

# Another Year of the League

By Earl R. Browder

**W**HILE the first year's intensive activity of the Trade Union Educational League was dominantly propagandist, the second year was marked by great organizational achievements, and the coming twelve-months will present the decisive struggle to establish program and organization in the life of the American labor movement. This, in brief, summarizes the rich experiences of our work, indicates the stages through which our movement has grown, and points out the tasks of the year before us.

Propagandist efforts, the dissemination of the program of the T. U. E. L., is fundamental to our work. To say that the first year of our work was propagandist and the second year organizational, does not mean that propaganda stopped during the second year. On the contrary, at least ten times more was achieved in the year just ending than in the first year. But the second year's educational work is marked by a new factor—it is accompanied by the establishment of definite organization forms, crystallizing throughout the labor movement all the forces of progress and revolution into a machinery for carrying over the program of the League from theory to action. Organizational achievements are the outstanding contributions of the last year.

## Development of Industrial Committees

Before the close of the first year we had a demonstration of the development that the left-wing forces must undergo, when the Railroad Amalgamation Conference met in Chicago in December, 1922. More than 500 delegates from all over the country met, and established the Railroad Committee which has since published the *Railroad Amalgamation Advocate* and organized 3,377 local unions into the movement for industrial unionism. The Needle Trades Section of the T. U. E. L. followed suit with a national conference, May 5-6, New York City, in a great gathering that unified, for the first time, a national left-wing movement within the entire industry. Early in May, a national conference was held of militants in the Textile industry, and a committee established there also, which has been a militant factor in later developments. On May 13th, a national conference of militants in the Shoe and Leather industry was held in Boston, which instituted the Amalgamation Committee for that industry. The Metal Trades Committee, first organized at the time of the Railroad Conference, held its second conference in Chicago in September, 1923. The Building Trades Committee was organized provisionally in May,

and held its first conference in September in Chicago. The culmination of the campaign of organization was the great conference of the Progressive Miners, held in Pittsburgh, Pa., June 2-3, in which participated more than 200 delegates from all the coal mining states of the country.

The year shows active International Committees at work, uniting the activities of all left-wingers upon uniform programs, in the Railroad Industry, the Metal Industry, the Needle Trades, the Building Trades, the Printing Trades, the Food Industry, the Shoe and Leather Industry, the Textile Industry, the Marine Transport Industry, the Tobacco Industry, and the Coal Mining Industry. All of these Committees have printed and circulated complete plans of industrial unionism through amalgamation, and various other planks of the left wing program, in quantities ranging from 10,000 to 100,000 copies each. Six industrial publications have been launched; they are, *Railroad Amalgamation Advocate*, the *Metal Trades Amalgamation Bulletin*, the *Needle Worker*, the *Progressive Building Trades Worker*, the *Progressive Miner*, and the *Industrialist*, organ of the Printing Trades Committee. The railroad and mining papers are bi-monthly while the others are monthly. Their circulation ranges from 5,000 to 20,000 copies each.

## Completing the Organizational Machinery

In addition to the industrial conferences mentioned, there were several district conferences which went far to build up the power of the T. U. E. L. The Eastern District conference, held in New York on May 6th, consisted of 160 delegates from 17 cities. It definitely established the League organizationally in New England and the industrial States of the East. The Canadian District held two conferences, the Eastern section conference at Toronto, in August, and the Western conference in Edmonton, in September. Both were very successful and registered deep impressions upon the Canadian labor movement. In July, a conference of the Western railroaders was held in Tacoma, under the auspices of the Railroad Committee, which further consolidated the organization of the railroad militants. The Central District held a conference in Chicago in September, in conjunction with the Second General Conference of the T. U. E. L.

When the Second General Conference gathered on September 1-2, in Chicago, another measure was had of the organizational advance made by

the League during the year. Not only was the conference more than twice as large as the first one a year before, but it covered more than 90 industrial centers and included Canada and Mexico. A large part of the proceedings were taken up in organizational matters; plans were executed for hooking up all loose ends; and international connections established between the industrial committees and the various international propaganda committees of the R. I. L. U.

Another organizational achievement was that made by the establishment of the Red International Committee, which co-ordinates the activities of the League and the various unions affiliated or sympathetic to the R. I. L. U. This committee completes the organizational structure of the entire left wing of the American labor movement, and leaves the organizational problem as one of simply filling in and building up the established machinery.

### **Educational Work More Successful**

In the meantime propaganda has been wider and more effective than ever. The well-known fact that 16 State Federations of Labor and 14 International Unions have been put on record for industrial unionism through amalgamation is not so important as the less-known fact that literally thousands of local unions and central bodies have been permeated with the idea. In the railroad industry alone considerably more than 3,000 locals formally endorsed the Minnesota Plan. The scope of amalgamation propaganda has everywhere taken on this profound rank and file character. Such conservative unions as the Iron Molders and the Lithographers, known for years as anything but radical, have joined the movement, demonstrating again how deeply the left-wing forces have penetrated the working masses with the revolutionary ferment.

The campaign for establishment of a labor party has been most effectively participated in by the T. U. E. L. It was the League that made the first national move toward crystallizing the nation-wide sentiment that existed into definite organization, by sending out its famous referendum in March, 1923, to 35,000 local unions throughout the country. The overwhelmingly favorable response to this move had a great deal to do with the successful gathering of more than 500 delegates a few months later in the July 3-5 Convention in Chicago. Local and state labor parties have sprung into being in dozens of places, under the stimulus of the propaganda carried on by the militants in the T. U. E. L. and the Workers Party. The Federated Farmer-Labor Party has become a power through the support thus organized.

