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The
BANKRUPTCY
OF THE
**AMERICAN
LABOR
MOVEMENT**

BY Wm Z. Foster



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CHAPTER I

A State of Bankruptcy

A commonly accepted principle of practical economics is that in a given country the extent and ripeness of the labor movement depends directly upon and may be measured by the degree of industrial development attained in that country. In non-industrial China, for instance, no one looks for important labor organizations, but all the world takes as a logical thing the powerful labor movements in highly industrialized Europe. Karl Marx stresses this principle, saying: “— combinations (of labor) have not ceased to grow with the development and growth of modern industry. It is at such a point now that the degree of development of combination in a country clearly marks the degree which that country occupies in the hierarchy of the world market.”¹

This economic principle holds true quite generally. With almost unfailling regularity those nations with well developed industrial systems also have well developed labor movements, and those that are backward industrially are also backward in working class organization. The one glaring exception to the rule is the United States. Here we have the extraordinary situation of the world’s most highly developed industrial system on the one hand, and the most backward labor movement of any important country on the other. The United States stands first in the world market, but, in apparent contradiction to Marx, this could never be deduced by a study of its primitive working class organization. The whole situation is a great paradox.

¹ Poverty of Philosophy, P. 156.

Before indicating the cause of this paradox and pointing the way out of it, it will be well for us to demonstrate the extreme undevelopment of the American labor movement by considering a few of its principal phases:

INTELLECTUAL BLINDNESS

A prime requisite for carrying on Labor's fight successfully against the exploiters is a clear understanding of just what that fight is about. Otherwise practical programs and effective tactics are out of the question. American Labor, aside from the weak revolutionary groups, is particularly lacking in this vital respect. It has not yet opened its eyes to the true meaning of the labor struggle, nor is it trying to do so. It is intellectually blind.

In all other important countries, particularly in Europe, Organized Labor has awakened to the revolutionary character of the working class movement. It has come to acquire a revolutionary point of view regarding private property, the State, the wage system, the class struggle, and capitalist society generally. It knows that the wrestlings between the workers and the capitalists are but so many incidents of a revolutionary struggle in which either side seizes from the other all that it has the power and intelligence to take. With eyes that have been opened, Labor abroad is conscious of its revolutionary mission, and it is striving constantly, despite a thousand timidities and mistakes, towards the only way to solve the labor problem, towards the abolition of the capitalist system and the establishment of a proletarian regime.

But American Labor is still asleep, drugged into insensibility by bourgeois propaganda. It is the only important labor movement in the world not yet aware of the revolutionary character of the fight that it is carrying on; it is the only one which has not declared for some sort of a socialist society as its ultimate goal. And the worst of it is that it is making no effort toward such an awakening. European Labor studies present day society deeply and draws fundamentally revolutionary conclusions therefrom, but American Labor takes capitalist economics and morals for granted. An earnest study of social institutions by a typical American labor leader would be a world curiosity.

In this philosophical backwardness, in this positive refusal to see capitalism in its true light, originate most of the evils from which our labor movement is now suffering. American Labor has

no social vision, no real understanding of what it is trying to accomplish. A few years ago its leaders used to tell us they were striving for "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work," but since that nonsensical conception has been exploded they dodge the issue altogether. Consequently the movement just drifts along aimlessly and planlessly, fighting for petty immediate demands, most of which are founded upon false bourgeois premises, and which lead the workers into a swamp of defeat. American Labor, because of its ignorance of its true goal, is short-sighted and crassly materialistic. It knows nothing of that wonderful spirit of sacrifice and idealism which is always born of the workers' hope for a new day. Mr. Gompers and the others who justify this condition of ignorance and fight relentlessly against every attempt to enlighten the workers about capitalist society and to get them to formulate real working class intellectual conceptions, are as generals of an army who have neither a plan of strategy nor a knowledge of the enemy they have to contend with. It is our calamity and discredit that one has to come to America to find the sad spectacle of a great labor movement which has not yet freed itself intellectually from the bonds of capitalism, and which is still persisting in the foolish and hopeless task of patching up the wage system.

OUR POLITICAL INFANCY

No less primitive is American Labor's conception of political action. In this respect also we stand in a class by ourselves, at the foot of the list. In all important foreign countries the labor movements have come to understand that they must carry on the class war in the political as well as the industrial field. With them it is no longer a debatable question as to whether or not the workers should organize politically on class lines. Such organization is so well understood as to be taken for granted as a self-evident necessity. The only matter at issue is whether their political parties should be Labor, Socialist, Syndicalist,¹ or Communist in make-up. Only in the United States is the labor movement so altogether raw

¹ Although differing radically from the other groups in their political conceptions, the Syndicalists nevertheless carry on working class political action. They use the unions as their party, and instead of electing representatives into the Governments, they bring direct industrial pressure to bear on them.

and undeveloped that it still has this fundamental lesson to learn. This is the one modern country where the mass of organized workers have no political party of their own, and where they continue to tail along in the train of the capitalist parties, pursuing the program of “rewarding their friends and punishing their enemies.” Everywhere else the labor movements have outgrown this obsolete policy from 15 to 50 years ago.

By preserving in this primitive and outworn political method American Labor has been reduced to practically a political zero. Our labor movement has little or no real influence in the affairs of the State. One aspect of its powerlessness is its almost complete lack of representation in the various legislative bodies. Outside of a few nondescript “card men” here and there who are often even more corrupt and treacherous than the capitalist politicians themselves, Labor has no spokesmen whatever in the local, state, and national legislative assemblies. The whole law making and law enforcing mechanism is in the hands of the enemy, who do as they please with it.

Compare this situation with that prevailing in Europe, for instance, where the workers have understood to build themselves class political organizations. There Organized Labor is a great political power, and one which must be reckoned with on all vital issues. In Germany the workers’ parties control 42% of the members of the Reichstag, in Austria 38%, Checho-Slovakia 36%, Belgium 35%; Denmark 34%, Italy and Bulgaria 25%, Norway, Holland and Switzerland 22%, in their respective national parliaments. In Great Britain many experts look for the Labor Party to be the dominant one after the next general elections. Politically the workers of Europe are a real power.

Another aspect of American Labor’s political weakness is the reactionary course of labor legislation in the United States. In 1909, after his visit to Europe, Mr. Gompers had this to say:

“We are, in the United States, not less than two decades behind many European countries in the protection of life, health, and limb of the workers... We are behind England 10 years. We are behind Germany 20 years.”¹

¹ “*Charges Against the National Association of Manufacturers, etc.*” P. 2532.

In the 13 years that have elapsed since this comparison was made the situation has become much more unfavorable for the United States, because during that period, and especially since the war, nearly all the European countries have made great strides forward in labor legislation while this country has gone steadily backward. All over Europe the workers have been able to wring one political concession after another from the capitalists, whereas here the capitalists have stripped the workers of many of their most fundamental rights. Free speech and free press have been largely abolished by the multitude of anti-syndicalist laws, and hundreds of labor men, arrested merely for expressing their opinions, have been given prison sentences so severe as to shock the civilized world. The right of assembly has degenerated into little more than a privilege, dependent upon the whims of the American Legion, the Ku Klux Klan, or corrupt local officials. The right to strike has been abridged by Esch-Cummins laws, industrial courts, and the injunction abuse, which flourishes now as never before. Even the fundamental right of popular representation has been invaded by the refusal to seat regularly elected workers' candidates, and by millionaires flagrantly buying their way into Congress. Hardly a month passes by but what some hard-won piece of legislation is destroyed. The Sherman Anti-Trust law, with its fancy Clayton Amendment, has become a laughing-stock by being used only against Labor, the very one it was supposed not to apply to. The Seamen's Act has been rendered inoperative, and the noble Supreme Court has declared the Federal Child Labor Law unconstitutional. Likewise, this august body, in the Coronado Case, has delivered itself of an American Taff-Vale decision against the unions. And now comes Judge Wilkerson with his injunction, denying the right to strike to 400,000 shopmen, and making outlaws of them. Almost any one of the workers' political rights may go next. And in the face of all this disaster, the labor movement flounders around helpless to stop the rout. Mr. Gompers' pet policy of rewarding the workers' "friends" and punishing their "enemies" has made a political nobody of American Labor.

Besides robbing the workers of representation in the legislative bodies and stripping them of all political power, Mr. Gompers' political policy directly corrupts and weakens the trade union movement itself. By opening the organizations to capitalist party representatives, posing as "friends" of Labor and seeking

endorsement, it has made the workers' unions convenient nesting-places for all sorts of political crooks. These sharpers, in turn, have poisoned the selfish individuals in Labor's ranks to such an extent that in many localities selling out Labor politically for cold cash has become a regular profession of alleged labor leaders. Much of the bribe-taking from employers for industrial "favors" that curses our labor movement derives from the same source; for once labor officials become accustomed to betraying the workers politically it is an easy step further to betray them industrially. The shocking Mulhall exposures of a few years ago gave barely an indication of the extent to which capitalist politicians have poisoned the labor movement, because its doors are open to them.

But, worst of all, American Labor's political policy directly checks the growth of class consciousness among the workers and retards the intellectual development of the labor movement. The acceptance of the capitalist parties as the political expression of the working class necessarily carries with it also the endorsement of their general capitalist point of view. Logically enough practically the whole battery of our trade union officials and labor papers express almost identically the same social conceptions as the capitalists and join hands with the latter in suppressing all activity tending to give the workers a clear understanding of the class nature of present society. Only when the workers organize politically as a class do they break with capitalist concepts and develop class consciousness.

For many years the British labor movement went along pretty much as we are doing now, a political cipher in the service of the capitalist parties. With most of its leaders preaching purely capitalistic economics, naturally class consciousness made slow headway. But when finally, as a result of the Taff-Vale Decision in 1901, the movement was driven to independent political action and to organize the Labor Party, these very leaders, in the nature of things, were compelled to advocate, to a greater or lesser extent, class solidarity and class action. This broke the ice, and henceforth proletarian investigation and education found a more congenial atmosphere. The supposedly unshakably conservative British workers began to become class conscious. From that time to this they have made wonderful strides towards acquiring a revolutionary point of view. American workers will do the same once they break with the capitalist parties and set up a class party of their own. With

its present policy of rewarding its "friends" and punishing its "enemies," the American labor movement is still in the political kindergarten.

WEAK AND PRIMITIVE UNIONISM

In harmony with its undeveloped social viewpoint and its infantile political organization, American Labor's trade unions also are in a very backward state. Whether considered from the standpoint of numerical strength, type of structure, or general spirit of progress, they fall far behind the unions of many other countries. Even a casual glance over the world's labor movement confirms this statement.

Regarding the question of numerical strength: At present there are, including all independent unions, not over 3,500,000 trade unionists in this country, or about 1 unionist to each 31 of the general population of 110,000,000. Compare this, for example, with the situation in the two other leading industrial countries, Germany and England. In Germany there are somewhat over 12,000,000 trade unionists out of a total of 55,000,000 people, or about 1 to each 4 1/2; while in England the trade unionists number approximately 6,000,000, or 1 to each 7 1/2 of her population of 44,000,000. In other words, the German trade unions, considering the difference in the population of the two countries, are numerically about 6 times as strong as ours, and the English about 4 times. For our unions to be as large proportionally as those in Germany they would have to have no less than 24,000,000 members. Compare this giant figure with the paltry 3,500,000 members that our unions now possess and a fair idea is had of how far behind the American labor movement is in this respect. In Germany and England (not to mention other countries) the great mass of the working class has been organized, but here in the United States barely a start has yet been made.

Structurally our trade unions make an equally poor showing. Whereas in all other leading countries the main labor movement, accepting the logic of capitalist consolidation, have quite generally endorsed the principle of but one union for each industry and are making rapid strides towards its realization, the American labor movement still clings firmly to the antiquated principle of craft unionism. Throughout the rest of the world there are many single unions—such as building, metal, railroad, general transport, printing, etc.—that have been built up recently by amalgamating the

original craft organizations. Others are being constantly created. In England the giant new Transport and General Workers' Union has just been formed; the Amalgamated Engineering Union is making steady headway towards its avowed goal of one union in the metal industry; likewise the National Union of Railwaymen, the Federation of Printing and Kindred Trades, the Federation of Building Trades Operatives, etc., in their respective fields. Strong amalgamation movements are afoot in every industry. In addition plans are now being discussed to lash all the national unions together and to develop the whole labor movement into one gigantic machine. In Germany a similar process of consolidation goes on constantly. Already many large industrial unions have been constructed from the old craft organizations. The best-known of them is the famous Metal Workers' Union, with 1,700,000 members. Gradually the entire labor movement is being developed into one organization.¹ In Belgium the original welter of craft unions has been hammered together into about a dozen industrial organizations, and plans are now being carried through to unite all these into one body. In Australia the largest unions in the country have declared for a complete amalgamation of all the workers' labor organizations into a single departmentalized union to represent the whole working class. In Norway there is now a committee at work devising ways and means to reorganize the entire craft union movement into a series of industrial unions, all of which shall be locked together.

So it goes all over the world except in the United States; everywhere else the workers are making rapid progress in the necessary work of transforming their primitive craft unions into modern industrial organizations. But here we are still floundering in the mud of craft unionism, and progressing at only a snail's pace.

¹ In Germany the General Federation of German Trade Unions (Socialist), comprising about two-thirds of the whole labor movement, has 8,000,000 members. These are combined into 49 national unions. On the other hand, the A. F. of L., with fewer than 3,000,050 members, is split up into no less than 117 national organizations. The average membership of the unions in the German Federation is approximately 143,000, while that of the A. F. of L. unions is less than 24,000. This illustrates the much greater consolidation and concentration of trade unions in Germany than in the United States.

