

C. I. O. Faces Challenge Of Steel Industry

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duced to a mere shadow of a union. It represents today a far cry from the powerful organization that conducted the Homestead strike in 1892 and cleaned up on the Pinkertons. Its gain of 150,000 new members during the 1919 steel strike withered away under the unfortunate leadership of Mike Tighe, who was then its ancient president and who remains in control today despite his senility and decrepitude. Even the new spark of life with which the union was infused as a result of the impulse from the N.R.A. was too much for the hoary president and his slightly younger lieutenants. A new set of progressive elements had come into leading local positions. They condemned in scathing terms the policy of paralysis; they made some stupid mistakes, but they demanded action and organization. Mike Tighe knew only the reply of suppression and expulsion and numerous local lodges were wrecked.

After Fifty Years

To Mike Tighe the secret rituals and mummerly left over from old days of trade union illegality remain a sacred union heritage, more dear to him than activity and progress. And so well did he discharge his obligation to the invisibility of his contract with the steel manufacturers that the union, after more than a half century of existence, counts a paid up membership of not more than 4,800. Needless to say this contract which Mike Tighe holds as sacred, is not meant to embrace more than a scattering of workers here and there in a few mills. It is a contract designed essentially to restrict and to prevent organization.

From this description it would be difficult for any reader to note any real distinction between Mike Tighe and Wm. Green, except the difference of age. Outward differences there are none. Actual differences there are none. In essence the former has carried out the policy of the latter and both are more or less equal partners in the policy and methods of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy. And thus the real reason for the dismal failure of organization in the steel industry—aside from the devastating gross incompetence—can be found only in the position of this bureaucracy.

Wm. Green and his allies do not think of coming to grips with the problem and undertaking a campaign of organization in the only way that it could actually succeed. Such ideas are alien and repugnant to them. Their own role is determined by their attitude to the capitalist system to which they swear allegiance. They naturally become champions of the rights of collective bargaining for labor with themselves, however, occupying the position of agents who are privileged to bargain both ways. In this role they will endeavor to gain concessions for the unions but simultaneously they consider themselves to be the custodians of the interests of capital against aggression from the rank and file members.

The Empire of U. S. Steel

In the steel industry, however, no alternatives are offered. The United States Steel Corporation, is the absolute and despotic ruler. It is in itself an empire within an empire. Only 23 American cities had a greater population than the population of the U. S. Steel Corporation in 1920. Not less than 196,000 workers and their families are dependent for their livelihood upon this corporation. This is America's largest employer of labor. The directors of this corporation do not at all fancy any ideas of sitting down at conference tables with representatives of labor. Their policy in this respect was laid down in a resolution of June 17, 1901, when J. P. Morgan the Elder organized the United States Steel Corporation. It says:

"We are unalterably opposed to any extension of union labor, and advise subsidiary companies to take a firm position when these questions come up, and say that they are not going to recognize it."

Every word here is meant just exactly as it is written. Moreover, the U. S. Steel executives have never deviated from this resolution. Nor has Mike Tighe ever deviated from his respect for the invisibility of his contract with the steel companies. He has understood it and interpreted it just exactly as

it was meant to be understood. This is one of the reasons for the fact that the organization he leads has only 4,800 members.

The Challenge of Steel

Meanwhile modern conditions of production has forged ahead to constantly greater improvement of machinery and efficiency of output, constantly also subordinating the conditions of labor to the control of the capitalist ownership of industry. Under these conditions the whole trade union movement is in danger of utter ineffectiveness, if not actual extinction, unless the basic industries and particularly the steel industry is organized. Even Green, Tighe and company cannot possibly be entirely unaware of this fact, though they may not comprehend its real meaning—or for that matter, care much. But they do know that the tackling of the steel empire is a serious campaign of organization, leaves no room for compromise or for bargaining. Besides it is such a gigantic task and may result in serious bruises because the feudal rulers of this empire believe in fighting it out to the end.

This is the challenge to the whole trade union movement. What the A. F. of L. Executive Council will do about it is now perfectly clear. It will do exactly nothing of any serious consequence.

The A. A. Convention

The Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers has just ended its sixty-first annual convention. For days on end it gave consideration to the offer made by the C. I. O., only by a scant majority was a conditional acceptance achieved. Mike Tighe, however, succeeded in maintaining his stranglehold upon the union and making his bid for the friendship of both Lewis and Green. The final decision adopted affirms the charter rights of the Amalgamated Association, which are the rights of sole jurisdiction as an industrial union. Outside of that the conditional acceptance of the C. I. O. offer will have real meaning only provided the industrial union forces take hold of it and carry it into life.

