

The Communist Party and Industrial Unionism.

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FOREWORD.

The following thesis on the Communist Party and Industrial Unionism, issued by the Executive Committee of the Communist International, is particularly valuable in this country where the ideas of the I. W. W. still find favor with a number of class-conscious workers both within and without the Communist movement. It clearly defines the scope of activities of industrial unionism before and during the proletarian dictatorship—and proves that unless the industrial unions work under the guidance and direction of the Communist Party, they tend to pernicious forms of syndicalism which hamper the revolutionary movement.

In this connection it is important to mention that the ONE BIG UNION MONTH-LW of the I. W. W. brazenly accept what this thesis calls "the worst features of syndicalism" as its own position.

It is also interesting to mention the internal controversy going on in the W. I. U. among political parties and industrial unions as the leaders in the revolutionary labor movement. The editor of their official organ, recently resigned because he disagreed with the S. L. P.—W. I. U. position on this question thus creating a veritable tempest in the latter organization.

This thesis, as well as the thesis on the ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTIES, printed in a previous issue should go a long way in clarifying this issue to the membership of the Communist Party. But, to make our agitation effective it is necessary that the members of the party should spread this idea in their shops and unions, particularly in the I. W. W., O. B. U. and Independent industrial unions.

(Editor—Communist)

THE PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION.

To arrive at a clear understanding of the proper relationship of the Communist Party and the workers' industrial organizations, one must first examine the purpose and structure of industrial organization.

According to Webb, the aim "is to maintain and increase the standard of wages." Brentano and Sombart say that the object is "to subsidize the members in time of strike, and to safeguard their interests by increasing their wages."

The Bolshevik Party has never given its adhesion to these phrases. It has never approved the formula generally accepted by the Second International. This was defined by a well-known Austrian militant industrialist, Adolf Braun, as the organization of the workers "in permanent craft or Trade Unions of wage earners, with the object of securing ameliorations of working conditions within the limits of the capitalist system, and to fight within those limits to prevent conditions growing worse."

In the controversy with the Mensheviks in 1913, the Bolshevik Party laid the rule down that the workers should be organized in a Union covering the entire industry, not merely a sectional craft trade within the industry.

The Communist Party declared that the industrial unions should conduct the economic fight of the workers, and should constantly collaborate with the workers' political party in the working class struggle for emancipation, the abolition of wage slavery, and the victory of Socialism.

For this reason the Bolshevik Party has never considered the industrial union as an organization aspiring only to secure some reforms and ameliorations of working conditions within the limits of capitalist society. On the contrary, the Bolshevik Party, in complete accord with the doctrine of Marx, has always seen that the industrial union is one of the most important organizations of the working class; one that has been created for the fight for Socialism in intimate collaboration with the political party, and one that, in consequence, is favorable to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Since 1913 important changes have come about in Russia. The power has passed into the hands of the working class. The bourgeoisie has been expropriated; the workers are no longer obliged to sell their labor power to the divers exploiting employers.

If we consider that fact, it immediately becomes clear to us that the functions of the industrial unions in Russia are subject to important modifications.

A STATEMENT BY THE ALL-RUSSIAN CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS.

The resolution adopted at the First All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions in 1918 is as follows:

"The October Revolution, which transferred the power from the bourgeoisie to the workers

Now the Communist Party in Russia,

and poor peasants, has created entirely new conditions for all the workers' organizations, and especially for the industrial unions.

"Under the changed conditions, the industrial organization can no longer be regarded as the advance guard of the fight put up by the worker in selling himself to the employer. The employer who used to buy labor power of old, exists no more. It is no longer necessary for the unions to collect strike funds or to organize strikes.

THE PRESENT FUNCTION OF RUSSIAN TRADE UNIONS.

What are the real functions of the industrial organizations in Russia today?

The same resolution of the First All-Russian Congress of Industrial Unions says on this point:

"The unions must now transfer their center of gravity to economic reconstructions."

To explain what an industrial organization really is under the conditions now obtaining in Russia, one is first obliged to make clear that:

"An industrial union in Russia today is a permanent union of all the workers in a given industry; it represents one of the principal bases of the organization of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

"The industrial union today (under the guidance of the Communist Party) transfers its center of gravity to the domain of economic organization, by making its aim an energetic participation in all the efforts of the workers for a Communist reconstruction of society and for the abolition of social classes. This participation takes the following forms:—

"(1) General co-operation in the organization of production on a Communist basis.

"(2) The re-establishment of the productive power of the country, which was destroyed by the war and the internal crisis.

"(3) The calculation and redistribution of labor for the entire country.

"(4) The organization of the exchange between town and country.

"(5) The introduction of the obligation to work.

"(6) Helping the State Departments to provide food.

"(7) Helping to solve the fuel crisis and other difficulties.

"(8) Giving general aid to the formation of the Red army.

"(9) Defending the economic interest of the workers, and at the same time fighting against the individualist tendencies and the short-sighted views of that section of the workers which, because of its ignorance, still retains the habit of regarding the Proletarian state of today as though it were the old employer.

"Because the industrial organization of today are the Communist schools of the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses, they have become, little by little, an integral part of the general mechanism of the state. They are one of the organs of the state of working people who submit to the rule of the Soviets because the Soviets are the vehicle indicated by history for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE SOVIETS

The industrial unions work in conjunction with the Communist Party and the Soviets. The activities of these three institutions are closely linked. To make clear the relations of these bodies, it must be remembered that the Soviets actually include larger masses than the industrial unions themselves; also that the Soviets have taken over part of the functions of the industrial unions.