Disregarding the rapid consolidation of the employers and their wonderful increase in strength, American Labor plods along with the 19th century condition of from 10 to 15 autonomous craft unions in each industry, and considers such a primitive state of unorganization as the acme of trade union accomplishment.¹ There is hardly a breath of progress anywhere. Though our movement is threatened with extinction because of its lack of solidarity and centralization, the man who proposes a sensible plan of amalgamation is harassed and persecuted by the highest officials as a fanatic and a disruptor. At its Cincinnati, Ohio, Convention, the A. F. of L. repudiated the principle of amalgamation and endorsed the Scranton declaration of 21 years ago, which was written before the great modern capitalist combinations were formed. On the other hand, the progressive German unions, which are much further advanced than the A. F. of L., and by no means as hard pressed by the employers, at their 1922 Leipzig Convention went on record for amalgamation generally and laid plans to reorganize the whole labor movement on an industrial basis. In the United States, where capitalist organization has reached the highest known type, the trade unions should lead the world in the matter of numbers and structure. In point of fact, however, they are not beyond the point reached generally by European trade unions 15 years ago.

Invariably American labor leaders, when confronted with irrefutable facts demonstrating the numerical, structural, and intellectual inferiority of our labor movement as compared with that of Europe, attempt to wave aside the unfavorable comparison by making the broad assertion that trade unionists enjoy better conditions in this country than anywhere else in the world. So far as wages are concerned this is undeniably true. But it is idle to say that such is the case because American labor is better organized or more ably led than European labor. Without belittling the accomplishments of our unions, it is safe to say that the determining factor in the matter is that the United States, as compared with Europe, has long been a bonanza country. Enormously rich and getting from 2 to 20 times greater production from their employees, the capitalists in this country are much more inclined to yield a bit

¹ The one exception is in the case of the United Mine Workers of America, which, at least so far as its structure is concerned, will compare favorably with any coal miners' union in the world.

on the wage scale of the workers, unorganized as well as organized, than are the employers in poorer and slower-going Europe. Unquestionably European workers have to fight much harder for wage increases than we do.

Nevertheless, up to the outbreak of the war at least, the European unions were able to make a surprisingly creditable showing in wages. During a debate in 1909 between Karl Legien and Karl Kautsky this was strikingly illustrated. In his paper, *Die Neue Zeit*, Kautsky sought to prove that trade union action had little value. To back up his assertions he cited official A. F. of L. statistics which showed that the wage increases secured by its affiliated unions from 1890, to 1907, had barely beat the advancing cost of living. Legien took exception to this argument, and refused to consider the accomplishments of the A. F. of L. organizations as exhausting the possibilities of trade unionism. In a pamphlet, *Sisyphusarbeit oder positiv Erfolg*, he demonstrated that the German unions had made a much better showing with regard to wages, compared with the rising cost of living, than had the American organizations.

But in any event, even if our wage standards are somewhat higher than those in other countries, certainly we have little to brag about. In the March, 1922, wage hearing before the Railroad Labor Board, B. M. Jewell, President of the Railway Employees' Department of the A. F. of L., stated that in 1921, the full-time wages of railroad shop mechanics could purchase only 64% of the meat, fish, milk, and eggs; 77% of the cereal foods; 91% of the vegetables; and 71% of the butter, fats, and oils necessary to maintain their families at the lowest level of safety. The Department of Labor family budget calls for an expenditure of \$2,303.99 per year; whereas the wages of the shop mechanics, counted at full-time basis and totally disregarding the terrific unemployment, amounted only to \$1,884.90. And since then their wages have been slashed again about 10% on the average. With strategically situated mechanics in such a condition, the deplorable state of the unskilled, who get hardly half as much wages, can better be imagined than described.

But a far better criterion than wages to judge the strength of a labor movement is the more vital matter of the shorter workday. In this respect American Labor is behind the rest of the modern industrial world. In Great Britain, Australia, Italy, and New

Zealand, the 8-hour day has been quite generally established by trade union agreements, and in the following countries national 8-hour laws have been enacted for industrial workers:

Austria	Jugo-Slavia	Poland
Checho-Slovakia	Luxembourg	Portugal
Denmark	Mexico	Russia
Ecuador	Netherlands	Spain
Finland	Norway	Sweden
France	Panama	Switzerland
Germany	Peru	Uruguay ¹

Compare this wide-spread application of the 8-hour day with the situation in the United States. Many, if not most of our industries, still have the 9 and 10-hour day, not to mention the barbaric 12-hour day of the steel mills. Despite the United States' great industrial advantages over all its competitors, which should have greatly facilitated the unions in winning shorter hours, this country remains pre-eminently the long hour work-day nation of the world. This is indeed a poor recommendation for the prowess of our labor movement.

Another matter which is vital in determining the real strength of all labor movements, and in which ours is sadly lacking, is trade union control over industry. In many European countries the trade unions are so thoroughly established in almost every branch of industry that the employers have come to accept them practically as permanent institutions. In such lands trade unionism has become recognized as an inevitable factor in industry. So well are the workers organized that scabs are almost a thing of the past. This is notably the case in England and Germany. In the latter country the trade unions have agreements covering every industry. No sane employer hopes to dislodge them, much less break them up. Consequent upon this firm grip on industry, which encourages them to look forward to the time when the mills and factories will be democratically owned and operated, the European unions have worked out elaborate systems of factory councils, guilds, etc., to take over the management of industry, and they have made substantial progress in establishing these organizations.

¹ For comparisons between these laws and the limitations of each, see U. S. Dep't of Labor *Monthly Labor Review*, P. 184. April, 1921.

But things are profoundly different in the United State. Here the unions have such a slight grip upon industry that they hardly dream of such things as factory councils and guilds. Indeed, outside of the clothing industry, very few of our labor leaders would even know what such things are. The nearest approach we have had to such a movement was the one centering around the Plumb Plan, and Mr. Gompers neatly smothered that. As yet our trade unions have hardly won a semblance of recognition. Constantly they have to fight for their very existence. In not a single industry have they been able to force the type of recognition that is common in many European countries. The closest there is to such recognition is in the case of the four railroad train service organizations, and even these are constantly threatened. America is peculiarly the land of the "open shop." The "American Plan" is the correct name. Nowhere else but here is such an abomination to be found. With the great industries almost totally unorganized, and with vast armies of scabs available, the employers of this country have contempt for the trade unions. They look upon them as a passing phase, as presumptuous organizations which must and will be eliminated at the first opportunity. The present wholesale smashing of unions, which threatens the life of the entire labor movement, is the most eloquent testimonial to the weakness of American Labor.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, JOURNALISM, CO-OPERATIVES

In no other phase does the unparalleled conservatism and backwardness of the American Labor movement come to light more strikingly than in the latter's relations to the labor organizations of other countries. At present there are two great world labor movements; one, the International Federation of Trade Unions, with headquarters in Amsterdam, and the other, the Red International of Labor Unions, with headquarters in Moscow. The former is passive and reformist, the latter is militant and revolutionary. All the important labor movements of the world are affiliated to one or the other of these two—that is all except ours. The American trade union movement stands aloof altogether, on the ground that both are too revolutionary. According to Mr. Gompers, who pulled the A. F. of L. out of the Amsterdam International a couple of years ago, even that yellow organization, whose leaders undoubtedly stopped the world revolution and saved capitalism during the big labor

upheavals in Germany, France, Italy, etc., after the war, is much too radical for American workingmen to associate with. This withdrawal from Amsterdam has made us the laughing stock of the international labor world, reformist and revolutionary alike. To the militant unionists of other countries it is a profound mystery how, in this land of advanced and aggressive capitalism, the labor movement can be so spineless intellectually as to fear affiliation with even the timid Amsterdam International.

In the matter of a labor press the American working class is particularly weak. As for the A. F. of L. itself, its journalistic efforts are deplorable. On the one hand it gets out the hard-boiled *American Federationist*, with its news and editorial columns filled with reactionary attacks upon everything even mildly progressive, and its advertising space littered up with scab advertisements; and on the other hand, the anaemic *A. F. of L. News Letter*, with its poor attempt at being a news service for the labor press generally. Likewise the international journals, with rare exceptions are dry as dust and reactionary. Rigidly censored by the controlling officials, there is no freedom of discussion in their columns. They sound no real proletarian note, nor do they carry on vital educational work. Their technical trade education and constant repetition of stereotyped petty capitalist ideas might well be left for the employers to propagate. Nor are the local papers as a rule any better. Many of them are contemptible grafting sheets, the like of which cannot be found in any other country. Such parasitic papers, almost always stout defenders of Gompersism, make their living by campaigning against everything healthy in the labor movement. Their favorite method is to print vicious attacks against all progressive movements in the trade unions and then, on the strength of these, "sandbag" the employers into giving them advertising and flat donations of money. There are scores of such "rat" sheets, some operating independently and some with the endorsement of local central labor councils, pouring a flood of poison into the trade union movement. Nearly all important industrial centers are infested with them. Pittsburgh, for instance, has three, viz.: *National Labor Journal*, *Labor World*, and *National Labor Tribune*. All of them joined hands with the employers to defeat the great steel strike of 1919. And the worst of this journalistic shame, which could exist in no other labor movement, is that the A. F. of L. officialdom makes no effort to obliterate it. But this officialdom spares no effort to

crush the revolutionary press. Characteristically just now it is engaged in a war against the Federated Press, the best labor news gathering agency in the world and one of the few institutions of which our labor movement may be really proud.

In the field of co-operative enterprise the American labor movement makes the same poor showing that it does in so many other phases of labor activity. All over Europe, in England, Germany, France, Italy, Scandinavia, Belgium, Holland, etc., the co-operative movement is vast and vigorous and a real institution in the life of the people. It involves great armies of members and hundreds of millions of capital. But in the United States the movement is just beginning. This country has long been the despair of earnest co-operators. An apparently incurable blight, traceable to the ignorance, cupidity, and indifference of our labor leaders, has cursed and ruined their efforts. Only within the past few years, with the development of co-operative stores among the miners, the founding of the labor banks, and occasional other ventures here and there, has any real headway been made. Compared with that in Europe, the co-operative movement in the United States is still in its swaddling clothes.

REACTIONARY LEADERSHIP

The prevailing type of American labor leadership is a sore affliction upon the working class. Our higher officialdom swarms with standpatters and reactionaries such as would not be tolerated in any other country. Mr. Gompers himself personifies the breed. He is the arch-reactionary, the idol of all the holdbacks in the labor movement. Possibly, as some allege, he was a progressive at the time the A. F. of L. was formed, but now he is the undisputed world's prize labor reactionary. In many respects he is even more reactionary than the very capitalists themselves. A case in point is his present attitude towards Russia. In that distressed country millions of people, famine stricken, are dying of starvation. The labor movement and the liberals of the world, forgetting political differences, are rallying to their support by sending food and money. Even the cold-hearted capitalistic United States Government, not to speak of various other bourgeois organizations, was moved to make a substantial contribution. But in the face of all this bitter need Mr. Gompers, a bound slave to his insane hatred for everything radical, stands unmoved. The cries of millions of

starving women and children go unheard by him. Not a word has he spoken in their behalf, not a dollar has his organization raised to relieve their sufferings. Mr. Gompers would starve Soviet Russia into re-establishing capitalism. This brutal program, now frankly abandoned even by most capitalistic politicians, is on a par with that of Kolchak and Semenov. American Labor's policy towards Russia, dictated by the blind hatred of Mr. Gompers, is a disgrace which should make every workingman bow his head in shame.¹

American Labor leadership has displayed crass incompetence in organizing the masses industrially. The relatively small number of trade unionists in the United States is ample proof of that. As a shining example of our movement's weakness in the organizing department let us again cite Mr. Gompers. Considered as a labor organizer he is a first class failure. Because of his incompetency much of the blame for the unorganized state of the working class attaches to him personally. Never during the long tenure of his office, at least not since the "stormy '80's," has he developed, or allowed anyone else to develop a comprehensive plan to organize the masses of the workers. Opportunity after opportunity he has allowed to slip by unused, to the sad detriment of the labor movement.

Consider the war situation for example: That was a marvelous chance to organize the great body of the working class and to unshakably intrench the trade unions. The workers were most strategically situated and enjoyed wonderful political and industrial power. Had there been even a mediocre organizer, instead of a "labor statesman," at the head of our movement, great armies of toilers could have been drawn into the labor organizations. A general national organization campaign should have been mapped out and intensive, systematic drives for members started in all the

¹ On a par with Mr. Gompers' reactionary Russian policy was his attitude towards the infamous "red" raids engineered by Attorney-General Palmer. Never was a more dastardly crime committed against the rights of the workers. But Mr. Gompers made no protest. Quite evidently Mr. Palmer was a man after his own heart. Characteristic enough it is that on May 1st, 1922, with Mr. Palmer in political limbo and even the reactionary Republican politicians refusing to stoop to such contemptible artifices, it was Mr. Gompers who issued the flaming warnings in the capitalist press against the impending red peril.

industries. Given even ordinarily competent direction, such a movement would have achieved tremendous success. But of course, nothing of the kind was done. The intellectually sterile Mr. Gompers failed utterly to perceive the needs and opportunities of the situation. He was too busy winning the war and making the world safe for democracy. Flattered by great capitalists and basking in the sunshine of a fickle public opinion, he completely neglected the vital business of organizing the workers and spent his time with such questionable affairs of state as putting across the Versailles Treaty. He worked out no general strategy, no unified campaign of organization for the labor movement. And no one else was in a position to do so. Consequently the various organizations had to go ahead as best they could. Everybody started whatever he pleased. While Mr. Gompers dallied with his capitalist friends, the Chicago Federation of Labor was compelled to launch the great drives in the packing and steel industries. To organize such movements was clearly the duty of Mr. Gompers' office, and if it failed to do so he alone was to blame. The situation, from an organizing standpoint, was chaotic. Little substantial was accomplished. With the general result that, because of Mr. Gompers' inefficiency, because he had no inkling of what should have been done, the great masses of the workers were not organized during the golden opportunity presented by the war time. And now we are paying the penalty in the great "open shop" drive that is smashing the unions. Had the workers been organized during the war, and they easily could have been, the "open shop" drive would never have started against the deeply rooted trade unions. Had Mr. Gompers been even a third rate organizer it would have changed the whole face of industrial America.

