of the workers by slashing wages, cutting relief, speeding up production, etc., and the easy success the German and Italian capitalists had in breaking up their workers' political parties, trade unions and coöperatives, and reducing standards greatly, leads the ruthless open-shop American exploiters to conclude therefrom that the use of similar fascist methods of terrorism would also be immediately and highly profitable and successful in the United States.

The heart of the fascist danger resides in the fact there are many millions of impoverished, discontented and confused workers, farmers, professionals, etc., mostly unorganized and leaderless. Finance capital, by means of false promises, illusory programs, and downright terrorism, seeks to put its agents at the head of these rebellious masses and thus to turn their very disaffection and demand for improved conditions into the most powerful weapon in the service of reaction and fascism. The essence of fascist strategy is to draw its indispensable forces from those very social strata that should be its deadly enemies.

In the 1936 elections we witnessed the first real mobilization of the forces of incipient American fascism. The vast bulk of finance capital, the basic source of fascist trends, was represented directly by the Republican Party and the Liberty League, and was united behind Landon. It was determined to beat Roosevelt at any cost, and Landon's campaign of synthetic liberalism, by obscuring the true reactionary program of the capitalists, approached a fascist demagoguery. The

Union Party, supported by the demagogues, Coughlin, Smith, Townsend, Lemke, et al., was permeated with a growing fascist spirit among its leaders, and its establishment fitted into the strategy of fascist-minded big business in their attempt to draw mass support from Roosevelt.

The big capitalists freely support the Democratic Party in many places, notably in the ultra-reactionary South, in Tammany-ridden New York, in Chicago, Indiana, etc., where it serves their local needs; but on a national scale they opposed Roosevelt, because to them he typifies that traditional American liberalism which they intend to destroy and to replace by a ruthless domination over the masses. True they supported Roosevelt when he took office in 1933 (and they will seek to make terms with him again undoubtedly); but this early support was primarily because their Hoover Government had definitely failed to liquidate the crisis and to hold the masses in check. The great financial interests feared that in order to extricate themselves from a difficult situation it was absolutely necessary to temporarily adopt some such program as Roosevelt proposed. But at all times the capitalist oligarchs looked very much askance at Roosevelt's toleration of trade unionism and his partial relief for the unemployed, the farmers, the small bank depositors, small home-owners, etc. Hence, when the economic crisis had spent its worst force and the industries began slowly to limp into operation again, the capitalist rulers, taking fresh heart, demanded insolently that Roosevelt at once throw aside all his relief and security measures and put the masses back again upon the open-shop, starvation regime of "rugged individualism." They backed up this arbitrary demand by moving over in force in support of the Republican Party and by opening up all their batteries against Roosevelt. They did not stop even at calling him a Communist and an agent of Moscow.

Under this heavy fire Roosevelt had steadily retreated to the right. He had made concession after concession to Wall Street: slashing unemployment relief, yielding to company unionism, sloughing off strikes, etc. But the pressure of the

masses against such action on his part has been very great, and Roosevelt's rightward course is not sufficiently fast or decisive to suit the great financial interests. They are determined to make a clean sweep of the civil rights and living standards of the masses. In the stormy days directly ahead they foresee an urgent need for drastic repressive measures to control the rebellious masses and Landon is the man they had chosen to be their present-day leader in this job of mass impoverishment and enslavement. Roosevelt is no real barrier to fascism, and Landon was the chief political standard-bearer in the 1936 elections of a reaction moving more and more in the direction of fascism. A victory for Landon, while it would not immediately have ushered in fascism, would have greatly stimulated and facilitated its growth.

It was a sinister indication when the Republican Party, the party of capitalist reaction, had to abandon its traditional policy of placing as its candidates avowed reactionaries and to select a figure, Landon, that would give it a pretense of liberalism. Such a maneuver was in itself highly demagogic and it smacked of the usual fascist strategy. Fascism always puts forth demagogic figures and slogans to trap the politically unwary masses and it adjusts the character of such slogans to the state of political development of the masses; Mussolini and Hitler, in situations of revolutionary crisis, riding into power on false slogans of revolution and Socialism. In the United States, however, where the situation is not yet so sharp, where democratic traditions are strong, and where the masses are still affiliated to the two old parties and are heavily afflicted with capitalist illusions, finance capital, turning more towards fascist-like methods, finds it sufficient to hide its main program of reaction generally behind a demagogic false-face of liberalism and a fake fight for democracy. But for the more radicalized elements, those who are tending to break away from the old parties, the more openly fascist agents, the Coughlins, Gerald Smiths, etc., whose special task is to round up for finance capital the discontented masses, are already pretending to be fiery rebels and are putting forth false slogans of revolt.