In all the other issues close to the left-wing elements the T. U. E. L. has played a leading part in stirring up the labor movement to their consideration. For example, the case of Jacob Dolla, steel strike militant railroaded to the penitentiary in Pennsylvania, was brought before the labor movement by THE LABOR HERALD. That there is hope for Dolla's release today is due to the agitation of the League militants. The League participated in one of the greatest educational campaigns ever conducted, in the trial of Wm. Z. Foster in Michigan. THE LABOR HERALD has laid the basis for sound movements of organization in various industries, by the publication of articles analyzing the problems of the Ford industries, the electrical industry, the rubber industry, and the automobile industry generally. In the question of immigration and the migration of negro labor, the League published, in the articles of the late Clarissa S. Ware, a program that received the most wide-spread attention in Europe as well as America. Through the publication of its pamphlets, the T. U. E. L. has stimulated thought and study throughout the labor movement, on the questions of the Red International, Fascism, the Russian Trade Unions, as well as the more intimate questions of the trade unions.

### **Reactionaries War Against the League**

Deep and profound has been the effect of the T. U. E. L. activity among the rank and file. Among the official bureaucrats the effect has been equally strong, but in an opposite direction. The reactionaries have taken up the alarm sounded a year earlier by Samuel Gompers, and joined in a holy war against the League. In this campaign they have openly called upon the employers for assistance, a typical example of which is seen in the Searles articles sponsored by the United Mine Workers. Fear of the League and its activity has worked miracles in wiping out feuds of long standing between reactionary labor leaders; an example was shown when John Lewis and Frank Farrington, at each others throats for years in the Miners Union, suddenly made peace and formed an alliance, within a week after the Progressive Miners Conference.

It is probable that 1924 will be characterized by a more systematic war against the left wing by the reactionary officialdom. This is to be expected. Now that the League has definitely established its program among the revolutionary and progressive elements, and the whole left wing is beginning to crystallize its forces into the organization network established under the leadership of the League, the bureaucrats will frantically endeavor to beat back its rising in-

fluence. But the beginnings of their efforts, experienced during the past year, give confidence to the militants rather than otherwise. For while the reactionary officials have been able to do great harm to the unions themselves, which is a very bad thing and to be overcome in every way possible, yet they have not diminished the power of the left wing. Quite the contrary. The left wing has become more powerful since it has been forced to fight for its life.

There have been four main efforts to break the progressive forces, in the leather, mining, and needle trades, and by the Gompers machine in the A. F. of L. Convention at Portland. In the leather industry, an effort was made by Bryan, president of the Leatherworkers Union, to expel the members of the Amalgamation Committee. It failed dismally. The rank and file came to the support of the attacked men and forced the bureaucrats to drop the cases. In the mining industry the struggle has been more bitter; it has involved the betrayal of the Nova Scotia miners to the British Empire Steel Corporation by Lewis, and the break-up of the District administration by Lewis "organizers." It has been carried to the extent of the expulsion of Tom Myerscough, secretary of the Progressive Committee. But generally the local unions have refused to carry out the expulsion program of Lewis and Co., and the rank and file militants are stronger than ever before in the history of the union.

The fight in the International Ladies Garment Workers and Furriers Union has been the most intense. It has cost the Unions much in strength and membership, and threatens to do more harm if the bureaucrats are not brought to a halt. To the militant and revolutionary workers it has meant much hardship and suffering. But from the standpoint of the growth in power and influence of the left-wing program and leadership, even this struggle has forwarded our movement greatly. Never before have so many thousands of needle workers been convinced of the neces-

sity of amalgamation of all needle trades unions, of a labor party, of revolutionary leadership, as they have been convinced by the war fought by the present officialdom against the Trade Union Educational League. The officialdom has shot its heaviest artillery already, and the membership of the needle unions are more than ever overwhelmingly with the left wing. Ways and means to register the rank and file revolt effectively and overwhelmingly is the problem for 1924 in the needle trades.

It is the systematic campaign for class collaboration, organized and executed especially within the last year by the reactionary officials, that gives the guarantee of more rapid and solid development of the left wing in the future. Whether it desires or not, the membership of the labor unions will more and more be forced to fight against their official leaders, because these leaders are flagrantly and openly selling them out to the employers. The institutions of class collaboration set up, the revival of insurance as the basis of unionism, the "labor bank" craze, the Johnston "co-operation" scheme of efficiency engineering, and the Gompers-Lewis-Berry program laid down in Portland, all combine to force the masses of workers to the left because the official union machinery is being tied up to capitalism so closely that it cannot even partially function to protect wages and hours.

Carefully surveying the second year of the Trade Union Educational League we can say: our program has been proved sound and it has been established with the progressive and revolutionary labor unionists; our organizational methods and forms have been established and, when sufficiently backed by the enrollment of every militant who believes in the program, meet the needs of the movement; and our militants have shown themselves to be first-class fighters, when necessity arises. The coming year may confidently be expected to see the Trade Union Educational League move forward to new achievements.

## ***Idaho 17th State Federation for Amalgamation***

**M**EEETING at Pocatello, January 14th, the Idaho State Federation of Labor adopted a resolution for industrial unionism through amalgamation of existing unions, thus becoming the seventeenth such body to join the amalgamation movement. It also approved the project of independent working-class political action through the

formation of a Labor Party, endorsed the recognition of Soviet Russia, and denounced the State criminal syndicalist law. Full reports are not available as THE LABOR HERALD goes to press, but from the action on these four vital measures Idaho can be fully classified as a member of the progressive wing of the American labor movement.