

WORKERS AGE

A Paper Defending the Interests of the Workers and Farmers

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Leftward Winds in the S. P.

ILGWU Convention Notes

by Observer

The convention of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, dramatized a period of phenomenal growth. Only one year ago a union with some 40,000 members, the convention this year recorded such tremendous growth that the union is within striking distance of a quarter million members. The I.L.G.W.U. is today the third largest union in the A. F. of L.

In the forthcoming issue of Workers Age we will thoroughly estimate the decisions of the convention. In this issue we present a number of documents which epitomize certain of the high points of this convention.

For the dramatic manner in which the convention spoke up against race discrimination, we are indebted primarily to the progressive and militant delegation from Local 22. It was on the initiative and under the pressure of this delegation that the convention finally moved from the lily white Medinah-Michigan Club. The delegation of Local 22 expressed its appreciation for this act by presenting a floral wreath to the convention. Charles Zimmerman, manager of this local, made the following talk to the convention on this occasion:

"The moving of the convention out of the Medinah-Michigan Avenue Club into this hall is something that has no precedent in the history of American labor. (Applause) This is the first time that a convention of a labor union demonstrated in such a forceful way that we are not going to tolerate any discrimination within our ranks, against any members of our Union, regardless of their race, color, or creed.

"Such action, in a country where, in almost half of its area, the Negroes have no right to ride in the same street cars or sit in the same seats with the white people, where the employing class is trying deliberately to intensify race hatred and race prejudice, shows more than anything else that we are going to do our utmost to unify the ranks of the workers to carry on the struggle against the employing class. We are not going to tolerate, not only in such matters as have caused the moving of our convention, any race discrimination, but we are going to carry our campaign into the shops and into the ranks of American labor, where race prejudice still exists; we will carry on the fight to achieve the objective that there shall be no discrimination whatsoever, that the workers of this country be unified in the struggle against the employing class until the present system, the social order is changed completely." (Applause)

(From the convention minutes)

Another issue which is today plaguing the labor movement, is

the NRA. In a minority report of the Committee on Officers' Report, Zimmerman placed very clearly his differences with the administration on this question. The correctness of Zimmerman's claims that NRA is a menace to trade unionism, were dramatized by the letters to the I.L.G.W.U. and to President Roosevelt, from a delegation of steel

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In the Next Issue:

RUSSIA AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS
by Bert Wolfe

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE NEW DEAL
by Jay Lovestone

THE I.L.G.W.U. CONVENTION
An Estimate

Militants Capture Party

by Jay Lovestone

Put yourself in a jammed, stuffy, smoke-filled hotel meeting room surrounded by middle-aged, middle-class folk, and some younger people, workers from the mill and mine and you will find yourself in the Socialist Party Convention, held at the beginning of the month, in Detroit.

Too few workers were there as delegates. As many farmers were there, though now and then one would run into a "red hayseed," in

the best sense of the word; really a remnant of an age gone by, a left-over of the old populist farmers, drifting with the tides of time into the Socialist Party ranks.

In the main, the debates were no polite, parlor-Socialist discussions. They were spirited battles between successful Socialist lawyers and once successful ministers of the gospel. They were rousing calls to, or away from, action by flourishing university professors and fossilized soap-boxers.

Hillquit Was Missing

All of which gave us a picture and a feeling of hopeless, pathetic confusion. Hillquit was missing. The body of the Hillquit leadership and policies was there alright, but the head was gone. The right wing, consisting of pseudo-Marxists of the crassest type, constituted a formidable numerical section of the convention. However, it was obvious, at the very outset, that it was leaderless, headless, and, at the close of the convention, even heedless in its manner of debate.

The "steel rod" of the convention was Norman Thomas and the forces rallying around his personality-plus leadership. Most of these delegates had no idea what they wanted, but they wanted something new, and they felt their want keenly. Others felt that the party was inactive; they wanted to do something and do it in a hurry.