Behind Landon's genial smile and his smokescreen of "progressivism," as well as behind Coughlin's "radicalism," lurked the ugly face of that capitalist reaction which tends steadily in the direction of deadly fascism, with its anti-Semitism, anti-Negro, anti-foreign policy, union-smashing, suppression of civil rights, and with its policy of cultural reaction, mass starvation and war.

THE WORLD FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM AND WAR

Fascism does not solve the basic capitalist contradictions, but instead greatly intensifies them. Its increased exploitation of the toiling masses widens the gap between the latter's producing and purchasing powers and thereby deepens the economic crisis; its suppression of the trade unions and other fighting organs of the workers, poor farmers and petty bourgeoisie, although it temporarily represses the class struggle, does not liquidate it, but only dams it up and in the long run makes it more explosive; its policy of violent imperialist aggression does not solve the capitalists' burning domestic problems but instead threatens to destroy the world capitalist system. Hence, it is not surprising that as fascism develops it antagonizes huge masses of the people and greatly accelerates the anti-capitalist struggle generally of the toilers all over the capitalist world.

The Communists are active leaders and organizers of these awakening millions in their struggle against the menacing danger of fascism and war. To this end Communists have taken the lead in the policy of the anti-fascist broad People's Front: a solid proletarian unity with other oppressed classes in individual countries and also active coöperation between the attacked colonial, democratic and Socialist nations in defense of democracy and in militant opposition to the war onslaught of the fascist barbarians. Already there has been successfully developed far-reaching application of this Leninist policy. The basic class lineup in the Peoples Front—workers, poor peasants, lower middle class—is essentially the

same as that which made the Russian revolution. Building the Peoples Front constitutes the main strategy of the Socialist revolution in the present period, and its most outstanding theoretician and organizer is the brilliant Stalin.

Under the world leadership of the brave Dimitrov, head of the Comintern, the Communist Parties have played a decisive role in the organization of the Peoples Front in a number of countries. Notably in Spain and France the united front policy has already had real success and has resulted in the election of the Popular Front anti-fascist governments. And on the international scale the Soviet Union, on the same general principle, has entered into alliance with France and other threatened democracies and has vigorously supported various colonial and semi-colonial countries in the defense of world peace and democracy against the fascist aggressors.

In order to understand this present-day Communist revolutionary united front strategy against fascism and war it must first be clearly realized that the fascists base their domestic and international policies upon the principle of the militant offensive. Thus in many countries, where they are not already in power, they have put bourgeois democracy on the defensive and are threatening to deprive the toiling masses of workers, poorer farmers and petty bourgeoisie in these lands of their most elementary civil rights, organizations and living standards. And, likewise, on a world scale, the fascist bloc of Germany, Italy, Japan, etc., increasingly supported by the reactionary classes in all countries, is, with its rabid imperialist aggression, menacing the national life and political independence of various countries, including not only Socialist U. S. S. R., but also bourgeois democratic France, Spain and Czecho-Slovakia, as well as China and various other colonial and semi-colonial nations. The immediate world issue, raised by the fascist offensive, is democracy versus fascism.

Now the huge people's masses in these countries, although they are not yet ready to accept the full logic of the class struggle and enter upon an immediate struggle to overthrow

capitalism and establish Socialism, are nevertheless prepared to wage militant battle against the fascists in defense of their threatened democratic rights and living standards. They are violently opposed to having their unions smashed and their parties broken up, their wages cut and their general civic rights curtailed; they dread their countries' losing their political independence to the fascist imperialists; they look with horror upon the prospect of a new world war, many times more destructive and more bitterly fought than the last one. In defense of their lives and liberties, threatened by the advance of fascism, the attacked masses, despite their multiplicity of organizations and ultimate objectives, are ready and can be organized for joint struggle. And this defense fight, around blazing immediate vital issues, in agreement with solid Leninist principles, is the starting point for the Peoples Front.

