

## The T. U. E. L. Conference at Cleveland

## A Forecast of the Work of the 'New Trade Union Center'

No Illusions on the  
Gastonia Trial

As the trial in Charlotte, N. C., of the 16 Gastonia textile strikers and leaders gets under way, it develops certain features which, though dissimilar to many that characterized the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti years ago, does not change the primary fact that it is a frame-up of workers because of their activity in the labor movement.

These features, deliberately developed by the prosecution and the judge, are calculated to create an artificial atmosphere of "fairness", by a scrupulous regard for polite formalities, by insignificant "concessions" to the defense attorneys, by banquets to the prosecution and defense counsel, and by a general skilful handling of the case by the judicial harpies of the Southern textile barons. Why? In order to disarm the protest movement of the workers by creating the impression that the defendants are guaranteed a square deal at the hands of the chivalrous gentlemen of the black robe. The greatest danger to the interests of the defendants lies precisely in these illusions.

The role now being assumed by Judge Barnhill in Charlotte has been played before, and more than once. It was played by Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis to perfection in the trial of the 100 I. W. W. in Chicago during the war, and he succeeded very neatly in disarming the radical press generally. The conviction and the savage sentences he meted out which had been prepared behind this screen, came as a rude jolt to those who thought that fair words and false appearances did away with the class struggle and the class function of the capitalist courts.

It is in the light of this and similar experiences that the workers should read the words of Norman Thomas, the new evangelist of the Socialist Party, in the New Leader (August 31, 1929). He writes enthusiastically: "Hats off to Judge Barnhill for his remarkable fairness thus far to the Gastonia defendants. At least North Carolina is to be spared the disgrace of a Webster Thayer."

This is the quintessence of socialist and liberal wisdom, which limits objection to the frame-up system to the crude jobs of the bungling Thayers. In reality, it is the smoother and suaver Barnhills and Landises who are better exponents of the frame-up system precisely because of their superior "technique". Only a blockhead—or a socialist liberal—can fail to see this.

In the Gastonia case, the prosecution is seeking to establish the responsibility of leaders for all acts of violence that occur during a struggle. The attempt to establish this "principle," on the one hand, and the struggle of the labor movement against it, on the other, run like a red thread through the history of American labor trials since the days of the Haymarket martyrs. This is the essential aspect of the Gastonia frame-up as it has been in many other cases. The real attempt there is to fasten upon Beal and other leaders, who were not even present at the tent colony when the fatal shooting occurred, the responsibility for the death regardless of who fired the shots. With such a precedent fixed, every active fighter and leader in the working class movement can become an easy target for any kind of prosecution for events taking place entirely out of his control. With such a precedent a "Wall Street bomb explosion" caused by accident or by provocateurs, can become the basis for a wholesale victimization.

This is the central feature of the Gastonia case which gives it a particular claim upon the whole labor movement, besides the general claim of solidarity which every worker prosecuted in the capitalist courts for his activity in the class struggle has a right to make.

Precisely for this reason, and for many others that we have adduced in previous issues of the Militant, do we repeat the necessity to emphasize the slogan of the "Fight against the Gastonia frame-up!" as the central rallying cry of the fight for the defense. The slogan of the "right to self-defense" of the workers involved, as the main and only slogan in the campaign, appears to be very radical and revolutionary solely upon the surface. In essence, it narrows the fight to a legal tilt between prosecution and defense, confined to the court-room, to establish the "preponderance of evidence" on the weighty question of... who fired the first shot, as though the class struggle would be suspended while this fine point was fairly adjudicated. As though the honest witnesses for the defense are sure to outnumber and outweigh the hired perjurers of the prosecution backed by mill owners' money.

The workers must be on guard. No illusions! Our

We go to press before the sessions of the Cleveland conference of the T. U. E. L. have opened; it is therefore necessary to deal with the actions and decisions of the conference in detail in the next issue of the Militant. However, there are already a sufficient number of signs that indicate what the character of the conference will be. We mention a few of them here, and each of them, from a different direction, cast the shadow of what will take place in Cleveland.

1. The delegation from the southern textile fields will probably be the only really representative and important group at the conference. Most of the other delegations represent wishes and hopes instead of substance. We were not taken in by the empty fanfare and "delegations" at the fake Federated Farmer-Labor Party convention in 1928; we are not gullible enough to swallow the delegates "representing the masses of the unorganized" in the shape of formless mass meetings, or, as in most cases, of Party faction meetings in a shop. The conference was extremely ill-prepared, its slogans were wrong, it was organized in a purely administrative manner without worrying about the masses of the workers. This is not the way to organize the unorganized workers, but to confuse them and to lay the basis for their disillusionment.

2. Johnstone's article in the Daily Worker of August

## Lovestone's Burglaries

It makes a lot of difference whose office is burglarized, it seems. The Lovestoneites whose skill with the jimmy and the dark lantern is well known have turned their attention—and their burglarious talents—to the National office of the Communist Party, and the workers who have waited a long time for the whole truth are informed in horrified accents that the Party boss of yesterday, blessed by Stalin, saluted by Foster, is not only a petty bourgeois politician and an opportunist but is a burglar and all around crook as well. The working class public on last Tuesday was edified by a detailed account of the robbery in the Daily Worker.

This exhibition of criminality is indeed a shocking spectacle which shames and discredits the communist movement, undermines its prestige and makes it the laughing stock of its enemies. Every revolutionary and every conscientious worker must and will condemn the Lovestone gangsters who have demonstrated once again that they stand on the moral level of the underworld. Such elements are alien to the working class. They belong in the category of criminals who live by their wits, their black-jacks and their jimmies.

