

How the A. F. of L. Actually Betrayed the Automobile Workers

A Story from Detroit that Blasts Green's Class Collaboration Policy

By Special Correspondent

DETROIT, Mich.—Less than a year ago, Detroit was in the throes of a crisis. The automotive workers, who had been called "the lowest paid mechanics of America," who for five years had silently suffered unemployment, cruel speed-ups and constant wage reductions, suddenly revolted. Paralleling the movement in steel and textiles, they flocked into the A. F. of L. federal unions by the thousands.

Last Spring
By the beginning of 1934, the federal locals in the Michigan area alone had grown to some 60,000. By March, grievances had so accumulated that sentiment for a strike swept through the industry from city to city. A general strike was threatened at Fisher Body; the plants at Flint, Pontiac, Lansing and Cleveland overwhelmingly passed strike votes. The Hudson plant at Detroit, the Buick at Flint, the Chevrolet, Hupp, Dodge, Cadillac, Chrysler, Packard, Plymouth, Nash plants—all were ready for the walkout.

The arrogant executives of the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce for the first time in years had the "jitters". London editors were bombarding the Detroit papers with questions. In the White House Roosevelt was spending sleepless nights and working overtime.

Today
Today Detroit is quiet. The papers gleefully record the change and point out the "peaceable nature of the automotive worker when given the advantage of the secret ballot to express his heartfelt desires". More than 90 percent of the workers participating in the recent Automobile Labor Board's elections voted for candidates unaffiliated with any union. The A. F. of L. received only 5 percent of the total.

Does this indicate that the auto workers, grown wiser during the year, have become immune to unionism, as the capitalist press would like to convince us? Well—
By March 5 of last year, 200,000 auto workers in Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and surrounding areas were waiting for the signal to strike, to battle for their demands for union recognition, 20 percent wage increase, 40-hour week, time-and-a-half for overtime, reinstatement of discharged union employees, etc., etc.

When enthusiasm was at its height, the A. F. of L. agreed, at Roosevelt's request, to postpone the strike until after the hearing of the National Labor Board March 14.
Waiting tensely for this decisive date, local after local voted to strike if a satisfactory agreement was not reached then.
March 14 arrived. That very day the bosses, desperately striving to halt unionization, "voluntarily" announced the 36-hour week with pay increases. "Ford Brings Back the \$5 Day," screamed the headlines.

And on that very day, the Labor Board hearing broke up when representatives of Hudson Motor Co. and General Motors walked out after reading a statement that they were not committed to accept any ruling of the board.

A. F. of L. Acts
The 200,000 men awaiting the order to down tools thought that now even the die-hards, Collins and

Green, surely must act in the face of this sham and defiance. But no! Hugh S. Johnson, still NRA dictator, was placed in charge—and again Collins agreed to a five-day postponement.
The season was drawing to a close; evidently the strike was to be negotiated to death. But the workers, inexperienced, were still hopeful, still did not see through the tricks of their leaders.

On March 20, the day before the new deadline, the Detroit Free Press blazoned a front-page editorial: "Don't Wreck America". "The issue is largely an academic one," it smugly assured the underpaid workers, "a difference of opinion over an economic-political philosophy. . . . No matter which side wins . . . the wage scale and the hours will remain the same."
Next day, March 21, the president announced he would personally take charge of the negotiations, and asked Collins for a postponement. Green wired Collins to agree. This time the strike is postponed— indefinitely!

Capitulation
Five days later, March 25, the A. F. of L. leaders capitulated to the administration, agreeing to the creation of the Automobile Labor Board and proportional representation, which meant legalization of the company union, and signed an agreement which made absolutely no provision for union recognition, hours, wages or anything else.

The strike was called off. . . . The workers, many of whom were having their first trade union experience, were left hanging in mid-air. The "settlement" came toward the end of the season. With the aid of the press, the A. F. of L. bureaucracy helped the administration create the illusion of the impartiality of the Automobile Labor Board. Instead of concentrating on building a union and fighting for workers' demands, it shifted the problem to lodging complaints with Dr. Leo Wolman, head of the board, and waiting for a vote on representation.