But the anti-fascist masses' fight cannot possibly remain on the defensive. It must and does develop swiftly into an aggressive counter-offensive. And the whole logic of the capitalist crisis and the fascist attack compels this counter-offensive to set new objectives that eventually must put at stake the very existence of the capitalist system itself. The present vital issue is democracy versus fascism, but the struggle tends inevitably to raise for solution the basically revolutionary question of Socialism versus capitalism.

Consider how this broadening from a simple defense of democracy to a revolutionary counter-attack actually develops in life. The French workers, for example, could not be satisfied merely to develop a temporary safeguard to their democratic rights by putting the Blum government into office: on the contrary, they also carried through huge strikes and raised wages, got the 40-hour week, and organized four million new trade union members, besides nationalizing the munitions industry and the banks and otherwise attacking the capitalist fortress, and they will soon go further. In Spain, the united toiling masses in the Popular Front are, (as I write), advancing still more onto the counter-offensive: with

arms in their hands they are fighting the landlords, big capitalists, militarists and nobility and, if victorious, will undoubtedly go far towards Socialism. The road to the Socialist revolution starts from the defensive Peoples Front struggle against the present fascist attack upon the lives and liberties of the masses and ends with the Communist-led overthrow of capitalism.

The world fight for peace has similar revolutionary implications to those of the Peoples Front movements in the various countries. The present war situation is basically different than that on the eve of the world war, when two great groups of aggressive imperialist powers faced each other. Today the U. S. S. R., through its alliances with the proletarian world movement and the democratic and other at-present unwarlike countries, is leading a defensive fight to preserve peace in the face of the aggressive fascist war plans of Germany, Japan and Italy. The U. S. S. R. is thus not only the advance-guard and fore-type of the oncoming world system of Socialism, but it is also the main defense of humanity now against fascist barbarism and a dreadful new mass slaughter. But if the fascist murderers succeed in unleashing their dogs of war then the whole picture must immediately change. The anti-war forces must inevitably shift at once from the defensive to the counter-offensive. Inevitably the very life of the capitalist system is placed in jeopardy. The international defeat of the fascists would produce Socialist revolutions in their various countries and bring about a tremendous advance towards Socialism in every other land. The fight for the preservation of peace is thus at bottom a revolutionary question of the most profound importance.

The development of the great Peoples Front movement, nationally and internationally, against hunger, fascism and war acquires its profound revolutionary justification because it unites and inspires the hitherto disorganized and demoralized masses and puts them on the path to victory. In the first place it lays the basis for proletarian unity through providing the practical program and organizational means by

which the various discordant worker groups of Socialists, Communists, Syndicalists, Anarchists, etc., can fight together in decisive masses against the fascists. In the next place, the People's Front establishes a workable coöperation between the proletariat and great masses of the lower ranks of city and country petty bourgeoisie, and has brought the latter out on the barricades against the big capitalist forces. This is of vast importance, for out of these middle social strata fascism has hitherto drawn its major fighting troops. The People's Front also infuses the masses with fresh hope and encouragement. The bankruptcy of the reformist policy of the Second International (long the basic organization of the whole European proletariat) which was the cause of the easy victory of fascism in Italy, Germany and Austria, had left the masses all over Western Europe in a state of deep demoralization and pessimism. Fear spread widely among them that the advance of fascism was irresistible. But the successes of the People's Front and the great struggles of the U. S. S. R. to preserve the world's peace—are dispelling these negative mass moods. Thus, the People's Front, by providing the toiling masses with a new unity, a powerful organization and an effective strategy, has given them an invincible fighting spirit and a fresh revolutionary perspective.

The Stalinist policy of the People's Front is the old Marxian-Leninist policy of the united front applied to present-day conditions of struggle. Ever since its formation, the Communist International has urged upon the Social Democrats a policy of joint struggle against the bourgeoisie, and sometimes with temporary success. Thus there developed the coöperation with the left Social Democrats in Germany in 1923, the well-known Anglo-Russian trade union committee of 1924-26, the united front in China in 1925-26, etc. We have also seen that, ever since 1923, the American Communist Party has carried on much united front activity in strikes, labor defense, Labor Party, union elections, etc. But in general the world reformists, pinning their hopes upon the perspective of a long period of peaceful capitalist de-

velopment, rejected the Communist policy of united front class struggle and based everything upon class collaboration with the bourgeoisie. It is not surprising, therefore, that the partial united fronts initiated in Germany, England, China, United States, etc., eventually came to smash through the conflict of the irreconcilable policies of class collaboration (S. P.) and class struggle (C. P.).