The Militant Group

Numerically speaking, the biggest group in the convention was the "Militant" outfit. Politely put, in a political sense, judging by the sundry shades of opinion in its ranks, it might be called the rainbow group, the Rainbow Division of the S.P. All colors of principle and policy went into making one picture of confusion, solidified by aspiration to office and hope for a "new deal." More accurately put, in a principle sense, it should be called the "Militant managerie." It was the Noah's Ark of the convention. It saved the S.P. from the thunder on the left and the open opportunist deluge on the right. This group did not have a definite theoretical base. It had many bases, despite some of its top leadership flirting with the Alter-Ehrlich centrist tendency in the Second International. In its successful serried ranks were job-seekers, chronic postponers of issues, some genuine grandiose dreamers, the awakening Wisconsiners, led by Mayor Hoan and Sheriff Benson of Milwaukee, and the thinkers and doers of Socialist-Centrism led by Biemiller of Wisconsin and Krueger of Illinois.

The R.P.C.

Last, but numerically least, was the Revolutionary Policy Committee, stronger in revolutionary aspiration than in numbers or experience. The handful of delegates under its banner occupied a strategic position in view of the closeness of the contest between the rights and the all inclusive Cen-

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Lovestone Addresses ILGWU Convention

Jay Lovestone, secretary of the Communist Party U.S.A. (Opposition) addressed the twenty-second biennial Convention of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, during the afternoon session on Wednesday June 6, 1934. The stenographic report of his address follows.—Editor.

PRESIDENT DUBINSKY: In the course of the convention you have heard references to the Communist Party (Opposition). The spokesman from that organization is in this hall. There are a number of delegates representing important locals that belong to this group, and, as I stated, while we politically differ and disagree, the fact that this group and their leader, stand in principle against dual unionism entitles him to be heard in our midst. I therefore will call upon Jay Lovestone to step forward to the platform. I want him to address this convention.

JAY LOVESTONE: Brother Chairman, Fellow Delegates and Comrades: You have had a sort of jubilee harvest of distinguished speakers and speeches. So far as I am concerned, I will not be able to fall into either category here. Likewise, let me say in advance that I will not be carrying coal to Newcastle and offer you more compliments. Your

President has well said that there are many differences between us. Still we are able to work in the same trade union movement.

With these differences assumed, let me attempt, at this moment, to present to you as a Communist, as one of the founders of the Communist movement in this country, the Communist position on a number of questions which agitate us today. These are questions the solution of which will determine not only the fate of your mighty union, not only the fate of the American working class, but, I say, contribute decisively toward the fate of the world labor movement and, therefore, of the best part, the most constructive part, of humanity as a whole.

I do not propose to butt into your business. But I say that a number of fundamental questions which may appear to you as strictly your business are strictly the business of the entire working class, of which the Communist movement is an organic part. We have, in the United States, the biggest trade union movement in the capitalist world. We have, in the United States, the biggest trade union movement next to the Russian, next to Socialist Russia, where the working class rules and does not beg favors.

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Zimmerman's Minority Report

As a member of the Committee on Officers Report, I want to submit the following minority report:

1. Our union has made tremendous progress within the last year and this should be a source of gratification and encouragement for the entire membership. I feel, however, that the spirit of incessant glorification and uncritical jubilation, which is characteristic of the tone of this report, is an unwholesome one for a labor organization which ought always to be sober, critical and realistic. There is no group of men of any organization in existence, that can possibly be so infallible and so perfect as the committee makes out our officers to be. This spirit of exaggerated praise and endless glorification certainly will not help us to see clearly the many difficult problems still facing our union and the women's garment industry. An approach a little less sugary and a little more objective and sober is absolutely necessary for our union to continue to march forward.

