

# What the T.U.E.L. Conference Should Do

The national conference of the Trade Union Educational League scheduled for Cleveland on June 1st has been postponed for three months to August 31st. The reason for the postponement is a cable of instructions received from Losovsky, general secretary of the Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern) which says in substance:—

The preparations and response to the conference thus far are unsatisfactory. The Profintern is tired of fake journalistic successes and achievements which have no genuine content. Either the conference is to represent broad masses of workers that can form a real basis for a new center of the left wing—which is not the case thus far—or else no new center should be built at all.

This is a timely warning to which others of equal and greater importance must be added. The delay gives the Communists and the left wing militants additional time to reflect upon the tasks confronting the movement and act with sober consideration. Whatever action is taken at Cleveland must be taken without self-delusion or deception of the workers who follow the left wing. Mistakes made at so critical a period as the present will surely have such serious consequences as may retard the development of the left wing for a long time to come.

The conference must state definitely that it is a center of the left wing whose aim is to unite the whole labor movement on the basis of a militant class policy, a center of the new unions formed up to now with the left wing minorities in the old unions. The center must not be set up as a national trade union federation that parallels the A. F. of L. and the conservative independent unions. The implications contained in all the articles of the Stalinite leaders in this country are that Cleveland will see the formation of another De Leonist Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance under Communist control. It is true that none of these writers state this precisely and avoid the question as to precisely what is to happen at Cleveland like a cat avoids a bowl of hot porridge. But the militants must reject this pernicious custom of confronting its supporters with accomplished facts without discussion or enlightenment.

The conference must resist the growing tendency to give up the reactionary unions as a bad job, to withdraw the militants from them on the slightest pretext and set up brand new "class unions" which are perfection itself and have only the slight defect that they are sects without mass following. This is no abstract warning. Meetings and conventions of the reactionary unions in the last year or two have seen an almost absolute minimum of left wing representation.

The conference must put the banner of "Unity of the Trade Union Movement" in the front ranks of the left wing. The movement has been shifted off the rails of correct class policy to such an extent in recent times that it very virtuously refuses to have anything to do with anyone or anything that does not accept every tenet of the Communist or left wing program. The left wing must be the first to propose and fight for unification of the ranks of the trade union movement on a minimum program of action. The fact that the corrupt union bureaucrats do not want such a unification does not invalidate this plan in the least; it merely helps to increase the number of workers who turn away from the influence of the fakers and follow the leadership of the left wing.

The conference must reject the spurious "leftism" and sectarianism characterized by the prevalent attitude towards the progressives. "The development of such broad progressive oppositional movements is vital in the struggle against the labor reactionaries and the employers. Every forward surging current, every difference in the ranks of the bureaucracy, should be utilized to organize, temporarily or permanently, such opposition movements . . . the left wing, organized in and around the T. U. E. L., make joint movements with the progressive groups upon the fundamental and burning issues . . . A basic

condition for building and strengthening the trade union movement is the defeat and overthrow of the present ultra-reactionary controlling bureaucracy and the establishment of a militant fighting leadership. The main strategy to accomplish this is by united front movements between a well organized left wing and the progressive group, carrying with them the masses of the organized workers, and putting through such fundamental propositions as the organization of the unorganized, the formation of a labor party, etc. In such combinations the progressives will often waver and fail, and it will always fall to the left wing to be the determined driving force, but these movements constitute the correct strategy at this stage of the American labor movement."

William Z. Foster, "Misleaders of Labor," pages 311-312. (Our emphasis.)

This was correct 18 months ago when it was written and remains correct today. Here also, its validity remains unchanged despite the fact that the Progressive group just organized has a number of S. P. fakers in it, despite the fact that Foster is singing in a different tone today because of the change in his factional relationships with the Comintern and Profintern, despite the invention of the Bucharinist "third (or is it now the fourth?) period."

The conference must sharply condemn the actions of the Stalinites in control of the T. U. E. L. who have expelled members of the Communist Opposition from the organization with-

out as much as charges being preferred, a trial being held or notification given the victim—solely because of political differences in the Party. The T. U. E. L. call appeals for democracy in the trade unions, and correctly so. But it will not have a scrap of value and arouse no faith in the masses if it begins this fight by abolishing democracy in the T. U. E. L. The removals of comrades Swabeck, Hedlund and Skoglund from the T. U. E. L., and the attempt to wangle George Voyzey out of his position in the National Miners Union of Illinois must be condemned out of hand. This kind of work only delivers weapons to the reactionary trade union fakers who seek to justify their expulsion of militants from the unions by pointing to the Stalinites who expel Communist Oppositionists from left wing organizations. These are not the methods of the class conscious left wing movement. They are the methods of "petty-bourgeois politicianism" existing in the Party. The left wing has had enough of Lewisism and Sigmanism.