But the development of the great world economic crisis of 1929, producing a swift growth of the fascist danger that was made especially clear by the advent to power of Hitler, radically changed the situation. The workers are reacting militantly against fascism. The Socialist leaders' hopes for a peacefully developing "organized capitalism" that would gradually grow into Socialism are smashed. The opportunist Second International bureaucrats were shocked and demoralized to see that in Germany and other Central European countries, their erstwhile friends, the capitalists, had turned violently against them and had built up the fascists as mobilizers of the masses. They began to realize that they could not simply adjust themselves to the approaching fascist regime by endorsing it after it arrived (as the German S. P. tried) but that fascism's advent meant the destruction of their organizations and often their own imprisonment. They must needs either fight or be wiped out completely.

Consequent upon this bankruptcy of their political program and the rupture of their alliance with the big bourgeoisie, many Socialist leaders, yielding to the anti-fascist mass pressure, are now hearkening to the Communist International proposals of united front action against fascism and war. Thus, in Italy, Austria, Spain, France, etc., such joint movements have taken shape, although not without sharp right wing resistance. But not everywhere is the united front accepted. The Second International, as a body, still refuses to make a general united front with the Communist International. This is because of the conservative and decisive influence of the Socialist Parties in Great Britain and Scandinavian countries, which still cling to the old policy of the

Second International, because in their countries the fascist danger is not so acute, the capitalists still remaining in collaboration with the opportunist Socialist leaders and relying upon them to restrain the workers from enforcing "unreasonable" demands. But also in these countries the idea of the Peoples Front makes rapid headway. The refusal of the American Socialist Party to make general united front movements with the Communist Party reflects the right wing element in the Second International.

The growing rejection by various Socialist Parties of the old anti-united front line of the Second International and the adoption of the coöperation with the Communists which is the heart of the Peoples Front, is a tacit admission of the bankruptcy of Bernstein reformism and the correctness of the Marxian-Leninist-Stalinist class struggle program. But many Socialist reformists, although abandoning the old openly opportunist line of the Second International, become afflicted with another corruption—the Trotskyite counter-revolutionary ideology.

The Trotskyites repudiate the whole Peoples Front development as a fetter upon the revolution. They condemn its fight to preserve democracy as futile and demand that everything be concentrated on an immediate struggle to overthrow capitalism; they denounce its alliance between the workers and petty bourgeoisie as a continuation of the old Second International class collaboration and demand its liquidation. But all this only reveals the criminal stupidity of the disruptive, counter-revolutionary Trotsky group. Trotsky would now abandon the lower middle class and farmers to the fascists, even as he tried earlier to deliver the middle Russian peasants over to the kulaks. No one would be happier than the Hitlers and Mussolinis if the revolutionary Spanish and French workers were so foolish as to drive away the peasants, intellectuals, petty business elements and undeveloped workers by abandoning the fight for the preservation of democracy. Such a course, like the Trotskyite demand for the liquidation of the Franco-Soviet pact,

would simply surrender these masses to fascism and insure its victory; it would be a god-send to the fascists in their plan of extinguishing all liberty and enslaving the masses in a "holy war" against Communism.

The line of the Peoples Front is not the class collaboration of Bernstein, but the class struggle of Lenin. This basic difference between the policy of the Second International reformists and the Comintern policy of the Peoples Front is demonstrated in real life by the decisive facts that whereas the German Social Democratic leaders always worked in alliance with the big capitalists and wound up by voting to support the Hitler government; the Spanish workers, allied with the poor peasants and lower city middle class in their heroic Peoples Front, are fighting hand in hand against the fascist forces of big capitalists, big landlords, nobility, militarists, etc. The Spanish masses are traveling the revolutionary road that leads finally to abolishing capitalism altogether, setting up the dictatorship of the proletariat and building Socialism.

To make the Peoples Front succeed, many difficult internal problems have to be solved. Chief among these are: (1) the gradual establishment of working class unity through the liquidation of openly capitalist, reformist Socialist, Syndicalist, Anarchist and Trotskyist illusions among the workers; (2) the development of the leadership of the proletariat in the Peoples Front movement; (3) the systematic convincing of the poorer farmers and lower city middle class that their true interests lie with the workers against monopoly capital, and the cementing of a firm, programmatic alliance between these rebellious petty-bourgeois elements and the working class.