After the sell-out, the workers left the A. F. of L. almost as fast as they had entered it a few months earlier. Thousands were reported as tearing up their membership books in disgust. Many even temporarily lost their faith in unionism. The A. F. of L. was forced to withdraw Collins from Detroit, so great was his disrepute. And the bosses made a drive for the company union.

The Anti-Labor Board
For nine months, the Auto Labor Board listened to complaints and reports of code violations—and did nothing. In January of this year, at last it got around to plant elections. Thus far they have been held at the Cadillac, Chevrolet, Dodge, Plymouth and Chrysler plants. The ground had been well-prepared by the administration. Of some 40,000 eligible to vote, 35,230 or 90 percent participated; 34,273 voted for unaffiliated representatives, 1,847 for A. F. of L. and 508 for company unions.

The answer to the bosses' campaign for company unionism is clear: the workers do not want company unions. But after the sellout of last year, they have lost faith in the A. F. of L. Fed bunk about the impartiality of the Labor Board for ten months, they have

been taught to believe in the possibility of gaining their demands without a union—through "unaffiliated" representatives. With miserable pay and the speed-up continuing, they are riding toward disillusion; trouble is brewing at the bottom.

A New Attack
The manufacturers, seeing the repudiation of their company union scheme, are trying a new attack. Elmer H. Gustavson, company union man, chairman of the elected Cadillac agency of representation, has told of plans to organize a Federation of Automobile Industrial Employees, to parallel the A. F. of L.

It is not clear whether most of the unaffiliated representatives are blinds for the company union or whether, once elected, they are won by bribes and flattery. Some idea of how they work comes from Gustavson: "The 16 members of the agency met in the council room of the Cadillac Administration Building and spent most of their day in deliberation. Their wages went on just as if they had been at work in the shop." One result of their deliberations: "They ratified an arrangement under which mutual cooperation will be exercised in a study of changes of wage and bonus rates."

It is plain that these agencies, even with the best intentions, with no organization behind them be-

Bankers Control Relief California Legion Aids Drive To Reduce Standard

BERKELEY, Cal.—In line with California's drive against militant workers, employed or unemployed, the S.E.R.A. administration is being reorganized on the basis of control by the banking interests and the American Legion. Because of the growing sentiment for organization among the workers, this change is being pushed—but in the meantime, or until March 1 at least, many relief workers probably will not be given re-assignments and thus will be deprived of relief for several weeks.

Behind the drive of the American Legion to rid the State Emergency Relief Administration of all "communists", which is, of course, being widely publicized by the Hearst and other papers, is a plan to discharge all of the present administrative force of the S.E.R.A. who are not satisfactory to the Legion and the bankers, as the simplest way to control the relief situation. The ultimate purpose is to prevent organization of the workers, to cut relief costs and to divert relief funds to the various vigilante groups sponsored by the Legion.

In some instances relief has been cut to a pound of rice a week. At one food depot in Berkeley recently, when a group of workers who had spent 15 cents in carefare received 10 cents worth of rice as their weekly allowance, they rebelled and scattered rice all over the place.
The California Workers Association must organize the unemployed workers immediately. It must resist all efforts to make of the C.W.A. a mere social organization; it must discourage factionalism; it must organize agitational meetings and mobilize the workers against this threat to their already low relief standard and their fight to fight for better conditions.

Act in Newark

NEWARK, N. J.—An overflow mass meeting of 250 relief workers demanded an open hearing on charges against two investigators who were dismissed on five hours' notice, without a hearing. The official charge was "insubordination". The discharged investigators had said that \$8.25 a month is an insufficient allowance for one person. They had also attempted to organize the investigators.
The mass meeting formed a committee.

