

B. OF L. E. CONVENTION

A PROGRAM OF ACTION FOR THE ENGINEERS

By C. R. HEDLUND

On Monday morning, June 2nd, the Sixth Triennial Convention of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers opens in the city of Cleveland. There are many important tasks confronting this convention, which if correctly performed would improve the B. of L. E. tremendously.

Among the 21 Railroad Craft Organizations the B. of L. E. occupies a strategic position and if properly led with a progressive program would become a powerful factor in helping to solve the ever growing problems of the railroad workers.

However, in the last six years the B. of L. E. has been mismanaged and betrayed by its officials on a scale which challenges comparison in all labor history in this or any other country. During this period the organization, as well as its membership, have been swindled out of millions of dollars of its hard earned money. The officials under the leadership of the late Warren S. Stone, started out to organize one private corporation after another and proceeded to sell the worthless stock, running into millions of dollars, to the B. of L. E. members who were trained to think that their leaders, or rather misleaders, could do no wrong.

Floating Worthless Stock

After the officials had unloaded all the worthless stock they could on the membership, they then proceeded to float equally worthless bonds in the name of these worthless corporations and put on a campaign to palm them off on their victims. After the officials had obtained all the money they could by the sale of worthless stocks and bonds they helped themselves to the large funds which belonged to the various departments, such as insurance, pension, etc., and mortgaged the two office buildings which the organization owned in Cleveland, presumably, to get around the insurance laws in the state of Ohio. Mind you, they mortgaged the B. of L. E. buildings in order to get their hands on the B. of L. E. funds. These mortgages amounted to about \$7,000,000 at the time of the last convention in 1927. Since that time these mortgages, which ran to the different insurance departments of the Brotherhood, have been lifted in the air and another first mortgage has been slapped on these same office buildings to secure another loan of \$4,000,000 from a private source. So there is now a mortgage on the two office buildings amounting to approximately \$11,000,000.

The Officials Loot the Treasury

But the process of looting had only begun. The officials needed more and more money, so they started to help themselves to the cash in the Cleveland bank and in its stead shoved in worthless paper, until the bank reached a condition where it was about to be closed by the bank examiner at the time of the 1927 convention. The officials then induced the convention to obligate the B. of L. E. for the necessary amount of cash to put into the bank in place of the worthless paper, and as a result the closing of the B. of L. E. bank was avoided.

But the B. of L. E. officials needed still more money. They had sold all the worthless stocks and bonds they could get rid of to the membership; they had helped themselves to the various funds of the organization, they had taken all the cash they could out of the B. of L. E. bank. What could they do next to get more money? They had not yet given real estate a trial. So they proceeded to get 30,000 acres of Florida real estate, also practically worthless, and a great campaign was started in every terminal throughout the country to sell real estate to the already overloaded victims, the B. of L. E. members. The fraud and deliberate lying which was used by the B. of L. E. officials and their real estate salesmen in their high pressure sales campaign to palm off worthless Florida real estate on its members will be recorded as one of the blackest spots in the wholesale betrayal of the B. of L. E. by its official bureaucrats.

But the sale of Florida real estate did not go over big. The members were not

realizing any profits from their former investments in stocks and bonds, but the officials had to have still more money and the B. of L. E. and its membership constituted the only source from which the officials had any hopes of getting it. So new schemes had to be devised to pry more money loose from the membership. The idea of floating a \$10,000,000 B. of L. E. bond issue was now proposed by the officials and their henchmen to the 1927 convention and this proposition was actually put over. But they succeeded in selling only a little over two million dollars worth of these bonds which were also worthless, and to stimulate the sale of these bonds, they were labeled "Loyalty Loan Certificates." The "Loyalty Loan" however, did not furnish the required amount of money needed by the officials, who by this time had become regular gluttons for "jack". More and still more money was needed and there was only one more way of getting it, and that was by arbitrary assessment of the membership. So a \$5.00 special monthly assessment was levied on the members for 24 months as a starter, and to sweeten this assessment a little they gave it the name of "Loyalty Assessment". The word "Loyalty" and even the secret work were being used by the money gluttons to popularize the fraudulent Loan and Assessment.