In accomplishing these tasks grave obstacles will be encountered in overcoming poisonous reformist influence, the extreme difficulty of working in the fascist countries, the danger of defeat from the reactionary-controlled armies in the bourgeois democratic countries, the hesitancy and reluctance of the middle class elements to act decisively against

the fascists, Trotskyite disruption, temporary splits in the united front, problems of organizational forms and tactics, etc. But the line of the Peoples Front is a correct one and, intelligently and energetically applied, it is the broad way along which the proletariat can progress towards the final revolutionary struggle with the firmest unity and the greatest mass of allies.

THE PEOPLE'S FRONT IN THE UNITED STATES

In the United States the most basic social forces are also working towards the development of a broad Peoples Front. The long industrial crisis, with its huge unemployment, wage slashes, starvation relief systems, brutality by government forces and widespread mass poverty, has created a vast and profound discontent. The masses, deprived of all social security, and with their living standards wrecked, are deeply alarmed at the situation and are losing their capitalist illusions. Their discontent is greatly sharpened by their growing fear of fascism and their universal horror of the impending new world war.

During the last few years this developing mass radicalization has increasingly expressed itself by organized mass struggle. In previous chapters I have dealt with many phases of this spreading movement—the big struggles of the unemployed in 1930-1934, the huge strike wave of 1933-1936, the large increase in trade union membership, the rapid growth of the Communist Party, the struggles of the war veterans for the bonus, the many strikes and other militant movements among the farmers, the developing youth movement, the awakening of the Negro masses, the tremendous growth of anti-fascist and anti-war movements, the springing up almost overnight of the Sinclair "Epic" organization, and the Townsend old age pension plan. Besides, we see fascist demagogues like Long, Coughlin, Smith, etc., seizing upon the mass discontent, and building up such large organizations as the

Share-the-Wealth movement and the National Union for Social Justice.

The September 12th Chicago conference of 118 liberal delegates of farm, labor and various political organizations is a further expression of the mass discontent; it is the first movement of the kind since 1924, and it carries within it strong Farmer-Labor Party tendencies.

The most important mass development, however, in the profound stirring of the American toilers is the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization, made up of fifteen A. F. of L. unions with some 1,500,000 members and headed by John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers. In line with the generation-long fight of the left wing (S. L. P., S. P., I. W. W., S. L. of N. A., C. P., T. U. E. L., and T. U. U. L.), the C. I. O. is setting out to organize the millions of unorganized workers in the steel, automobile, rubber, radio and other mass production industries on the basis of industrial unionism. The leaders of the C. I. O. under the great mass pressure, disillusioned with the traditional craft unionism, long since rendered obsolete by the mechanization, specialization, rationalization and trustification of industry, have turned to the industrial system which the A. F. of L. should have adopted 35 years ago.

But the C. I. O.'s significance far outruns the question of the organization of the unorganized, fundamental though this may be. It is a movement which has the potentiality of profoundly altering the whole structure, leadership, policies and social outlook of the trade union movement. For 50 years, a clique of corrupt and reactionary labor bureaucrats, many of whom are increasingly showing fascist tendencies, have held the trade unions in their deadly grasp and successfully defeated every effort of the left wing to make the unions into broad organizations capable of defending the interests of the working class. The C. I. O. is a crushing blow in the face of this whole reactionary system. It carries within it the possibility of a great advance of Labor on every front—ideologically, industrially, politically—during the oncoming

period. It can serve as the means to unite all the present scattered struggles of the workers, farmers, middle class, Negroes, youth, etc., into one mighty progressive mass movement; into a great American Peoples Front against fascism and war. But it remains to be seen if its leaders, who are only now beginning to break with their past of many years' long ultra-conservatism, will display the understanding and initiative to realize the objectives that history opens up before the C. I. O.

It is not surprising that the Greens, Wolls, Hutchesons, Whartons, and other reactionaries controlling the A. F. of L. Executive Council should attempt to kill the vital C. I. O. movement by suspending its unions and generally making war upon it. This criminal splitting of the labor movement in the face of the growing fascist reaction is in line with their many years of betrayal of every interest of the working class. But the labor misleaders will not succeed this time. The masses of organized workers, including those in the craft unions, are supporting the C. I. O. and if the latter's leaders make a determined fight within the old unions they can readily break the death clutch of the Green reactionaries and open the doors to a new era for organized Labor.