SIGNIFICANCE OF NRA

2. My chief difference with the report of the majority of your committee is on the question of the estimation of the NRA, its effects and its meaning for the labor movement. The committee is at-

tempting the impossible task of reconciling diametrically opposed viewpoints on this fundamental question and is, thereby, evading the responsibility of taking a clear-cut position itself.

The question of the significance of the NRA and its meaning for labor is today the most widely discussed question in our movement and no union, certainly not a union of our character, can meet in convention without adopting a clearly defined attitude on this question.

The NRA is not now, nor was it even in the earlier stages, a scheme of genuine industrial democracy, a plan to give labor a real voice in the management and control of American industry. On the contrary, the NRA was developed as a plan of stabilizing the shaky foundations of the capitalist system thru stimulating the organization of the employers on a national scale into gigantic associations endowed with government powers to regulate and direct industry in their own interests. It is important to note that in its general outlines the NRA follows the recovery plans proposed by Mr. Harriman, President of the United States Chamber of Commerce, in the Fall of 1931. Within this framework, the New Deal has included maximum

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LOVESTONE

"THE S.P. CONVENTION"
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Biro-Bidjan

TWO worlds—the old and the new. All things, all phases of life reveal the startling contrast. In the old decaying world of capitalism, anti-semitism raises again its ugly head. In the new young world of socialism, anti-semitism is liquidated forever.

It is no longer merely in the backward, semi-feudal, barbarian lands that anti-semitism shows itself. It is in the lands of high civilization and culture, such as Nazi Germany. Like a pestilence the plague of anti-semitism spreads from land to land throughout the capitalist world.

Nationalism was a progressive force in the youthful period of capitalism; today it is a curse. The curse of anti-semitism begets its inseparable opposite, bourgeois Jewish nationalism. Anti-semitism drives the Jew back into the ghetto; Jewish bourgeois nationalism would accomplish segregation on a world scale, a world-ghetto in Palestine.

"There are two nations in every modern nation . . . there are two national cultures in every national culture." Zionism subordinates the "progressive nation" to the "reactionary nation," the proletariat to the bourgeoisie, socialist culture to the anti-culture of a capitalist world in decay. Zionism builds the rubbish of national oppression into its very foundations, for Zionism is founded on the dispossessing of the Arab and the negation of Arab self-determination. It plays catpaw to British imperialism. As in all forms of national reaction today, Zionism begets its own fascism (revisionism) within its own ranks!

Only one land is solving, only one class can solve, the Jewish question.

The first week of the existence of the Soviet government witnessed the "Declaration of the Rights of the Nationalities of Russia." With a single revolutionary leap, Russia passed from the worst land of Jewish discrimination and persecution to the best land of Jewish equality and freedom.

In the years of the building of the new Socialist order the Soviet Union tackled the problem of bringing the declassed Jewish merchants, peddlars, Talmudical scholars, brandy distillers and luftmenschen, and above all the Jewish youth, into the basic industries, thus ending once and for all the isolation of the Jews that had set them apart in an enforced ghetto as a "peculiar people." Colonies like Kalinindorf, Stalindorf, New Zlatopol, Freidorf and Biro-Bidjan, brought the Jew into agriculture. Industrialization brought the Jew into industry. By the end of the first Five Year Plan, over half the Jews in the Soviet Union were wage-earners in productive industry! The age-old Jewish problem was a problem no more!

On May 7th, 1934 Biro-Bidjan was proclaimed a Jewish Autonomous Region with the prospect, upon further growth, of becoming an Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic, one of the equal partners in the free union of people called the Soviet Union.

Decaying bourgeois nationalism brings anti-semitism in Germany, and Arab-Jewish race war and Fascism in Palestine. Proletarian internationalism brings economic rehabilitation, freedom and equality, and the preservation and extension of all that is progressive in Jewish culture or nationality.

Two worlds—one dying—another, and better, being born!

LOOK AROUND YOU!