All over the world the labor movement suffers grievously from unscrupulous, self-seeking leaders, but nowhere so much as in the United States. Here we are infested with breeds of them entirely without parallel anywhere else. Only in America can be found known crooks and convicted criminals functioning as labor officials, many of whom have become enormously wealthy through robbing both employers and workers. This condition is a world scandal; the active unionists of other countries simply cannot comprehend it. They have their reactionaries a-plenty. But such open thievery is peculiar to the United States alone. It is a drastic proof of the low level of our labor leadership.

But worse even than the plain grafters are the large body of leaders who, destitute of all idealism and real proletarian feeling, look upon the labor movement simply as a convenient means to well-paid jobs of power and influence. They kill all life and progress in the workers' organizations. Mr. Gompers is the undisputed king of this type. He is the champion office-holder of them all. The way he has hung on for forty years is a world marvel. And the labor movement has paid dearly enough for it. Mr. Gompers has never considered any movements of the workers from any other angle except what effect they will have upon his tenure of office.

Like all other labor politicians, but much more pronouncedly, Mr. Gompers shirks responsibility. No matter how burning the need for vigorous action to save some critical situation, he will initiate nothing. The labor world may tumble about his ears, but to protect his own interests, he stands pat. With him everything is all right so long as he does not have to assume responsibility that may breed him enemies. His philosophy is, better to lose a thousand strikes and organizing opportunities through inaction than to risk one aggressive movement, the failure of which might enable someone to "get something on him." He moves ahead only when pushed. This negative attitude, this habitual refusal to initiate anything or to assume any responsibility caused the failure to organize the workers generally during the war; this it was that made Mr. Gompers sabotage the steel campaign from beginning to end, when it got under way in spite of him. And this do-nothing policy it is which constantly paralyses the labor movement in its brain and heart and reduces its vitality to the vanishing point. It is a policy fatal to Organized Labor; but it is good for Mr. Gompers' own personal ends, and that to him, is of course supreme justification for it.

More than simply failing to initiate progressive movements, Mr. Gompers is actually a valiant fighter for things as they are in the labor movement. A curious twist of this policy makes him play the role of a sort of weak king among powerful nobles. The international union presidents are the nobles. Things have conspired to make them into petty despots in their respective spheres. They are little nabobs. With unlimited autonomy and points of view to correspond with their narrow craft interests, they naturally carry on a wrangling, unsolidaric movement fatal to the interests of the working class as a whole. The great need of the labor movement is

that the power of these nabobs be clipped, and that it be absorbed by the general organization, the A. F. of L. The national movement, as such, must be strengthened. But it is exactly this that Mr. Gompers fails to do. On the contrary, he defends the vicious nabob system even more militantly than the nabobs themselves. He fights every attempt to strengthen the A. F. of L. or to make it function as an effective central organization. He battles to preserve all the privileges of the nabob international presidents, disastrous though these may be to class solidarity and progress. This has given him wonderful prestige with the nabobs as a "safe" man. Thus, strangely enough, by keeping his own organization – the A. F. of L. proper – weak and functionless he personally waxes great and powerful. And again, for his advancement, the labor movement pays a bitter price. The labor politician, of which Mr. Gompers is the shining example, is the old man of the sea of American Labor.

Severe though many of the foregoing criticisms of American Labor may be, no truth-seeking worker, free from chauvinistic bias, can deny their correctness. Although the American labor movement has some admirable qualities (which will be indicated as this pamphlet progresses), nevertheless, in the main, it is miles and miles behind the labor movements of other important capitalist countries. Our labor movement's non-revolutionary outlook, its lack of social vision, is unique in the international labor world; likewise its want of an organized, mass working class political party. Our trade unions are primitive to a degree in their structure and they cling tenaciously to the antiquated craft form, discarded by workers in other countries; they are exceedingly weak in numbers, encompassing only a small body of workers, instead of the great mass, as in Germany, England and elsewhere; they have not succeeded, as compared with European unions, in winning the shorter workday and in establishing the foundations of democracy in industry; the breath of progress is not in them. The international policy of our movement is a joke, when not a tragedy. Our labor journalism is colorless, stupid, and often corrupt; our co-operative movement is in its infancy; our labor leadership is incomparably reactionary. While the labor movements abroad, keeping pace with a growing capitalism, have gone ahead developing new conceptions, consolidating their organizations, and winning new conquests, we have practically stood still, stagnant, unresponsive, unprogressive. Finally we have arrived at the paradoxical situation

where, apparently in contradiction to economic principles, the United States has at once the most highly developed industrial system and the weakest working class organization of the modern capitalist world. So decrepit and unfit is our labor movement that, unless ways are found to revive and re-invigorate it, it is actually threatened with extinction by the employers in the present great "open shop" drive. The American labor movement is bankrupt.

CHAPTER 2

Cause of the Bankruptcy

The weakness of the American labor movement, its lack of social vision and its general backwardness politically and industrially, as compared with the labor movements of other countries, has long been a matter of common knowledge. It cannot be denied or disputed, nor do real labor students try to do either. Their aim is to explain it, to find out the reasons for the paradoxical situation of the world's most advanced capitalistic country possessing such a primitive working class movement. Two explanations for this condition, widely accepted among labor men and students generally, are (1) that the influx of so many millions of immigrants, with their innumerable racial, language, national, and religious differences, has enormously complicated the problems confronting the labor movement and hindered the work of unionization and education by bringing together a practically unorganizable mass in the industries, and (2) that the workers of America, because of the existence of the free land for so long and the opportunities presented by the unexampled industrial expansion, have been better able to make a living, and consequently have not felt the need for organization and a revolutionary spirit to such an extent as the oppressed workers of Europe. Or, in other words, that too many immigrants and too much prosperity are to blame for the extreme backwardness of Organized Labor in the United States.

FOREIGNERS AS MILITANTS

Regarding the first of the explanations: Although, undoubtedly, the presence of so many nationalities in the industries makes the problem of organization more difficult, it is by no means an insurmountable obstacle. The situation is not nearly so bad as it has been painted. The "unorganizability" of the foreign-born workers is a very convenient cloak for labor leaders to cover up their inefficiency and the weaknesses of an unfit craft unionism. The fact is, the immigrant workers are distinctly organizable, often even more so than the native Americans. This has been demonstrated time and again in strikes during the past 10 years. In the big Lawrence strike of 1912 it was the immigrant workers, a score of different nationalities, who were the backbone of the great struggle. Likewise in the packing house movement of 1917-21, the whole

thing centered around the foreigners, mostly Slavs. They organized the unions in the first place (the Americans quite generally refusing to come in until after a settlement had been secured), and they are the ones who made the final desperate fight. The same experience was had in the great 1918-19 organizing campaign and strike in the steel industry. Although in some mills there were as many as 54 nationalities, they joined hands readily and formed trade unions. There was much more difficulty in organizing the minority of Americans than the big majority of heterogeneous foreigners. And when the historic struggle with the steel trust came the foreign workers covered themselves with undying glory. They displayed the very highest type of labor union qualities.

The majority of the membership of the United Mine Workers of America are foreigners. Yet that is one of the very best labor organizations in this country. Indeed, one can search the world's labor movement in vain to find a union with a more valiant record. But the best illustration of the organizability of the foreigners is to be found in the clothing trades. In that industry the unions are made up of a general conglomeration of nationalities, principally Jews, Poles, Italians, and Lithuanians. The Americans form but a small minority of the membership and almost nothing of the administration. Yet the unions, all of them, are miles in advance of the ordinary American trade union. In fact, they will compare with the average European labor bodies. Most of the criticisms of the American labor movement, outlined in Chapter I, do not apply to these organizations, made up chiefly of immigrants. They are the one bright spot in a generally dismal movement.

Again it must be said that, although somewhat complicating the problems of the labor movement, the immigrant workers cannot be seriously blamed for its present deplorable condition. Intellectually they are radical and receptive of the most advanced social programs. If they, making up the bulk of the working forces in the great industries, have not been organized industrially and politically before now it is immediately because of the utter sterility and incompetence of the Gompers regime.

PROSPERITY NOT A DETERRENT

To urge the comparative prosperity of the American working class as an explanation of the backwardness of our labor movement is just as futile as to blame it upon the foreigners. The fact is that

exceptional prosperity, instead of being a deterrent, is a direct stimulus to labor organization and radicalism. The workers progress best, intellectually and in point of organization, under two general conditions the antipodes of each other, (1) during periods of devastating hardship, (2) in eras of so-called prosperity. When suffering extreme privation they are literally compelled to think and act, and when the pressure of the exploiter is light, during good times, they take courage and move forward of their own volition. The static periods, when very little is accomplished in either an educational or organizational way, are when times are neither very bad nor very good. Then both factors for progress, heavy pressure and stirred ambitions, operate at a minimum.

Russia and Germany, in their revolutions, gave conclusive proofs of the tremendously rapid spread of labor organization and radicalism when the workers are under terrific pressure from the exploiters, and many years' experience all over the world has demonstrated that the labor movement also makes good progress under the very reverse conditions of "prosperity." Australia is a classical example. That has long been a land of "good times" and "opportunity." An abundance of cheap land has been constantly at hand, labor has always been scarce, and unemployment practically nonexistent. If there were anything to the theory that prosperity kills the militancy of the workers then certainly the Australian labor movement might be expected to be weak and insipid. But in reality it is one of the most advanced working class organizations to be found anywhere in the world, and it has been such for many years past. This is no accident or contradiction. Australian Labor is strong, not in spite of the prevailing "prosperity," but because of it. It is exactly since opportunity is plentiful and labor scarce, which means that the employers are to some extent deprived of their powerful ally unemployment, that the workers' fight is easier and they are encouraged to make greater and greater demands upon their exploiters. Germany, before the war, was another typical example of the working of this principle. It was by far the most prosperous country in Europe, and consequently it also had the best organized and most intelligently radical working class.

Even in the United States can be traced the benefits conferred upon Organized Labor by "opportunity" and "prosperity." The West has always been the land of opportunity, the traditional place of labor shortage and high wages in this country; and likewise it has

ever been the natural home of militant labor unionism and radicalism in general. It is in the East, where labor has been most plentiful, wages lowest, and opportunity scarcest for the worker of small means, that labor organization and revolutionary understanding have made slowest progress. By the same token, when hard times prevail over the country the labor unions become weak, and the workers, defeated, grow pessimistic and lose all daring and imagination. But when the hard times are succeeded by a wave of "prosperity" the workers' cause picks up at once; the unions, victorious, grow rapidly and, having had a taste of power, they are ready for further conquests, no matter how radical. This tendency was well illustrated during the war and the boom time following it. Never were the workers more prosperous, never were wages higher, job conditions better, and working hours shorter than in this period. But the prosperity, instead of injuring the labor movement, gave it the greatest stimulus, physically and intellectually, in its history. The workers, acting as they always do under such favorable circumstances, poured into the organizations by hundreds of thousands. Then the latter, tremendously invigorated by this enormous influx of new strength and finding the capitalists' fighting ability greatly handicapped because of the labor shortage, insisted upon concessions and conditions such as they hardly dared dream of in pre-war times. A basic radicalism developed throughout the working class, not the classic Marxian revolutionary understanding, it is true, but a closely related deep yearning and striving for more power over industry and society generally. Naturally enough also it was in 1919, when the railroad unions were at the very zenith of their power and influence, that they announced the Plumb Plan to take the railroads out of the hands of their present owners.

The workers, particularly in a backward labor movement like ours, learn by doing. It is just when they enjoy greatest power and well-being, in times of prosperity, that they are most stimulated to desire and demand more. Because this is the case, because the workers habitually take advantage of every lessening of the pressure upon them by expanding their organizations and increasing their demands, periods of abounding prosperity are periods of danger to capitalism. They are eras of genuine progress to the working class, even as are the times of unbearable hardships. The explanation that the backwardness of American Labor is due to too much prosperity

will not stand up. The workers as a class do not become enervated by prosperity, they are energized by it and developed into militancy. Because American workers have been comparatively well off is a reason, not that they should have a weak labor movement, but that their organizations, political, and industrial, should be powerful, and revolutionary.

THE REAL CAUSE, DUAL UNIONISM

The American labor movement is in its present deplorable backward condition not because of the reactionary influence of the immigrant workers, or because of the stultifying effect of the higher standard of living prevailing in this country. This is plain when a serious study is made of the matter. Under certain circumstances both of these forces, particularly the former, may exert a hindering influence on the development of labor organization, but at most they are only minor factors. The real cause of the extraordinary condition must be sought elsewhere. And it is to be found in the fatal policy of dual unionism which has been practiced religiously for a generation by American radicals and progressives generally. Because of this policy thousands of the very best worker militants have been led to desert the mass labor organizations and to waste their efforts in vain efforts to construct ideally conceived unions designed to replace the old ones. In consequence the mass labor movement has been, for many years, systematically drained of its life-giving elements. The effect has been shatteringly destructive of every phase and manifestation of Organized Labor. Dual unionism has poisoned the very springs of progress in the American labor movement and is primarily responsible for its present sorry plight.

In order to appreciate the destructive effects of dual unionism it is necessary to understand the importance to Labor of the militant elements that have been practically cancelled by the dual union policy: Every experienced labor man knows that the vital activities of the labor movement are carried on by a small minority of live individuals, so few in number as to be almost insignificant in comparison to the organization as a whole. The great mass of the membership are sluggish and unprogressive. In an average local union of 1,000 members, for example, not more than 100, or 10% of the whole, will display enough interest and intelligence even to attend the regular meetings. And of this 100 usually not more than half a dozen will take an active part in the proceedings. In other

words, the actual carrying on of the real work of the labor movement depends upon a minority, which in the present state of things, does not exceed 1% of the mass.

This militant minority is of supreme importance, to every branch of the labor movement. It is the thinking and acting part of the working class, the very soul of Labor. It works out the lighting programs and takes the lead in putting them into execution. It is the source of all real progress, intellectual, spiritual, and organizational, in the workers' ranks. It is "the little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump." The militant minority, made famous by the Russian revolution as the "advance guard of the proletariat," is the heart and brain and nerves of the labor movement all over the world.