Speaking on the question of the Peoples Front in the United States at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, Moscow, 1935, Dimitrov said that "A Workers and Farmers Party might serve as such a suitable form." This is correct. Conditions are rapidly ripening in the United States for the establishment of a great Farmer-Labor Party able to unite the toiling masses of workers, farmers, petty bourgeoisie, Negroes, etc., against fascism and war. The many developments in the direction of the American Peoples Front tend to find their principal center in this Farmer-Labor Party movement.

In Chapter V, I have pointed out the principal causes that have tended hitherto to check the development of class consciousness and organized political action among American workers. Among these historical factors were the existence of

great tracts of free land; relatively high wages and living standards; considerable economic opportunities in the long period of industrial growth; the presence of huge bodies of non-citizen immigrants; the lesser need to struggle for formal democratic rights, which had been won by the workers long before; the privileged position of the big labor aristocracy; the decentralized form of the federal government; etc. For generations the workers have fought vigorously against the capitalist exploiters, but because of the foregoing deterrent factors which tended to set up capitalist illusions among the masses, their fight was confined chiefly to the economic field and did not take on an organized political form. Under the circumstances the toiling masses did not develop a broad mass party and a political program of their own, but remained affiliated to the two capitalist parties.

However, the objective situation has now fundamentally altered, and with it the workers' views. The historical American factors checking the development of united political activity by the broad masses of workers have largely lost their force. Under the blows of the crisis, the workers, suffering from gigantic unemployment, wage cuts, generally lowered standards of living and a complete closing of all doors to economic opportunity, are rapidly losing their capitalist illusions and their faith in the two old parties. The working class, by the halting of immigration and the decline of the role of the skilled worker in industry, is becoming more homogeneous, and on all sides the workers see the state, ever more highly centralized, being used against them by the capitalists. They sense the huge capitalist reaction that is developing and the inadequacy of the old craft trade union and non-partisan political action to cope with it.

As a result of all this pressure, the struggles of the toiling masses not only expand and grow more militant, but especially become more political in character. All the above-mentioned mass movements of trade unions, Townsend, Epic, Coughlin, etc., are highly political. It is of basic significance that for the first time in their history many millions of the

workers and other toiling masses generally in the United States have developed a series of political demands, for unemployment relief and insurance, old age pensions, farm relief, federal wage and hour laws, reduced taxes, public works, Negro rights, youth demands, against fascism and war, etc., that are sufficiently important, national in scope and deeply-rooted enough in the mass consciousness to serve as a firm program foundation for a great independent national party of toilers.

The masses are manifestly splitting away from the two old parties and are tending towards building a party of their own. Local and state F. L. P.'s are developing in many places. In such a vital situation it is the historical task of the proletariat to give leadership to the discontented of other classes, the farmers, professionals, etc., who are breaking from their old capitalist moorings. This is to say that it is the duty of the trade union movement to take the lead in the formation of a great national Farmer-Labor Party and to unite the masses in a broad Peoples Front against the threatening dangers of hunger, fascism and war.

Of course the A. F. of L. leaders have utterly failed in this elementary task. These reactionaries, who for two generations have been the lackeys of the capitalist class, naturally are lagging behind the whole political advance of the masses. Criminally betraying the interests of the toiling masses, they are resisting the formation of the Farmer-Labor Party and are still trying to keep the workers tied to the two capitalist parties. During their long domination over the trade unions, the Green bureaucrats (logical continuers of Gomperism) have done the workers in this country deadly damage. They have refused to allow the craft unions to develop into an industrial basis in conformity with the growth of mass production in industry: they have stubbornly refused to organize the millions of unorganized and are now trying to split the labor movement to prevent it; they made cannon fodder of the workers during the war; they have used every capitalist device to prevent the growth of class consciousness

among the workers. But one of the most dangerous of all their betrayals is their present refusal to give a lead to the discontented masses through the organization of the Farmer-Labor Party. Thus they have permitted great masses of these potential Farmer-Labor Party forces to fall under the influence of such Hearst fascist demagogues as Coughlin and Smith, and such rank opportunists as Lemke and Townsend of the Union Party. The Union Party is a direct contribution to the growth of fascism in the United States, and the responsibility for this untoward development lies at the door of the A. F. of L. misleaders of Labor.

