

Amalgamate Engineers and Firemen MARCH 6TH AND AFTER

The course of events is gradually teaching Locomotive Engineers and Firemen the necessity and importance of uniting in one organization, as a preliminary step in the process of amalgamating the present helpless and expensive Railroad Crafts—21 in number—into one union in the Railroad Transportation Industry.

The interests of the locomotive engineers and firemen are identical. Practically every hardship, every difficulty, has to be borne and suffered alike by the two men in the locomotive cab. Poor coal and equipment, heavy trains, added duties without additional pay, poor working conditions and the many known and unknown hardships and dangers of the rail, such as snowdrifts, washouts and defective track, are all mutual problems of both men in the cab.

The old argument of the Grand Lodge Officials that the craft form of organization is the best kind of organization to look after the interests of the membership, no longer holds good, because neither the B. of L. E. or the B. of L. F. & E. are any longer craft organizations. Since its Milwaukee convention in 1906, when the "E" was added to the Firemen's name, the B. of L. F. & E. officials have kept organizers in the field to retain its Engineer members. On the other hand, the B. of L. E. officials have maintained organizers to pull firemen out of the Firemen's organization, as soon as they had passed the examination for engineer. This in spite of the fact that such firemen will have to fire a locomotive for years after they have been examined for engineer. So the B. of L. E. will take all the firemen they can get so soon as they have passed the engineer's examination and the B. of L. F. & E. is fighting to retain as many of its engineer members as it can.

From the foregoing, then, it can clearly be seen that if there ever were any reasons for two organizations in the locomotive cab, there are no such reasons now.

Bureaucrats Hinder Progress

There is just one thing that keeps us apart now, and that is the high salaried official bureaucrats who control both organizations. In spite of what pressure the rank and file is putting on these officials to amalgamate, they always find some foolish and worthless excuse for not doing it.

As long as the two Enginemen Brotherhoods are controlled by swarms of office holders who draw from \$7,000 to \$15,000 a year, plus a most liberal expense account, it is going to be hard to unite the men in the cab. For years these officials have been busy intrenching themselves in office. They have secured a strangle-hold on the Brotherhood press, such as the Journals and Labor, the railroad weekly. They have gag-laws, like section 84 of the Engineers' Constitution, enacted to stifle all expression by other means. Then we have the notorious "obligation" which constitutes another safeguard for the officials. Every time a working member advocates something to which the bureaucrats are opposed, if they cannot find a law to hang on him, then they will contend that he violated his obligation and out he goes via the expulsion route. But no matter what the officials do, obligations and gag-laws never affect them.

Ridding the two Enginemen's Brotherhoods of excessive salaries, foolish obligations, gag-laws and secret work will go a long way toward clearing the track for the amalgamation of the Engineers and Firemen.

The coming convention of the Engineers, which convenes in Cleveland on the first Monday in June, can do a whole lot toward amalgamation by appointing a rank and file committee consisting of engineers who are known to favor amalgamation and provide this committee with means and full power to prosecute the question of amalgamation to its final conclusion.

The Brotherhood press, circulars and other printed matter, should be employed in the campaign for amalgamation of the Engineers and Firemen and other needed reforms within these two organizations.

—C. R. HEDLUND

NORTHWESTERN SHUTS DOWN ROUNDHOUSE

CLINTON, Ia.—The Northwestern railroad has shut down permanently its East Clinton roundhouse, throwing the employees out of work because the use of larger locomotives makes it unnecessary to service them at this point because of longer runs.

BALDWIN LOCOMOTIVE LAYS OFF 1,200

CHESTER, Pa.—(FP)—Baldwin Locomotive works has laid off 1,200 workers. Few factories are operating full time in this important industrial suburb of Philadelphia.

LABOR PARTY IN KENOSHA

KENOSHA—(FP)Continued life for the Kenosha Labor Party, born of the Allen-A hostility strike, is assured by action of a conference of Kenosha county laborites, which recently met and organized the party on a permanent basis. Representatives of trade unions throughout the county attended the meet and laid plans for a vigorous campaign in April, when municipal elections come around.

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38

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(Continued from Page 1)

ity will provide, by the attendance at them, one means of ascertaining to what extent the attendance at the open demonstrations was sympathetic and conscious. The attitude of the masses toward the prosecution of the leaders, attendance at meetings, responsiveness to appeals, the circulation of the Communist press, etc., in the coming period will be reliable indicators of the depth and consciousness of the movement. All these factors will have to be noted carefully as a basis for further steps.