CROWD HEARS MUSTE REPLY ARREST THREAT

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—More than three hundred workers turned out to the North Side Carnegie Library here on February 5 to hear A. J. Muste's exposition of the program and principles of the Workers Party.
A threat by the chief librarian to arrest Muste if "he said anything about the government" contributed added interest to the meeting. But in spite of the fact that Comrade Muste's speech called for the revolutionary road to socialism in no uncertain terms, the threat was not carried out.
Ted Selander, substituting for Comrade Cannon, who is in Sacramento, spoke on the work of the National Unemployed League. Louis Breler was chairman.

come tools in the hands of the company officials. This honeymoon between worker and master cannot last long.

A. F. of L.'s Dilemma
Now even the A. F. of L. is awake to the danger to its hide. It sees itself being elected out of business. The leaders are forced to eat their words of last year and repudiate the agreement they signed. Pressure has forced Green to withdraw from the Auto Labor Board and protest against renewal of the code. The A. F. of L. was forced to refuse to participate in the plant elections or be bound by them; to repudiate Richard Byrd, its representative on the Labor Board; to demand majority rule in the plants. Dillon, who recently conferred with Green in Chicago regarding the assembling of the National Council of United Automobile Workers, is leading a big organizing campaign in Detroit, Flint and other centers; he is forced to demand that Roosevelt's agreement be abrogated, the employee representation elections voided and the board abandoned.

Unionism is at low ebb, and the reputation of the A. F. of L. so bad a few strikes may be the only method by which it can hope to organize the workers. However, the situation is in a state of flux; the workers have no partiality toward any existing union. The overwhelming number of workers employed in the industry is unorganized.

Now is the time the left wing must establish for itself a base at every point of entrance, must enrich itself in preparation for future developments.

Why Progressives Must Organize

The havoc, confusion and demoralization that the A. F. of L. bureaucracy works in the trade union movement finds a glaring example in the strike of the workers of the Kartiganer Co., manufacturers of ladies hats.
Last summer the union declared the shop on strike. The workers responded to the call. The shop located in New York was closed tight while the workers in New Jersey, bribed and terrorized, remained at work.
After a few weeks some of the bosses signed the agreement with the union, but did not open their shop. The union officials, seizing upon the technicality that the strike was settled, refused strike relief.
This continued for seven months when the workers, in despair, went to the boss and asked him to open the shop, promising not to have anything to do with the union. The shop was opened and operates as before with the addition of a company union as a collective bargaining agency.
Today the bosses' association is threatening that it will break the agreement with the union if the Kartiganer shop is not compelled to come up to the same conditions that prevail in the industry. The workers in the shop, embittered by their sad experience, will not budge. The union officials, caught between two fires, finds a simple so-

Spiking Lies Printed In the Daily Worker About Printers Election

Under the misnomer, "RANK & FILE PRINTERS WIN UNION ELECTIONS" — Solomonick and Harfield replace discredited Trotskyites, the Daily Worker erects its customary fabric of lies as a preliminary to the destruction of the Independent Printing Employees.

What is the truth concerning the election and the organization?
1. Not a "rank and file administration" came into office but a crew of handpicked and incompetent Stalinists. They won the election through the importation of a dozen ringers whose illegal ballots determined the outcome. They brazenly voted down a motion that "only those with membership in the union at least two weeks prior to the election be permitted to vote". Not one of the ten politically unconnected outsiders present voted for the Stalinist slate. The small group of rank and fileers present, without exception, voted for the old administration, "the discredited Trotskyists".

2. Lie No. 2—"A year ago a few hundred workers got together. . . . Omit the hundred and you are nearer the truth. By the untiring efforts of these few "Trotskyists" the I.P.E. was built up to a few hundred. . . . The leadership of the I.P.E. fell into the hands of a group of Trotskyites expelled from the Communist party as enemies of the workers, who packed the Executive Board with five of their followers" Lie No. 3. The original Executive Board consisted of three members of the former Communist League, one racketeer who was subsequently expelled, and three Stalinists.