The fate of all labor organization depends directly upon the effective functioning of these militant, progressive spirits among the ignorant and sluggish organized masses. In England, Germany, and other countries with strong labor movements the militants have so functioned. They have remained within the old trade unions and acted as the practical teachers; stimulators, and leaders of the masses there assembled. Consequently they have been able to communicate to these masses something of their own understanding and revolutionary fighting spirit, and to make their movements flourish and progress. But in the United States dual unionism for years destroyed this natural liaison between the militants and the masses, which is indispensable to the health and vigor of Organized Labor. It withdrew the militants from the basic trade unions, and left the masses there leaderless. This destroyed the very foundations of progress and condemned every branch of the labor movement, political, industrial, co-operative, to stagnation and impotency. Dual unionism, so to speak, severed the head from the body of American Labor.

HISTORY OF DUAL UNIONISM

Before indicating more directly the devastating effects of dual unionism it will be well for us to glance for a moment at the historical development of that tendency in this country: Dual unionism is essentially a product of utopianism; it is the result of a striving to reach the revolutionary goal by a shortcut of ready-made, perfectionist organizations. In the early days of our labor movement, 30 to 40 years ago, it played little or no part. Then the militants, not yet having worked out the fine-spun union theories

and cartwheel charts of our times, accepted the primitive mass unions of those days as their working organization. Consisting principally of Anarchists and Socialists, these early fighters took a very active part in the everyday struggles of the organized workers. They sought diligently, not to coax the workers to desert one set of supposedly unscientific unions and to join another set supposedly perfect, but to give vigor and intelligence to the fight of the primitive organizations. Without realizing it they acted in harmony with the most modern militant tactics. The result was that the workers responded to their efforts, and our trade union movement speedily took its place, as a progressive, fighting organization, right in the forefront of international Organized Labor. Though free land and opportunity were much more prevalent then than now, they were powerless to stem the radicalism of the working class.

During the '80s, when the revolutionists were particularly active in the old unions, the American labor movement was an inspiration to the workers of the world. The Knights of Labor were radical and aggressive. Most of the leaders were Socialists. Even Gompers paraded as a revolutionary. In 1887 he said: "While keeping in view a lofty ideal, we must advance towards it through practical steps, taken with intelligent regard for pressing needs. I believe with the most advanced thinkers as to ultimate aims, including the abolition of the wage system."¹ The trade unions were also radical. It was not the K. of L., as many believe, but the Federation of Trades and Labor Unions (later the A. F. of L.) that called and engineered the great general strike of 1886. This historic movement entranced the working class rebels all over Europe, not only because it was the first modern attempt to win the universal 8-hour workday, but especially because it marked the first successful application of their beloved weapon, the general strike of all trades in all localities. In after years they named as Labor's international holiday the day, May 1st, upon which the strike began. In those stirring times our labor unions stood alone in the world for militancy and fighting spirit. This the international labor movement looked upon as perfectly natural. The prevailing conception was that inasmuch as the United States (even in those early days) had the most advanced type of capitalism it was bound to have also the

¹ J. R. Commons, *History of Labour in the United States*, Vol. II, P. 458.

most advanced labor unions. The common expectancy was that this country would be the first to have a working class revolution.

Even after the unsatisfactory outcome of the great 8-hour strike and the execution of the rebel leaders, Parsons, Spies, Fisher, Engel, and Lingg in connection with the Haymarket riot, the Socialists and other radicals enjoyed great power and influence in the trade unions for several years. They were on friendly terms with the leaders of the Federation and constantly making headway with their program. Yet they had a steady fight to make with the reactionary elements. This was being carried on successfully until the appearance of Daniel DeLeon as a power among the radicals. DeLeon, with his dynamic personality and alluring program of separatism, was quickly able to put a stop to the work in the trade unions and to start the rebel movement definitely upon the road to dual unionism.

DELEON AND DUAL UNIONISM

Few men have made a greater impression upon the American labor movement than Daniel DeLeon. His principal accomplishment was to work out the intellectual premises of dual unionism so effectively as to force its adoption and continuance as the industrial program of the whole revolutionary movement for a generation. He was an able writer, an eloquent speaker, a clever reasoner, and a dominant personality generally. But despite his brilliance he was essentially a sophist and a utopian. He particularly lacked a grasp of the process of evolution. He made the fundamental mistake of considering the old trade unions as static, unchangeably conservative bodies, and in concluding that the necessary Socialist unions had to be created as new organizations. He did not know that the labor movement is a growth, intellectually from conservatism to radicalism, and structurally from the craft to the industrial form. DeLeon's industrial program of dual unionism was merely the typical utopian scheme of throwing aside the old, imperfect, evolving social organism and striving to set up in its stead the new, perfect institutions.

DeLeon came to acquire considerable prestige in the radical movement about 1888. Of a hasty, impulsive, and autocratic nature, he soon fell foul of the two great branches of the labor movement, the American Federation of Labor and the Knights of Labor. He broke with the A. F. of L. over a skirmish which occurred in 1890 between that organization and the New York Central Labor

Federation. The latter body, controlled by the Socialists, accepted the affiliation of a local branch of the Socialist Labor Party. But when its delegate Lucien Sanial, appeared at the following convention of the A. F. of L. he was denied a seat. Unquestionably Gompers was right in this controversy, for until this day labor organizations, no matter how radical, do not permit the direct affiliation of political parties. But the affair embittered the hasty DeLeon, who repudiated the A. F. of L. and turned his attention to the then decadent Knights of, Labor. In that organization, grace to his great activity and natural ability, he soon acquired substantial power. At the 1894 General Assembly of the K. of L. he joined forces with Sovereign against Grand Master Workman Powderly. Together they overthrew the latter, but the victorious Sovereign, disregarding his political bargain, refused to reward DeLeon for his assistance by appointing Lucian Sanial editor of the official national journal. This provoked DeLeon's bitter ire, and he broke with the K. of L. These experiences, first with the A. F. of L. and then with the K. of L., convinced him that neither of these organizations were fit material wherewith to build up the Socialist labor movement he had in mind. Therefore, in the following year, 1895, he launched the Socialist Trades and, Labor Alliance, a radical organization designed to supplant the whole conservative labor movement. In the past there had been dual unions organized in opposition to the old trade unions (witness for example the American Railway Union founded by Eugene V. Debs), but the S. T. & L A. was the first of a general character and a revolutionary makeup. Its foundation clearly marked the embarkation of the radical movement upon its long-continued and disastrous program of dual unionism.

Of course, DeLeon did not draw his dual union program simply out of thin air. Naturally there were present many factors which made it seem the plausible, if not inevitable, method to follow. Despite their militancy, the trade unions of the time (while not worse than those of England, where dual unionism got no footing) were comparatively weak in numbers, stupid in their philosophy, and infested with job-hunters and reactionaries. To the rebels of those days, impatient and inexperienced as they were, it looked an unpromising task to convert these primitive groupings into Socialist organizations. It seemed much simpler to start the labor movement all over again, this time upon "scientific" principles. At that early date, because of the youth of the movement, they knew nothing of

the unworkability of dual unionism. In 1895 DeLeon's plan, now discarded as utopian, seemed logical and practical, almost an inspiration, in fact.

SCORES OF DUAL UNIONS

The Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance was still-born. It never amounted to more than a handful of militants, the masses refusing to rally to its standard. The same forces that ruin all such unions effectively checked its growth. But if the S. T. & L. A. failed as an organization the idea behind it, of revolutionary dual unionism, made steady headway. More and more the radical movement, from left to right, became convinced that the trade unions were hopeless, more and more it turned its attention to dual unionism. DeLeon himself was a powerful factor in this development.

In 1899 the Socialist Labor Party split, largely because of the trade union question, and gave birth to the Socialist Party. For a time it looked as though the new body might declare definitely for the trade unions and against dual unionism. But it soon developed a powerful left wing, led by Debs, Haywood and others, who advocated dual unionism as militantly as DeLeon himself had done in the old party. In the meantime, the dualist concept had become enlarged from that of simply a separate Socialist labor movement to that of a separate Socialist labor movement with an industrial form. Revolutionary dual unionism became revolutionary dual industrial unionism. Sympathizers multiplied apace.

Soon the whole revolutionary and progressive movements became impregnated with the dual union idea. Even the right wing elements, who had previously fought against DeLeon over the matter, largely adopted it. Dual unions in single industries sprang up here and there. But it was in 1905 that the movement came to a head. The S. T. & L. A. being hopelessly moribund, a new general dual union organization was deemed necessary, so, with a great fanfare of trumpets, the whole radical movement gathered in Chicago to launch it. There were Socialists, Socialist Laborites, Anarchists, Industrialists, and Progressives. The result of their historic convention was the Industrial Workers of the World, an organization devised to supplant the whole trade union structure and to realign the labor movement upon a new revolutionary basis.

The I. W. W. went forth the embodiment of great hopes and absorbing the efforts of the best workers in the country. But,

nevertheless, it could not triumph over the obstacles ever confronting such dual organizations. The workers simply refused to quit the old trade unions that had cost them so much trouble and strife to build. After several years, therefore, the I. W. W. was quite generally recognized as a failure, and the rebel elements began to turn away from it. But the peculiar thing was its failure did not discourage the dual union idea, any more than had the downfall of the S. T. & L. A. On the contrary, that idea grew and flourished better than ever.

Strangely enough, the longer the dual union policy was followed, the more logical it seemed, notwithstanding its failure to build any new unions of consequence. This was because of the fact that as the revolutionary elements continued their tactics of quitting the old unions the latter, suffering the loss of the best life's blood, withered and stagnated. More and more they became the prey of standpatters and reactionaries; less and less they presented an aspect calculated to appeal to revolutionaries. Dual unionism became almost a religion among rebels. No longer would they even tolerate discussion of the proposition of working within the old unions. The Workers' International Industrial Union, the One Big Union (both of which aimed at covering all industries) and scores of dual unions in single industries were launched later to put the beloved program into effect. Though all of them failed almost completely, still the separatist policy maintained its ground with wonderful vitality. The whole radical and progressive movement, from the extreme left to the liberals, was shot through and through with it.

This widespread devotion to dual unionism, which has never been equalled in any other country, lasted until about the middle of 1921. At that time a bright light broke upon the rebels. All of a sudden they became aware of the fallacy of withdrawing from the organized masses. The intellectual structure of dual unionism fell to the ground with a crash. With a profound change of tactics, which for swiftness has never been paralleled in world labor history, the bulk of them repudiated the separatist policy they had followed so loyally for a generation and turned their attention to developing the old trade unions into modern, aggressive labor organizations. But of this remarkable shift we will say more further along.

CHAPTER III

Ravages of Dual Unionism

Dual unionism is a malignant disease that sickens and devitalizes the whole labor movement. The prime fault of it is that it wastes the efforts of those vigorous elements whose activities determine the fate of all working class organization. It does this by withdrawing these rare and precious militants from the mass trade unions, where they serve as the very mainspring of vitality and progress, and by misdirecting their attention to the barren and hopeless work of building up impossible, utopian industrial organizations. This drain of the best blood of the trade unions begins by enormously weakening these bodies and ends by making impotent every branch of the labor movement as well; for the welfare of all Organized Labor, political, industrial, co-operative, educational, depends upon the trade unions, the basic organizations of the working class, being in a flourishing condition. Dual unionism saps the strength of the trade unions, and when it does that it undermines the structure of the entire working class organization.

THE DUAL UNIONS FAIL

Since the dual union program was outlined almost thirty years ago by DeLeon it has wasted a prodigious amount of invaluable rebel strength. Tens of thousands of the very best men ever produced by the American labor movement have devoted themselves to it whole-heartedly and have expended oceans of energy in order to bring the longed-for new labor movement into realization. But they were pouring water upon sand. The parched Sahara of dual industrial unionism swallowed up their efforts and left hardly a trace behind. The numerically insignificant dual unions of today are a poor bargain indeed in return for the enormous price they have cost.

Consider, for example, the Industrial Workers of the World: The amount of energy and unselfish devotion lavished upon that organization would have wrought miracles in developing and extending the trade unions; but it has been powerless to make anything substantial of the I. W. W. Today, 17 years after its foundation, that body has far fewer members (not to speak of much less influence) than it had at its beginning. The latest available official financial reports show a membership of not more than

15,000, whereas in 1905 it had 40,000. Even its former revolutionary spirit has degenerated until the organization has now become little more than a sort of league to make war upon the trade unions and to revile and slander struggling Soviet Russia. The I. W. W. is a monument to the folly of dual unionism.

The One Big Union of Canada is another example of rebel effort wasted in dual unionism. Four years ago it started out with a great blare of trumpets and about 40,000 members. Its advent threw dissension into the old trade unions and shattered their ranks. They lost heavily in membership, the militants pulling out the more active elements on behalf of the O. B. U. Yet, today, this organization, despite the great effort put into it, has but an insignificant membership, not, over 4,000 at most, and its constructive influence is about in proportion. It was a costly, ill-fated experiment, and in the main has worked havoc to Canadian labor. The Workers' International Industrial Union, another universal dual union, has occupied the attention of the Socialist Labor Party's active spirits for 14 years, but now it can muster only a few hundred actual members. Similar records of disastrous waste of rebel effort are shown by the dozens of dual unions started in the various single industries, all of which literally burned up the energies of the militants. Except for those in the textile, food, and shoe industries, which have secured some degree of success, these dual unions have all failed completely. They have absorbed untold labor of the best elements among the workers and have yielded next to nothing in return. Dual unionism is a useless and insupportable squandering of Labor's most precious life force. It is a bottomless pit into which the workers have vainly thrown their energy and idealism.

DEVITALIZING THE TRADE UNIONS

The waste of rebel strength, caused so long by dual unionism, has reacted directly and disastrously upon the trade unions. For many years practically all the radical papers and revolutionary leaders in this country were deeply tinged with dual unionism. In their program the ideas of secessionism and progressive unionism were welded into one. The consequence was that as fast as the active workers in the trade unions became acquainted with the principles of revolutionary unionism they also absorbed the idea of dualism. Thus they lost faith and interest in their old organizations, either quitting them entirely for some dual union, or becoming so

much dead timber within them. The general outcome of this wholesale turning away of the progressive minority was to divorce the very idea of progress from the trade unions. It nipped in the bud the growing crop of militants, the only element through which virile life and development could come to the old organizations. Dual unionism dried up the very spring of progress in the trade unions, it condemned them to sterility and stagnation. It was a long-continued process of slow poisoning for the labor movement.

