

# Party Industrial Methods and Structure.

By William Z. Foster.

WHEN the Trade Union Educational League, which was founded in the Fall of 1920, got well under way in the Spring of 1922 by the launching of the Labor Herald, it was an instantaneous success and almost immediately it became a great power in the labor movement. The objective situation was most favorable. The workers were in a militant mood. The employers were trying to rob them of the standards of living and the organizations established by them during the war period, and they were resisting vigorously. A veritable epidemic of strikes took place in practically all the industries.

In the midst of such a situation the league was born and began to function. Its program of amalgamation and militant struggle generally against the employers, found a ready response. The discontented elements accepted the league's leadership in the unions, not only the rank and file, but also the minor officialdom which calls itself progressive. The league was the real leader of the whole left wing of the labor movement, using this term in the broadest sense. In the historic Decatur and Portland conventions of the Illinois Federation of Labor and American Federation of Labor, it made its program the main issue before the labor movement. The success of the league attracted the most favorable comment from the Profintern, which held the league up internationally as a model type of left wing organization and methods. By working aggressively through the league, our party largely freed itself from sectarianism and succeeded in establishing itself as a real factor in the labor movement.

Within the past two years the influence of the league has, in certain respects, sensibly diminished in the unions. It is true that during this period the league has won many substantial victories. Notable cases in point are the splendid showings made in the recent elections of the Miners and Carpenters. But the movement undoubtedly lacks the broad sweep that it once had. Especially has the league largely lost the leadership over the so-called progressive elements, which played such an important part in its early activities. The masses in the unions are not responding to its slogans as they once did. There is a strong tendency for the league in its organized manifestations—local groups, national conferences, etc.—to consist merely of Communists and their closest sympathizers. In other words, the league is experiencing a sharp period of isolation.

## Factors Making for Isolation.

Many factors have contributed towards making the masses in the unions less responsive to our slogans. For one thing they have, during the four years from 1919 to 1923, suffered big reverses in practically every industry, including steel, meat packing, clothing, textile, shoe, printing, railroads, building trades, etc. These defeats, taken together, constitute the biggest defeat in the history of the American labor movement. Besides wiping out whole sections of the best trade unions, they have also contributed enormously towards weakening the morale and fighting spirit of the rest of the organized masses for the time being,

and towards making them less responsive to the efforts of the revolutionary left wing.

Another detrimental factor is the growth of the class collaboration movement. This took on its greatest impetus naturally enough at the close of the period of the great defeat above mentioned. The reactionary bureaucracy, terrified at the power of the employers and unwilling and incapable of adopting a militant policy of class struggle to withstand them, abandoned every semblance of aggressiveness and turned to the class collaboration policy of surrender, which is embodied in the many schemes of labor banking, B. & O. plans, workers' insurance, co-operative housing schemes, etc. To put across these enervating and demoralizing projects they are now poisoning the trade unions more persistently and systematically than ever with the slave conception that a real struggle against capitalism is impossible. The whole labor movement is reeking with this propaganda, to the detriment of its militant spirit.

In order for the trade union bureaucracy to keep the unions enmeshed in the class collaboration program, it was necessary that they prevent the left wing, at all costs, from reaching the rank and file with its message of class struggle. Consequently they launched the militant warfare against the left wing which is now such a striking feature of the present situation. This ruthless campaign of expulsion and other forms of terrorism, which has reached its maximum in the wholesale and illegal unseating of delegates in such former radical strongholds as the Minneapolis and Seattle central labor bodies, has practically made the Trade Union Educational League an underground organization in nearly every trade union in the country. This has, of course, rendered its work more difficult.

The splits attendant upon the growth and development of the labor party and LaFollette movements also served, in their later stages, to break off many valuable connections of the left wing in the trade unions. The split at the Chicago, July 3rd, 1923, convention, when the Federated Farmer-Labor Party was formed, was especially disastrous. This split, caused primarily by the weakness of the Fitzpatrick group, detached from our following many valuable progressive elements in the rank and file and among the lesser officialdom of the unions. Other labor party splits had similar results. The fact that we had to make open warfare against the LaFollette candidacy, which was an historic necessity of the situation, also caused us to break with many valuable elements in the trade unions who, while willing to follow our lead on many issues, were not ideologically advanced enough to see through the sophistries of LaFolletism and when they broke with us over LaFollette, they broke with practically our whole program. The comparative defeat of the LaFollette movement, as measured by the extravagant hopes held out by its leaders also tended to create an air of defeatism among the masses and to make them less responsive to the left wing program.