3. The record of these Stalinists is as odious as the drive of lies in the Daily Worker. One of them, Golden, without notice to the organization deserted his post as organizer of the I.P.E. with considerable damage to the drive for membership then on. The other, Tomaseh, after months of sabotage, similarly deserting the post of organizer, "escamoted" the books, membership cards and all the other vital property of the I.P.E. in the midst of its last drive. This action was defended by the present Stalinist administration when it was brought to the attention of the membership at that time. "Stupid" was all Solomonick, the new president could say when the issue was again raised in the discussion of the report of the outgoing Executive Committee. In effect it was his opinion that there was nothing wrong with this criminal action except that it wasn't administered with sufficient skill.

4. "Through their entire period in office they conducted only one strike, in a shop of four workers." Another half-truth in which the most important facts are omitted. This strike (which was the beginning of a strike campaign), was entered into, with the books still missing and without a single penny in the treasury. The Stalinists now in office failed to appear for a single day to organize or do picket duty, to help collect funds, etc. They sabotaged the strike in the hope that it would be defeated and thus discredit the "Trotskyists".

5. But, to their extreme consternation, a partial victory was lution. They put an ad in the Forward and the Day that the Kartiganer shop is on strike and then they put a few pickets in front of the place. But no strike was ever won in this manner.
A Job for the Progressives
The solution of the problem is a progressive group in the union that will be able to win the confidence of the workers in this shop and cope with the threats of the bosses' association. —B. F.

FOLLOW THE NEWS IN THE NEW MILITANT.

gained—one of the very few among the unorganized printers in recent years. In the Daily Worker, they say "the Trotskyites agreed with the boss that the Negro pressman should not get the same wage increase as the other workers received". In the Executive Board meeting prior to the election, Harfield charged this to be a "betrayal". This slander was flung back into his mouth at the self-same executive board meeting by the Negro worker involved, who had urged a compromise so as not to jeopardize the settlement as a whole, which he considered a considerable achievement. Hardly a month later the boss again fired the Negro worker. But the prompt action of the old executive board and the action of the Altum shop committee forced his reinstatement. At the election all the Altum workers, without exception voted for the so-called "Trotskyists" and two of them spoke in their favor in the discussion.

6. What is the program of the new "rank and file administration"? The most conspicuous thing about the union election was the lack of a program on the part of these people. The "D.W." says they will organize shop committees. In the pig's eye. Every shop they were assigned to since the union was organized was lost and the workers either left disgusted or never appeared. The Quality Art Shop in Long Island with 500 men involved is one instance (Tomash and Harfield assigned), and the Nehoc Press employing a dozen men is another (Golden assigned).

7. "One of the most important tasks of the new administration" says the Daily Worker, "will be to bring about cooperation with the printing locals affiliated with the A. F. of L. in a joint drive for the unionization of the unorganized shops in the city and to affect affiliation with the A. F. of L." How is this to be done after Typographical Union No. 6 has closed its books for the fiftieth time to the unorganized and the Pressman's Local No. 51 has given the I.P.E. a straight kick in the face by starting another one of its rackets called "associate membership" (this means collecting five spots from the unorganized and giving them the fake promise of organization some day in the distant future)? Harfield, the present secretary of the I.P.E., indicated how this was to be done a few months ago. In

a mass meeting of the I.P.E. at which bureaucrats of the A. F. of L. spoke, he advised the pressmen to join not the I.P.E.—but Local 51. As opposed to his A. F. of L. patriotism the founders of the I.P.E. declared for a policy of genuine organization as the only way to budge the A. F. of L. fakery. Only independent effort will lead the unity of all printing workers.

Those who built the I.P.E. but were voted out by a pack of non-printers—Stalinist ringers all of them—stated at the election meeting that the policy of the Stalinists was to bury the I.P.E. either by inaction or by some raw deal with the A. F. of L. fakery. The printers are warned to be vigilant against this wrecking crew and to be ready to steer the Independent Printing Employees back to its unionization drive among the unorganized. The signal for such action has been given by the workers of Altum Press. By spreading this sort of action and by that alone, will the Big Six workers and those of the other locals be made aware of their duty to their unorganized brothers.