A disastrous effect of this systematic demoralization and draining away of the militants is that it has thrown the trade unions almost entirely into the control of the organized reactionaries. In all labor movements the unions can prosper and grow only if the progressive elements within them organize closely and wage vigorous battle all along the line against the conservative bureaucracy. The militants must build machines to fight those of the reactionaries. But in the United States dual unionism has prevented the creation of such progressive machines. By its incessant preaching that the trade unions were hopeless and that nothing could be done with them, it discouraged even those militants who did stay within the unions and prevented them from developing an organized opposition to the bureaucrats. Poisoned by dual union pessimism about the old organizations and altogether without a constructive program to apply to them, the militants stood around idly for years in the trade unions while the reactionary forces entrenched themselves and ruled as they saw fit. Because of their dualistic notions the militants practically deserted the field and left it to the uncontested sway of their enemies. If the American labor movement is now hard and fast in the grip of a stupid and corrupt bureaucracy, totally incapable of progress, dual unionism, through its demoralization of the trade union opposition, is chiefly to blame.

During the great movement of the packinghouse workers the indifference of the radicals towards the old unions wrought particular havoc. A handful of rebels, free from dual union ideas, were primarily responsible for the historic movement. Soon they found themselves in a finish tight with the conservatives for control of the newly formed unions. Occupying the strategic position in the organizations, especially in the Chicago stockyards, they begged the dualistic radicals, who worked in the industry, to come in and help them control the unions, offering to place them in secretaryships and other important posts. Had this offer been accepted, it would

have certainly resulted in the big packinghouse unions, then numbering over 100,000 members, coming entirely under progressive leadership. But so strong was the spirit of dualism at that time, in 1919, that the outstanding rebels, mostly extreme left-wingers, would not participate constructively in the trade unions even under such exceptionally favorable circumstances. They refused the invitation with insults and contempt. The consequence was that the few militants within the old unions were swamped by the reactionaries, who soon wrecked the whole organization by their incompetence and corruption. It was a splendid opportunity lost. Similar opportunities existed in other industries. It is safe to say that if the radicals had been free of dual unionist tendencies during the war period and had been active in the trade unions, the great bulk of the working class would have been organized, instead of the comparatively few that were gotten together by the reactionaries, who controlled the unions.

DISRUPTION THROUGH SECESSION

Dual unionism's steady drain upon the vitality of the trade unions by withdrawing and demoralizing the militants piecemeal has been ruinous enough, but the many great secession movements it has given birth to have made the situation much worse. It is the particular misfortune of the American labor movement that just when some trade union is passing through a severe crisis, as a result of industrial depression, internal dissension, a lost strike, or some other weakening influence, the dual union tendency breaks out with unusual virulence and a secession movement develops that completes the havoc already wrought. Exactly at the time the militants are needed the most to hold the organization together is just when they are the busiest pulling it apart. In such crises those who should be the union's best friends become its worst enemies. This has happened time and again. During the past two years, for example, the longshoremen and seamen have had bitter experience with such breakaway movements. Both organizations had lost big strikes, and both were in critical need of rebuilding and rejuvenating by the progressive elements. But just at this critical juncture the latter failed, and, instead of strengthening the unions, set about tearing them to pieces with secession movements. Four or five dual unions appeared, and when they got done attacking the old organizations and fighting among themselves all traces of unionism

were wiped out in many ports. Similar attacks are now being directed against the weakened railroad shopmen's unions.

A great secession movement, typical for its disastrous effects, was the famous "outlaw" strike of the switchmen in 1920. That ill-fated movement began because of a widespread discontent among the rank and file at the neglect of their grievances by the higher union officials. It was a critical situation, but had there been a well-organized militant minority on hand the foment could have been given a constructive turn and used as a means not only to satisfy the demands of the workers but also to defeat the reactionaries. But the long-continued dualistic propaganda in the railroad industry had effectively prevented the organization of such a minority. Hence, leaderless, the movement ran wild and culminated in the "outlaw" strike. Then, as usual, the secessionist tendency showed itself and a new organization was formed. The final result was disaster all around for the men. The strike was lost, many thousands of active workers were blacklisted, the unions were weakened by the loss of their best men, and the grip of the reactionaries on the organization was strengthened by the complete breakup of the rebel opposition. The "outlaw" strike of 1920 was one of the heavy penalties American workers have paid for their long allegiance to utopian dual unionism.

Likewise typical of the ruin wrought by dual unionism was the movement that gave birth to the Canadian One Big Union in 1918. Freeing themselves for the moment from the dual union obsession, the rebels had raised the banner of industrial unionism in the old trade unions, and the workers, seeing at last an escape from reactionary policies and leadership, responded en masse. Union after union passed into revolutionary control, and the movement swept Western Canada like a storm. It seemed that finally an organization of militants, without which there could be no progress, was about to be definitely established in the trade unions. But just when the movement was most promising the dualists got the upper hand and steered the whole business into the quagmire of secession by launching the O. B. U. as a new labor movement. Havoc resulted. The new union, of course, got nowhere, and the old ones were split and weakened by dissensions and the loss of many thousands of their very best workers. But, worst of all, the budding organized minority within the trade unions was wrecked, and the organizations passed completely into the control of the

reactionaries. The O. B. U. secession set back the whole Canadian labor movement for years.

BREAKING THE WESTERN FEDERATION OF MINERS

One of the great tragedies caused by dual unionism was the smashing of the Western Federation of Miners. This body of metal miners, organized in 1893, was in its early days a splendid type of labor union. Industrial in form and frankly revolutionary, it carried on for many years a spectacular and successful struggle against the Mine Owners' Association. Brissenden says that its strikes in Coeur d'Alene, Cripple Creek, Leadville, Telluride, Idaho Springs, etc., were "the most strenuous and dramatic series of strike disturbances in the history of the American labor movement." Time after time the miners armed themselves and fought it out with the gunmen and thugs of the mining companies. Their valiant battles attracted world-wide attention.¹

But this great organization, unquestionably one of the best ever produced by the American labor movement, has long since been wrecked both in point of numbers and spirit. Insignificant in size, it has also become so conservative as to be ashamed of its splendid old name. It is now known as the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. This pitiful degeneration of the Western Federation of Miners was caused directly by dual unionism. Some detail is necessary in order to show how it happened:

To begin with we must understand that in its best days only a few of the W. F. of M. membership, not over 5% at most² were active and revolutionary. This small minority, highly organized, occupied all the strategic points of the union. Thus they were able to communicate something of their own revolutionary spirit to the mass as a whole. The organized rebels literally compelled the W. F. of M. to be a virile fighting organization.

In 1905, the W. F. of M. was one of the unions that formed the I. W. W. It remained part of that organization for about two years, when it withdrew. The militant elements, the ones who had made

¹ The history of the W. F. of M gives the lie direct to the argument that prosperity kills the militancy of the workers. That union was made up mostly of American born workers and operated in what was then the most prosperous section of the country, the Rocky Mountain district.

² Estimated by Vincent St. John, former W. F. of M. militant.

the W. F. of M. what it was, were bitterly opposed to the withdrawal. For the most part they stayed in the I. W. W. and allowed the W. F. of M. to go its way without them. Hundreds of the best men, including such fighters as Haywood, St. John, etc., deserted the old organization, either by quitting it altogether or by becoming negative factors in it. The passage of the W. F. of M. through the I. W. W. served to sift out the active workers, to rob the W. F. of M. of its very soul. The W. F. of M. went into the I. W. W. a revolutionary organization; it came out of it, if not actually conservative, then at least definitely condemned to that fate.

After the W. F. of M.'s withdrawal from the I. W. W. its militants, all become ardent dual unionists, declared war to the knife against it. The organization which had previously absorbed so much of their unselfish devotion was thereafter the object of their bitterest attacks. Once the very backbone of the W. F. of M., the militants now became its deadliest foes. Under these circumstances it was not long until the degeneration set in which has reduced the once splendid Western Federation of Miners to its present lowly status.

Among others, the writer was one who pointed out the folly of rebels destroying an industrial union like the W. F. of M., simply because it had withdrawn from the I. W. W., and who likewise urged that a campaign be started to take control of the union again. But the answer always given was that the Moyer machine, especially because it controlled the big Butte local union, was unshakably entrenched. And when it was proposed to capture the Butte local this was declared impossible. But the fallacy of this objection was made apparent in 1914 when, as a result of insupportable grievances, the rank and file of the Butte organization rose up, drove their officials from town and took charge of the situation. This put Butte, the citadel of the reaction, squarely in the hands of the militants. Had they but stayed in the W. F. of M. and carried on a campaign in the other locals the whole organization would have been theirs for the taking. But they were so obsessed with the dual unionism prevailing generally among rebels, and so blinded with hatred for everything connected with the A. F. of L., that they seceded at once and formed a new union. This went to smash, as such organizations almost always do. The only practical effect of the whole affair was to deal a death blow to W. F. of M., already weakened and poisoned by the desertion of its former militants.

It is one of the saddest facts of American labor history that the Western Federation of Miners was finally destroyed by the very men who originally built it and made it one of the joys of the working class. What the Mine Owners' Association, with all its money and power, was unable to accomplish, the militants, obsessed by dual unionism, brought about with little or no difficulty. Their allegiance to an impractical theory has broken up all organization among the metal miners. And the ravages that were made upon the W. F. of M. have been visited to a greater or lesser extent upon every other trade union in the United States, for all of them have had to suffer the loss of their most active workers and to confront as bitter enemies those very fighters who should be their main reliance.

DOWNFALL OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

A striking example of the destructive influence of dual unionism upon other working class organizations besides trade unions, was the ruin it wrought to the Socialist Party. For many years the S. P. was the chief vehicle for revolutionary thought in this country. Gradually it grew and expanded until, in 1912, it reached a total of 118,000 members. It appeared to be flourishing and destined for a vigorous future. But all of a sudden it began to wither and disintegrate, a process which went on until now the S. P. has less than 10,000 members.

This quick collapse of the Socialist Party was one of the most remarkable events in modern labor history. It seemed that the very bottom fell out of the movement. The first immediate cause was the passage, at the 1912 national convention, of the famous Art. 8, Sec. 6, of the party constitution, stringently prohibiting the advocacy of sabotage, and other forms of direct action. This measure, amounting in effect to an anti-syndicalist law, greatly antagonized the left-wing elements and drove many of them from the party. The next blow came when the United States entered the great war. The party adopted an anti-war resolution, only to find itself confronted with a labor movement and a working class generally stricken by war fever. Result, further great losses in membership and prestige. The final stroke came with the Communist split in 1919. This pulled away at least half of the remaining party membership, and the rest demoralized, have been unable to recover and to rehabilitate the

organization. Since then the S. P. has diminished constantly in strength to its present low level.

The three above-mentioned causes for the breakdown of the Socialist Party, despite their importance, were only of a surface character. The real reason lies deeper. It is to be found in the organization's faulty economic policy, in the dual unionism which has afflicted it ever since the party's foundation. All working class political parties, whether Labor, Socialist, Communist, or whatnot, must be organized with the trade unions as their foundation. This is because the trade unions are the basic institutions of the working class. The fact that they carry on the everyday struggle of the workers for better conditions gives them enormous prestige and numerical and financial strength, all of which labor parties must utilize in their political work. It may be accepted as an axiom that whoever controls the trade unions is able to dictate the general policies, economic, political and otherwise, of the whole working class. All over the world the strength of the workers' political parties is in direct ratio to the amount of control they exercise over the mass trade unions. Such a thing as a powerful labor party, whether conservative or radical, without strong trade union backing, is impossible. Therefore, one of the very first tasks of every working class political organization must be to establish its influence in the trade unions.

The Socialist Party has never understood these cardinal facts. Its working principle, real enough even though unexpressed, has always been a presumption that it could secure its membership and backing from the citizenry generally. It has not realized that all labor parties must have as their foundation not only the masses, but the masses organized in the trade unions. Because of the tendency of its predecessor, the Socialist Labor Party, to split away the rebels from the trade unions, the thing that the S. P. necessarily had to do in order to succeed was to carry on an intense campaign against dualism and to entrench its active workers in the strategic positions of the labor organizations, where they could educate the masses and utilize their industrial, financial, and other strength to further the cause of the whole Socialist movement. But because it did not clearly understand the importance of the unions as such it failed to map out such a positive industrial program, indispensable to its life and progress. It allowed all its industrial work to be thwarted by a dual unionism which infected the party deeply from its inception.

Although when the Socialist Party developed as a split-off from the old Socialist Labor Party one of the issues it dissented upon was the latter's policy of dual unionism, it was not long until it, too, was in the grip of the same disease. A powerful left-wing, bitter haters of the trade unions and ardent advocates of a dual labor movement, rapidly developed. The right-wing favored active participation in the trade unions, chiefly for vote-catching reasons, while the left-wing proposed the destruction of the trade unions. The party as a whole, seeking a false harmony, straddled this vital question. Its general attitude was to favor industrial unionism, but not to tell its members how to achieve this form of organization, whether through the development of the old unions or the establishment of new ones.¹ As an organization it carried out no serious work to build up the necessary labor union foundation. Each wing of the party applied its own particular industrial policies. For some years the right-wing attempted to capture the old unions, and with considerable success in the Machinists', Bakers', Clothing Workers', Miners' and other unions, but on the whole, the left wing, by a bitter warfare against the trade unions, sabotaged such work most effectively.