## Shop Nuclei.

That objective conditions have become temporarily more unfavorable for our industrial work and that we are suffer-

ing from a considerable degree of isolation is incontestable. But what is far worse is the tendency of many comrades to accept this isolation as a matter of course, to rationalize it, and not to struggle against it. This is a fundamental mistake. We must break through our isolation at all costs. To re-establish our connections with and leadership over the masses, especially the progressive wing in the trade union movement, is one of the most urgent tasks now confronting our party. To this end the organizational measures outlined herein are indispensable.

A basic necessity for developing proper connections with the masses, both organized and unorganized, is the reorganization of the Workers Party upon the basis of shop nuclei. This fact has been pointed out so many times that to many it will seem superfluous to mention it again. But it must be iterated and reiterated until the shop nuclei system is a reality. At the recent sessions of the Enlarged Executive Committee of the Comintern the outstanding feature was the militant campaign to Bolshevize all the parties in the Communist International. And a most important phase of this was the rapid reorganization of the parties on a shop nuclei basis. The French party is now based completely on shop nuclei, and the German, Czecho-Slovakian and other large parties are fast following suit. During the past year our party has taken its first steps in this direction. But the work will have to be pushed with still greater vigor and our whole party reorganized on the shop and street nuclei basis in the near future.

Shop nuclei will greatly unify our party and hook it up closely with the masses. They will serve as the means of carrying on our general political work among the vast armies of toilers in the industries. Among their most important functions will be taking the leadership and initiative in all sorts of strike movements. The extreme weakness of the trade unions and the presence of millions of totally unorganized workers puts this great task squarely up to our shop nuclei. Once we get our shop nuclei established in the big industries this stimulation and leadership of the unorganized masses in their struggles against the employers will be of tremendous consequence to our party.

Specifically, the shop nuclei will also play a big part in the organization of the unorganized millions into trade unions. In the last party convention I pointed out that the organization of the unorganized is one of the historic tasks of our shop nuclei. The reactionary trade union bureaucracy has proved completely incapable of organizing the masses. The much-touted steel campaign failed utterly, and the flamboyant scheme just announced by the A. F. of L. will hardly fare better. The masses will not be greatly organized until the left wing is in position to do the job. A close network of shop nuclei in the various industries will contribute enormously towards putting us in such a position. Our nuclei will be so many live points among the inert millions in the industries. With them as a basis, it will be possible for us, seizing upon the opportune time, to initiate great movements among the masses and to sweep them into trade unions. The shop nuclei will be powerful instruments in furthering amalgamation and the shop committee movement. They will be the great weapons wherewith we shall fight against the menacing growth of company unions—a subject which I shall touch upon more fully in a later article.

### Party Trade Union Fractions.

Shop nuclei must be the foundation organizations for carrying out our industrial policies, and next in order come Communist trade union fractions. It is a fundamental of Communist organization that in all institutions and organizations in which the party is carrying on work the Communist members shall form themselves definitely into groups, or fractions. Only in this way can they unify themselves and utilize the full value of organization. Such fractions are organized in legislative bodies, labor parties, trade unions, fraternal societies, sport organizations, military bodies, etc. They stand directly under the control of the regular party organization, national and local. The maturity and effectiveness of a Communist Party can be measured pretty much by the extent and flexibility of its fractions in the various organizations in its sphere of activity. The matter of party fractions was also greatly emphasized at the meeting of the Enlarged Executive of the Comintern.

It is a weakness of our industrial work that the party as a whole has too little understood the necessity for and functions of trade union fractions. It is true that in trade union conventions, in city central labor bodies, and in local unions our Communist members function to a considerable extent as party fractions. But the system is altogether too fragmentary and casual. This must be made good. We must develop a thoroughgoing system of trade union fractions, based upon a real understanding of their task in the general work of our party.

To this end a prime essential is that every working-class member of the party be required to join a trade union regardless of the obstacles in the way—once again the Comintern and Profintern are insisting upon this A-B-C proposition. All these trade union members shall be definitely organized into Communist fractions to correspond with their local unions, city central bodies, international unions, etc. In all branches, C. C. C.'s and D. E. C.'s there shall be organized industrial committees to stimulate and direct their corresponding fractions. The whole trade union fraction system, specifically the national trade union fractions, shall be under the direction of the industrial department of the party. The strengthening and developing of the trade union fractions is of real importance to the success of the party industrial work.

### The Trade Union Educational League.

In our industrial work there has been a strong tendency to consider the Trade Union Educational League groups as Party fractions and hence to restrict them to Party members alone. This must be corrected. Party fractions and T. U. E. L. groups are distinct forms. The Party fractions are the crystallization of the purely Communist forces in the trade unions, while the T. U. E. L. is a general left wing organization. The one is a definite Party structure, the other is an organizationally autonomous movement. The Party fractions work within the T. U. E. L. to influence it in a Communist direction.