WHAT TO ATTEND

- Minneapolis, Minn.**
Feb. 20, Wednesday at 8 P.M.—Open mass meeting on "Two Years of Roosevelt". Speaker: C. R. Hedlund. At new branch headquarters, 631 3rd Ave. S.
Feb. 23, Saturday evening—Housewarming Party in new branch headquarters, 631 3rd Ave. S. Dancing, cards and refreshments. Admission 15c.
- Allentown, Pa.**
Feb. 23, Saturday, 8 P.M., 9th Ward Unemployed League Hall—Card Party. Sponsors: Workers Party of the U. S.
New York City
Feb. 16, Saturday 9 P.M.—Red Cabaret and Dance. Germania Hall, 16th St. and 3rd Ave. Tickets still available at 49c at 2 West 15th St.
Feb. 17, Sunday, 2:30 P.M.—Debate on "Which Program for American Labor" between A. J. Muste for the Workers Party and Jay Lovestone for the Communist Party (Opposition). Irving Plaza. Tickets still available at 2 W. 15th St.
Feb. 22, Friday 8 P.M.—Forum, Branch 4: "Program of the Workers Party". Speaker: Max Shachtman. 29 West 120th St.
Feb. 22, Friday 8 P.M.—"How Shall the Progressives Function in the Trade Unions?" Hugo Oehler, Branch 7, 1281 49th St., Brooklyn. Friday night forums at all other branches.
March 16, Saturday night—Press Ball to be given jointly by the New International and the New Militant. Details to be announced later.

Win a Prize

Rules of the Prize Contest for Subscribers

- Who may participate?**
The contest is for individuals and branches. Any individual, not employed in the national office of this publication, may compete.
- How are points counted?**
Counting will be on the basis of yearly subs, each of which will count as one point. Two half year subs will also count as one point. Subs taken on combination offers will be counted unless otherwise specified.
- What are the dates of the drive?**
The drive started February 1 and will end on May 31.
- What are the prizes?**
(a) Each month during the drive a prize of \$2.00 in books will be awarded to the individual sending in the greatest number of subs during that month. A minimum of 10 subs will be required in this category.
(b) To the individual sending in the largest number of subs for the period of the entire drive will be awarded a prize of \$5.00 in books.
(c) To the branch getting the largest percentage score in individual subs and bundle orders will be awarded a prize of \$10.00 in books.
(d) To the branch making second place for the entire drive in the points outlined in (c) above, a prize of \$5.00 in books.

General remarks:
*All books are to be selected from the lists of the Pioneer Bookshop, 66 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

*In case of tie in any category duplicate prizes will be awarded.
*All remittances must be payable to the New Militant, 2 West 15th Street, New York. In order to be counted they must be received on or before 5 P.M. of the last day of each month (for category 4a) or on or before 5 P.M. of the last day of the drive (for the remaining categories). They must also contain
(a) name of subscriber
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MONDAY, 8:40-10:00 P.M.—Elementary English—F. Becker
MONDAY, 8:40-10:10 P.M.—Marxian History—Felix Morrow
WEDNESDAY, 7-8:30 P.M.—Marxian Economics (vol. 1)—H. Oehler
WEDNESDAY, 7-8:30 P.M.—American Labor History—A. J. Muste
WEDNESDAY, 8:40-10:10 P.M.—History of the Three Internationals—M. Shachtman
THURSDAY, 7-8:30 P.M.—Trade Union Strategy and Tactics—A. Swaback
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Debate

on
WHICH PROGRAM FOR AMERICAN LABOR

Jay Lovestone A. J. Muste
For Communist Party (Opposition) For Workers Party of U.S.

HEYWOOD BROWN, Chairman

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