The intolerance of the Stalinites to all criticism except that which they are forced to swallow by force pump in Moscow only makes it all the more necessary for the serious workers in the movement to turn their attention to these problems. In coming issues of the Militant we will yet return to the question of the T. U. E. L., conference and deal with other phases that have not been thoroughly treated.

—M. S.

## BITTELMAN ON THE CROSS

### A Hard Luck Story

*"Before he set out upon his great expedition, Alexander settled the affairs of Macedon, over which he appointed Antipater as viceroy, with twelve thousand foot, and near the same number of horse. He also enquired into the domestic affairs of his friends, giving to one an estate in land, to another a village, to a third the revenues of a town, to a fourth the toll of a harbour. As all the revenues of his demesnes were already employed, and exhausted by his donations, Perdicas said to him, 'My lord, what is it you reserve for yourself?' Alexander replied, 'Hope.'"* — DR. GOLDSMITH, GREEK HISTORY FROM THE EARLIEST STATE TO THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT, VOL. II.

The difference between Alexander the Great and Alexander the Bittelman is simple. The former, who wept because he had no more worlds to conquer, reached his Apex only after the then known world lay at his feet. The former not only reached his Apex but even passed beyond it into decline before he had conquered as much as a single American cruiser. Such is the conclusion one must draw from the mean fate doled out to Bittelman by the latest, brand new Open "Address" of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. And every impartial observer will perforce admit that the treatment meted out to Bittelman is decidedly shabby and more than a little insincere.

We have come upon sad days indeed when the E.C.C.I., (read: Stalin) presumes to denounce anyone in the Comintern for "petty-bourgeois politicianism." Has not the whole course and career of Stalin and company in the recent history of the International been that of unprincipled combination, chicane, intrigue and back-stairs diplomacy? Why should the same dish be called sauce for the Russian goose and apple sauce for the American gander? And we can hardly believe our eyes when we read that Stalin, the hero of the Menshevik adventures with Chiang Kaishek and Feng Yu-Hsiang, the companion-in-arms of Purcell, Hicks, Citrine, Cook et. al., the partner for years of Bucharin-Tomsky-Rykov, the room-mate of the Peppers, the Neumanns, the Thaelmanns, the Semards, the Smerals, the Rafeses, the Murphys, the Lovestones and the rest of the riff-raff and bobtail of the movement for the past years—that this same Stalin should dare to speak indignantly about Bittelman's opportunism!

What right has the Master to scold his pupil for trying to grow up in his image? We will say in Bittelman's defense that no one in the

American Party tried more earnestly or with greater devotion to become a little Stalin than he. He read the speeches and articles of the Master in Pravda and Izvestia with the fascination of a rabbit snared by a cobra. When Stalin called "Trotskyism" a right danger, Bittelman shouted in chorus that it was an ultra-right menace. When Stalin did a fiop and called it a left danger, Bittelman (who was the first one in the States to get a copy of Pravda) yelled hoarsely that it was an ultra-left danger. When Stalin found that there was a growing differentiation among the Russian peasantry, Bittelman immediately discovered the American Kulak and all but proposed the establishment of Collective Farms for all Minnesota farmers having only two tractors and Soviet Farms for the expatriated farmers in camps controlled by the Party, with the hope that socialism might be built in Camp Nitgidaiget.

And when Stalin signed the Kellogg Pact as a piece of "realistic Bolshevik diplomacy" Bittelman thought that he too would become a high-powered statesman and at least demand from the American government that it build "no more cruisers." Poor Bittelman thought that this slogan was the genuine McCoy and came straight from the horse's mouth. Hadn't the German Party carried on a big national campaign against the building of the German Cruiser "A"?

Why, then, in the face of all these obvious facts should Bittelman get such a raw deal? It is true that he was somewhat factional, but who among his colleagues is ready to cast the first stone? It is rumored that even Stalin carries on a bit of factional fighting in his spare moments. The answer to this puzzle does not lie in an examination of the Third Period, or the relations between Inner and Outer Contradictions. It is much more simple.

Stalin is putting the various Parties of the Comintern through the process of dumping the most obviously discredited fakers who no longer have even an inch of standing in the movement: the Peppers and Lovestones of the world; and he is trying to put in their place those whose veneer has not yet been entirely scraped off. In the United States his choice is William Z. ("Win-the-war-Bill") Foster with Wobbling Will Weistone to furnish the heavy theoretical guns. With such a newly manu-

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