In the foregoing it has been pointed out that due to the extreme pressure of the reactionary bureaucracy and to various other forces the T. U. E. L. is now experiencing a certain degree of isolation. Under no circumstances shall we rest content in this condition. We must strive to overcome

*(Continued on Page 379)*

# Party Industrial Methods and Structure

By William Z. Foster

(Continued from page 352)

the isolation and to bring the broad left wing definitely under the leadership of the League. This is one of the most important tasks of the Workers Party.

We must broaden out the League. Throughout the labor movement there are great numbers of individual workers, ranging from mildly progressive to near revolutionary, who are deeply discontented with the present policies and leadership of the unions, and who are more or less sympathetic to our general industrial program. To bring these at present scattered and demoralized elements into the League must be our constant aim. By the same token those local unions in the various centers which are sympathetic to our program must be brought into the closest organic contact and co-operation with the local and national committees of the League and induced to contribute regularly to their financial upkeep. The non-party elements should be got to pay regular donations, and the best of them should be made members of the various local and national committees of the League.

The Party must devote more energy to the building of the Trade Union Educational League. Its goal in this respect should be twofold: first, to have a general group of the League in every locality where our Party has any connections, and second, to make these local leagues real organizations of the whole left wing in their respective localities. Special attention must be given to the problem of bringing the non-party elements into the League. Where the local leagues consist only of Party members and close sympathizers, where they have not succeeded in attracting to themselves large bodies of non-party elements, they are in reality not leagues at all. They are Party fractions.

## Building a Progressive Bloc.

In the furtherance of our trade union work we must, in addition to building up shop nuclei, trade union fractions, and the organization of the left wing generally directly in the Trade Union Educational League, also undertake the task of developing a progressive bloc in the trade unions of those elements who are discontented with the policies of the reactionary bureaucracy but are not yet ripe enough to be brought into the League or under its immediate influence.

A characteristic of the American labor movement is the utter spinelessness and lack of leadership and organization among these so-called progressive elements in the trade unions. Although more or less in opposition to the old bureaucracy, they have no real program of their own, and they lack the ideological development to follow that of the League.

This situation presents a problem and an opportunity for our Party. This group comprises great numbers of the rank and file and smaller officialdom. It would be a major mistake for us to confine ourselves to a campaign of villification against these progressives for their weakness and to abandon them as hopeless by simply lumping them together with the reactionaries as part of a united front opposition

to us. That would not be Leninism. It would be sectarianism. Our policy must be to stimulate this latent opposition and to lead it against our central enemies, the reactionary bureaucracy controlling the unions. For this purpose we must give it a program and organization. We must put out such united front slogans as will rally these elements, and then we must find the means to connect with them organizationally and to exercise the maximum amount of leadership possible over them and to draw them closer to our Party. The medium through which these tactics shall be carried out directly is, of course, the Trade Union Educational League.

We must apply our basic slogans for immediate work in this sense, towards the building of such a bloc of progressives, as well as for the more radical elements directly into the League. The slogans for a labor party, for amalgamation, for the organization of the unorganized, etc., can be used effectively in this connection. An especially potent slogan should be the demand for world trade union unity, a slogan which has served as a strong rallying cry for all the progressive and revolutionary elements in the British trade union movement. In this connection efforts must be made to link up the struggle of the progressive wing of the British movement with that of the trade union movement of this country in a general demand for world unity as proposed by the Comintern and the Profintern.

An especially favorable opportunity for the building of such a progressive bloc is presented by trade union elections. These must be exploited to the full. It must be our policy to stimulate the progressives to set up united front opposition tickets to the administration candidates in all local unions, international unions, and central labor council elections, except in such cases, of course, where we are strong enough to make a substantial showing with our own revolutionary candidates. We must not only challenge the rule of the bureaucrats ourselves, but we must induce and drive the progressives to do the same thing.

The basis of such united front election tickets must be a program dealing with the most urgent needs of the unions. In a number of instances we have outlined and applied such programs. The one proposed by the left wing to the Hannon-Anderson opposition in the Machinists' Union may be taken as a minimum type. This envisaged a fight against the reactionary Johnston machine based upon the following three points: (1) Rejection of the B. & O. Plan; (2) Reinstatement of all expelled left-wingers; (3) A militant campaign for amalgamation. Upon the refusal of the Hannon group to accept this proposal, the left-wingers placed a full ticket of its own in the field. United front tickets of revolutionaries and progressives, based upon such united front programs must be developed to a far greater extent and with a much clearer understanding of what is involved in these tactics than has hitherto been the case in our industrial work.