Company Unions Stampede

Last year company union representatives from a number of plants held a convention in Newcastle, Pa. at which demands were formulated for wage increases and improved working conditions while the delegates refused to grant admission to management representatives. Shortly thereafter a similar company union convention in Gary, Indiana, considered a proposal for a final breakdown from company control with the vote unanimously in favor of taking independent measures to defend the interests of the workers. These are important signs of a new trend and of a new vitality displayed in an original way. Real possibilities of organization in the steel industry are unquestionably available.

The organization of these workers has now become imperative. But the challenge has been thrown right back into the lap of the industrial union bloc. What will these unions do about it? Trifling with this problem or nibbling at it will not do. A rich opportunity awaits these unions. A spark of new life was manifested at the steel workers' convention nourished by the pressure for action made by the progressive elements. New unions are growing and gaining ground in several mass production industries from which forces for further extension can be recruited. Practically all of these new unions appear to be ready to continue an aggressive fight for the building of a truly powerful industrial union movement; but its future is bound up with progress in steel.

The organization of the steel in-

Roosevelt Steals Labor Party Thunder

Labor Chiefs Use New Deal as Safety-Valve

By ARNE SWABECK

During the last few weeks the plea for Roosevelt's re-election has gained new converts and new adherents with amazing speed from the trade union movement. It is taking on the character of a clean sweep. By the manner in which the plea is presented, and in view of the present objective conditions, it is not at all surprising that the labor party question fades into the background with the same ease that this sweep gains in momentum. Or, perhaps it would be more correct to say that the labor perambulator is being hooked onto the Roosevelt handwagon.

This stampede started last January when John L. Lewis whooped through the United Mine Workers convention a unanimous resolution for Roosevelt's re-election. Following this lead Labor's Non-Partisan League came into being. It was sponsored by the Lewis-Hillman forces. The American Federation of Hosiery Workers convention and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers General Executive Board next fell in line. Two international union presidents, David Dubinsky and Emil Hieve quickly deserted the Socialist Party for their new and real allegiance. Wm. Green, on the opening day of the A. F. of L. Executive Council second quarterly meeting, advocated the President's re-election. And two days before this the delegates to the United Automobile Workers convention voted without a dissenting voice to support the Roosevelt candidacy.

Raw Deal for Auto Workers

Nobody will suspect that the automobile workers harbored feelings of special gratitude to Roosevelt. They cannot possibly have forgotten his infamous automobile agreement which was foisted upon them during the spring of 1934. This agreement they looked upon then as a definite setback to their aims and efforts; and such it proved to be. It brought about the hated Automobile Labor Relations Board headed by Wollman. It strengthened, for the time being the stranglehold of Wm. Green and Collins, later supplanted by Dillon, and postponed the organization of the autonomous international union so much desired by the organized automobile workers.

No, these are not the reasons for their endorsement of Roosevelt. The decision of the auto workers convention simply means that it follows the lead of the Committee for Industrial Organization. This is of double significance when viewed in relation to the labor party question. It must be remembered that on the whole the unions of the C. I. O. and its supporting unions, like the auto workers, represents the section of organized labor which is traveling in a progressive direction. This is indisputable. It is also the section of organized labor that has shown the greatest vitality and growth, and particularly so when a comparison is made with a number of unions, distinctly craft in make-up and in spirit, which have remained

stagnant for some time, or actually lost ground.

No Serious Labor Party Swing

These facts only lend so much more emphasis to what has been stated in these columns more than once: There is not a serious movement on foot, nor are there any serious forces available for a national labor party, or farmer-labor party or third party in 1936. Those who still attempt to create the impression that there are, like the Stalinists do, are simply up to their old pernicious game of deception. An editorial in the May 7 Daily Worker finally acknowledges that, "A Farmer-Labor Presidential ticket in 1936 is now out of the question," but it maintains that the prospects are as good as ever for a farmer-labor party this year. This is equally pernicious and deceptive.

Superficially it may seem as if the fervent desires nurtured by the Stalinists were to be realized through the conference call sent out by the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party. However, the appearance in this case is also deceptive. The con-

ference call is issued only to individuals, not to organizations. Obviously these individuals are expected to do nothing more than to explore the possibilities for a labor party. But what they are to explore becomes further clear in the announcement that a farmer-labor presidential ticket is not to be considered at this conference. In other words, the sponsors of the conference consider the presidential ticket to be a matter settled by the Roosevelt reelection endorsements. Nothing further remains to be explored but how to swing the labor party sentiment successfully into this reelection campaign.