The only way to prevent the awakening masses, who are deeply discontented with both capitalist parties, from being trapped by fascist demagogues is for Organized Labor to assume the initiative in building a powerful Farmer-Labor Party. The reactionary A. F. of L. leadership refuses to take such action; so this puts the heavy responsibility squarely upon the shoulders of the Committee for Industrial Organization, led by John L. Lewis. The C. I. O. appears to be accepting this responsibility and through Labor's Non-Partisan League is undoubtedly tending in the direction of forming a national Farmer-Labor Party. Its active participation in the 1936 elections, and the formation of the American Labor Party in New York are good signs. But the C. I. O.'s pace is still altogether too slow, hesitant and indefinite. The need to organize the Farmer-Labor Party as a bulwark against fascism is urgent and imperative; it must be undertaken promptly on pain of the fascists stealing the leadership over great masses of toilers. The Communist Party stands foursquare for the building of the Farmer-Labor Party, and it devotes all possible resources to this end. The Communist Party (unlike the Socialist Party) does not consider the Farmer-Labor Party a rival organization. On the contrary, it recognizes the Farmer-Labor Party as the path along which the masses of toilers in this country, who are by no means yet ready for an advanced Communist program, are taking their first steps into independent action. As the level of

political activity of the masses rises through the building of a great Farmer-Labor Party, so will the body of militants for Communist Party membership increase, and so will the Communist Party be able to extend its political leadership among the masses. The interests of the Communist Party and the Farmer-Labor Party dovetail, as do the interests of the C. P. with those of the trade unions and all other bodies furthering the interests of the toiling masses.

Nor does the Communist Party fear that the Farmer-Labor Party, although its program at first be relatively moderate, will develop into a reformist organization, like the German Social Democracy or the British Labor Party. Quite the reverse, the Farmer-Labor Party, unlike the G. S. D. and B. L. P. organized as it will be in a period of declining capitalism and rapidly sharpening class battles and with the stimulus of a growing Communist Party, must tend towards a policy of class struggle. It will be the main route of the toiling masses into the American Peoples Front for battle against fascism and war. And the deepening of the crises and the mass awakening, must eventually lead to that final struggle when, under the political leadership of the Communist Party, the masses will wipe out forever the monstrous capitalist system with its poverty and brutality and establish a free, prosperous and happy Soviet America.

WAR AND REVOLUTION

Capitalism is doomed. Not fatalistically through the automatic operation of impersonal economic and political laws, but because the tens of millions of workers, peasants and lower city middle class elements, whom the obsolete capitalist system is crushing down into poverty and enslavement, are now gradually preparing themselves ideologically and organizationally to strike down the present impossible order of society and to supplant it by the scientific and humane Socialist system. The Russian workers and peasants have made the first great breach in the capitalist structure. They are the

trail blazers of the new social order, but the French and Spanish movements give unmistakable proof that the toiling masses in many other countries are already beginning to tread the same revolutionary path.

The great capitalist monopolists of the world understand clearly the logic of the capitalist crisis and the rising revolutionary mass movement. They see that they can no longer hold the toiling masses in subjection through the old system of democracy. So they proceed to destroy democratic liberties and to apply fascist demagoguery and terrorism. But they also realize that even where they do succeed in establishing the fascist dictatorship they have not thereby solved the basic economic and political contradictions of capitalism, but have only rendered them more acute and explosive. Therefore, to preserve their rulership, they are preparing to use an even more dreadful weapon: devastating modern warfare. The inability of fascism to solve capitalism's economic crisis and to hold the rebellious masses in check is revealed by the fact that it is precisely the fascist and semi-fascist countries that are taking the lead in organizing a new world war.

Humanity now stands upon the very brink of a gigantic war, far more cruel, bitter and destructive than the war of 1914-18. Mass executions of prisoners by Spanish fascists and air bombardments of Madrid and other cities show how terrible the coming war will be. The dominant capitalist class, in plain English, are deliberately preparing cold-bloodedly to butcher tens of millions of people in their desperate attempt to maintain intact the obsolete capitalist system which history has inexorably sentenced to the scrap-heap. But the sequel will show that this murderous plan will fail. Should they be able to break the masses' resistance and launch the war, the very war that the fascists are organizing to destroy European democracy and to save capitalism from the revolution will only hasten the coming of the Socialist revolution and make its results more fundamental and sweeping.