You will see a deep ferment in the labor movement; feverish organization, phenomenal trade union growth, bitter and bloody strikes, widespread disillusion with NRA, a tenseness—a restiveness which promises deep and decisive struggles.

In the ranks of the revolutionary movement there is division and the sharpest clash of conflicting thought. The Communist movement is divided. Even the Socialist movement for years smug and cynical, is rent by political dissension.

WHAT IS BEHIND ALL THESE DEVELOPMENTS?

If you want a clear Marxist analysis of the problems facing the working class in the U.S.A. and abroad, you must read

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Organ of the Communist Party U.S.A. (Opposition)

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Zimmerman's Minority Report

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for the turning over of lists of union members to a board including representatives of employers and thus establishes a national, government-approved blacklist, this auto agreement, which gives official recognition and thus legalizes the company union as a form of collective bargaining, shows what grave dangers the NRA has in store for the workers if they are not ready to militantly defend their unions and their interests.

RIGHT TO STRIKE CHALLENGED

The NRA has openly dared to challenge the right of labor to strike, a right, without which no trade union can exist. At the last convention of the American Federation of Labor, Senator Wagner, chairman of the National Labor Board, did not hesitate to declare: "The first charge upon labor is that it abandon the philosophy of strike in its relation with employers. The crucial point is that the strike is never more than a protest. It has no constructive force. It creates hundreds of new problems but cannot solve a single one." At the same convention, General Johnson thundered: "Labor does not need to strike under the Roosevelt plan. The plain truth is that you cannot tolerate the strike. . . . If you persist or countenance the strike, public confidence and opinion will break down and destroy you."

MENACE OF GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE

A very grave challenge to trade unionism embodied in the NRA is the possibility it gives for government interference in the inner affairs and proper functions of the unions. Let me remind you that even in the Cloak trade the NRA attempted to interfere and even held public hearings on the question of initiation fees. I need not emphasize how dangerous may become this attempt to deprive the unions of their independence unless labor crushes it in its very first stages.

In the most influential circles of the NRA, opinions are being advanced favoring the turning of our unions into government agencies, a tendency which bears within itself the seeds of Fascism. As far back as last September, General Johnson himself urged "overhead control of labor as responsible to government" for our trade unions.

PROGRESS THRU MILITANT ACTION

The great expectations aroused by Section 7a proved a tremendous stimulus to the revival of trade unionism. Instead of utilizing this opportunity to build up their organizations and to fight for improved conditions, many labor leaders contented themselves with hailing the NRA as the great charter of labor that would automatically bring them all sorts of benefits. Not only did they fail to realize the dangers in the NRA, but they even spread the illusion that the NRA would be the means of solving the problems of the workers and improving their conditions. They did not drive home to the workers the necessity of having strong fighting unions upon which they could depend; on the contrary, they tended to make the workers place their entire confidence in the official operations of the NRA. The sad plight of the textile workers today is only the consequence of dependence of the union leaders on the NRA rather than on strong, militant organization and aggressive action. President MacMahon of the United Textile Workers even went so far as to boast, at the A. F. of L. convention, of the strikes that he had prevented or called off. "No man nowhere has tried more determinedly than I have," he said, "to avoid chaos in the industry. In my office there are not hundreds but thousands of appeals from the workers demanding that they be allowed to strike. The vast majority of those appeals have come from the South."

The tremendous growth of our organization and the improvement of conditions in the various markets have come as a result of an entirely different practice, of a policy of aggressive strike action and dependence only on the forces of the union. In fact, the rebirth of our union really began months before the NRA was enacted into law. This can

easily be proven if you remember the Philadelphia dress strike. The report of the General Executive Board, Page 71, informs us:

"If the term, rising from the dead, may be used in regard to any of our unions within the past year, it can rightfully be applied to our Philadelphia dressmakers organization, Local 50. The experience of Local 50 in 1933 was nothing short of resurrection and most remarkable of all was the fact that the revival movement in the Philadelphia dress industry had preceded by several months the general recovery movement which spurred on trade union activity all over the land and in our own International Union. In a historic sense it became therefore the forerunner of the great strike movement in our industry last year and its splendid example acted as an inspiration and driving force for our union in the other markets."