Because of this negative attitude the Socialist Party never won for itself the support of the labor organizations, without which it could not possibly succeed. Its members never were encouraged to occupy the tremendously important strategic posts, such as executive officers, editors, etc., in the trade unions, which could have been used to enormous advantage for the party. On the contrary, these posts remained uncontested in the hands of the conservatives, who used them most effectively to poison the masses against Socialism. When, for example, the party adopted the anti-war resolution it would have been comparatively simple to secure the support, or at least the toleration, of the working class for that measure, had the radicals been strategically entrenched in the unions. But with the Gompers crowd in complete control the latter

¹ A classic example of this negative policy was the famous industrial resolution adopted in the 1912 S. P. convention. This resolution, accepted unanimously by dual unionists and trade unionists alike, was nothing more than an agreement between the two factions that the party in general should actively support neither the trade unions nor the dual unions, in other words, that it should have no industrial program at all.

were able to sway the whole trade union movement, and with it the working class in general, against the Socialist Party and its anti-war attitude. In this instance the party reaped the whirlwind that it had been sowing for so many years by its failure to conquer the trade unions, a task which it could have easily accomplished had it but freed itself from dualism.

In Europe the Socialist Parties of the various countries have suffered many heavy blows since the beginning of the world war. But they have stood up under them far better than the American Socialist Party. This is because, being deeply rooted in their respective trade unions, there is some structure and fiber to them. Consider the Social Democratic Party of Germany, for example. That organization openly betrayed the workers all through the war and the revolutionary period. It forfeited its right to represent the working class. In consequence it was subjected to several great splits and innumerable desperate assaults from without by the left-wing elements. But it has maintained itself with a vigor not even remotely shown by the Socialist Party in this country. The explanation for this was its firm control over the German trade union movement. Having in its hands practically all the executive positions of the unions, it was able to control the masses even under the most trying circumstances. Had the left-wingers been able to break this trade union control, the S. D. P. would have collapsed even as our Socialist Party did. The degree of success of the German Communist Party in its present struggle against the Social Democratic Party is in direct relation to its ability to win the trade unions away from S. D. P. domination.

The Socialist Party in this country collapsed because it was built upon talk, instead of upon the solid foundation of the trade union movement. Because it did not have the labor unions behind it the organization had no real stability. Hence, when it was put to the test, as noted above, in 1912, 1917, and 1919, it went to pieces. Dual unionism kept the Socialist militants out of the organized masses and thus directly prevented the winning of the working class to the beginnings of a revolutionary program. Moreover, it made of the S. P. itself a formless, spineless movement, which was shattered at the first real shock. Dual unionism ruined the Socialist Party.

Further illustrations might be cited almost indefinitely to show the baneful effects of dual unionism upon various working class organizations. By pulling the militants out of the trade unions and

wasting their energies on futile utopian separatist organizations, dual unionism has robbed the whole working class of progressive leadership. It has thrown the great labor unions almost entirely into the hands of a corrupt and ignorant bureaucracy, which has choked out their every manifestation of real progress. And in stultifying and ruining the trade unions, dual unionism condemned to sterility every branch of the entire labor movement, industrial, political, and otherwise; for if the workers in general have not been educated to an understanding of capitalism and the class struggle, if they have not developed a revolutionary ideal, if they have not yet organized politically on class lines, if they have not yet produced a powerful cooperative movement—in every instance the cause may be directly traced to the paralyzing influence of the reactionary trade union bureaucracy, which dual unionism entrenched in power. The persistence, for a generation, of the fatal dual union policy is the true explanation of the paradoxical and deplorable situation of the United States, the most advanced capitalist country in the world, having the most backward labor movement.

CHAPTER IV

New Realism vs. Old Utopianism

But the American labor movement is at last freeing itself from the dual union tendency which has sucked away its life blood for so many years. During the past 18 months whole sections of the militants have undergone an intellectual revolution, repudiating their historic policy of building independent idealistic labor organizations, and turning with remarkable rapidity and unanimity to the work of revamping and revolutionizing the old trade unions. Practically every branch of the radical and progressive movements has been effected by this unprecedented tactical about-face. The Communist groups, viz.: Communist Party, Workers' Party, and Proletarian Party, have been particularly influenced. Made up of elements to whom dual unionism was almost a religion for many years, they have now turned entirely against that policy and are working diligently within the old unions to revive and re-invigorate them. Quite evidently those parties are determined not to make the fatal mistake, which ruined the Socialist Party, of failing to establish their militants in the strategic positions in the organized masses. The Farmer-Labor Party militants, always active in the unions, have had their work clarified and intensified. The Socialist Party, the I. W. W., the O. B. U., and the various single industry dual unions have also been greatly touched by the new viewpoint. Large numbers of the latter's most active spirits have come out openly for consolidation with the trade unions. It is the most complete change of tactics that has ever taken place in any country in the world in so short a time. Dual unionism has been dealt a death blow.

THE CAUSE OF THE RENAISSANCE

The new movement is crystallizing in the Trade Union Educational League; but before describing this organization it will be well for us to consider the origin of the profound and remarkable tactical reversal and the differences between the old utopian dual unionism and the new realistic industrial program:

The repudiation of dual unionism in the United States and Canada was precipitated as a result of the Russian revolution. When the Communists of the world, shortly after the revolution, organized their political party, the Third International, one of the first great organizational problems to confront them was that of the trade

unions. In order to succeed in its immense task of overthrowing capitalism generally, the new International was compelled to have the backing of the masses organized industrially. But the difficulty was how to secure this support. Everywhere the trade unions were in the hands of reactionary leaders, and the question was whether the Communists should stay in the old unions and launch a bitter struggle to control them, or withdraw from them, smash them up, and start dual labor movements in the various countries.

For a time the dualistic conception prevailed, particularly in the programs for Germany and the United States. But the keen Russian leaders at the head of the Third International were quick to perceive the folly of such a course. Zinoviev, Radek, and others began to combat the separatist tendency and to urge penetration of the trade unions. Lenin himself was especially militant in this respect. In his famous booklet, *The Infantile Sickness of 'Leftism' in Communism*, he says:

But the German 'Left' Communists commit the same stupidity when, because of the reactionary and counter-revolutionary heads of the trades unions, they, through some inexplicable mental process, jump to the conclusion that it is necessary to quit these organizations altogether! To refuse to work in them! To invent new workingmen's unions! This is an unpardonable blunder which results in the Communists rendering the greatest service to the bourgeoisie... A greater lack of sense and more harm to the revolution than this attitude of the 'Left' Communists cannot be imagined... There is no doubt that Messrs. Gompers, Henderson, Jouhaux, Legien, etc., are very grateful to such 'Left' revolutionaries who, like the German opposition-in-principle elements, or as so many among the American revolutionaries in the Industrial Workers of the World, preach the necessity of quitting reactionary trade unions and refusing to work in them.

Losovsky, head of the Red International of Labor Unions and also of the General Council of the All-Russian Trade Unions, was another, who inveighed heavily against dual unionism. In his pamphlet, *The International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions*, and speaking of the formation of that body, forerunner of the present Red International of Labor Unions. he says:

All this evidence of the invincibility of the trade union bureaucracy (advanced by the I. W. W. dualists) created a curious impression. On the one hand these comrades were preparing to bring about a social revolution in their country—and on the other hand they speak of Gompers with such holy horror as if to drive Gompers and the other traitors out of the trade unions was a much more difficult task than overthrowing the mighty capitalist class of America... To leave the trade unions and to set up small independent unions is an evidence of weakness, it is a policy of despair and, more than that, it shows lack of faith in the working class... The motto put forth by the Communist International, and which is our motto also, is: *'Not the destruction, but the conquest of the trade unions.'*

At the 2nd congress of the Third International, held in Moscow in 1920, heavy blows were dealt the dual unionists by the realistic Russian leaders. Radek in particular waged war against them. He tried, but without much success, to have the American delegation adopt a trade union policy. The congress finally condemned dualism in principle. But a definite stand was not taken on the matter until the congress of 1921. In the year that had passed the problem of dual unionism had become a burning issue in many countries. It had to be settled, and the congress handled it without gloves. As a result the dualists were overwhelmingly defeated and the tactics of participation in the trade unions was endorsed and adopted. In the trade union theses outlining the general policy of the Third International it says:

During the next epoch the principal task of all Communists will be to concentrate their energy and perseverance on winning over to their side the majority of workers in all labor unions. They must not be discouraged by the present reactionary tendency of the trade unions, but take active part in the struggles of the unions and win them over to the cause of Communism in spite of all resistance.

Dealing directly with the industrial program to be applied in America, the theses say:

Communists must on no account leave the ranks of the reactionary American Federation of Labor. On the contrary,

they should get into the old trade unions in order to revolutionize them.

Following closely after the 3rd congress of the Third International came the 1st congress of the Red International of Labor Unions. In that body also the advocates of breaking up the old unions and starting the labor movement all over again were routed completely. The general theses on the subject say:

The task of the revolutionary elements in the trade unions does not consist in wresting from the unions the best and most class conscious workers in order to create small independent organizations. Their task should be to revolutionize the unions, to transform them into a weapon of social revolution by means of the everyday struggle in favor of all the revolutionary demands put forth by the workers within the old trade unions... To conquer the unions means to conquer the masses, and these can only be conquered by a systematic campaign of work, setting against the policy of class collaboration that of our steady line of revolutionary action. The slogan, "Out of the Trade Unions" prevents us from conquering the masses for our cause and retards the advance of the social revolution.

The R. I. L. U. program for America says:

The question of creating revolutionary cells and groups within the American Federation of Labor and the independent unions is of vital importance. There is no other way by which one could gain the working mass in America, than to lead a systematic struggle in the trade unions.

This categoric condemnation of dual unionism by both branches of the Communist International, political and industrial, produced a profound effect in America. The left-wing elements who for so many years had accepted industrial dualism as a self-evident necessity, in fact, almost as a religion, were literally shocked into a re-valuation of it. Their eyes were opened all of a sudden to its disastrous consequences. Then they repudiated it and began their present great drive back to the old trade unions. To the Third International, and particularly to the Russians at the head of it, is

due the credit for breaking the deadly grip of dual unionism in the American labor movement.

OLD VIEWPOINTS DISCARDED

With the repudiation of dual unionism, the militants have also cast aside many of the theories they once held regarding the unions and have adopted new and different conceptions. In the past, blinded by the glittering dual union utopia and embittered by organization chauvinism, they developed many bizarre notions about the trade unions in order to justify the dualist policy. In the light of recent events these theories seem ridiculous. The real meaning of the labor movement escaped the dual unionists altogether. Besides ascribing the most extravagant virtues to their utopian dual organizations, they lashed the old trade unions with criticisms which, for wildness and vitriolic sharpness, have never been equaled in any other country. They looked upon the trade unions as a sort of conspiracy carried out by the employers against the working class, as capitalistic organizations which, yielding no benefits to the workers now and utterly incapable of evolving into genuine labor unions, had to be ruthlessly destroyed.¹ The following

¹ Dual unionists commonly make the charge that the A. F. of L., backed by capitalist money, was organized to destroy the Knights of Labor, and then, with characteristic inconsistency, they claim the success of the A. F. of L. as proving the feasibility of the dual union program. But the fact is the A. F. of L. was not organized as a rival organization to the K. of L. When the A. F. of L. was founded in 1881 it had 40,000 members (out of a total of 200,000 trade unionists in the whole country) whereas the K. of L. at that period had only 20,000 members. Only for a couple of years, when it was at its peak, did the K. of L. exceed the trade unions in numerical strength. Generally speaking the trade unions represented the skilled workers, and the K. of L. the semi-skilled and unskilled. At first no rivalry existed between the two movements. They maintained friendly relations until 1884, when the K. of L. began its rapid growth and hectic career. Needing the skilled workers in its bitter battles against the employers, the K. of L. embarked upon a militant campaign to absorb the trade unions. This started the fight, John R. Commons, in his *History of Labor in the United States*, P. 386-411, says: "The conflict was held in abeyance during the early eighties. *The trade unions were by far the strongest organizations in the field* (Italics ours) and they scented no particular

list of miscellaneous quotations from well-known militants illustrates typically the long prevailing intense hatred and contempt for the trade unions:

The American Federation of Labor is not now and never can become a labor movement.¹

The United Mine Workers is a capitalist organization just as much as the standing army of the United States.²

The 28,000 local unions of the A. F. of L. are 28,000 agencies of the capitalist class.³

When it comes to strikebreaking the A. F. of L. has Farley beaten 1,000 ways.⁴

The American Federation of Labor is neither American, nor a federation, nor of labor.⁵

There is no case in the history of bygone organization in the labor movement where existing organizations have changed to meet new conditions.⁶

danger when here and there the Knights formed an assembly either contiguous to the sphere of a trade union or even encroaching upon it.” But with the great expansion of the Knights, beginning about 1884, the jurisdictional war began in earnest. “In nearly every instance the Knights were the aggressors.” Finally at their removal Assembly in 1886, the Knights declared war against the trade unions. This aroused the latter to self-defense. They opened peace negotiations with the K. of L., but as these failed, “Thereupon the Federation declared war upon the Knights and announced the decision to carry hostilities into the enemy’s territory.” In view of these facts it is idle to assert that the A. F. of L. was a capitalist conspiracy, or even a dual union, against the Knights of Labor.

¹ Vincent St. John, in speeches.

² James P. Thompson, Everett, Wash, 1911 convention of International Union of Shingle Weavers.

³ Wm. D. Haywood, in speeches.

⁴ James P. Thompson, Everett, Wash., 1911.

⁵ Daniel DeLeon, 1905 I. W. W. convention.

⁶ Vincent St. John, *Why the A. F. of L. Cannot Become an Industrial Union*.