The Failure of the "General Strike"

Counter-balancing the apparent response to the demonstrations was the total failure of the call for a general strike, issued by the Communist Party. This call fell flat everywhere and its failure is an ominous proof of the fantastic over-estimation of the movement entertained by the Party leadership, and the falsity of the tactics which flowed from this over-estimation. It is impossible to play with calls for a general strike without discrediting this slogan and those who lightly proclaim it. The general situation gave no ground for such a slogan in connection with March 6th, and it was particularly wrong for the Party to issue it, like a casual phrase, when it has been losing one trade union position after another, and thus losing the possibility to give this slogan life even on a partial scale: Needle Trades, Miners, Boot and Shoe Workers, etc. Every failure to make good with a strike call has the effect of still further weakening the trade union position of the Left wing. This is the inevitable penalty of careless phrase-mongering with great slogans.

A continuance of this policy, after the events of March 6th have clearly revealed its unmistakable falsity, prepares the ground for disastrous defeats and a possible loss of those gains actually realized. This, unfortunately, appears to be the line of the Party leadership. Blinded by the spectacular, and more or less external, aspects of the demonstrations, and overlooking these fundamental factors, they are proceeding with the call to "prepare the political mass strike". Thereby they again misjudge the strength and tempo and consciousness of the movement and open the door for colossal blunders which will facilitate reaction. The capitalists and their reformist agents will be the ultimate gainers from this irresponsible and wholly unfounded perspective of the present movement.

The Reformists Step In

The action of the reformist socialists and sections of the trade union bureaucracy in setting up "An Emergency Conference for Unemployment" on the heels of the March 6th demonstrations is a significant event. On the one hand it is a tribute to the great working class action set in motion under the leadership of the Communists; on the other hand it is an obvious attempt to seize the leadership of this movement in order to strangle it. This represents an important danger to the movement in which the Communists up till now have had a virtual monopoly. The outcome of this attempt, and others of a similar nature which are bound to ensue, depends also to a large extent on the tactics of the revolutionaries. Mere denunciation will not be sufficient to cope successfully with such flank attacks.

Now is the time for the Communists to come forward with united front proposals which, if properly applied, will serve the double purpose of consolidating and broadening the movement of the unemployed and of defeating the aims of the reformists. The failure to utilize united front tactics up to now has been a big mistake which paved the way for this maneuver of the socialists and labor fakers and gives it a certain possibility of success.

The United Front Tactics

The right step now is for the Communists to put concrete proposals for com-

mon action in behalf of the unemployed to all labor organizations. Such proposals should be put directly to this so-called "Relief" in order to call their bluff. The demands should be few and simple, directly to the issue, and centering around a militant fight for work or compensation for the unemployed workers. This includes of course a demand for united defence of those arrested in connection with the demonstrations on March 6th. It is incorrect in this connection, as it is incorrect in general at the present stage of development, to bury the essential concrete and living demands, which really move the workers, under a long list of so-called "political" demands which the workers do not understand and are not prepared to fight for. The challenge to the officials of all labor organizations to join in a united fight for the interests of the unemployed will create the best conditions for effective agitation for the issues in the ranks of these organizations—a work sadly neglected if not actually ignored, up till now. By these means the base of the movement can be broadened and the revolutionary influence extended.

Unite the Left Wing Forces

Above all, in the face of the growing reactionary offensive and the worsening conditions of the workers it is necessary to unite the Communist and Left wing forces for common action. This is the prerequisite for the mobilization of the workers in defense of their interests around the revolutionary standard. This common action of the Communists and Left wing forces has been blocked and sabotaged by the official leadership of the Party, and the working class movement has been thereby weakened. The attacks, slanders and misrepresentation against the Communist Opposition, the attempts to exclude them even from participation in the actions of the Left wing, are blows against the working class. They help to disarm and disorganize the unemployment movement as well as all other working class movements in the face of a growing unity and aggressiveness of reactionary forces.

We speak now as before for the unity of the Communists and the Left wing forces in a common fight for working class interests, and we appeal to the workers in the ranks of the Party and Left wing to compel a course in this direction.

MINERS NOT CONSULTED IN DRAWING UP AGREEMENT

WILKES-BARRE, Pa.—(FP)—Anthracite coal diggers will have nothing to say in the framing of the new agreement to replace the 5-year contract expiring Aug. 31. This is the word brought back from Indianapolis by international board members of the United Mine Workers, following the union's board meeting.

The tri-district convention of anthracite miners, usually held before the expiration of agreements in order to lay down demands for the new contract, will not be called, Int'l Pres. John L. Lewis has decided. Instead the miners will be summoned into session after the agreement has been negotiated by Lewis and the operators. Faced with an accomplished fact, they are expected to put their approval on a contract which will merely extend the existing document.

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