Can anything more be required to prove that we do not owe the revival of our union simply to the NRA but rather to the aggressiveness of our union.

Especially today when the grim realities of the NRA are coming to the fore with the passing of the honeymoon stage, is it necessary for our International to adopt a correct and realistic estimate of the NRA, a policy justified by our experiences in the last year, especially in the dress trade, a policy that will help insure militant action by our organization.

Instead of singing praises to the NRA and presenting gifts to President Roosevelt, we must realize the dangers and counteract the illusions of NRA. We must train our members to have faith only in their union and rely only on their organized strength for defense of their interests. We must never for a moment forget that the whole NRA was initiated and developed primarily as a means to save the foundering ship of capitalism.

NO PARTICIPATION IN CODE AUTHORITIES

The Darrow Report has fully borne out our contention that the code authorities are nothing more nor less than executive committees of powerful trade associations of employers, concerned primarily with promoting their own business interests. What labor can get under the codes is not dependent upon its representation in the code authorities but rather on the strength of its organization since these issues are determined not by the votes in the code authorities but on the picket lines. For labor to become part and parcel of the code authorities means for it to share responsibility for their decisions, which may often be the worst blows against unionism. It means for labor to mortgage its independence and to lose the advantage of freedom of action and suddenness of attack. Labor must confront the NRA machinery as it confronts employers associations, being prepared to back up its demands with its organized might but refusing to become part of it. By participating in the code authorities we promote the illusion amongst the workers that their problems can be solved within these bodies thus undermining their faith in unionism.

OUR DUTIES TO THE LABOR MOVEMENT

3. In arguing against our statement on the NRA, the majority of your committee declares that our union must not even attempt to lay down policy for the general labor movement of this country. I regard this viewpoint as basically and dangerously wrong. Only if we view the NRA from the standpoint of the labor movement as a whole is it possible to see it in a clear light and to frame policy accordingly. That is why we must not shirk the responsibility of contributing actively to the working out of an effective program for the trade union movement of the country. Our International is today the third largest organization in the American Federation of Labor, one of the largest trade unions in the world. It is therefore, our solemn duty to throw our full weight in the direction of progressivism and militancy in labor's ranks. Our statement lays down a clear and definite orientation for American labor at this crucial moment. I therefore urge upon this convention to bear all these considerations in mind and to endorse the minority report.

WHITHER THE SOCIALIST PARTY?

WHAT happened at the Detroit Convention?
 WHY did the "Old Guard" lose control?
 HOW militant are the "Militants"?
 WHO are the present leaders of the S. P.?
 CAN the R. P. C. make the S. P. revolutionary?

JAY LOVESTONE

on the S. P. Convention

IRVING PLAZA

15th Street and Irving Place (Main Auditorium)

Tuesday, June 19th, 8 P. M.

S O C I A L I S T S W E L C O M E

ADMISSION
 15 cents

Auspices:
 COMMUNIST PARTY U. S. A.
 (OPPOSITION)

STEEL MEN TO DEFY THE NRA

(Continued from Page 3)

The whole labor movement, every friend of labor, will watch with bated breath the developments in the steel industry. The committee has shown a degree of militancy and a refusal to bend the knee before the steel barons and their agents in Washington, born of decades of oppression and degradation in the steel mills. Pressure from the "responsible leaders" of the government and the A. F. of L. may come. To yield would be disastrous. The tasks involved in a strike against these industrial "feudal lords" are indeed difficult. Yet precisely this will have to be achieved if the steel workers, if the whole trade union movement is to go forward. The steel industry is the back-bone of the open shop and company union. It must be broken. To accomplish this the whole labor movement must be aroused in support of the steel workers.