The first duty of every revolutionist is to destroy the A. F. of L. There can be no revolutionary organization so long as it exists.¹

We simply have to go at them (the trade unions) and smash them from top to bottom.²

I would cut off my right arm rather than join the A. F. of L.³

We don't want to save the Federation any more than to save the nation; we aim at destroying it.⁴

The A. F. of L. never won a strike, the I. W. W. never lost one.⁵

If any officer of a pure and simple trade or labor organization applies for membership in the Socialist Labor Party he shall be rejected.⁶

It has been said that this convention was to form an organization rival to the A. F. of L. This is a mistake. We are here for the purpose of forming a labor organization.⁷

This worn-out system (trade unionism) offers no promise of improvement and adaptation. There is no silver lining to the clouds of darkness and despair settling down upon the world of labor.⁸

It might as well be said if the fine energy exhibited by the I. W. W. were put into the Catholic Church (instead of the trade unions) that the result would be the workers' control of industry.⁹

Through the foregoing intensely hostile criticisms, which truly reflect the viewpoint held generally by rebels for many years regarding the trade unions, run the conceptions that the trade unions are essentially capitalistic in nature, and that they cannot develop into bona fide revolutionary organizations. But the militants of today, since their great change in opinion and tactics, no longer accept these far-fetched and unjustifiable conclusions. They see the trade unions for what they really are, primitive but genuine attempts of an ignorant working class to organize and fight the exploiters that

¹ Joseph J. Ettor, *Samuel Gompers Smascherato*.

² Tom Hickey, cited by Brissenden, *History of the I. W. W.*, P. 49.

³ Wm. D. Haywood.

⁴ Joseph J. Ettor, cited by Brissenden, *History of the I. W. W.*, P. 303.

⁵ James P. Thompson, in speeches.

⁶ Socialist Labor Party convention, 1900.

⁷ Wm. D. Haywood, 1905 I. W. W. convention.

⁸ Manifesto of conference forming I. W. W., 1905.

⁹ Wm. D. Haywood, *International Socialist Review*, March, 1914.

are harassing it. If the organizations are afflicted by all sorts of capitalist ideas and notions it is because the workers as a whole suffer from them also. Timid and muddled trade unions are a logical throw-off of a timid and muddled working class. But as the workers gradually become educated, and especially as a more militant and intelligent element achieves leadership among them, the trade unions will constantly take on higher forms and a more advanced psychology, until finally they develop into scientifically constructed, class conscious weapons in the revolutionary struggle.

In the era just past the militants made much of the fact that the trade unions demanded only "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work," claiming this slogan showed conclusively that they were wedded to the perpetuation of the capitalist system. It was one of the prime reasons why the Socialists did not invade the A. F. of L., depose the Gompers regime, and change the whole face of the labor movement twenty years ago. But the militants are no longer deceived by this and similar slogans. They see that little or no attention is paid to such doctrines in real practice. The unions know no such thing as "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work." Consciously or unconsciously, they have used that device as camouflage to conceal from the capitalist enemy the aggressive character of their movement. In reality there is no set limit to their demands. Notwithstanding the hamstringing effects of their conservative bureaucracy, and of their own ignorance and weak organization, the unions constantly improve working conditions and screw up wages as much as they can. Their unwavering method is to seize from the exploiter all they have the understanding and power to take. This is a distinctly revolutionary proceeding. And the modern militant knows that, so far as the industrial part of the class struggle is concerned, his task is to broaden, deepen, clarify, and hasten this natural revolutionary trade union tendency until it culminates in the final abolition of capitalism.

INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM A GROWTH

Especially the new movement, as represented by the Trade Union Educational League, repudiates the conception, long a dogma of the dual unionists, that the trade unions are anchored to the principle of craft unionism and cannot develop into industrial organizations. As against the old idea that the inevitable industrial unions have to be created out of the whole cloth, by fiat as it were,

the new movement holds that they are coming as a result of an evolutionary process, by a constant building-up, re-organization, and consolidation of the primitive craft unions. This conception is borne out by world-wide labor history.

In the development of industrial unionism out of the original unorganized condition of the working class the labor movement passes through three distinct phases, which may be roughly designated as isolation, federation, and amalgamation. In the beginning the workers almost always organize by crafts. These primitive unions, knowing little or nothing of broad class interests, fight along in a desultory battle, each one for itself. This is the period of isolation, or pure and simple craft unionism. But after a greater or lesser period it finally ends: the crafts in the various industries, seeing that the employers play their organizations against each other and thus defeat all of them, learn something of their common interests and set up alliances among themselves along the lines of their respective industries. This brings them into the second, or federation, stage of development. Their evolution goes right on: for the same forces that necessitated the craft unions federating eventually compel them to consolidate these federations into actual industrial unions. Thus they arrive at the final stage of amalgamation. The resultant industrial unions then pass through a similar process of integration. First they fight alone, then they strike up federations with allied industries, and finally they amalgamate with them. Industrial unionism comes, not as a new system suddenly applied to the labor movement, but as the culmination of a long and elaborate evolution from the simple craft unions to the complex organizations necessary for the modern struggle.

Practically all the great industrial unions in the world have been built by this evolutionary process. In England, the National Union of Railwaymen, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Miners' Federation, and the Transport and General Workers' Union are amalgamations of many craft and district unions. In Germany, the Metal Workers' Union, the Building Workers' Federation, etc., etc., were built up the same way from original craft unions. These big organizations, and dozens more in other countries, have all passed through the three stages of isolation, federation, and amalgamation. That is the normal mode of labor union progress. And despite the efforts of the dualists to prove them static and unchangeable, American trade unions are travelling the same evolutionary route

that the foreign unions have taken, although very much slower and more laboriously. At present they are quite generally in the federation stage of development. That is the meaning of the many alliances among them—the railroad federations, the printing, metal, building, and other trades councils—that exist in the various industries. The task of the militants is to develop the trade unions into the next stage, amalgamation; to speed on the present natural evolution until these bodies culminate in industrial unions.

THE MILITANTS IN THE MASSES

The new movement now crystallizing in the Trade Union Educational League also differs widely in tactical conceptions from those of the dualists. The essence of the program of the latter was to set up labor unions upon the basis of their several political and industrial theories and then to try to educate a backward working class into joining them. This was a violation of the first principle of labor unionism. The workers organize in the industrial field not because they hold certain elaborate social beliefs jointly, but because through united action they can protect their common economic interests. Labor unions are built upon the solid rock of the material welfare of the workers, not upon their acceptance of stated political opinions. In the very nature of things labor unions at present must consist of the many sects and factions that go to make up the working class, Republicans, Democrats, Socialists, Communists, Anarchists, Syndicalists, Catholics, Protestants, etc., etc. The natural result of the dualists' attempt to organize labor unions around their theories was a whole crop of new labor movements. As fast as new conceptions, political and industrial, developed, their proponents organized separate labor unions to give expression to them. In some industries there were as many as five of these dual movements, each representing a different tendency and each engaged in the hopeless task of converting the masses to its particular point of view. Dual unionism, with its program of labor organization along the lines of fine-spun theory, not only devitalized the trade unions by robbing them of their best blood, but it also degenerated the revolutionary and progressive movement into a series of detached sects, out of touch with the masses and the real struggle and running off to all sorts of wild theories and impractical programs.

But the militants in the Trade Union Educational League rigidly eschew this sectarian policy. Their program is the very reverse, to keep the militants in the organized masses at all costs. Instead of setting up intellectual and organizational barriers and then coaxing the worker to break through them, they carry their propaganda right into the very heart of the workers' organizations and struggles. The Russian revolution has taught them that the great masses will probably never become clear-headedly revolutionary, but that they will follow the lead of an organized conscious minority that does know the way. The League militants conceive the question of labor organization to be largely one of leadership, and they aim to secure the backing of the mass of organized workers by taking the lead in all their battles, by showing in the crucible of the class struggle that their theories, tactics, and organization forms are the best for the labor movement. Thus will be broken the grip of the revolutionary bureaucracy who now stultify and paralyse the labor unions, and the control of these organizations thereby gradually pass into the hands of the militants who will stimulate and develop them.

In the past the militants have voluntarily isolated themselves from the organized masses, which was very convenient indeed for the labor bureaucrats. But now these active spirits fight desperately against such isolation. They realize fully that their place is in the big trade unions. And when the controlling reactionaries, who instinctively know that the rebels are dangerous to them only if in the unions, expel individuals and local unions, the latter must fight their way back in again. Such a policy however, does not mean that the old organizations must be maintained at any price. In extreme cases secession movements may be unavoidable through the reactionaries' refusing to obey the mandates of the rank and file. But when such splits occur the militants must have so maneuvered as to keep the mass of the membership on their side. Otherwise disaster will come upon them and the labor movement. The winning combination for the rebel movement, the typical situation that the Trade Union Educational League is trying to create everywhere, is for the militants to function aggressively as a highly-organized minority in the midst of the great unconscious trade union mass. The heart of the League's tactical program is that under no circumstances shall the militants allow themselves to become detached from the unionized section of the working class. "Keep the

militants in the organized mass," is the slogan of the new revolutionary movement.

THE AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS

An excellent illustration of the effectiveness of the "keep the militants in the organized mass" method advocated by the Trade Union Educational League was the birth of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. Characteristic of their general misinterpretation of labor history in favor of their policy, the dual unionists have cited this powerful independent union time and again as the one convincing proof of the correctness of the dual union program, and few indeed have contradicted them. All of which qualifies the Amalgamated so much the better to show the difference in principle and results between the old and the new methods of the militants.

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers was not built by dual union methods. It developed out of the work of an organized minority within the old United Garment Workers. The traditional way of dual unionism and the very essence of its program, is for the handful of militants to devise ideal unions, set them up in competition with the old trade unions, and to engage with the latter in an open struggle for control of the industry, a process which almost always results in simply stripping the old unions of their militants and leaving those organizations in the hands of the reactionaries. But nothing like that occurred in the case of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. The militants in the men's ready-made clothing industry had no dual union.¹ They accepted as their organization the United Garment Workers of America, and they planned to make it into a virile fighting union capable of playing a worthy part in the class struggle. To this end they organized themselves, in harmony with League principles, to defeat the controlling reactionaries and to make their own policies prevail.

The struggle between the progressives and the reactionaries in the United Garment Workers went on for a number of years. The rebel elements, utilizing every mistake or crime of the officialdom, gradually extended their organization and influence with the rank

¹ The needle trades generally have been unusually free from dual unionism, a fact which no doubt has had a great deal to do with the advanced types of organization prevailing in that industry.

and file. The sell-out by Rickert in the great Chicago strike of 1910 strengthened their grip. Then came the bitter New York strike of 1913, with its record of treason by the old officials. This was the final blow. On the basis of the resultant discontent the militants, now organized nationally through a rank and file committee (exactly the same as the League is at present setting up in the various industries) elected an overwhelming majority of delegates to the approaching 1914 convention in Nashville.

This brought the situation to a crisis. The militants had the rank and file behind them, but Rickert, in a desperate attempt to save himself, ruled out enough of their delegates to leave him in control. At this all the rebel delegates withdrew and re-organized themselves into another convention. Then they gave an eloquent proof that they were not dual unionists. Even after Rickert's outrage they refused to secede, but claimed to be the genuine United Garment Workers. It was only when the A. F. of L. convention, shortly afterward, denied this claim and recognized Rickert that they launched out as an independent union.

To call such a proceeding dual unionism is nonsense. It had absolutely nothing in common with the customary dual union policy of sucking the militants out of the old unions. The very heart of the campaign cited, and the reason it succeeded, was that it kept the militants in the organized mass and united them there so that they could beat the old machine. The split at Nashville was a minor phase. No matter whether it took place or not, the militants had won the rank and file. Regardless of Rickert's antics, the organized men's clothing workers had definitely accepted the leadership of the men who later made their organization such a brilliant success. Instead of being an endorsement of dual unionism, the rise of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers is a striking justification of the "stay with the organized masses" policy advocated by the Trade Union Educational League.

CHAPTER V

The Trade Union Educational League

The new movement of militants working within the trade unions is centering around the Trade Union Educational League. This body is the descendant of two forerunners, the Syndicalist League of North America and the International Trade Union Educational League. The first of these was organized in 1912. As its name indicates it was Syndicalist in tendency, and it was largely influenced by the French labor movement, then in its glory. The S. L. of N. A. had the same general working principles as the present T. U. E. L. It flatly opposed dual organization and advocated the organization of revolutionary nuclei in the mass unions. For a time it made quite a stir, securing a grip in the labor movements of many cities. In Kansas City in particular the Central Labor Council fell into the hands of the rebel elements, who actually drove the leading labor fakers out of the city. The organization had four journals: *The Syndicalist* of Chicago, *The Unionist* of St. Louis, *The Toiler* of Kansas City, and *The International* of San Diego. A feature of the movement was an extended trip through the United States by Tom Mann, who endorsed its program wholeheartedly. Another was an attempt of the Emma Goldman Anarchist group of New York to steal the thunder of the movement by launching a national Syndicalist league of their own. But the Syndicalist League of North America was born before its time. The rebel elements generally were still too much infatuated with dual unionism to accept its program. Particularly was this true because just about that time the I. W. W. made a great show of vitality, carrying on big strikes in Lawrence, Akron, Paterson, Little Falls, etc., etc. After about two years' existence the S. L. of N. A. died.

The next effort to organize the radicals within the mass unions took place in 1916, when the International Trade Union Educational League was founded. This body set up a few groups here and there, but it found a poor soil to work in. The war situation was at hand and the rebels, still badly afflicted with dualism, would have nothing to do with the ultra-patriotic trade unions. Hence it never acquired even as much vigor and influence as the earlier Syndicalist League of North America. It expired in 1917.

The present Trade Union Educational League was organized in Chicago in November, 1920. For about a year it lingered along

more dead than alive, due as usual to the dualistic attitude of the militants generally. But in the latter part of 1921, after the Third International and the Red International of Labor Unions had condemned dual unionism so categorically and advocated the organization of nuclei within the mass unions, it took on sudden vigor and importance. With the hard shell of dualism broken, the militants, particularly those in the extreme left wing, came with a surprising change of front to see in it exactly the type of organization they needed. One after another, the Communist Party, the Workers' Party, the Proletarian Party, and the United Toilers went on record officially in favor of its general policy. Hence the League rapidly extended its organization and sphere of influence. In the early part of 1922 it put on a drive, sending out an elaborate series of circular letters to hundreds of militants (later blasted by Mr. Gompers as the "1,000 secret agents" seeking to destroy American civilization) in that many towns, calling upon them to organize groups of rebel unionists in their respective localities. As a result branches of the League were set up in all the principal unions and industrial centers of the United States and Canada. In March, 1922, THE LABOR HERALD, monthly official organ of the League, was launched.

