

# PREVENT THE A.F.L. SPLIT FROM SPREADING; RE-UNITE THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

—Statement of the Central Committee, Communist Party, U. S. A.—

**T**HE Tampa convention of the American Federation of Labor, by its endorsement of the Executive Council's illegal suspension of the unions affiliated to the Committee for Industrial Organization, has greatly deepened the already serious split in the American trade union movement. This action by the convention in no sense represents the will of the great mass of the membership of the A. F. of L., who in recent months in many international unions, state federations, local central bodies, local unions, etc., voted overwhelmingly against the suspension of the C.I.O. unions and for trade union unity. The Tampa splitting decision is the work of the clique of reactionary trade union leaders who dominated and controlled the convention.

The current efforts of Green, Woll and Frey to cloak their splitting policy in pleas for unity do not in any sense modify their direct responsibility for the present split situation. After barring the more than 1,000,000 C.I.O. members from representation at Tampa, in direct violation of the A. F. of L. constitution, these leaders now hypocritically talk of committees and conferences to re-establish unity—but all on the basis of the liquidation of the C. I. O., the abandonment of the drive to organize the unorganized in the basic industries and the knifing of industrial unions. Such proposals are wrecking proposals which endanger the unity and the future growth of the trade union movement.

The split in the trade union movement is a grave threat. Never was there a better opportunity than the present for the workers to strengthen their labor organizations and to achieve their industrial and political demands. The defeat of the Landon reactionary forces in the election

has given the workers a new sense of confidence and power. They want to go forward on all fronts. For this they require unity. Therefore, the present split must be healed so that the workers will not be hamstrung and the gains jeopardized that could easily be won in the coming months by a unified and militant trade union movement. The division in the A. F. of L. serves the interests of the employers and gives encouragement to every reactionary in the United States.

## *The Cause of the Split*

**T**HE responsibility for the menacing disunity in the ranks of organized labor lies squarely at the door of the reactionary leadership of the Executive Council of the A. F. of L.—Green, Frey, Hutcheson Wharton, Woll, etc. It is the final result of many years of ultra-reactionary policies by these misleaders of labor; the climax of the persistent attempt of the reactionary A. F. of L. leadership to choke out every semblance of progress in the American trade union movement.

For many years the dominant leaders in the Executive Council have made war against all efforts of the progressive and revolutionary forces within the unions to give the trade union movement an effective industrial and political policy. These officials have ruthlessly suppressed trade union democracy, condoned rule by gangsters and racketeers, callously sold out and broke strikes, maintained alliance with employers and corrupt politicians, paid themselves enormous salaries at the expense of underpaid workers, and been inveterate enemies of the workers' organizing themselves politically into a Farmer-Labor Party.

The A. F. of L. reactionary top leaders have always refused to organize the unorganized masses in the great trustified industries because they fear the new leadership and militant policies that are bound to arise from the successful organization of these workers. And when organization campaigns in the mass production industries have developed in spite of the A. F. of L. leaders, these time-serving bureaucrats have shamelessly sabotaged and defeated them.

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THE dominant A. F. of L. leaders for thirty years have also resisted with every weapon at their disposal the long struggle of the left wing and progressive elements in the labor movement to reorganize the antiquated craft unions upon an industrial basis. They have striven desperately to maintain their horse and buggy system of craft unionism in the face of the mechanization, specialization, rationalization and trustification of industry that render craft unionism obsolete and make industrial unionism imperative for the mass of the workers. Consequently, the trade unions only contain a fraction of the organizable workers in industry.

Under the pressure of the great strike struggles and organization campaigns of the early Roosevelt period and the growth of a strong industrial union bloc of unions led by John L. Lewis, president of the U.M.W.A., the 1934 A. F. of L. convention in San Francisco was compelled to adopt a resolution at least partly supporting the policy of organizing the workers in the mass production industries on the basis of industrial unionism. But the reactionary A. F. of L. leaders never considered this resolution as more than a gesture, a "scrap of paper" concession forced from them in the midst of the prevailing labor upheaval. The Executive Council majority had no intentions of putting this resolution into effect, and they have not done so. On the contrary, they have deliberately sabotaged it and have been a constant barrier against the development of industrial unionism and trade union organization in the mass production industries. This reactionary attitude was quite in line with the traditional policy of the misleaders of labor in the A. F. of L.

But under the surging demands of the great masses for organization, the progressive unions in the A. F. of L. refused to allow the basic question of organizing the huge armies of the unorganized to be sidetracked and ditched in this manner. They set up the Committee for Industrial Organization and undertook to give life to the San Francisco resolution by actually organizing the workers in the mass production industries upon an industrial union basis. Every progressive element in the labor movement, as well as great masses of the unorganized, greeted enthusiastically the formation of the C.I.O. At long last there was the prospect of some serious organizing work being done.

BUT all this was high treason in the eyes of the reactionary moguls of the A. F. of L. Executive Council. Alarmed that the demand for industrial unionism, after a full generation of struggle for it by the left and progressive elements had finally reached the point where it could no longer be squelched by the customary sabotaging measures used by the Executive Council following the San Francisco convention, they decided to root out the industrial tendency from the ranks of the Federation at one fell blow, even though they crippled the whole labor movement by doing so. Accordingly, the Executive Council, in flagrant violation of the constitution of the A. F. of L. and the whole tradition of the American trade union movement, and under cover of hypocritical pretenses of majority rule, proceeded in a high-handed manner to expel the C.I.O. unions comprising one-third of the entire trade union movement. With over a million progressive unionists ousted, they were then able to control the Tampa convention and to continue their work of disruption by confirming the exclusion of the C.I.O. unions. Every reactionary element in the United States rejoices at this autocratic and criminal action against the solidarity and welfare of the working class, and all progressives are outraged by it.