Norman Thomas, with characteristic pessimism, sees the threatening war as bringing fascism; but Mussolini, more of a realist, expresses clearly the fears of the capitalist rulers when he declares that the next great war will be followed generally by Communism. In spite of such fears, however, the fascist dictators have chosen the path of war. They are compelled to try to solve their imperative economic and political problems at the expense of other states by stealing their national territory, their colonies and their markets, which means war. They know that war will bring revolution; but when the revolution comes the fascists calculate that they, at least, through swift victory and iron military dictatorship, will somehow escape its force. But this is a vain hope. I make bold to say that when the fascists begin their planned gigantic massacre they will by that very act sign the death warrant of European capitalism.

It is true that the capitalists in the last war slaughtered 10,000,000 human beings, injured 20,000,000 more and destroyed several hundred billions in wealth; and yet escaped revolution, except in Russia. But the situation is vastly different today; it is far more revolutionary. In 1914 the working class of Europe was firmly in the control of the Second International and the various Socialist Parties were tied up with their respective capitalist classes. The reformist Socialists carried the masses into the war and, when, after the war, the toilers made fierce revolutionary assaults upon capitalism in Germany, Hungary and Italy, etc., it was the Socialist Party everywhere, coöperating with the capitalists, that defeated them. It cannot be denied that the Second International preserved European capitalism, and therefore, is primarily responsible for the advance of fascism and the huge mass slaughter now standing in prospect. The only reason it did not succeed also in preventing the revolution in Russia was because its Russian Party was too weak, the masses of workers and peasants following the revolutionary leadership of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party.

But today capitalism in the event of war will find no such

ready-made savior as in the first world war. The opportunist leaders of the Second International will be unable to deliver the masses chained the next time. Their reformist policy, although still very dangerous, has lost its old-time mass power. Reformist sins against the working class have practically destroyed the Socialist Parties in Germany, Austria and Italy. And in France, Spain and other countries the Socialist Parties are turning their eyes towards the new and militant policy of joint struggle with the Communists against fascism and war. In nearly all countries there are now strong Communist Parties, under the leadership of the Communist International and ready to apply Lenin's decisive revolutionary slogan of transforming the imperialist war into a revolutionary war against capitalism. And behind it all stands the great fortress of Socialism, the Soviet Union with its powerful, revolutionary Red Army.

The fascist dictators will probably be able to begin the war, and even to make a show of mobilizing behind them the masses in their respective countries. But they will be unable to go far in their war against democracy and Socialism. Fascist terror, nationalist illusions, anti-Soviet propaganda (in which the Socialists have done their share) may check the revolt of their toilers for a while. But among the masses there is already almost universally an intense anti-war and anti-capitalist sentiment, far greater than in 1914-18, and when the terrible strain of the war begins to tell on the masses this spirit will surely flame up into irresistible revolutionary fury. Under the leadership of the Communist Parties and other anti-fascist groups, the united front of toiling masses will eventually tear the fascist terror régime into shreds. When Hitler and Mussolini dare to launch their projected war, the masses will answer them by writing *finis* to the accursed capitalist slave system in their countries.

Every major war of the past two generations has given birth to revolutions, and the coming war will prove no exception. Out of the Franco-German war of 1871 came the heroic Paris Commune; the Russo-Japanese war of 1905 gave

rise to the first Russian Revolution; the 1914-1918 world war resulted (in spite of the Second International) in the overthrow of capitalism in one-sixth of the world's surface and the establishment of the first Socialist government, the U. S. S. R. And there is every reason to believe that the next general war, which is now so rapidly in the making, will provoke such a mass revolt as to cause the overthrow of capitalism in many European countries and bring about a huge expansion of Socialism.

The toilers want peace. They want to accomplish the inevitable transition from capitalism to Socialism through the orderly processes of democracy. They know they constitute the bulk of the people and could win peacefully if majority rule prevailed. They abhor and dread war, with all its horrors of millions slaughtered, whole populations ruined, cities destroyed and industries wrecked. They know it is they and their families who must always bear the brunt of war. Fired by the example of the U. S. S. R., therefore, they are fighting desperately to prevent the inhuman war that the fascists are organizing. But in the present relation of forces the decisive word may rest with the fascist capitalists who hold power in many countries. They have cast aside democracy and are choosing the bloody road of war. In spite of mass resistance they are striving to plunge the world into a holocaust of murder and destruction, that will threaten civilization with a return to barbarism. On their heads, therefore, be the heavy responsibility. By war they cannot save capitalism, and history will inexorably visit upon them condign punishment for their monstrous crime.

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