But if the burglary of the National office, and the second one a few days later of a section headquarters, were a black tragedy, there is at least a comic relief. This is supplied by the outbursts of moral indignation from the Foster-Wicks leadership of the Party. To hear these people cry one would think they had never seen a burglary before, much less taken part in one together with Lovestone. The two robberies of the office of the Opposition last winter were carried out jointly by them with him. It was an "official" job which they took no pains even to conceal or deny. The stolen documents were flamboyantly displayed a few days later in the Daily Worker and the combined forces of Lovestone and Foster, then happily united, proclaimed to the world that their mutual love was the kind that laughs at locksmiths; that if they couldn't answer our arguments they could at least rob our house and make away with the loot. Those who applauded the burglaries of Lovestone while he was the secretary of the Party have no ground to complain when their chickens come home to roost.

In view of this the fulminations against the latest burglary sound a bit hollow. Stalinism brought with it into the International all the methods of which the present Party leaders complain and they themselves have used them against the Opposition. Therefore we would not advise anyone to take their loud protests against the "underworld and police methods" of Lovestone as an indication of a serious intention on their part to swear off and go straight. It is safer to rely on stronger locks and a watchman with a shotgun.

countless dead and imprisoned have taught us that the real defense of the workers is a militant protest movement.

The organization of this movement on the broadest basis remains our central task. The formation of a united front—in deeds—against the Gastonia frame-up is a duty of the hour.

Those who want a working class victory for Gastonia must and will work for this with all their might.

ust 30, 1929 on the tasks of the conference, which is valuable only for its bluntness and not for its proposals. What Foster is cautious enough to equivocate about, or encircle with qualification, Johnstone blurts out. Like the proposed constitution and program of the T. U. E. L., he tips his hat brusquely to the necessity for working in the old unions, but on this basis: that the Left wing is to work in the old unions only for the purpose of splitting off what they can to affiliate these splinters to the new trade union center. This is plain enough, at any rate. Not only does it violate all we learned in the Communist movement about work in the basic mass organizations of the workers, but it precludes any possibility for carrying on such work. This grows plainer every day. The "new line" results in the surrender of the 3 or more millions of workers still in the A. F. of L. to the mercies of Green.

3. The proof of the virtual liquidation of Party and Left wing activity in the A. F. of L. unions is now mountain-high. A dozen trade union conventions in the last few weeks alone could be cited where not a single Left wing delegate was in evidence, and in many cases for the first time. At the Minnesota State Federation of Labor Convention (at Mankato) only O. R. Votaw, member of the Communist League, was a delegate, with no other Left winger present. The New York State Federation of Labor convention had representatives of the Muste group acting as the only opposition, insipid and timid as it was, to the machine. Numerous other instances show the same dark picture or darker. If this situation can possibly grow worse, the "new line" of the T. U. E. L. is sure to contribute its big mite.

4. The Eastern conference of the Marine Workers League. The ultra-mechanical control by the Party of this movement has throttled it until it is almost a wreck. The results of the policy of alienating and driving away all elements not members of the Party—and of a certain Party faction, at that—has narrowed the League down to its present shadow and resulted in a turn-out of 31 delegates, 2 of whom represented no one at all in New Orleans, 2 more represented the same grand total in Galveston, another 2 spoke for nobody in Boston, with the same from Norwalk. New York represented about 100 members, Philadelphia and Baltimore 50 each. The splendid possibilities for the organization of the movement were whistled away by those put in charge of the work. On the newly elected Executive Committee, there are approximately three actual seamen. The real inner "powers" of the Marine Workers League remain Mink, Sparks and Somers, who are the kind of "seamen" that would look for the foc'sle in the galley and for the bo'sun on the bridge. Left wing and revolutionary militants like Jim Gildea, John Russell, Hector Macray, Brophy, S. M. Rose, Fred Crowley, Sizemore and King, were either wangled out, driven away, or "disciplined" out of activity. Their misfortune is that they have experience, ability, authority and prestige among the seamen. Four delegates go from this conference to Cleveland to represent American seamen!

5. The Cleveland conference meets under the warning sign of three severe defeats for the Left wing in the New York unions. The loss of the Left wing furriers' strike and the triumph of the Right wing among the cloakmakers, have delivered a dizzying blow to the organized left wing in New York. In addition, last week's election of officers at the Iron and Bronze Workers Union, under the leadership of the Left wing for years, returned a complete Right wing slate, ousting Rosenfeld, Hofbauer, Powers and Karin who ran for re-election, and giving over the executive board of the union completely to the Rights. Philistine philosophers will always find "objective conditions" to explain these alarming facts. We find the cause where it actually lies—in the false, the radically false policy of the Left wing, that is, of the Communist Party leadership.

The Cleveland conference will run quite smoothly, we know. That has been taken care of in the usual way. It will be of service in emphasizing the great necessity of organizing the unorganized millions, demanded by us over a year ago. But few, if any, clear voices will be raised to demand the revival of the correct line that can fructify the excellent objective possibilities into blossoming realities. For our part, we will continue to demand the application of the teachings of Lenin on work in the trade unions, the united front policy, the organization of the unorganized in reality and not in manifestoes and fake conferences, the collaboration with workers following the progressives, the fight for the class struggle in the unions.

—M. S.