## Prevent the Split from Spreading

EVERY progressive force in the working class must cooperate to re-establish trade union unity. And while this struggle goes ahead, manifestly the most urgent task confronting the workers in the present critical situation is to prevent the split from spreading further. As yet the split is confined to the top committees of the labor movement, and what must be done at once is to prevent it from spreading down into the lower organs of the trade union movement and thus dividing the workers' unions into two warring camps. To this end, the following propositions are necessary:

1) Pending the re-establishment of unity within the A. F. of L., the Committee for Industrial Organization should retain its present form as a committee to carry on organizing work in the mass production industries. The cause of unity can be best served by the continued unity and solidarity of action of all unions now in the C.I.O. The Committee form of the C.I.O. is one that enables it to continue its work of organization with the maximum effectiveness, as the craft unions have only negligible forces in the mass production industries, while at the same time this form prevents the reactionaries from extending the split in the labor movement into the unions and industries generally. While carrying on this organizing work, the C. I. O. should do so on the basis of the principles of trade union unity and with the aim of bringing about a united and powerful A. F. of L. based on industrial unionism.

2) There must be no splitting off of local unions or groups from international unions affiliated either to the A. F. of L. or to the C. I. O. Where the question of affiliation to either the C. I. O. or the A. F. of L. develops, the principle of majority rule must prevail. Unity nationally in the respective craft and industrial unions must be maintained. Every effort should be exerted to prevent sections of the international unions

from splitting off and thereby bringing about a state of confusion and internecine warfare in the respective trades and industries.

3) There should be no unseating of C. I. O. union delegates in the Central Labor Unions, State Federations, etc. Rank and file delegates of the trade unions should prevent any attempt on the part of the A. F. of L. leadership to force the C. I. O. unions out of the central bodies by refusing to obey such instructions. On the other hand, there should be no voluntary withdrawal of C. I. O. union delegates from the A. F. of L. City Central and State Federations.

## Re-Establish Trade Union Unity

WHILE putting into effect the emergency measures to prevent the spreading and deepening of the split between the A. F. of L. and C. I. O., the following general proposals should be aggressively furthered in order to bring about the re-establishment of trade union unity within the A. F. of L.

1) The initiation of a widespread campaign among the local unions and other organizations affiliated to the A. F. of L. for resolutions and other actions condemning the suspension of the C. I. O. unions, and demanding their reinstatement in the A. F. of L. with full rights, and the continuation of their present organization campaigns. The majority of the craft union members are opposed to the suspension and must be mobilized against the Executive Council splitters.

2) A demand for the continuation of negotiations between the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. for the re-establishment of unity upon the basis of organizing the mass production industries into industrial unions within the A. F. of L.

3) A demand that the whole question of industrial unionism be submitted for decision to a general referendum vote of the rank and file of the A. F. of L. and C. I. O. unions. Similar referendums to be initiated in individual craft unions.

4) Intensification of the organization campaigns now being conducted by the C. I. O. in the steel, textile, auto, rubber, needle and other industries. The success of these campaigns is of the most profound importance to the unity and general welfare of the trade union movement.

5) Efforts to mobilize the local unions of the A. F. of L. craft unions, to support the organization campaigns now being carried on by C. I. O. unions, and also for these A. F. of L. unions to begin active organization work in their own respective jurisdictions.

6) An agreement between the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers and the metal trades of the A. F. of L. on the basis of the A. A. organizing all the steel workers into one industrial union, and the Federated Metal trades organizing the workers among the auxiliary metal industries in the steel areas.

7) The raising of the question of industrial unionism in all the A. F. of L. and railroad unions in those forms constituting the next practical steps to industrial solidarity in the given industries, such as a general national agreement for all railroad trades, agreements expiring on the same date in the building trades, federation of the marine trades, amalgamation of the metal trades, etc., all these joint action developments looking toward the eventual reorganization of the craft unions on an industrial union basis.

8) The launching of a systematic campaign in the craft unions for the democratization of these organizations, the elimination of racketeers and gangsters, and the development of a new progressive leadership and policy.

9) Efforts to establish the political unity of the various sections of the trade union movement by linking together or setting up of a working co-operation between the A. F. of L. and Brotherhood legislative committees, Labor's Non-Partisan League, farmers' organizations, State Farmer-Labor Parties, etc., on the basis of a common legislative program. Special efforts should be made to unite the local unions of the C. I. O. and A. F. of L. with the Socialist and Communist Parties and other workers' organizations into city and state Farmer-Labor Parties, with the objective of a national Farmer-Labor Party.

THE Communist Party holds that the foregoing general line of policy represents the best and most practical route to the restoration of trade union unity, the organization of the workers in the mass production industries, and to the eventual reorganization of the A. F. of L. upon an industrial union basis, and the development of progressive leadership and policies in the trade union movement.

The Communist Party urges all progressive forces in the trade union movement to take the necessary steps to prevent the further splitting of the A. F. of L. and to re-establish trade union unity. Millions of workers in their local unions and in the unorganized industries must by their unbreakable solidarity prevent the split that the reactionary A. F. of L. leaders are attempting to carry through at the top. The Communist Party pledges all its efforts to work for the unity of the American trade union movement. It calls upon all progressives to carry forward the fight for unity by adopting resolutions in every trade union body, demanding the lifting of suspensions and support for the steel organizing campaign.

Defeat the Executive Council splitters!

For a united American Federation of Labor based on industrial unionism!

William Z. Foster, Chairman,  
Earl Browder, Secretary,  
Communist Party, U. S. A.