Local Bodies Powerless

A labor party sentiment has been recorded in a number of local unions. Much of it is motivated on progressive grounds. To an extent it arises out of disappointment with promised New Deal measures which were not realized; to an extent also out of disappointment with conditions under the "New Deal blessings." Above all it arises out of fears of reaction and an instinctive but unclear fear of Fascism. But, in view of the general lack of understanding of what the requirements of a party of the workers must be, it is particularly these fears that help to drive the organized workers in marching formation into the Roosevelt camp.

John L. Lewis and Industrialist Serve Same Master in 1936 Elections

The day after May Day two news items appeared side by side in the press. The first reported a speech by A. P. Giannini, financial titan of the Bank of America, and a director of the National City Bank. Bubbling with optimism and brimful of praise for the President, he declared, "As a result of President Roosevelt's fiscal policies, our financial structure rests on a solid foundation that at any time within our memory."

The second was an announcement by John L. Lewis that the State Federations of Labor of Kentucky and Alabama had followed the precedent set by the United Mine Workers and recorded themselves in favor of Roosevelt's return to office.

Banker Giannini spoke under the auspices of the Good Neighbor, a non-partisan organization of liberals formed to campaign for Roosevelt's reelection. Labor leader Lewis spoke for Labor's Non-Partisan League, a non-partisan organization of union officials also formed to campaign for Roosevelt.

Striking Coincidence

What a flood of light this little coincidence casts upon the political lineup behind the Democratic party for 1936! On the one hand, Roosevelt will secure the support of the liberal wing of finance capital, including those captains of industry and finance who are bound to the Democratic party by their special interests. While they will contribute as usual to the campaign funds of both parties, the conservative section of the big bourgeoisie, organized around the Liberty League and the United States Chamber of Commerce, will rally behind the Republican Party, not in the hope of defeating Roosevelt but for the purpose of exerting pressure upon him to keep his liberalism within moderate limits.

On the other hand, thanks to the activities of John L. Lewis and his associates, Roosevelt will be assured of the support of the vast majority of organized labor. A few days ago Lewis and Major George L. Berry visited Roosevelt at the White House and informed him that 30,000 union officials in various states had already sponsored Labor's Non-Partisan League; 4,000 speakers in every state of the union were warming up for the campaign; and that, in addition to the international unions that have declared themselves for Roosevelt, six state Labor Federations had endorsed the President and the League itself.

An Act of Betrayal

What can it mean when one of the foremost bankers and the most powerful captain of organized labor in the country combine to set their seal of approval on Roosevelt's policies and vie with each other in soliciting support for his reelection? It can mean but one thing. That this "labor lieutenant of capital" is delivering the workers into the hands of the political servant of their masters and is engaged in an act of outright betrayal of the interests of the working class.

There is no need to look further than one's nose to prove this point. For at the very moment when the coryphée of capital and the captain of labor joined in a chorus of praise for Roosevelt, the notorious open-shop Industrial Association of San Francisco, backed and financed by Giannini and his friends, was engaged in a conspiracy to smash the Maritime Federation of the Pacific, one of the most militant and progressive organizations in the American labor movement. And it was doing so with the active connivance of such administration officials as Secretary of Commerce Roper and

and deserve the support of all advanced workers.

High Stakes for Lewis

More alert and enterprising than the moss-backed conservatives of the Green-Gompers school, Lewis is ready to meet the demands of the industrial workers for industrial unions. His own union, the strongest in the A. F. of L. is organized on an industrial basis and has made him a power in the A. F. L. His sponsorship of the industrial union movement may well make him the unchallenged leader of organized labor. These are high stakes and well worth fighting for. Lewis has therefore placed himself at the head of that movement to exploit it for his own private purposes.

Not only must the old forms of trade-union organization be overhauled but new forms of trade union action are necessary to exact concessions from the employers today. The old craft-union bureaucrats carried on their class collaboration activities directly with the bosses. The National Civic Federation was the supreme expression of this immediate alliance between labor and capital. Representing only a small section of privileged craftsmen, these leaders could make deals with the employers at the expense of the mass of unorganized unskilled workers. These narrow syndicalists opposed and resented governmental interference.

This form of class collaboration is exceedingly difficult to carry on when the negotiators represent all the workers in a plant or industry, and particularly difficult in the present period of capitalist decline. Here the whole body of workers are opposed to their employers in a particular industry and the success of a strike and the terms of the settlement affects the profits and competitive position to a considerable degree. The conflicts tend to become sharper and more irreconcilable and the social consequences more serious, and hence it becomes increasingly necessary for the government to step in as a third party and try to arbitrate the dispute.