To stimulate and organize the progressive forces into an oppositional bloc against the reactionary machine, presents great difficulties in this country. In England the task was easier. To begin with, the ideological level of the masses, and consequently of the trade union leadership, was far higher than in this country. There were many trade union leaders with strong left-wing leanings, such as Purcell, Cook, etc., who took the initiative, under the driving force of the revolutionary minority movement, and shaped up an opposition to the right wing in the Amsterdam International. But

in the United States our so-called progressives in the unions, especially amongst the leadership, are far more backward ideologically and they are completely demoralized and programless. An especial difficulty in stimulating these progressive elements into action against old bureaucracy, is the fact that it is exactly from these so-called progressives that are emanating the schemes of class collaboration on the political and economic fields which we have to combat most sharply, such as LaFolletteism, B. & O. Plans, etc. The old bureaucracy is too hopelessly reactionary to put forth even such schemes as these. But despite the many points of sharp opposition that exist between our revolutionary wing and the progressives, it will nevertheless be possible for us, by the systematic and intelligent application of our united front slogans and tactics, to unite masses of them into struggles against the powerful and firmly entrenched reactionaries for constructive ends that will open the ears of the masses to our message and will bring these masses under our general influence.

These united front tactics, while opening the door to contact with the masses, also contain dangers that must be guarded against. In our united front elections and other campaigns in combination with progressives, two points must always be clearly kept in mind. First, these campaigns must always be made upon the basis of definitely stated united front programs, however minimum in character they may be; and second, our comrades involved must always definitely state our full program and criticize frankly not only the central enemies, the ultra-reactionaries, but also the temporary allies, the progressives.

Under no circumstances shall such campaigns be allowed to degenerate into mere maneuvering for strategic positions in the unions, as has happened to a considerable extent in the needle trades; nor shall they simply be the support of one set of reactionaries against another, as was the case in the election of Jim Lynch in the Typographical Union. The basis of such united front movements must be at least progressive, if not actually revolutionary. Opportunism in all its forms must be categorically rejected. The tactics must lead constantly to clarification of larger and larger masses of workers, to bringing them constantly closer under the influence of the Workers Party, and to stimulate them into ever more militant and extensive struggles against capitalism.

#### In Conclusion.

In carrying out our industrial work we must keep clearly in mind the four stages outlined above: (1) shop nuclei; (2) trade union fractions; (3) T. U. E. L.; (4) progressive bloc. Only by so doing can we really carry out our program successfully.

The shop nuclei are our basic contacts with the masses of workers, organized and unorganized in the industries, and they will serve for the initiation and carrying out of various movements to unite the workers in struggle against the employers. The Party trade union fractions are the consolidation of Party members in the trade unions and in the T. U. E. L., and they are the basic instruments for the carrying out of Party policies in these organizations. The Trade Union Educational League is the organization of the left-wing elements generally in the trade unions and serves to unite them in a militant struggle against the bureaucrats

and for the rejuvenation of the unions. The progressive bloc, in closest possible organic connection with the T. U. E. L., will be the beginnings of organization among those broad, discontented but ideologically backward organized trade union masses seeking blindly for some way out of the impasse into which they have been led by their reactionary leaders.

As pointed out in the beginning of this article, the working class, due to the severe defeats it has recently suffered on the political and economic fields, has a lowered fighting morale, and because of additional factors which have tended somewhat to break some of our connections with the masses, the general effectiveness of our propaganda has been lowered. But these are passing phenomena. The pressure of capitalism increases constantly on the masses and they will soon be driven into a fighting mood again. The present passive state of organized labor must eventually give way to a fresh wave of struggle against the employers. And the connections that we have lost, through the labor party splits, etc., will soon be re-established. The way to re-establish these connections and to take the real lead in the struggles of the workers, will be by militantly carrying out the political and economic programs of the Workers Party through the organization forms outlined above. We must eradicate the lingering conception that work in the trade unions is in some way Syndicalistic. This is a basic error which greatly injures our Party. We must recognize the trade union work as one of the prime tasks confronting our Party. We must undertake it with far greater militancy and upon a broader scale than before in the history of our Party.

## Bolshevism and the World Situation

By Gregory Zinoviev

(Continued from page 342)

It fears sanguinary battles much less than formerly. We are all acquainted with the mentality of the masses of the workers that has arisen since the war almost everywhere in Europe.

#### The Awakening of the Peasantry.

The awakening of the peasantry. One of the causes of the defeat of the Paris Commune was the hostility of the peasantry toward the working class. The Russian proletariat in 1905 was defeated primarily because the Russian peasantry went against the working class. In all previous revolutionary battles, the peasantry not only did not occupy a neutral position but frequently was directly hostile to the workers. In our days, however, the peasants are beginning to occupy quite a different position. Every rank and file worker should now feel instinctively that he is not as isolated and alone in the struggle as was the generation before him.

#### The Revolution Defeated.

We have not passed through a zone of utterly defeated revolutions. The situation throughout the whole of Europe is that the forces of the working class are not sufficiently mature to carry through a victorious revolution.

The revolutionary working class now has its General Staff, the Communist International, which embodies the