The Real Estate Racket

It is with this background of experience that the B. of L. E. Convention convenes at Cleveland on June 2nd. However, the officials have done their utmost to keep the membership in the darkest kind of ignorance concerning these so-called "Obligations" which the members are being called upon to pay. Gaglaws, obligations, secret work, censored magazines, threats, and even expulsions have been used by the officialdom to keep the membership suppressed and in line. It is hard to tell to what extent the intelligent and militant minority is organized and prepared to carry out a constructive program at the coming convention.

A Program for a Rank and File Union

The writer of this article circulated the recent St. Paul B. of L. E. union meeting with a convention program containing the following proposals, to wit:

Fire all the present Grand Officers and drive them from the B. of L. E. in disgrace; cut officials' salaries to the level of the wages received by the engineers on the best paid runs, not to exceed \$350.00 per month plus necessary traveling expenses; election of all officials at each convention and no six year terms as at present; all officials, after serving two terms in office, to be drafted back on the job to run a locomotive for a period of at least one term before they are again eligible for election to office; establish a definite system of representation at conventions so that the Grand Officers cannot juggle the representation as at present; election of the editor of the Journal instead of appointment by the Grand Chief.

Repeal of the gaglaw section No. 84, page 73 of the statute, which prohibits the issuing of printed matter concerning the organization by a member; have a free speech clause inserted in the constitution; elimination of membership obligation together with ritualistic and secret work; have the convention take definite steps to amalgamate with the B. of L. E. & F.; have the new administration stand instructed not to spend another dollar of the duespayers' money for the personal benefit of the Grand Officers and other profit seekers who sunk their earnings in these mismanaged and fake corporations; also to have a law enacted which will provide that no salary increases of officers and delegates will become effective before being ratified by a referendum vote of the membership.

The Divisions and memberships in and around the Twin Cities and Minnesota are also being circularized with the above program in order to get some of these needed changes in the B. of L. E. enacted into law at the coming B. of L. E. convention.

Illinois Elections Ignore Worker's Needs

CHICAGO—On Tuesday, April 8, the state of Illinois held its primary election. A record has been established in a peaceful election in the city of Chicago, not even a single killing or kidnaping. How much stuffing of ballot boxes took place or voting by sovereign citizens "residing" on empty lots or the spacious quarters of a street vender's push cart, one may not know.

There was no lack of contest, however. During the present economic crisis and gloomy business prospects a political job may appear very enticing to any hard pressed merchant willing to serve the masters; and hence there were in cases as many as twelve contestants for one office, particularly within the "Grand Old Party". The offices to be nominated ran all the way from U. S. senator, representatives in Congress, the state legislature, county offices, judges of municipal courts and party committeemen. The Republican Party primary ballot was 3 feet long.

A Contest Between Groups

The hottest contest centered around the most cherished job—U.S. senator on the republican ballot, between Charles S. Deen the present incumbent and Ruth Hanna McCormick, daughter of the once notorious politician, Mark Hanna. The latter won in a landslide of over 200,000 plurality. She represented the typical viewpoint of middle western industrial magnates and made her main issues: no international entanglements and against adherence to the world court. Whatever that could mean to workers participating in the primary is still a puzzle. Otherwise the important campaign issues were "pure Republicanism" in the one camp and "democracy without entangling alliances" in the other. Here and there some sympathy was expressed for the distress of the farmers, but that cost as little as catering to the colored vote by McCormick through her support of De Priest, the colored congressman from Chicago. All candidates tried to be in favor of the waterway from the Great Lakes to the Gulf. Each accused his opponents of shiftiness but only those could clinch their point who made best use of the accusation "entangling alliance with the city hall machine". In the midst of the campaign, the Chicago Tribune came lumbering forward with the "paramount" issue—wet or dry. Of course one may not forget the importance of this issue as considered by the official Communist Party in a platform plank of hybrid opportunism in the last presidential elections.