Rely on Gov't Good Will

As a result, the industrial union leaders tend to rely more and more upon the good will of the government and less and less upon the militant action of their membership. They are not averse to threatening strikes and even to calling them if they are forced to it. But they do not really trust such militant methods. They prefer to depend upon such governmental aids and agreements as N.R.A. codes, Guffey Bills, and similar agreements drawn up together with the administration. To secure these concessions from the state, it is necessary to keep in the good graces of the party in power, to see that their rank and file do not get out of control and embarrass the administration.

It cannot be denied that by skillfully combining the strike threat with the legal opportunities opened out by the N.R.A. that Lewis's Mine Workers, Dubinsky and Hillman's garment workers and other unions have exacted substantial concessions and made considerable gains under the Roosevelt regime. But again, like the old craft-unionists, they have done so at the expense of the great mass of workers in the auto, rubber, and steel industries, who have been thrown to the wolves. This is part of the price they have had to pay for their gains. Another installment on their debts to the administration for favors received is being made by their support of Roosevelt. The others will come due—and will be made—in good time.

to soak the rich, the need of curbing Wall Street and the need of preventing the invasion of the people's rights by the courts. Roosevelt declares himself to be against war and Fascist tyrannies and for a "people's government." By these ingenious campaign devices, the Rooseveltians aimed, and rather successfully to forestall the emergence of a labor party, or a third party, in 1936.

The adept pupils of these demagogic cunning devices, who are holding high posts in the progressive union bloc, follow up the campaign in the same high key. They are for aggressive unionization, for industrial unionism and against reaction. John L. Lewis started the ball rolling at the U.M.W. convention with a mighty attack on the Liberty League. An easy target. These leaders are now all against war and Fascist tyrannies and they also have broad views on the people's front. It is therefore not at all unnatural they should direct the genuine fears of reaction and the fears of war and Fascism into the safe channels in support of Roosevelt's reelection. With a little manipulation that can easily be interpreted, and even in the prevailing labor party and people's front jargon if necessary, as symbolizing the fight against reaction.

No Labor Party Wanted Now

Of course, the truth is that these "progressive" leaders, in harmony with Roosevelt, do not want a labor party, or a third party and certainly not before their own preparations are well done; not until they are sure that they can keep it within the proper reformist bounds. Even then they can be expected to yield only to pressure. Their aim can then be expected to be to utilize such a development to counterpose the growth of a revolutionary movement. As solid converts to the New Deal, they aim to lay out the line of march with Roosevelt today and perpetuate his program tomorrow—if need be, by means of a third party.

Today they attempt to make a distinction between Roosevelt and the Democratic Party. How can any real distinction be possible? Roosevelt is the standard bearer of his party—one of the two capitalist parties. From this party he receives his mandate and this carries with it the duty to serve finance capital. Need there be any doubt that this is the responsibility to which he will remain loyal even more decisively and unequivocally after his reelection.

The trade union support of Roosevelt could not be unexpected. It is destined to go down in history as one of the great illusions of revolutionary education of the working class. After 1936 new disillusionments are sure to begin. Will a third party carrying on the New Deal tradition and program then prove a solution? Most decisively not! And it is well to remember that this is the only kind of a labor party that can reasonably be expected. Hence there remains one main conclusion to draw. Today and tomorrow the struggle for Socialism must go on.

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C. P. Trails Roosevelt

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Roosevelt's: this entire perspective was outlined in Roosevelt's annual message to Congress. In actuality, the Democratic Party in this country this year, under Roosevelt's leadership, constitutes the ultimate in the People's Front as defined by and called for by the Communist Party. It comprises, in its main social composition, just what the Stalinists ask: the bulk of the trades unions, the organized farmers, the Townsendites, the Epic Clubs, the disoriented middle classes, the bulk of the unemployed; with the majority of "Wall Street and the industrialists" howling against it from the outside. And its program is a completely typical People's Front program, with the standard People's Front demands, closely similar to and in many cases to the left of the program, for example, of the French People's Front.

Thus the Roosevelt demagoguery, ably assisted by

the Hillmans and Dubinskys and Olsons, is in a position to sweep to itself the great majority of those who have been infected by the Stalinist agitation, and tie them to Roosevelt's machine, whatever the Communist Party publicly declares about voting, since the Stalinist agitation leads necessarily in the Roosevelt direction, and provides no political barrier to bring about a differentiation along class lines.

Browder is too modest in asking for a joint ticket with the Socialists. In all conscience, his name should be presented to the Democratic Convention as the logical and fit running mate for Roosevelt.

The international betrayal of Stalinism manifests itself in every country in the betrayal of the revolutionary struggle within that country. The fight for socialism is the fight not against this or that individual capitalist or group of capitalists, but against capitalism itself. And this fight is no longer conceivable apart from the fight against Stalinism, whose historical function is now only the search for new forms in the betrayal of the struggle for socialism.