The English Congress of the Russian Communist Party has given the following definition of the party and of the Soviets:—

"The Soviets are the state organization of the workers and poor peasants which effectuate the Dictatorship of the Proletariat during the period when the state in all its forms is gradually being extinguished. The Soviets unite within their ranks ten million workers, and, little by little, must strive to include the entire class of workers and poor peasants.

"The Communist Party, on the other hand, is an organization which takes in only the advanced guard of the workers and poor peasants; only that part of these two classes which fights consciously for the practical application of the Communist program. The aim of the Communist Party is to obtain a preponderating influence and complete control of all the workers organizations, the industrial unions, the co-operatives, the rural Communists, and so on. The Communist Party strives especially to introduce its program into the actual organizations of state—the Soviets—and to obtain complete control there. No doubt can exist that in the future that various existing organizations of the workers will be finally united in one form. It is useless to speculate today as to which form will prove the most durable. Our present duty is to determine precisely between the Communist Party, the industrial unions, and the Soviets.

THE THEORY OF THE EQUALITY OF RIGHTS

Even amongst the more hopeful section of the old International, the opinion was very prevalent that the Communist Party on the one hand, and the industrial unions on the other hand, were organizations of equal value—having the same rights—organizations which collaborate on important questions of all kinds, like two contracting parties. The Socialist Party should control the political side, while the industrial

unions controlled the economic side. Thus, for example, the German Social-Democrats passed a resolution, supported even by August Bebel, stating that if it should ever be necessary to employ the weapon of the general strike, this question could only be decided by a conference between the executive of the party and the general committee of the Trade Unions.

From the Communist viewpoint this opinion cannot be recognized. The equality of rights theory has always been disputed by the revolutionary Marxists.

From the revolutionary Marxian viewpoint, the Communist Party is the ultimate reunion of all phases of the struggle of the working class for freedom from the capitalist yoke. The Communist Party makes use of a whole arsenal of arms to win this fight. The political struggle is indissolubly bound up with the economic struggle. The Communist Party shows the way for the economic as well as the political struggle. The Communist Party is the advance guard of the proletariat. By the torch of Communism it lights up all the turnings of the road leading to the emancipation of the workers. On this account, the work which the Communists are doing in the industrial unions is but a fraction of the work which the Communist Party, as such, are doing.

During a period of dictatorship like that we in Russia are now passing through, one can still less think of any compromise with the equality of rights theory. The least deviation in this direction must be strenuously fought, in theory as well as in practice.

THE "NON-PARTY" TRADE UNIONS.

The present industrial unions are not necessarily under the Communist Party. All workers both, men and women, are received into them irrespective of their party or creed. A worker who does not belong to the Party has the full right to join our industrial unions. But on that account Communists who work in the industrial unions should not fail to pay attention to the conservative character of the members who do not belong to the Party. The Communists, and the Communist group, in the industrial unions must preach Communism openly. The leaders of the industrial unions must constantly draw the attention of the workers to this fact that the enemies of Communism, not belonging to the Party, are trying to deceive them. They should explain to the workers why the industrial unionist, while they are not formally members of our Party, always help the Communist Party, recognizing the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and defending the Power of the Soviets and the World Revolution.

THE MODERN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.

The modern industrial unions are doing an enormous work, and they greatly facilitate the struggle for Socialism made by the Communist Party and the Soviets. But at the same time there is, during our transition, a dark side to the activity of the industrial unions. For example, some branches of the Dock Laborers' Union on the Volga support the wage demands of their short-sighted individual members (without even having helped the Soviets in their fight against the incredible thefts which have been committed by the dockyard workers); they prove they are very much behind the times, and that they are incapable of rising above the narrow interests of their group. When certain associations of clerks and other similar commercial associations introduce people into the Soviet institutions, who are not fit to do the work which is entrusted to them, and when these associations take up the demands of their members, forgetting that they no longer have to deal with employers, but with the Proletarian State, they also prove their Trade Unions' narrowness. The fight against the negative parties of the working class movement is one of the chief duties of the Communists in the industrial unions.

At a time when the best elements in French Syndicalism are abandoning their former errors, and moving towards Communism in laying down the principle: "All power to the Workers' councils", there are working class groups and circles in Russia which are trying to revive the worst features of syndicalism. The famous Left Wing Social Revolutionary Party recently adopted a resolution demanding the transfer of the whole administration of industry and transport to the Central Committee of the industrial unions. It further proposed that common action should be taken by that committee and the industrial organizations of the whole world for the entire management of the Social Revolution and the world control of industry and transport by a combine of industrial unions. The Communist who work in the industrial unions should strongly oppose syndicalist tendencies of this kind.

SO-CALLED "INDUSTRIALISM"

It is equally necessary to turn against the tendencies known by the name of "industrialism", which are defended by some members of the Russian working class movement who are members of the executive committee of the All-Russian Metallurgical Union.

The industrialist want to erect our entire edifice on the skilled workers, and to put aside the whole mass of unskilled workers. Doubtless the war and the revolution have led to many fundamental changes in the social structure of the proletariat itself. There is no possible doubt about it. The factory worker of today is certainly the most developed of the proletariat. But in no case can it be the task of the Communists, men of the working class, only to elect skilled workers, who form a minority of the working class. The Communist ideas have nothing in common with the propagation of the working class aristocracy. On the contrary, the task of the Com-

(Continued on page 7)