Labor Fakery Play Usual Game

Otherwise these elections and the preceding campaign produced not one word in regard to the immediate issue confronting the large population of industrial workers in the state—the issue of unemployment. Thus could the capitalist parties show their haughty contempt for the political backwardness of the American workers. But to those who are now beginning to learn, it also becomes a proof that capitalist parliaments cannot function in the interest of the workers. So-called labor candidates and "friends of labor" were not lacking, however, on both capitalist party tickets. The Illinois State Federation of Labor and the Chicago Federation of Labor ran the whole gamut of indorsing "friends" and punishing enemies in perfect harmony with the A. F. of L. policy. The actual working out of the indorsements and punishments is, of course, becoming an ever tougher task. A few reversals had to be made since it is now so difficult to distinguish the "friends" from the enemies.

Independent Political Action Raised in Federation

The Chicago Federation of Labor did not even propose to make any demands or requests upon its indorsed candidates in regard to unemployment relief. That could possibly lead beyond the policy of political neutrality. Yet one development is noteworthy. At its last meeting, just before the primary elections, the Federation discussed the report on the appalling conditions in the city public poorhouse institutions. There entered into it the dreaded

STALIN SILENT ON BLUMKIN; JACQUEMOTTE SPEAKS

In a recent number of the Red Flag, organ of the Belgian Communist Party, there appeared an account of a public meeting at which Jacquemotte, a Stalinist henchman, replying to the questions of one of our Opposition comrades concerning the assassination of Blumkin, made an apology for this assassination and declared point-blank that Blumkin was a counter-revolutionist who was struggling for the overthrow of the Soviet regime. If such a reply by Jacquemotte did not astound us, we would ask why Stalin does not reply to the question of the International Opposition.

Jacquemotte, by such filth, hopes perhaps to recover "his leading role" in the Communist Party of Belgium. This slander concerning Blumkin is accompanied in the same issue with a flaming headline over an article about a strike: "Police, Trotskyites, reformists against the workers." No further enlightenment concerning Blumkin is produced. It is clear that "objectively" our Belgian comrades are in league with the police, probably because the leadership of the movement escapes from those whose policies have resulted in the virtual liquidation of the Communist Party of Belgium.

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Railroad Workers to Meet on 6-Hour Day

MINNEAPOLIS—The proposed mergers of the Great Northern and Northern Pacific roads has aroused the railroad workers to the necessity of action, if a great number of them are not to be placed permanently in the army of the unemployed.

The next meeting of railroad workers is to be a delegate conference to be held on Tuesday, April 22nd, 1930, 8 P. M. at Woodruff Hall, Prior and St. Anthony Aves., St. Paul, Minn. Each local union of railroad workers is called upon to send three delegates to discuss the six hour day and five day week.

The above meeting is being called by a provisional committee elected for this purpose at a meeting on April 3rd, which was attended by 125 railroad workers representing various crafts, including Switchmen, Engineers, Trainmen, Stationary Firemen, Conductors, Electricians, Carmen and Locomotive Firemen. This meeting was enthusiastic for further meetings and discussion to consider the problems of the railroad worker. Nearly 20 workers took the floor to discuss the six hour day and five day week and kindred subjects.

—O. COOVER

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PITTSBURGH, Pa.—2,000 jobless men and women applied for 260 available jobs as census enumerators in Luzerne Co.

subject—partisan politics. There were still those among the delegates who thought that something could be accomplished through the old policy of rewards and punishments; but they were not listened to very attentively. The acclaim of the house was for those who spoke definitely for a break with the parties of the bosses and for a labor party. To the gullible who think of the labor party in terms of a solution even for the immediate needs, we must of necessity say: Take a good look at his majesty's labor party government of Great Britain and its relation to the unemployed army there. But the labor party as a step away from the support of the parties of the bosses is surely in a forward direction.—A.S.

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