PROGRAM OF THE LEAGUE

The working theory of the Trade Union Educational League is the establishment of a left block of all the revolutionary and progressive elements in the trade unions, as against the autocratic machine of the reactionary bureaucracy. Thus, so that these various elements of the different political persuasions can co-operate together, the policy of the organization must be essentially industrial in character. Except for condemning the fatal Gompers political policy and advocating the general proposition of independent working class political action, the League leaves political questions to the several parties. Its work is primarily in the industrial field.

At its first National Conference, held in Chicago, August 26-27, 1922, the League laid out a broad revolutionary industrial policy, upon the basis of which it is uniting the militants and carrying on its educational work in the unions. Of this program the principal planks are: (1) abolition of capitalism and establishment of a workers' republic, (2) repudiation of the policy of class collaboration and

adoption of the principle of class struggle, (3) affiliation of the American labor movement to the Red International of Labor Unions, (4) wholehearted support of the Russian revolution as “the supreme achievement of the world’s working class,” (5) industrial unionism, (6) combating of dual unionism, (7) shop delegate system in the unions, (8) independent working class political action.

In a statement of its program and principles issued in February, 1922, the aims of the League are stated as follows:

The Trade Union Educational League proposes to develop the trade unions from their present antiquated and stagnant condition into modern, powerful 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 interests of Capital and Labor, it is firing the workers’ imagination and releasing their wonderful idealism and energy by propagating the inspiring goal of the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a workers’ republic. The League aggressively favors organization by industry instead of by craft. Although the craft form of union served a useful purpose in the early days of capitalism, it is now entirely out of date. In the face of the great consolidations of the employers the workers must also close up their ranks or be crushed. The multitude of craft unions must be amalgamated into a series of industrial unions—one each for the metal trades, railroad trades, clothing trades, building trades, etc. – even as they have been in other countries. The League also aims to put the workers of America in co-operation with the fighting trade unionists of the rest of the world. It is flatly opposed to our present pitiful policy of isolation, and it advocates affiliation to the militant international trade union movement, known as the Red International of Labor Unions. The League is campaigning against the reactionaries, incompetents, and crooks who occupy strategic positions in many of our organizations. It is striving to replace them with militants, with men and women unionists who look upon the labor

movement not as a means for making an easy living, but as an instrument for the achievement of working class emancipation. In other words, the League is working in every direction necessary to put life and spirit and power into the trade union movement.

ORGANIZATION OF THE LEAGUE

The Trade Union Educational League is what its name implies, purely an educational organization. It carries on an aggressive campaign of instruction and stimulation in every stage and phase of the labor movement. It is in no sense a dual union. It is an auxiliary of the labor unions proper, not a substitute for them. It collects no dues or per capita tax, nor does it accept the affiliation of any labor organization whatsoever. It issues no membership cards or charters. Those wishing to become members must fulfill the following conditions: (1) belong to a recognized trade union,¹ (2) subscribe to THE LABOR HERALD, official organ of the League, (3) satisfy a local membership committee that they accept the general program of the League. The revenues of the organization are derived from the sale of THE LABOR HERALD and pamphlets, collections at meetings, and donations of members and sympathizers to the Sustaining Fund. The League proposes to hold national conferences yearly. Between these conferences the organization is directed by the National Committee, at present consisting of five members, but which will finally be extended to fifteen, including a Secretary-Treasurer, and fourteen secretaries of the National Industrial Sections of the League, as follows: Amusement Trades, Building Trades, Clothing Trades, Food Trades, General Transport Trades, Lumber Trades, Metal Trades, Mining Trades; Miscellaneous Trades, Printing Trades, Public Service Trades, Railroad Trades, Textile Trades, and Local General Groups.

The organization plan of the Trade Union Educational League is to follow with its militant groupings all the ramifications of the labor union movement. To this end it sets up its educational

¹ By "recognized" unions are meant those organizations, independent and A. F. of L. alike, which in the judgment of the League can be adapted to amalgamation. Some, particularly the universal dual unions claiming rights over all industries, will have to be openly opposed as impossible to link up with the general labor movement.

organizations in all localities, crafts, and industries. The local General Groups are made up of militants from all trades. Their function is to carry on the local work generally. They are subdivided into Local Industrial Sections, one for each broad industry. Then there are state organizations to correspond to the State Federations of Labor. These local and state groups are in turn being combined into four districts, Canada, Eastern States, Central States, and Western States.

A most important part of the League are the National Industrial Sections. These are being organized in all the big industries, as specified above. They are each headed by a National Committee, selected either by correspondence or at national conferences, and representing all crafts, A. F. of L. and independent, in their respective spheres. These National Committees map out educational programs for their whole industries and create Local Industrial Sections to carry them into the local unions everywhere. The effect is that even in an industry with 20 or 30 craft unions the militants function on an industrial basis. No matter whether it is a rebel section hand in San Diego, California, or a militant engineer in Portland, Maine, all railroad members of the League are working upon a common industrial program and seeking in their many organizations to make it prevail. In the amalgamation movement, for example, with the militants in the several craft unions of a given industry definitely agreed upon creating an industrial union and working in unity to break down the walls between their respective organizations so that all may be combined into one body, the get-together effect is irresistible. Gompers and all his reactionary henchmen will never be able to withstand it.

THE LEAGUE AT WORK

Although the League has been active but a few months and has hardly made a start at creating its machinery, and notwithstanding the fact that the militants, because of their long connection with dual unionism, have but slight prestige in the trade unions and know very little about how to work effectively in them, nevertheless the organization has made wonderful headway. The workers are responding to its efforts in a manner which is a delight to the militants and the despair of the reactionaries. Already the League has demonstrated beyond question that the rank and file of Labor are ready for a radical program of action.

In advocating the various planks of its platform the League has developed a series of movements within the trade unions, all of which have shown a surprising vitality. An important one was the demand for a general strike of all workers throughout the country as a protest against the Daugherty injunction and other tyrannies of the employers. This movement was initiated in Omaha when League militants introduced the general strike resolution into the Central Labor Council. The resolution was adopted and ordered sent to all central bodies, with the result that hundreds of organizations endorsed it. Mr. Gompers himself stated publicly that he had 200 demands for nation-wide action and that never in the history of the labor movement had there been such a wide-spread sentiment for a general strike. The educational effect of the movement was great.

A large body of sentiment has also been created in favor of affiliation to the Red International of Labor Unions. Hundreds of local unions and dozens of central labor councils have endorsed the proposition. The Detroit and Seattle central bodies have sent delegates to Moscow, and District No. 26, United Mine Workers, has voted to affiliate. In the prevailing strike of railroad shopmen and miners the League has also taken an active part, its speakers encouraging and assisting the workers everywhere. In the Miners' Union the League is particularly effective. At present it is putting up progressive tickets, with excellent chances for victory, in many districts and sub-districts which have been used for years as pawns by the corrupt international administrations. A great service was the League's checking of the outburst of dual union sentiment that developed through the brutal expulsion of Alexander Howat and the Kansas District. A year before such an outrage would have surely split the Miners' Union. But as it was, the League, through its constant hammering against secessionism, had been able to drive home to the rebels some understanding of the disaster of dualism, and aided by the splendid, common-sense attitude of Howat, was able to prevent them from organizing breakaway movements. At least two districts were held in the U. M. W. A. directly through the League's efforts and serious splits were avoided in many more. This work of solidarity was a great achievement for the League and the labor movement at large. It probably saved the whole coal miners' organization; for had a bad break occurred over the Howat case, and it would have done so without the League's influence, the union

never could have weathered the great storm then about to descend upon it, the national general strike of 1922.

But the issue with which the League has scored its greatest success is that of industrial unionism through amalgamation. This movement to combine all the craft unions into a series of industrial organizations it as present sweeping the country like a prairie fire. The workers realize that the death knell of craft unionism has sounded and that the way to a higher form of organization lies through amalgamation. Men and organizations, who a year ago were entirely untouched by industrial union ideas, are now lining up for the project enthusiastically and in wholesale fashion. The "old guard" of the trade union bureaucracy are alarmed as never before in their experience.

The amalgamation movement proper got under way in the latter part of March, 1922, when the Chicago Federation of Labor adopted its now famous resolution calling for the consolidation of all the craft unions into industrial unions. Led by Mr. Gompers himself, the reactionaries declared war against the movement. But to no avail, amalgamation sentiment ran on like a flood everywhere. Since then (this is being written in October, 1922) thousands of local unions, scores of central labor councils, and five international unions,¹ Railway Clerks, Maintenance of Way, Butcher Workmen, Fire Fighters, and Amalgamated Food Workers, have adopted and endorsed general amalgamation projects. The State Federations of labor have been particularly responsive. During the past four months thirteen of them have acted upon the proposition and in eleven instances, viz.: Minnesota, Washington, Utah, Colorado, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Michigan, Indiana, Oregon, South Dakota, and Ohio, the amalgamationists won out overwhelmingly in spite of desperate resistance from the reactionaries. And in the two failures, California and Illinois, the craft unionists secured the victory only by narrow margins. The movement for solidarity is irresistible.

A high point in the campaign was the Detroit convention of the Maintenance of Way, when the 1,500 delegates not only endorsed amalgamation on five separate occasions, but they also cleaned out 19 of 21 of their general officials, including the President, Grable.

¹ At its May, 1922, convention the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America also reiterated more strongly than ever its demand for amalgamation of all the unions in the clothing industry.

Even the independent unions have been deeply affected by the amalgamation movement. A year ago the whole tendency was for them to split and split again, but now they are exhibiting strong get-together movements. In the boot and shoe and textile industries amalgamations of the independents are now under way, and further consolidations may be looked for in the near future. The amalgamation campaign, now sweeping victoriously onward, will culminate inevitably in a profound re-organization of the labor movement. It is a veritable triumph for industrial unionism, and the Trade Union Educational League is the heart of it all.

IN CONCLUSION

The American labor movement is bankrupt. With its reactionary bureaucracy and antiquated political and industrial policies and organization, it is altogether unfit to cope with the alert, highly-organized capitalist class. Politically it has long been a cipher, and now it is in grave danger of extinction industrially also. During the recent past the capitalist class has discovered a new aggressiveness and developed a powerful organization. It is no longer the same class which, before the war, was semi-tolerant of trade unionism. Now it is determined to root out every vestige of Organized Labor. The "open shop" employers have dealt the unions shattering blows in practically every industry, including printing, building, meat packing, steel, railroad, general transport, coal and mining, etc. Consequently the entire trade union movement has suffered disastrously. During the last three years it has lost fully 50% of its entire membership. The whole fabric of Organized Labor is bleeding. The labor movement is in a most critical state. So critical, in fact, that it will never be able to recover unless it quickly and radically changes its policies. The American working class is now imminently confronted with the tragic menace of having its trade union movement obliterated.

There are still some revolutionaries, unfortunately, who would welcome the elimination of the old craft unions, believing that with them out of the way a new and better movement would speedily take their place. But this is a fatal delusion. We may absolutely depend upon it that should the capitalists, in their great "open shop" drive, succeed in breaking the backbone of the trade union movement they would make all labor organization illegal and repress it with an iron hand. American labor would be reduced to

the status of Russian Labor in Czarist days; it would be forced to the expedient of setting up revolutionary nuclei in the industries in preparation for some favorable opportunity when the masses could be stirred to action. Indeed, even as it is, this system will doubtless have to be applied in some of our industries if they are ever to be organized. The mass trade unions are the only protection for the workers' right to organize; the only bulwark against a general flood of capitalist tyranny. They must be defended and strengthened at all costs.

In this grave crisis of the labor movement no relief may be expected from the trade union bureaucrats in high official place. With the rarest of exceptions, they are dominated entirely by the intellectually dead Gompers. Apparently they would slavishly follow him over the precipice to destruction. They are hopelessly self-lashed to the chariot of conservatism. Even now, in this hour of need, they resist with desperation the mildest reforms in the movement's policies and structure. The further the capitalists push them back the more timid and reactionary they become. They are mentally frozen over solid. If the labor movement is to be saved the regenerating force must come from the organized rank and file militants. They must surge up from the bottom and compel the static leadership into vigorous, intelligent action, or remove it drastically.

It is fortunate, indeed, that just in this critical situation, when their services are so badly needed, the militants are at last freeing themselves from the dual unionism which has cursed them and the whole labor movement for a generation by keeping the reactionary elements in power. They are organizing for action in the Trade Union Educational League, and they are finding the American working class, naturally militant and aggressive, more than eager to accept their program. Now the key to the situation is for the revolutionaries and progressives generally to rally around the League and to carry on a vigorous campaign for its policies of industrial unionism through amalgamation, independent workers' political action, affiliation with the Red International of Labor Unions, and all the rest. If this is done it will not be long until the death clutch of the Gompers bureaucracy is broken and the American labor movement, undergoing a profound renaissance, takes its place where it properly belongs, in the vanguard of the world's workers.

THE END

Militants, Notice!

Organize! Join the Trade Union Educational League. This is a system of informal committees throughout the entire union movement, organized to infuse the mass with revolutionary understanding and spirit. It is working for the closer affiliation and solidification of our existing craft unions until they have been developed into industrial unions. Believing that all workers should stand together regardless of their social or other opinions, it is opposed to the common policy of radical and progressive-minded workers quitting the trade unions and starting rival organizations based upon ideal principles. That policy is one of the chief reasons why the American labor movement is not further advanced. Its principal effects are to destroy all radical organization in the old unions and to leave the reactionaries in undisputed control.

The Trade Union Educational League is in no sense a dual union, nor is it affiliated with any such organization. It is purely an educational body of militants within existing mass unions, who are seeking through the application of modern methods to bring the policies and structure of the labor movement into harmony with present day economic conditions. It bespeaks the active cooperation of all militant union workers. For further details apply to the

Trade Union Educational League

118 North La Salle Street, Chicago